

**INSPECTION OF
WARWICKSHIRE
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

JULY 1999

**OFFICE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS
in conjunction with the
AUDIT COMMISSION**

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INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the Framework for the inspection of Local Education Authorities¹, which focuses on the effectiveness of Local Education Authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.

2. The inspection was in two stages. An initial review established a picture of the LEA's context, the performance of its schools, its strategy and the management of services. The initial review was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, school inspection and audit reports, LEA documentation, and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a School Survey was undertaken. This was in the form of a questionnaire sent to 140 schools seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work. The response rate was 79 per cent.

3. The second stage of the inspection involved studies of the effectiveness of aspects of the LEA's work through visits to eight secondary schools, 15 primary schools, and two special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support provided by the LEA contributes to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

4. This report draws on material from the initial review, from the School Survey and from the school visits, together with relevant evidence drawn from recent HMI visits to Warwickshire schools.

¹ LEA support for School Improvement: A Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities, London, OFSTED, 1997

COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Warwickshire is a large county of around half a million people. Although it is mainly rural, it has a number of large urban areas. The County's economy is generally prosperous, but there are local differences, with some areas eligible for European and other funding to assist economic and community development. The overall standards achieved by pupils in maintained schools in the County are above the national averages and in line with those in its statistical neighbours. The rates of improvements in standards are in line with the national rates.

6. Between 1994 and 1996, the LEA successfully completed a major reorganisation of its schools, which aligned the ages of transfer to the key stages of the National Curriculum and significantly reduced the number of surplus places. It necessitated a number of school closures and amalgamations. The LEA is currently completing a major review of special educational needs - its special schools, support services and delegation arrangements.

7. Warwickshire is a well-managed LEA with many significant strengths and no major weaknesses. The weaknesses that do exist are being tackled with vigour and clarity, and in a sensible order of priority. The LEA has succeeded in forging constructive working relationships with its schools and other partners, and this has secured a high level of trust and confidence - a picture convincingly affirmed in the School Survey and on school visits. Its intentions are seen by schools and its other partners as principled and fair. At the same time, the LEA maintains a robust approach to challenge and intervention, in appropriate proportion to success. It does not shrink from taking tough decisions.

8. The overall performance of its schools and the standards achieved by pupils are not remarkable when compared with those found nationally, but there are clear signs that, with the distraction of the school reorganisation behind them, quality and standards are rising as schools and the LEA are better placed to focus more keenly on the standards agenda. Judgements from the second cycle inspections of secondary schools compared to those on the first cycle show much improvement in schools.

9. The LEA has a clear view of its role in supporting school improvement and driving standards up, which has recently been set out formally in a well-structured Education Development Plan (EDP). The LEA discharges its statutory duties well and most services provide a high quality of effective support and advice which are well regarded by schools. Performance review is a strength of the LEA. Warwickshire is the only County Council in England piloting Best Value throughout all its services. The Education Department has a key role in this pilot.

10. Support for improving literacy has made a significant contribution to improvements in standards and the quality of provision in primary schools. Primary schools are also well advanced in their preparations for the National Numeracy Strategy and receive good support. Support to improve the quality of teaching is

notably consistent in its quality and effectiveness. The support for school management, and to governors, is not only extensive, but also well targeted and effective. An appropriate level of support has led to improvement in schools' use of data and target setting. Support to schools identified as requiring special measures and those with serious weaknesses or other difficulties is substantial and well co-ordinated, and has been successful. The role of link inspectors complements that of area education officers effectively. Their support is well focused and ensures that the LEA has a good knowledge of its schools.

11. Services bought back by schools through the LEA's business unit —Warwickshire Education Services — are well managed and responsive and provide effective support which is highly regarded by schools. Well-managed, effective and well regarded work in support of school improvement is also undertaken by the Early Years Team, the Schools Library Service, the County Music Service and the Intercultural Curriculum Support Service.

12. The LEA has consistently spent more than its Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), despite a low SSA per pupil compared to other shire counties. In doing so it has funded schools at similar levels to its statistical neighbours. Consultation with schools on the Education budget has been effective, and the LEA has a good record of providing indicative budgets well in advance of the new financial year. It strikes a good balance between offering support and guidance to schools on financial management and challenging schools both to manage within their means and to take a strategic view about the use of resources. Although more work is needed to ensure schools make maximum use of delegated budgets, it has this well in hand.

13. All of the functions of the LEA are at least adequately performed. Nevertheless, there are relative weaknesses to be addressed. A number of these occur in the area of special needs provision. The production of draft statements, for example, is too slow, though this is improving. The need for the review of special educational needs is evident in order to address current pressures arising from both local and national developments — the requirements to delegate more funds, the move to greater inclusion of pupils in mainstream schools, and the decline in numbers of pupils in the LEA's special schools. In addition, support for ICT is not sufficiently well co-ordinated and expertise is too thinly spread.

14. Other weaknesses are less marked, but there is scope to improve, for example:- the use made by schools of performance data in setting targets for individual pupils and relating this to teaching and learning; the quality of schools' own development and action planning; the consistency in the quality of the feedback to headteachers following visits to their schools; and admission arrangements in the nursery and primary sectors. Surplus places in the primary sector continue to need to be kept under careful review. Also, although the performance review of central services provided outside the Education Department has moved forward in recent years, there is room for more challenge, some of which will be provided by future plans for delegation. Finally, whilst information about service costs is published to

schools twice a year under the DfEE's accounting regulations and conventions much more can, and should, be done by the LEA to ensure that service costs to each school are highlighted, and that schools are empowered to make fully informed choices in respect of service provision and to make judgements about value for money.

15. Overall, then, this is an effective LEA which is well managed, with many strengths and much good practice. It is particularly well led and there is a high level of consistency in the quality and effectiveness of what it does. When aspects do not match this high quality, it tackles them. The balance between challenge and support for schools is nicely judged. The LEA enjoys enviable relationships with its schools, which are helping both the LEA and schools to concentrate on improvement. The LEA is not complacent and it is right to hold this view in the light of the unexceptional overall performance of its schools and the standards achieved by pupils. It has set itself a number of challenges, in particular, meeting the requirements of Best Value; and successfully implementing the outcomes of its review of special educational needs. Externally imposed challenges, in common with other LEAs, are to meet the requirements of Fair Funding and to meet demanding targets for literacy and numeracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. In order to improve the support for special educational needs and the provision for pupils with special educational needs, the LEA should:

- i. conclude the review of special educational needs as soon as possible;
- ii. ensure that appropriate training and guidance are provided to implement the final proposals in the review, relating, particularly, to the needs of pupils now in special schools, who may in future be educated in mainstream schools;
- iii. develop more sensitive methods of forecasting for special educational needs, so that budgets are generated on reliable assumptions;
- iv. ensure that draft statements of special educational needs are produced within the timescales as suggested in the Code of Practice; and
- v. ensure that all schools receive satisfactory feedback where changes to a pupil's statement of special educational needs are recommended in annual reviews.

B. In order to improve the quality of support for curriculum and administrative uses of information and communication technology (ICT), the LEA should:

- i. produce, in consultation with schools, a detailed strategy for improving the coordination and use of ICT in schools;

ii. ensure that all schools have access to sufficient expertise at an appropriate level to meet their needs; and

iii. undertake an audit of ICT competency of school staff to enable support and training to be better targeted.

C. In order to contain the predicted increase in the number of surplus places in primary schools and to strengthen the arrangements for admissions to nursery and primary schools, the LEA should:

i. complete the update of More Open Enrolment figures and, in the light of this, bring forward proposals to remove surplus places; and

ii. review the current policy where admissions to nursery and primary schools are administered by the schools themselves, and consider the appropriateness of replacing this system by one where they are centrally managed by the LEA.

D. In order to ensure that school balances are kept to a reasonable level and retained for appropriate developments, the LEA should:

i. review with schools the reasons for surpluses;

ii. agree a strategy that promotes effective financial management, including the rational management of contingencies; and

iii. put into place monitoring arrangements that enable reports to be made to the Education Committee on the level of surplus retained by schools for specific purposes.

E. In order to meet the principles of Fair Funding, the LEA should:

i. ensure that there is appropriate challenge, along the lines of Best Value, to the relevant services currently provided by central Council departments through the Education Department;

ii. ensure schools know the full cost of services; and

iii. ensure schools are given full choice in purchasing the services they require.

SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

Socio-economic context

16. Warwickshire is a largely rural county with a population of around 500,000. Its three main centres of population cover Nuneaton and Bedworth, Warwick and Leamington, and Rugby. Smaller towns include Kenilworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, Atherstone and Coleshill. Various minority ethnic communities live in the main population centres and add to the cultural diversity of the county. Unemployment has been falling since 1993 and has been consistently lower than the national average. Although the County's economy is generally prosperous, this masks local differences, with some areas eligible for European and other funding to assist economic and community development.

Pupils and schools

17. Nearly 76,000 pupils are currently educated in 245 schools maintained by the LEA. In addition, there are seven primary and eight secondary grant-maintained schools. Primary provision includes nursery, infant, junior and all-through schools. Secondary provision includes grammar and high schools, and both 11-16 and 11-18 comprehensives. All non-selective secondary schools are co-educational. There are single-sex selective schools in Rugby and Stratford-upon-Avon. One special school and one secondary school have been awarded Beacon status. One secondary school is a Technology College and one secondary school has Arts College status. There is a second Technology College in the grant-maintained sector.

18. The latest figures available, for 1997, show that 66.5 per cent of 3- and 4-year olds are on the roll of a maintained school in Warwickshire; this compares to 56 per cent nationally. For the same year, the pupil/teacher ratio (PTR) for schools in the County was higher than the national average: 19.3 compared to 18.6. It was also higher in each of the nursery, primary and secondary sectors. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is around half of that found nationally. By far the largest minority ethnic group is of Indian origin.

19. In 1998, the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need fell to slightly below the national average for both primary and secondary aged pupils. The percentages of primary and secondary-aged pupils in special schools have both fallen since 1994, but still remain slightly above the national averages.

20. Currently, pupil numbers in secondary schools are growing, but those in primary schools are falling, in line with the national birth rate. Places in many Warwickshire schools are sought after by parents living outside the County; the selective schools in East and South Warwickshire are particularly popular with out-County applicants. In 1998, the percentage of year 11 pupils staying on into

Warwickshire sixth forms and the percentage remaining in full-time education are both slightly below the most recent national averages.

21. In 1996, the County completed a major reorganisation of its schools, changing the age of transfer and resulting in the removal of a significant number of surplus places, thus matching the supply of places more closely to demand and achieving greater consistency and coherence within the County's school system.

22. Further details of pupils and schools are given in Appendix I.

Resources available to the LEA

23. Warwickshire's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for primary, secondary and post-16 education expressed per head of pupil population over the last three years has been below the average for its statistical neighbours and for all shire counties. The SSA for under 5s is comparable to the average for other English counties. The Education Committee has consistently spent above the SSA during this period.

Year	Expenditure * £m	%above SSA
1996/7	169.800	3.5
1997/8	169.367	4.2
1998/9	184.974	3.9
1999/2000	195.405	4.2

* excludes capital charges

Source: LEA

24. The Council has been successful in securing borrowing approvals in recent years: the Annual Capital Guideline was £19.363 million during the peak of the re-organisation of schools in 1996/97. There has been considerable investment in capital from revenue over the last four years ranging from a peak of £2922 million in 1996/97 reducing to £1.301 million in 1999/2000.

25. Key grants in 1998/99 included the Standards Fund (~3.011 million) and Section 11 (£771k). Income from LEA services in 1998/99 amounted to £7.415 million including £4.34 million from catering.

The Council, the LEA and the Education Department

26. There are 62 elected members of the County Council, comprising 31 Labour, 21 Conservatives, 7 Liberal Democrats, 2 Independents and 1 Conservative (who is not a member of the Conservative group). The democratic accountability of the Council is discharged through a number of committees, sub-committees and panels. There are five main committees which report direct to the County Council:

- Education Committee
- Environmental Strategy Committee
- Information, Leisure and Consumer Committee
- Policy Committee
- Social Services Committee

27. The education function of the Council is delegated to the Council's Education Committee which, in turn, delegates its functions to a number of sub-committees and panels. The two major ones are the Education (Performance Review) Sub-Committee, which considers reports on the performance and effectiveness of the service provided by the LEA and authorises any appropriate action; and the Education Strategy Review Panel. Other panels include Early Years, Special Educational Needs, Community Education, School Inspection Reports and Special Measures.

28. The Education Department is organised into five main management divisions: Community; Special Educational Needs; Committee; Warwickshire Education Services (WES); and the Schools' Team. The Department is headed by the County Education Officer (CEO), supported by a departmental management strategy team, comprising the heads of divisions, and the Director of Resources. A broader based management team, including heads of services, advises on operational matters. The Department's structure has recently been modified to a flatter model, following the replacement of the Deputy County Education Officer post by an Assistant County Education Officer as Head of the Special Educational Needs Division.

SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

29. Details of the educational performance of schools in Warwickshire are given in Appendix 2. The data in this section are illustrative, not comprehensive.

Standards of Attainment

30. Attainment on entry to Warwickshire Schools. The LEA has an accredited baseline assessment scheme. However, data from such schemes are not standardised nationally to enable comparisons to be made. Judgements by OFSTED inspectors about pupils' attainment on entry to 176 Warwickshire schools inspected in the period 1993-97 suggest this to be slightly above that found nationally and slightly below that found in its statistical neighbours.

31. For the past four years (1995-1998), the attainments of pupils in maintained schools (including grant-maintained schools) in Warwickshire have been generally above national figures at all key stages of education up to the age of 18, and in line with those in its statistical neighbours. For example:

- in 1998, 66.1 per cent of Warwickshire pupils reached Level 4 in Key Stage 2 English tests, compared with 64.8 per cent nationally; 60.4 per cent reached Level 4 in mathematics, compared with 58.5 per cent nationally;
- in 1998, 47.0 per cent of Warwickshire pupils achieved 5+ A*~C grades at GCSE, compared with 44.7 per cent nationally; 92.6 per cent achieved 5+A*~G, compared with 89.8 per cent nationally; and
- in 1998, the average points score per student entered for two or more A levels or their equivalent was 18.1 compared to 17.6 nationally.

32. **Rates of improvement in attainment between 1995-98 are broadly in line with national improvements, with slight variations.** Levels of attainment in schools have risen in Key Stage 1 reading and mathematics, in Key Stages 2 and 3 in English and mathematics, and in overall performance at GCSE and Advanced level. For example:

- the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 English tests rose from 54.5 per cent in 1995 to 66.1 per cent in 1998;
- the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 mathematics tests rose from 47.9 per cent in 1995 to 60.4 per cent in 1998;
- the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ A*~C grades at GCSE rose from 45.2 per cent in 1995 to 47.0 per cent in 1998;
- the average GCSE points score per pupil rose from 35.8 in 1995 to 37.9 in 1998 and

- between 1995 and 1995, the average points score per student entered for two or more A-levels rose from 17.6 to 18.1.

33. **The numbers of pupils permanently excluded from primary and secondary schools** have remained below national figures for the past three years. Permanent exclusions from primary schools have remained steady, but they continue to rise in the secondary sector.

34. **Attendance rates** in primary and secondary schools over the past four years have been above national figures.

Evidence from OFSTED inspections

35. Forty six per cent of those Warwickshire primary schools inspected have been rated as good or very good in relation to standards of achievement compared to 52 per cent nationally. Sixty two per cent of secondary schools have been rated as good or very good in this respect compared to 59 per cent nationally. Seven per cent of Warwickshire primary schools, the same per cent as found nationally, need to make substantial improvements in relation to standards of achievement. Six per cent of secondary schools, compared to ten per cent of schools nationally, need to make substantial improvements.

36. With regard to the quality of education provided in Warwickshire's primary schools, OFSTED inspectors judged 52 per cent to be good or very good compared to 60 per cent nationally and for secondary schools 65 per cent compared to 67 per cent of schools in England as a whole. OFSTED inspectors judged 62 per cent of primary schools in Warwickshire to be good or very good in relation to management and efficiency compared to 65 per cent nationally. Figures for secondary schools are 71 per cent compared to 69 per cent nationally. When judgements for the second cycle of inspections for secondary schools are compared to those on the first cycle, they show that there has been much improvement, not only on the LEA's previous ratings, but also in comparison to judgements on schools in England as a whole.

37. There are five schools subject to special measures: one infant, three primary and one special school. A pupil referral unit (PRU) is also subject to special measures. Since 1993, two primary schools and one PRU have been identified as having serious weaknesses; neither school is any longer in this category.

38. In HMCI's annual reports between 1993-97, three secondary schools, one primary school, one nursery school and one special school have been identified as being particularly successful in major aspects of their work.

SECTION 3: THE LEA STRATEGY

ROLES, PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

39. *The LEA has a clear view of its role in supporting school improvement. Relevant priorities have been established and a coherent strategy developed. These have been shared widely and are approved of by schools. The LEA has a clearly articulated approach to support, challenge and intervention. The strategy for supporting pupils with special educational needs has been weaker and is the subject of a major review. Its implementation is a significant challenge for the LEA.*

40. Warwickshire County Council is a '**Best Value**' pilot authority. It is committed to a policy of continuous improvement and of securing the highest quality services making the most effective and efficient use of available resources. The objectives of the Authority were set out in the Council's Key Tasks (1995/6).

41. The County Council has consulted on an overall strategy for council services. The **County Plan - Our County** - includes as the first key objective:

".....to improve education and opportunities for young people".

The Local Authority shows a strong commitment to education, not least by consistently spending above its Education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), and this is acknowledged by schools.

42. At the Council level, the planning and review process is supported by a number of cross-departmental working groups, conferences and five district, multi-agency Local Partnership Teams: Education is represented on all these. These help secure effective communication and coherent planning.

43. In February 1997, after wide consultation, the LEA published an **Aims Statement** of principles, values and means. The purpose of the LEA was set out:

"To make it possible for learners in Warwickshire to fulfil their educational potential".

44. For 1998/99, in order to meet these commitments, the Education Committee agreed five **Pledges**:

"We will

- promote learning and increased achievement;
- provide for Special Educational Needs;
- secure equal opportunities and equal access;
- provide for learning in Early Years; and
- promoting lifelong learning and community developments".

45. The Authority's Education Development Plan (EDP) for school improvement is principally related to the first of these pledges - "to promote learning and increased achievement" - although it is not seen in isolation from the Authority's other plans, many of which also contribute to school improvement. In the plan, it is stated that the prime responsibility for school improvement lies with schools and the LEA's role is to challenge and support schools to meet that responsibility.

46. Within the Education Department, key tasks and targets are developed in a clear and detailed way into a Department Plan (Key Tasks and Targets) and are linked annually to corporate policy, strategy and related objectives, and to departmental themes. From April 1999, the corporate and locality planning framework has been integrated with Education Department and school planning through the EDP.

47. The LEA sees its major roles as carrying out its statutory duties, articulating a vision for education in the County, ensuring access and equity, and supporting and challenging schools to raise standards. Taken together, the detail in these aims, pledges and plans constitute a clear vision and role for Warwickshire LEA and a coherent strategy for supporting school improvement. Of the schools visited, almost all were well aware of the LEA's role in, and its strategies and priorities for, school improvement, and all schools approved of these, with more than half the schools expressing strong approval.

The Educational Development Plan

48. The EDP sets out Warwickshire's eight priorities in support of school improvement for the next three years:

- A. Challenging under-performance to raise standards of achievement.
- B. Quality of teaching.
- C. Leadership and management.
- D. Curriculum initiatives in support of increased achievement.
- E. Standards of literacy.
- F. Standards of numeracy.
- G. Securing access and meeting individual needs.
- H. Information and communication technology.

The EDP has been approved by the DfEE for the full period of three years, subject to the general conditions.

49. The EDP priorities are consistent with a detailed audit and challenging targets have been agreed with schools. The three key areas and eight national priorities are adequately covered. Activities in the EDP are appropriately targeted at school improvement, but some are not sufficiently targeted on particular schools, key stages or groups of pupils, although, in practice, the LEA does target support well. There is a good overall statement on monitoring and evaluation. The EDP focuses well on addressing the large majority of areas for improvement

identified in this inspection report. Most of the remaining areas which require improvement lie outside the scope of EDPs.

50. In the School Survey, schools rated the clarity of the LEA's approach to school improvement, the relevance of the LEA's priorities to schools, the LEA's actions to achieve its priorities, and the involvement of schools in forming LEA policies and procedures significantly higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample. The LEA's priorities have had at least some influence on the planning of every school visited, and were clearly reflected in more than two-thirds. Many schools are gearing up to ensure that the EDP priorities are fully considered in their next cycle of school development planning.

51. Other plans also play a major role in supporting school improvement, in particular: the Early Years and Daycare Development Plan; the School Organisation Plan; the Plan to Reduce Infant Class Size; and the Behaviour Support Plan.

The strategy for special educational needs

52. The LEA is in the middle of a review of special school provision, and a review of the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SENSS), which also deals with issues of delegation. The review is needed and is an appropriate response by the LEA to national developments in special education; the decline in pupil numbers in special schools; the need to increase delegation to schools under Fair Funding; the criticism from schools of SENSS; and the increase in the number of pupils with statements of special educational need in mainstream schools. The SENSS Review is leading to the establishment of three services where there is now one:- the Learning and Behaviour Support Service; Low Incidence Support Services; and PRU Service. Schools rated the assessment of SEN, the provision and review of statements and how well pupils' special educational needs are met lower than the average for other LEAs in the sample. These were the only aspects which rated lower than the average for all other LEAs in the whole survey.

53. The EDP, "Key Task and Targets" and the review of SEN all link together and give a coherent picture. Work and consultation on both the SENSS and Special Schools Reviews have been pragmatic and have allowed enough flexibility for individual schools to make a contribution. Curriculum and training priorities relating to the Special Schools Review have been identified and a start has been made on meeting these needs. However, there is little evidence of planned development to meet the needs of pupils, now in special schools, who may in future be educated in mainstream schools; and existing PRUs are attempting to fulfil a very wide role and should seek to reduce the number of pupils with no prospect of returning to their schools. The two parts of the SEN Review are taking place simultaneously, placing considerable demands on the schools and LEA officers at a time when there are significant staff changes. Their implementation represents a significant challenge for the Authority.

Strategy to disseminate good practice

54. The LEA has recently launched the Name and Acclaim Strategy. Through these publications, and the work leading up to them, the LEA is identifying and disseminating good practice across its schools and opening up the potential for improved networking. This usefully complements the work already done through subject, phase and aspect meetings, and suggestions made by the Schools' Team about good practice in other schools.

Consultation with schools

55. The LEA consults widely with schools and its other partners. The LEA is viewed as open, approachable and responsive. Consultation is seen as being genuine. These factors have created a strong sense of partnership with, and trust in, the LEA.

56. The LEA has a comprehensive network of groups to ensure wide and effective consultation on the development of policy and practice. To assist consultation with schools there is an agreed process for sending consultation documents, and where possible, schools are given advance warning of the production of consultation papers especially where a meeting of the governing body is likely to be needed to consider a response. This is good practice. In the School Survey, schools rated the LEA's consultation on the EDP and consultation on planning the Education budget significantly higher than the average for other LEAs.

57. Evidence from school visits indicates that schools are kept well informed about LEA developments, are able to feed their views into the decision-making process, and their views receive full consideration. All schools visited considered consultation by the LEA to be at least good, with almost half considering it to be very good. As a consequence, schools are committed to the LEA's strategy for school improvement and the LEA's vision is understood, shared by and seen as being relevant to schools. The regular meetings between the CEO, senior officers and headteachers are seen as particularly important, and ones where dialogue is frank and open. One headteacher succinctly summed up the views of many in stating that the LEA's motives were always honourable.

The LEA's Evaluation of its Effectiveness

58. The LEA has a good range of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the quality and impact of its work and it takes appropriate action on the results of these evaluations to improve its quality and effectiveness further. The LEA involves its partners closely in these evaluations. Performance review is a strength of the LEA.

59. At the County Council level, officers and members regularly review policy and performance. There is a published calendar for business planning which successfully integrates reporting and planning timescales across the whole Authority. As part of its progress to a Best Value Authority, the Council has moved to ensure proper accountability of elected members and officers in the delivery of quality services.

60. Within Education, the Performance Review Sub-Committee and the Strategy Review Panel have key roles in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the service. In addition, the Education Committee has established three "Scrutiny Panels" to look in depth at the performance of:

- primary schools;
- secondary schools; and
- pupils with special educational needs in special and mainstream schools.

The panels consist of members from all parties, and each panel has clear aims

61. The impact of inspectors and teacher advisers is carefully monitored through follow-up visits to schools, feedback from schools, the scrutiny of notes of visits and team discussions.

62. In addition to responses from consultative groups, the Authority evaluates the quality, effectiveness and how much schools value its work in some detail by seeking their views about its services through an annual survey organised by the Warwickshire Education Services (WES). Originally limited to services provided by WES (i.e. bought-back services), it now appropriately includes questions about other parts of the Department in order to contribute to the performance review process. In the School Survey for this inspection, schools rated the evaluation of LEA services significantly higher than the average for other LEAs: indeed it had the highest average rating of all LEAs in the sample.

STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

63. The LEA is taking effective steps to meet its statutory duties and responsibilities. In contrast to many LEAs, both headteacher and teacher appraisal have been maintained. However, it does not meet the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice in respect of producing draft statements within 18 weeks.

SCHOOL PLACES AND ADMISSIONS

64. *The LEA takes purposeful action to review the pattern of school provision and employs adequate methods to forecast demand for school places. Overall, the LEA delivers a good quality admissions service, although there is scope for specific improvement to admissions in the nursery and primary sector.*

School places

65. In 1996, the LEA successfully completed a major reorganisation of its schools. The approach adopted has been disseminated widely as an example of good practice. One outcome of the exercise was the alignment of the County's age of transfer to the key stages of the National Curriculum. Another was a reduction in surplus places, which high before the start of re-organisation - 19 per cent overall (16 per cent primary and 24 per cent secondary).

66. The LEA takes purposeful action to review the pattern of school provision and employs adequate methods to forecast demand for school places, which is a particular challenge given the proportion of out-of-County pupils that seek places especially in Warwickshire's selective schools. In the School Survey, the planning of school places was rated significantly higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample.

67. Forty eight primary schools had pupils in excess of their capacity in 1998, with many working through planned transition following the major reorganisation of a few years ago. However, 12 per cent of primary places are currently surplus to requirement compared to 10 per cent nationally. The LEA predicts a consistent reduction in the demand for primary school places owing to an estimated fall in live births over the next three years. On the basis of existing More Open Enrolment (MOE) data, this is estimated by the LEA to increase surplus primary capacity by up to 5.6 per cent by 2002.

68. There are plans to update current MOE figures, which are thought by the LEA to exaggerate the problem in the primary sector as some do not take pre-school provision and other alternative uses of accommodation into account. The LEA is consulting on the amalgamation of four infant and junior schools and has applied for the disapplication of the standard numbers of 56 primary schools in connection with the policy to reduce infant class sizes. There is also a need to review the position of small schools serving pupils of primary school age to ensure an appropriate balance is retained in the light of such a marked fall in numbers.

69. Rising demand for secondary school places over the next three years will reduce surplus capacity substantially from the current level of 7.8 per cent, with a consequent impact on appeals. Extensions of existing schools are planned in most parts of the County to deal with this.

Admissions

70. Overall, the LEA delivers a good quality admissions service. Admission and appeal arrangements are generally sensitive to the needs of most parents. This is partly borne out by the rating given by schools, which was higher than the average of other LEAs in the survey sample, a view reinforced by the positive response given by many schools visited by inspectors.

71. There is, however, room for specific improvement with admissions to the nursery and primary sector. Without specific arrangements to moderate admissions administered by nursery and primary schools, it is difficult for the LEA to confirm that its published rules and arrangements are being properly applied, save to report the absence of any evidence of incorrect action. The LEA should review the need for the central co-ordination and management of all admissions arrangements with a view to ensuring that parents receive only one offer of a school place based on parental preference. This review should take into account any implications arising from the government's class size policy.

RESOURCE PLANNING AND EXPENDITURE

72. *The Council funds Education above SSA. Consultation with schools on the budget is effective; schools understand the basis for funding decisions each year and feel well informed. The LEA takes purposeful action to keep the numbers of schools in deficit to a minimum. The LEA is aware of school balances building up and needs to review reasons for this with schools, agree a strategy for tracking earmarked surpluses, and agree and set targets to reduce balances, where appropriate. A significant proportion of services are provided by central Council departments to Education and to schools direct. Schools need to have a greater choice in whether or not to purchase these services. As elsewhere in the country, SEN costs are rising. There is a need for the LEA to develop better methods of forecasting for SEN.*

School Funding

73. The County Council has kept spending above the SSA in recent years, despite receiving an SSA per pupil consistently lower than the average for shire counties. Expenditure per pupil in 1997/98 for primary and for secondary pupils under 16 was only slightly below the average for statistical neighbours. Delegation of its Potential Schools Budget to schools was 89.5 per cent in 1998/99, which was close to the average for other shire counties.

74. The LEA has taken timely and purposeful action to keep the number of schools in deficit to a minimum: the number at the end of 1998/99 is estimated to be 11. Four are agreed by the LEA and are linked to clear recovery plans. While the LEA advises schools about the need to make maximum use of school budgets, the estimated outturn for school balances in 1998/99 shows that schools are building up greater reserves than in the previous two years. The LEA estimates primary schools will retain £5.261 million as unspent balances, which is 8.4 per cent of the Aggregated Schools Budget; the cumulative percentage is 7.8 per cent. Unspent balances are also a problem in the special school sector where the end of year balance is estimated to be 9.5 per cent. Overall, seventy schools will have in-year underspends of more than ten per cent and 142 will retain more than five per cent of their budget share. Primary schools have reported particular concerns about the impact on school budgets of falling pupil numbers combined with that of infant class sizes of 30 rolling forward into junior year groups.

75. The LEA is aware of the problem. It has a clause in its 'Scheme For The Financing Of Schools' that requires governors to report on how they intend to use end of year school balances that are greater than 5 per cent. Work has already begun on an ad hoc basis to develop three-year projections and share data on comparative expenditure. The LEA currently monitors cumulative balances and intends to report the reasons for the surpluses in 1998/99 to the Education Committee and to schools. In future, it should be better placed to report on the aggregated level of balances retained specifically for school development and other purposes. The LEA recognises the need for a strategy that promotes effective financial management of contingencies, medium term planning and financial benchmarking. This does not imply that

financial management in schools is inadequate, but that there is a need for a more strategic approach to be adopted in the use of school resources by some schools.

76. Consultation with schools on the education budget has been effective, and a good example of this was its consultation on Fair Funding. Schools understand the basis for funding decisions each year and feel well informed. The LMS scheme is well written and accessible; schools rated its fairness higher than the average of other LEAs in the School Survey. A new scheme for financing schools introduced in April 1999 includes greater delegation for repairs and maintenance. Further delegation in 2000/2001 of Payroll and for SEN Support Services is planned. A fundamental review of the formula funding will take place in preparation for 2000/2001. This will probably include provision for a 'small schools protection factor'; a resource that should be targeted on schools that have an agreed long-term future based on Best Value principles.

Centrally Controlled Expenditure

77. A significant proportion of services is provided by central Council departments to the Education Department and direct to schools. These services are subject to performance review and, on the whole, represent demonstrable Best Value against three of the four requirements of "challenge, compare, consult and compete". For example, there is an exemplary service level agreement between the County Treasurer's Department and the Education Department which covers services such as Payroll, Pensions, Exchequer Services and internal audit. There is also a wide-ranging customer survey which helps to provide a focus for continual improvement. However, there are opportunities to strengthen arrangements to challenge why and how each service is being provided. Joint work is needed between the Education Department and central services on the application of 'Fair Funding' principles to the relevant central services. There is also a need to ensure that schools are given more choice in purchasing the services they require.

78. Spending on the administration of statements and the Educational Psychology Service was low in 1998/99 compared to that in its statistical neighbours. The budget for the administration of statements has risen from £304k in 1998/99 to £470k in 1999/2000. This increase, and the strengthening of management arrangements, are both well made and an appropriate response to criticisms about the responsiveness of the service and its performance in relation to the SEN Code of Practice.

79. Overall expenditure on SEN was high in 1998/99 compared to statistical neighbours, shire counties and all English authorities. The budget for the provision of statements increased from £1.311 million in 1996/97 to £4.78 million in 1999/2000, although during the same period considerable underspends were recorded on Stages 2 and 3 of the SEN Code of Practice. The absence of a clear and comprehensive strategy in previous years made the task of planning for change difficult and budgetary control less manageable. There is a need for the LEA to develop more sensitive methods of forecasting for SEN, linked to strategic intent, so

that budgets are generated on reliable assumptions.. This, combined with the consistent application of threshold criteria and stronger management arrangements, would provide a better platform to meet current and future needs.

LIAISON WITH OTHER SERVICES, VOLUNTARY GROUPS AND AGENCIES

80. *The LEA liaises very effectively with its wide range of partners. A number of links are excellent and result in successful initiatives which are of real benefit to pupils and schools.*

81. The LEA has developed an impressively wide range of effective links at a strategic and operational level with other departments and external agencies. This work is largely co-ordinated by the **Children and Young Persons Sub-Committee**. There is particularly effective liaison between Education and **Social Services** over:-Parents' Centres; residential education and care; the education of looked-after children; child protection; and advocacy for young people. There is good liaison with the **Health Authority** and productive working relationships with **Warwickshire Constabulary** on, for example, crime prevention work and a drugs and crime prevention project in Rugby.

82. The LEA maintains very good relations with professional associations and trade unions through regular formal meetings of the **Augmented Teachers Panel** and the non-teaching unions. Joint agreements are ratified between members and unions through the **Joint Negotiating Committee** which meets only when required. The unions are represented on the **County Teachers Advisory Committee** and other ad hoc working groups, whose work might affect teachers' working conditions. Officers and branch officials meet informally through the County Secretaries' meetings. The LEA and professional associations often issue joint advice or agreements on major issues. The CEO regularly briefs branch officials on major issues before their launch, for example, annual budget arrangements or major schools/service changes.

83. Working relationships with **The Chamber (TEC) and the Careers Service** are excellent. Examples of productive joint work include: the Success Index for tracking the numbers of young people entering "positive" and "negative" destinations; providing access to a vocational curriculum for Key Stage 4 pupils at risk of exclusion; a Reading Volunteer Scheme focused on economically deprived areas; and a mentoring scheme for disaffected Key Stage 4 pupils. TEC staff also provide consultancy and run events for schools on Investors in People (IIP). Five primary and seven secondary schools have already achieved IIP status; a further 16 schools are progressing towards IIP status and more are in the pipeline. Excellent working relationships also exist between the LEA and the Diocesan authorities. There was particularly close and effective working on the school re-organisation programme and the EDP.

84. An innovative venture involving a wide range of partnerships is the recent launch of the **Education Arts Zone**: a three year project aimed at celebrating the creative achievements of young people and extending the opportunities for young people's creativity to be expressed, developed and valued. The Zone is already gaining national recognition as an example of partnership in the pursuit of creativity the curriculum.

SECTION 4: THE MANAGEMENT OF SERVICES

WARWICKSHIRE EDUCATION SERVICES

85. Warwickshire Education Services (WES) is a successful and well-managed business unit operating in the Education Department providing a range of support services to customers across the County. It was launched in 1994 when budgets for its services were fully delegated to schools. It comprises nine service areas of which six are particularly relevant to support for school improvement:- the Educational Development Service; Finance; Governor Training; Information Services; Personnel; and Premises. All of these are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this section and their effectiveness in Section 5 of the report. WES won a Charter Mark in 1996 for its services. WES sets clear standards for its services, systematically monitors these and asks its customers annually about how well these standards meet their needs - 93 per cent responded positively in the most recent survey. Communication with customers is good. They are consulted on how to improve services and their views are taken on board.

INSPECTION, ADVICE AND CURRICULUM SUPPORT

86. *The services which provide this support to schools are very well managed and co-ordinated. Support is well targeted and is appropriately provided in inverse proportion to success. Schools are clear about the principles by which these services operate and value their work highly. Schools are carefully monitored and their strengths and weaknesses identified. The impact of the services is systematically evaluated and they are improved as a result. Support for ICT is weaker, and some secondary schools, in particular, have needs which are not met; a review of this provision is needed.*

The Schools' Team and The Educational Development Service

87. Inspection, advice and curriculum support for schools are provided mainly from two groups: the Schools' Team and the Educational Development Service (**EDS**). The Schools' Team is sub-divided into area teams, each comprising an area education officer and up to four inspectors. The Assessment Unit is also located in this team.

88. The Schools' Team is very well managed and maintains a sharp focus on school improvement, particularly in those schools with weaknesses. Standards, quality and the management of schools are regularly, rigorously and systematically monitored, and fluctuations are quickly identified and actions implemented. The deployment of staff is good and based on clear and appropriate principles which are understood by schools. The work of the team is expert, well-planned, meets the needs of schools well and leads to improvement. The needs of schools are reviewed termly, based on information from link inspectors, area education officers and other sources, and the programme of partnership reviews drawn up accordingly.

89. The Schools' Team is centrally funded. In addition to support and advice on curriculum issues, including the management of the literacy and numeracy strategies, the team also manages the support for improving teaching, governance, target setting, use of performance data, school management and development planning.

90. Every school has a linked inspector and officer. The purposes of the link roles are to support schools in raising standards; to help improve the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership and management; and to monitor compliance with statutory requirements. These are delivered effectively, particularly where the need is greatest. Inspectors and officers gain a broad range of first-hand evidence enabling them to identify strengths and weaknesses in schools. The complementary roles of the area education officers and link inspectors work well.

91. The work of link inspectors involves an agreed cycle of three visits to each school per year as a minimum. Schools invariably valued the quality of support and advice provided by link inspectors and, in particular, there were numerous examples of effective action having been taken to address weak teaching. Where judgements are made on visits, these have been provided in an open note of visit for the headteacher and chair of governors since January 1999. These notes have been welcomed by headteachers and their use will be evaluated later this year. Their quality is evaluated under '*Support for Improving the Management of Schools*' in Section 5 of this report.

92. This year, 156 schools in Warwickshire have been involved in the Building Bridges Project. This is well managed and is helping to secure effective transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Training for schools has taken place, schools have identified cross-phase activities and, at the time of the inspection, schools were beginning to undertake work on the activities. The LEA has provided funds and effective support and guidance. The project will be evaluated in the next year.

93. The work of the Schools' Team is monitored and evaluated thoroughly. This is done through surveys, letters, meetings with the CEO and headteachers, and Best Value analyses. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the work of the team also takes place during the regular cycle of team meetings and management team meetings. It is also closely scrutinised at the Performance Review Sub-Committee.

94. **The Educational Development Service (EDS)** is part of Warwickshire Education Services. Its prime function is to provide advice and professional development opportunities to support school improvement. Unlike the Schools' Team, all of its services have to be bought back by schools.

95. The detailed functions of the service are laid out clearly in a booklet for schools. This also sets out governors' and headteachers' own responsibilities in relation to the curriculum and teachers' professional development. The service's top priorities are the provision of school-based curriculum advice and training, including whole-school issues; and a professional development programme for both teaching and non-teaching staff.

96. Although the Schools' Team and the EDS exist as separate units within the LEA, they work closely together to support school improvement. There is an agreement that inspectors provide EDS teacher advisers with a professional steer and inspectors commission teacher advisers to intervene directly with schools and staff experiencing difficulty with teaching and planning. This systematic approach contributes to the LEA knowing its schools well. The LEA's knowledge and understanding of schools and the usefulness of its monitoring were both rated significantly higher than the average score for other LEAs in the School Survey. The LEA's own survey of schools found that 95 per cent felt that the work of the Schools' Team in supporting school improvement was important or essential.

Other Curriculum Support Services

97. Support for schools in curriculum uses of **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)** is split between the Schools' Team, who provide curriculum advice and support, and the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) Team, who advise schools on technical matters and strategic planning. In the School Survey, support for the curriculum use of ICT was rated, overall, higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample, although secondary schools rated it lower than this. The inspector with responsibility for ICT now heads the NGfL team. The Schools' Team's support to schools for raising standards in ICT has been augmented by the appointment of a new ICT inspector and by the expertise of a primary phase inspector with specialist ICT knowledge. Support for curricular aspects of ICT in secondary schools has been shared amongst all other specialist inspectors at the secondary level. This, to some extent, diluted the quality of support for curricular ICT and some secondary schools have specific needs for advice which, at present, the LEA finds difficult to meet. Also, the lack of a routine audit of the ICT competency of the school staff limits the ability to tailor courses to individual needs. A fundamental review of this provision is needed to give the LEA an opportunity to agree with schools the future direction of support for ICT within the context of an overall strategy. ICT is appropriately one of the priorities in the EDP.

98. The **County Music Service** provides a wide range of advice, support and practical tuition to schools, groups and individuals to improve standards in music across the County. The service is well managed, has a good reputation, and buy back of its services is exceptionally high. The service has won a local government award for "outstanding music" and has also achieved IIP status. The service is efficient and has steadily reduced its costs over the past four years. The service makes significant contributions to promoting live music in schools, music workshops and chamber music festivals across the County, as well as developing choral music. The Warwickshire Choral Initiative is a unique venture between the British Federation of Young Choirs and a county music service. It supports and develops singing as part of the music curriculum in Warwickshire schools and has established a network of youth choirs in all areas of the County.

99. The **Schools Library Service** provides a loan and advice service to schools to help raise literacy and numeracy levels and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is a well-managed service which has significant levels of buy-back by

schools. Ninety per cent of primary schools and 87 per cent of secondary schools buy back both the loan service and the advice service. In the School Survey, schools rated the provision significantly higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample. The service won a national award for school library services and recommended as “a model project for others to follow”. The service is involved in many literacy projects and has provided extensive and effective support to some schools in special measures and those with significant weaknesses. Schools’ needs are identified through appropriate methods:- scrutiny of OFSTED school reports; termly liaison meetings with school library staff; and feedback from evaluation forms.

OTHER SERVICES WHICH IMPROVE ACCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

100. *Support services for early years and for English as an additional language are well managed, provide a good quality of support and are well regarded by schools. Support to improve attendance is also well managed, and generally effective. The remainder of the services — those related to special educational needs — are currently subject to major review. Whilst much of this support for special educational needs is well managed and well regarded by schools, it is patchy and has a number of weaknesses. A review is appropriate and welcomed by schools. Liaison, by these services, with parents and other agencies works well.*

The Early Years Team

101. The Early Years Team is well managed and provides support for the 232 pre-school providers registered with the LEA. The team also gives effective support to the Childminder Networks. A noteworthy accredited part-time course, to be run in conjunction with Newman College, will provide a structured route to qualified teacher status for nursery nurses. This will run for the first time next year and is already oversubscribed. Responses to the School Survey show that schools, overall, rate the LEA’s support for improvement in the quality of early years provision higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample. Of the 69 primary, infant and nursery schools responding to the survey, almost half rated this support very good or excellent and over 90 per cent rated it good or better. Significant support is provided by the early years inspector where inspections reveal weaknesses in early years provision. This includes advice about the under 5s curriculum and support for teachers experiencing difficulties. In addition, the literacy training for nursery staff was conducted by the early years inspector and this ensured that it was well targeted. There has been a rapid expansion in Out-of-School Hours Clubs and the target for new clubs has been exceeded. Effective support and guidance is provided in setting up these clubs, and in pre-school and full-day care provision.

The Intercultural Curriculum Support Service

102. The **Intercultural Curriculum Support Service** (ICSS) seeks to ensure equality of access to the National Curriculum and to prepare all children for life in a multi-cultural society. This is a well-managed service which makes an effective contribution to school improvement. Visits to schools provided evidence of valuable and effective contributions by the service in developing teachers’ confidence and skills on multi-cultural and language issues; enabling pupils with EAL to access the

curriculum and become more self-sufficient; and organising a variety of in-school and out-of-school activities such as festivals and workshops. In the School Survey, support to schools in meeting the needs of pupils from minority ethnic groups was more highly rated in Warwickshire than any other LEA in the sample.

The Assessment and Statementing Service

103. The functions of the **Assessment and Statementing Service** relate to the LEA's performance of its statutory duties and associated administration in relation to conducting assessments of pupils' special educational needs at Stage 4 of the SEN Code of Practice; drafting and issuing statements for pupils with SEN; arranging statutory annual reviews; and facilitating the production of individual education plans (IEPs). The pattern of statements, percentage of pupils with statements and those in special schools reflect the national picture. The majority of schools receive at least a satisfactory level of support in the assessment of pupils' special educational needs and in the production and annual review of statements, but the LEA needs to ensure that all schools receive satisfactory feedback where changes to provision are recommended in annual reviews. The LEA met its statutory 18-week deadline for the production of draft statements in only 36 per cent of cases in 1997-98, though its performance is improving and 58 per cent were processed within the Code of Practice timescale in 1998-99. Sixty-six per cent of statements were completed within 26 weeks in 1998-99. The number of appeals to the SEN tribunal is low by comparison with national averages.

The Educational Psychology Service

104. The **Educational Psychology Service** is organised on an area basis. It is a small service and is stretched to meet all the demands placed upon it, but it is nevertheless able to fulfil its statutory role and functions. The deployment of staff, time and resources is sensible. The practice of allocating educational psychologists (EPs) to schools based on need, and with statutory work taking precedence, works well, and the principle is understood, and approved of, by schools. An interesting aspect is the use of a separately funded post for out-County placements. This will eventually become self funding. The Principal EP undertakes this role for 0.5 fte. This is good practice and should lead to improved monitoring of placements. This service is awaiting the outcome of the review of SEN support services, and the outcome of national advice and guidance from a DfEE working party. The draft business plan for the service is clear and informative - the service has been the subject of a performance review, and the analysis and comments have appropriately influenced the plan. Visits to schools showed that, in nearly every case, schools received good support from the service in dealing with the statutory assessment of children with SEN, despite the very considerable pressure on EPs' time. Support for "difficult cases" was highly valued by secondary schools.

The Special Educational Needs Support Service (SENSS)

105. This service is also awaiting the outcomes of the SEN Review; these will have a significant bearing on the management and deployment of this service, and are intended to build on current strengths and to overcome current deficiencies in

the service. At present, the service does not have clear, well-defined targets and the management structure lacks accountability. The rationale for, and the principles behind, the review, as well as the proposals for consultation, are discussed in Section 3 of this report. The majority of schools welcome the review of SENSS, although primary schools are apprehensive about the possible effects of delegation on costs and the quality of the service they will be able to buy back. The LEA needs to ensure that schools are confident in the new arrangements resulting from the review.

106. The quality of the support to schools from SENSS varies. In approximately half the schools visited, the service met their needs and pupils' needs well and was improving: in the remainder, it neither met their own nor their pupils' needs well.

The Parent Partnership Service

107. The Parent Partnership Service, provides good support for parents of pupils with special educational needs. Funded by the LEA, which commissions the Community Education Development Centre (CEDC) in Coventry to provide support for children with SEN at all stages of the Code of Practice, it has reached close to 1000 parents. A Pupils' Forum and a Parents' SEN Conference are planned for this year.

The Education Social Welfare Service

108. The **Education Social Work Service (ESWS)** is responsible for carrying out a range of statutory welfare duties on behalf of the LEA. The service has clear aims and priorities, is well managed and works effectively with schools, parents and other agencies. The service's key priority is to ensure that children attend school regularly.

109. The ESWS works closely with other staff in the Department, particularly the Schools' Team, and with other agencies, including Social Services, to promote school improvement through attendance strategies. To ensure effective and efficient use of the resources available, schools are banded on the basis of numbers on roll and attendance data; schools' entitlements to ESWS staffs time are based on this banding. In consequence, some schools will be visited once a year, others once a term, and the remainder weekly. This produces some inflexibility: some schools would benefit from visits which were more frequent, but not weekly. Five well-conceived stages of intervention are identified. This system works well, generally, and is well regarded by schools.

110. The LEA intends to put tracking data into place by September 1999. A first draft of a database to identify every child who is out-of-school, with reasons and details of provision by the LEA, has been produced. Although a considerable amount of work is needed to complete the database, and to keep it up to date, this is an important step forward in monitoring the placement of, and support for, these pupils. In the School Survey, overall LEA support for improving attendance was rated higher than the average for other LEAs, and was significantly higher in relation to child protection. Visits to schools also confirmed that the service is held in high regard for its targeted support for pupils and families needing counselling, and its support on child protection matters.

Behaviour Support

111. The Behaviour Support Plan sets out the LEA's strategy for improving behaviour and reducing exclusions and unauthorised absences, with targets for exclusions and unauthorised absence included in the Education Development Plan. The plan is appropriately based on the key principle of inclusion. Two groups of pupils are targeted - those who have already displayed behavioural difficulties; and vulnerable pupils at risk of experiencing behavioural difficulties. The plan links particularly closely to the Early Years Development Plan and the Children Services Plan, and this forms the basis of good working relationships with Social Services and other agencies in relation to the education of looked after children and children in out-County placements. The aim is to further develop those current projects targeted at tackling exclusions and pupils out-of-school. There are detailed arrangements to tackle problems speedily and effectively in order to meet the targets laid out in the EDP. One outcome of the review of SEN is to be the creation of a Learning and Behaviour Support Service.

112. The LEA, working jointly with representatives of other agencies, has established panels in each area to enable headteachers and officers to work together to ensure continuity in the education of secondary-aged children who have been excluded. The four panels consider both excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion, and are charged with producing an individual package for each pupil. They have had some success, particularly in the north of the County, in reducing the incidence of exclusion and reducing the time pupils spend out of school.

113. The Primary Exclusion Project has operated in six primary schools, drawn from an initial list of 12, which accounted for around 80 per cent of primary exclusions. Project workers work with schools to reduce the incidence of exclusions, focusing on early intervention, engagement in the curriculum, working with parents and linking with other agencies. There has been considerable success in the target schools; none of them have permanently excluded any pupils during the period of the project. As yet, there has been little systematic evaluation or dissemination of the project.

114. In the School Survey, overall LEA support for improving behaviour was rated higher than the average for other LEAs, but secondary schools rated it lower than this. Schools rated the appropriateness of the LEA's practice in the use of exclusion significantly higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample. Visits to schools confirmed that LEA support for improving behaviour, including provision of in-service training, is generally effective, although in some schools, the LEA's work has had little impact on behaviour and exclusions and the support staff have not provided effective behaviour modification models for pupils at Stages 4 and 5 of the SEN Code of Practice. The "hard-to-place" panels work well and the range of projects and policies relating to disaffected pupils are well regarded and generally successful.

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

115. *Five of the seven key management support services are delivered by WES: the exceptions being Property Services and the Governors' Support Service. WES provides a range of support services to schools that are fully delegated, have a strong customer focus, and compete with other suppliers. These services are highly regarded by schools and most of them are very well managed. Each service works closely with others in the unit and beyond, sharing information and offering proactive support to schools.*

Support and training for governors

116. *Support and training for governors was provided by a single unit within WES up to Autumn 1998. Since then, two units have provided support - the Governors' Support Service, which is centrally funded, and is located in the Schools' Team; and the Governor Training Unit, which is a traded service within WES. These services have clear aims, are well managed, their work is well planned and resources are targeted effectively in supporting and advising governing bodies, and improving their ability to manage their schools. Support is effectively co-ordinated to take the necessary action to intervene in, and support, those governing bodies experiencing difficulties. A central training programme offers a good range of courses, and take up is very high. An interesting feature is that, this year, the unit is employing part-time consultants to assist on the training programme, and is developing a larger core group of consultants in order to offer a more flexible, cost-effective staffing model.*

Personnel Service

117. Warwickshire's **Personnel Service** has achieved a high level of performance, which justifies its very good reputation with schools. Its guidance on personnel management and support for staff appointments were rated higher than the average of other LEAs in the School Survey. Buy-back of its standard subscription service in 1998/99 was 100 per cent, with intensive support targeted on schools with serious weaknesses. Schools particularly appreciated the service for its speed of response, its comprehensive set of model policies and for consistency in getting its advice right 'first time'. A positive aspect of its way of working is the importance placed on ensuring feedback received from schools on LEA support is disseminated appropriately.

Financial Services

118. Financial Services to schools are generally of a high standard, a view strongly supported by the schools visited and by the results of the School Survey. Clear and timely information on school budgets has been provided and the quality of financial advice, both written and oral, has been exemplary. Visits to schools operating local bank accounts and using SIMS LRM indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the arrangements in place. Visits to other schools which were using paper-based systems, while also approving the overall quality of service, did suggest room for improvement with the speed with which payments are made.

Bursarial support, a key activity, is well regarded by the schools visited. This was also true of Payroll, although this will be tested more fully when delegation to schools is in place. A particular strength of this service's practice is the rigour of its performance monitoring. This includes participation in the County's Quality Improvement Scheme, which enables performance benchmarking through peer group evaluation against agreed performance indicators.

Property Services

119. Property Services is a central department of the County Council that is providing a very effective service to schools both for structural repair and maintenance and for tenants' maintenance, where this is bought in. Annual property condition surveys are carried out to determine priorities for capital spending, making the Department well placed to respond to the requirements of the Asset Management Plan, with suitability a priority for future action. Schools rated the LEA's advice and support on school accommodation and on the condition of school buildings higher than the average of other LEAs in the School Survey. Visits to schools also elicited positive accounts of the service, with particular credit given to the work of building surveyors.

120. The priority allocated to energy conservation is appropriate and welcomed by schools. Participation in survey work with 16 other LEAs to benchmark costs of maintenance in secondary schools shows that Warwickshire's maintenance backlog is below the average of LEAs in the sample. Other costs such as energy, catering, rates and water expenditure were also below average, while mechanical maintenance was above the average. Electronic links with schools enable the monitoring of energy efficiency. Health and safety, security, and risk management inspections delivered by WES, also given a high priority by the LEA, are well regarded by schools.

Information Services

121. Training and support for administrative ICT is of an acceptable standard and appreciated by schools, which rated the service higher than the average of other LEAs in the School Survey. Training is sufficiently broad, generally of a good standard and suitably differentiated. Extensive use is made of e-mail, and information exchange is also facilitated by the use of disks. The LEA is moving ahead with plans to introduce an Internet mail service between schools and the Education Department. Support for administrative systems is good and extra help given to new staff has been particularly welcome. However, the LEA does not have a written strategy for ICT development and, as a consequence, opportunities to coordinate and to link initiatives are not optimised. An acceptable level of information about ICT developments is shared with schools, but the LEA's approach results in a variety of software and hardware used by schools. It also makes it more difficult for the LEA to demonstrate leadership and to take a proactive stance.

SECTION 5~ LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS, QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT

IMPROVEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS VISITED

122. The inspection team made judgements in 23 schools about improvements since the last OFSTED inspection and the effectiveness of the LEA's contribution: 15 nursery and primary schools; six secondary schools; and two special schools. Sixteen schools had made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the OFSTED inspection and the remaining seven had made sound overall progress. In all schools, the LEA's overall contribution to improvement had been effective crucially, where it was most needed it had been most effective. The LEA has been successful in matching the degree of support and intervention to the needs of schools.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING LITERACY

123. *The LEA has developed an effective structure for support and has set challenging literacy targets. It has made a significant contribution to improvements in the quality of provision and to improved standards in primary schools. The initial training for the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was well focused and subsequent support from the link inspectors has been helpful. Literacy lessons have been monitored by the LEA in all schools. Schools receiving intensive support from the LEA team are gaining much from the additional help. English staff in secondary schools are well informed about the NLS but few planned changes to the Key Stage 3 curriculum have yet resulted.*

124. Standards of literacy, as indicated by national test results for 7, 11, and 14 year-olds, are broadly in line with national averages and the averages for statistical neighbours. The proportion of pupils gaining level 4+ in English at the end of Key Stage 2 was 66.1 per cent in 1998. The Key Stage 2 target of 86 per cent for 2002 is thus suitably challenging, but the 1 per cent rise from 1997 to 1998 was not in line with the interim suggested targets to enable schools to meet the 2002 targets.

125. The improvement in standards of literacy is a priority in the EDP. The LEA's literacy strategy is to work through link inspectors with all schools to implement a policy of support and intervention. Monitoring of progress by inspectors is a key element and literacy lessons in all schools have been observed as part of a countywide survey. The Literacy Team, managed by the English inspector, currently spends most of its time in 16 schools receiving intensive support and 23 receiving a reduced, "moderate" form of this. Further schools have been identified for "moderate" support in 1999/2000, based on a thorough analysis of attainment, including their performance within their SEN "families".

126. Nine schools were visited with literacy as a specific focus and additional evidence was gathered in a further nine. Over two thirds of all these schools had made improvements in the quality of their literacy provision and in standards since their last OFSTED inspection; the LEA's contribution had been influential in all of them. As part of HMI's national monitoring of the implementation of the NLS, additional evidence from lesson observations in other schools suggests broadly satisfactory teaching with the need for improvement in some schools in whole-class sentence and word-level work and in the use of phonetics

127. Improvement in primary schools was mainly due to the introduction of the literacy hour, but schools had also made advances in monitoring their own work and tracking pupils' progress. The monitoring of lessons by literacy co-ordinators varied. In about half, this was an established part of the school's self-evaluation and led to the identification of strengths and weaknesses. Most primary schools undertook reviews of pupils' work in order to gain a view of different aspects of their attainment. Most of the secondary schools were in the process of preparing a literacy policy.

128. Primary schools were positive about the support of the LEA. The initial INSET on the literacy strategy had been well-tailored to the schools' needs and had enthused staff attending. The monitoring carried out by the link inspectors was also generally valued, and, in most cases, had led to helpful and constructive feedback. The additional help for schools receiving intensive support has been of great value. For example, in one school the literacy adviser worked with the co-ordinator to plan independent group work in detail for each year group. Together with the English inspector, the literacy adviser observed all class teachers and this led to the clear identification of areas for improvement.

129. Secondary heads of English are very well supported by the Authority. Their termly meetings with the English inspector are an effective and highly valued source of information and ideas. In a school where the English inspector had reviewed the work of the department, this had led to clear and helpful feedback. Teachers were well informed about how the NLS was working in the County, although there was some variation in the extent to which they had observed the literacy hour in action at first hand in feeder primary schools. They were thus in varying states of readiness to adapt their approach to literacy in Year 7. A conference is planned by the LEA to address this issue during the summer term.

130. The LEA is making a telling contribution to improvements in literacy. Its strategy of working through link inspectors is sound and ensures support where it is needed, not just for those in the bottom ten per cent of attainment. Initial training for the NLS has been well targeted and included many practical examples. Where intensive support is given to schools, this enables co-ordinators to plan in more detail and raises teachers' expectation of pupils. English staff in secondary schools receive effective support. They are well informed about the literacy strategy, but needed earlier support in considering the implications of changes in the primary schools for their own work in Key Stage 3. Lesson monitoring by link inspectors and literacy advisers is well established in both primary and secondary schools and has contributed to improvements in provision. "Building Bridges" projects are successfully promoting joint activities across Years 6 and 7.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING NUMERACY

131. *The Lea has been broadly effective in supporting numeracy, and attainment targets are appropriately challenging. There is a sound support strategy for the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) and primary schools are well advanced in their preparations. This, and other developments, were partly due to the successful Year of Mathematics initiative. Secondary schools value the support for mathematics and there have been a number of successful projects to promote joint work between schools across Years 5, 6 and 7. Monitoring has had a mostly positive impact.*

132. The 1998 national test results indicate that standards in numeracy are in line with those nationally and those for statistical neighbours. The proportion of pupils gaining level 4+ in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1998 was 60.4 per cent, a net rise of 12.5 per cent over three years, compared with 13.6 per cent nationally. The Key Stage 2 target of 77 per cent at level 4+ for 2002 thus represents an appropriate level of challenge.

133. Improvement in the standards of numeracy is a priority in the EDP. Preparations for the LEA's numeracy strategy are on schedule. The mathematics inspector is the Numeracy Strategy Manager and there are three numeracy consultants; a numeracy teacher adviser within EDS will support the work of the project. The lowest achieving schools will be supported in three cohorts of between 33 and 45 schools. The choice of these schools appropriately relies, in part, on a consideration of attainment in relation to similar schools.

134. Eight schools were visited with numeracy as a specific focus and additional evidence was gathered in a further eight. Five of the eight focus schools had made improvements in standards and in the quality of their provision for numeracy since their last OFSTED inspection; the remainder had maintained sound standards. The LEA's contribution had been influential in all of these.

135. Improvement in primary schools was due to a number of factors, but preparation for the NNS was significant in all of them. In particular, more emphasis was now placed on the use of mental mathematics in lessons and teachers' planning for group work had improved. Schools were thus well placed to implement the national strategy from September. Reasons for improvements in the secondary schools were more diverse, but included increased use of mental mathematics and ICT. The Year of Mathematics initiative in the County had enriched the range of classroom activity and improved the use of investigations in both primary and secondary schools.

136. Schools were generally positive about the work of the LEA in supporting numeracy and mathematics. Attendance at LEA INSET courses varied from school to school, but these were mostly thought to be helpful. Secondary heads of mathematics found their termly meetings with the specialist inspector and their annual conference useful. There were mixed views about the initial training for the NNS for primary schools from those who had attended by this stage; there was some criticism that the course content was not adjusted for those schools who were already well ahead in their planning. Several schools, both primary and secondary, acknowledged the helpfulness of the Year of Mathematics in disseminating ideas and broadening teaching styles.

137. LEA support for numeracy has been broadly effective. The LEA's numeracy strategy has been discussed with secondary heads of department, but some have, so far, made little progress in the development of a numeracy policy. Links with feeder primary schools vary in their effectiveness. In contrast, the "Building Bridges" projects have been successful in promoting joint activities across Years 6 and 7. Monitoring has had a mostly positive impact. For example, paired lesson observation with the head of department in one secondary school helped to raise previously unidentified issues and, in a primary school, monitoring by inspectors made an important contribution to improving the quality of teaching. In one secondary school, however, monitoring and feedback did not meet the school's continuing and demanding needs. The Year of Mathematics was very successful in raising the profile of the subject across phases and has left a good legacy, including more mental mathematics, a wider range of investigations and problem-solving and, in one secondary school visited, an imaginative town trail for Year 7 pupils.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

138. *LEA support to schools causing concern is substantial and effective. Systematic procedures are in place to identify weaknesses, support improvement and review progress in these schools. Co-ordination of the required support is good.*

139. Substantial amounts of good quality and effective support and advice are provided to schools with weaknesses, not only by the Schools' Team, but by a range of other LEA services. Six LEA maintained schools and one PRU in Warwickshire have been judged by OFSTED to require special measures since 1996: one school no longer requires special measures. In addition, two other schools and one PRU have been identified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses; neither school is in this category any longer. Elected members have established a Special Measures Panel. This ensures that members and senior officers systematically monitor schools with weaknesses and evaluate progress resulting from LEA support. The panel meets twice a year and receives progress reports from the County Education Officer and the Chief Inspector in person on any school in special measures, identified as having serious weaknesses and any school about which the LEA has serious concerns or which has recently received a high level of additional support. Reports are confidential. The headteacher and chair of governors are sent a copy of a report on their school to check for factual accuracy.

140. Systematic procedures are in place to identify, support improvement and review progress in schools causing concern. Building on work begun in 1996, the LEA has produced a clear and detailed policy document: "LEA Focused Support and Intervention for Schools Causing Concern". This has been discussed widely with teachers' panels, headteachers and the Diocesan authorities; on school visits, most headteachers expressed full approval of this intervention strategy. The policy clearly states the role of the Schools' Team in supporting improvement in these schools as well as clear criteria for allocating schools to one of five categories which trigger a range of support in inverse proportion to success. In addition to evidence of unsatisfactory standards in pupils' attainments, other appropriate factors bearing on the identification of schools causing concern are clearly set out.

141. The Schools' Team effectively co-ordinates a broad range of support to advise and help schools with weaknesses to improve, for example:- subject advice; monitoring of teaching and pupils' work; financial support; arranging visits to other schools; input from, for example, the Schools Library Service; appointments of extra governors; support on competency procedures; on-going programme of training; support to improve behaviour; and targeted advice and support for headteachers and senior managers. Schools are supported to good effect and progress is systematically monitored by the Schools' Team. There are close links with the Diocesan authorities regarding such support to aided or controlled schools. In addition to praising the overall level and quality of LEA support, some headteachers of these schools reported that they and their staff had received outstanding personal support from, not only within the Schools' Team, but from personnel in a number of other teams. In the School Survey schools rated the quality of LEA support for schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses higher than the average for LEAs. The clarity of its intervention strategy when things go wrong and the speed of response to their concerns were rated significantly higher. Written feedback, on the School Survey, from secondary schools was particularly positive in this respect.

142. A number of schools identified as having serious weaknesses or a number of weaknesses were visited. They have all received an appropriate level of well-targeted support from the LEA, and in each case this support has been effective in improving the school; in all but one, it has been a significant factor in that improvement.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

143. *The LEA provides good support to schools to improve the quality of teaching. There is a commendably consistent quality of effective support from the Schools' Team and EDS in particular. The emphasis on classroom observations has helped senior and middle managers to identify strengths and address weaknesses in the teaching in their schools.*

144. Data from OFSTED inspections about the quality of teaching in Warwickshire primary schools show it to be broadly in line with that in schools in statistical neighbours and that found nationally. LEA support for improving the quality of teaching was a focus on 23 school visits. In 17 schools, the overall quality of teaching and related aspects was judged by HMI to be good or better, and sound in the remaining six schools. Improvements have been made in 14 schools and quality has been maintained in the remaining nine. In all those schools where teaching has improved, the contribution of the LEA has been particularly effective and well matched to schools' needs, especially so in those schools where teaching had previously been judged unsatisfactory. There is a consistent quality of effective support from the LEA; not only, but particularly, from the Schools' Team and EDS.

145. In the School Survey, schools rated the LEA's support for teaching methods, classroom management, curriculum planning and the teaching of religious education (RE) and other subjects significantly higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample. Support for the induction of newly qualified teachers was rated higher than the average. There are many strengths in the LEA's support for improving the

quality of teaching. The cornerstone of this is the high quality of well-targeted and effective input from inspectors, and the way they work systematically with schools and link closely with teacher advisers in EDS. Most schools have benefited from work trawls, pupil pursuits and lesson observations followed by detailed feedback, which was evaluative and helped schools to improve teaching. Paired observations with headteachers or subject co-ordinators have frequently been undertaken and have helped to embed such activities in the culture of many schools. These have led directly to improved continuity and progression in the teaching, better assessment practices, clearer objectives and more appropriate teaching strategies. In one school, the SMT will now receive annual reviews from subject co-ordinators based partly on lesson observations. In other schools, lesson observations still remain a more intermittent occurrence. Where it has worked well it has led to shared understanding of quality, strengths and weaknesses in the teaching.

146. Schools have been well supported, where appropriate, in tackling any key issues arising from OFSTED inspections which related to aspects of teaching. For example, inspectors and teacher advisers have worked alongside teachers, provided a series of demonstration lessons, recommended good practice elsewhere and directed teachers to relevant training. The LEA has sufficient inspectors and teacher advisers to cover all curriculum areas, and so, as well as support for the core subjects, there was much evidence of effective support for religious education and other subjects, for example: better planned and more interesting lessons with improved progression in physical education resulting from training on Top Play or Top Sport; an improved Key Stage 4 RE course and more confident, knowledgeable and better planned teaching of RE in a primary school; improved provision and more confident teaching in art following attendance at courses and a school-based Arts Week supported by the LEA; more challenging drama teaching resulting from effective use of demonstration lessons and a drama week.

147. Inspectors and teacher advisers hold termly (for secondary schools) or twice yearly (for primary schools) subject and aspect meetings for co-ordinators. These were generally well regarded by schools and regularly attended because of their quality. Well regarded, school-based in-service has been bought in by schools, and a number of "partnership reviews" are carried out by inspectors each year which focus in depth on subjects and the quality of the teaching. Reports from these reviews are detailed, rigorous and evaluative, giving clear suggestions to secure improvement.

148. Support for, and the induction of, newly qualified teachers (NQTs) is generally well received. They have received constructive feedback following observations by inspectors and have generally found the induction courses helpful. This year's courses are reported to have improved much on previous years': they are considered to be more relevant, better timed and the distribution of information to schools enables better planning to take place.

149. Schools receive much effective input from inspectors, EDS and Personnel in addressing weak teaching. Support for continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers experiencing difficulties is commissioned from EDS by the Schools' Team through an annual service level agreement. Agreed guidelines for identifying

and supporting weak teachers and those experiencing difficulties are followed and outcomes are evaluated twice a year by the CPD inspector and the manager of the EDS. Many instances were encountered on school visits where teachers experiencing difficulties had been successfully supported and their practice improved or where, when appropriate, headteachers and governors had been effectively supported by the inspectors and Personnel Service in carrying through competency proceedings. Some headteachers described the LEA support in these circumstances as “exemplary”, “pivotal”, “professional”, “tactful” and “sensitive”.

SUPPORT FOR THE USE OF PERFORMANCE DATA AND TARGET-SETTING

150. *The LEA provides an appropriate level of support and this has led to improvements in schools’ use of data. Last year, comparative data to support target setting was provided in paper form; this was followed by the distribution of a CDROM, but currently schools make variable use of this. Value-added data is currently only available for sixth forms. Detailed guidance and effective training on target setting has been provided to schools, and this has built successfully on pilot work by schools and the dissemination of good practice. Link inspectors have generally supported senior management in schools well in target setting and their use of performance data, but more now needs to be done for target setting to influence teaching and learning.*

151. The LEA recently provided schools with a CD-ROM containing a wide range of performance data, and this year it will usefully include LEA policies. This is good practice. To ensure that data has been available when required, the timetable for data collection and information provision has, for three years, been subject to an ‘Information Agreement’ between schools and the LEA. This is also good practice. Data is provided for the whole school as well as by subject, gender and other parameters. Accompanying software allows each school to interpret its performance against County and national averages, in the context of all schools and similar schools. Some data for schools in the LEA is helpfully grouped by various “families”, based on different measures, such as the proportion of pupils with SEN. Support in the use of the disk has been available at a series of “Learning Cafes”. Clear written guidance includes examples of possible uses of the data. Value-added data is currently only available for sixth forms, but the LEA is developing a pupil database so that this work can be developed in Key Stages 1 to 4.

152. Schools visited had mixed views about the quality of data and its provision on CD-ROM. About a quarter had experienced continuing technical problems in its use. Where there were no difficulties, or where problems had been overcome, schools generally made some use of the data available on the disk and often additional data of their own. For secondary schools, the LEA’s comparative data for the County is less useful than for the primary schools because the number of schools in any one family grouping is small. For most schools, however, the data provided useful background information, and they valued the clarity of the written guidance and INSET.

153. Prior to the national initiative, a number of schools had already been setting targets for pupil performance. In response to the national initiative on target setting a project group was established. In summer 1998, following wide consultation, detailed and high quality guidance was distributed. This was anchored on a clear set of principles — ‘Warwickshire Principles for Target Setting’ — which were also consulted upon and agreed with schools. Work on target setting has been well supported by training, conferences, newsletters and good practice documents, and the LEA’s approach has been informed by a pilot project involving 18 primary and three secondary schools. Nearly all schools set targets beyond those required statutorily, for example: for every pupil in every year group in the core subjects; and, in addition, targets covering other academic attainment and broader achievement. Headteachers discussed draft statutory targets in the autumn term with their link inspector and challenging targets have been set. Some schools, however, would benefit further from more guidance on setting targets for individual pupils and relating this to teaching and learning.

154. The use of performance data for target setting was at least satisfactory in all but one of the 25 schools visited and was good or very good in 16 of these. Twenty had made improvements in their use of data for target setting since their last OFSTED inspection. Primary schools set targets for individual pupils and many used QCA tests to gain a more detailed picture of their progress through Key Stage 2. Only a few, however, were involving pupils or their parents sufficiently in target setting. Most primary schools had started to use the LEA’s baseline assessment information, available for the first time this year. Secondary schools made good use of data from national tests and other standardised tests, as well as their own knowledge of pupils’ performance and potential. Some used external value-added schemes, but it was rare for heads of department to make significant use of performance data and there were few signs of target setting having an influence on teaching and learning.

155. LEA support had made some impact in all but three of the schools visited; it was judged to have been significant in four. In three of the secondary schools, the LEA activity had acted as a catalyst for further development, the schools having taken their use of data much further. Link inspectors had influenced developments in about half of the schools visited. They had discussed possible methodologies and helped schools to set realistic and challenging targets. The level of support for target setting was mostly well judged; some schools needed little external challenge. Support was less effective in the special schools. To address this, a conference for headteachers of special schools has already taken place; support groups, pilot groups and on-going support is being provided; and parents are also becoming increasingly involved in the process.

156. The LEA has provided an appropriate level of support which shows signs of improving further. The provision of data, together with clear guidance and INSET, as well as the baseline assessment scheme and instruments for recording pupils’ progress in primary schools, have all been helpful to schools, even though the level of their use varies. The lack of value-added data for the County, below the sixth form, is a gap that is already being addressed. The distribution of performance data on CD-ROM is well conceived, but schools experiencing technical problems need

further encouragement to attend help sessions. Further support is also needed for senior staff who have not yet been able to harness the potential of the data available, and for heads of departments in secondary schools to help consider the implications of target setting for developing teaching and learning.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOLS

Support for improving the management of schools

157. *The LEA support for headteachers and senior managers is extensive, well targeted, effective and, appropriately, in inverse proportion to success. It provides good value for money.*

158. Support for improving the management of schools was a focus on 22 school visits. The quality of management was judged to be at least satisfactory in all schools, compared to 19 at the time of their last OFSTED inspection: in seven schools the quality of management had improved. In two schools it had improved significantly. The degree of support provided by the LEA was appropriate and effective in all but one school: it was particularly well targeted in 12. In the School Survey, support to headteachers and senior management was rated significantly higher than the average for LEAs and received many positive comments. It was the second most highly rated type of support by secondary schools.

159. The Schools' Team is largely responsible for providing advice and support to school management, but this is done in close co-operation with other services in the Education Department, such as EDS, Finance, Personnel and the Governor Training Unit, as well as external agencies such as the Diocesan authorities, when appropriate. Support for leadership and management is one of the eight priorities in the EDP.

160. Regular support for headteachers, in particular, is provided by their link inspector and area education officer. The amount of contact and support varies according to need, and is appropriate, well regarded and well matched in almost all the schools visited. It had been of crucial importance in those schools in most need, for example, those identified as requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses. In several schools, it was evident that advice and support had been maintained until issues had been resolved; this sustained commitment was important to headteachers, and valued by them.

161. Almost all headteachers and their senior managers were effectively supported in their role of monitoring the work of teachers and pupils through, for example:- organising work trawls; paired observations of lessons followed by discussion and evaluation; and helping schools to establish their own programme of lesson observation. Most headteachers valued the feedback from such observations and the evaluative comments written in the open note of visit. However, a few would welcome a more critical and evaluative edge to such visits.

162. Headteachers and others with management responsibilities in schools receive, and have access to, a wide range of advice, support and training, which, with only few exceptions, has been well targeted and effective in helping to improve management. The annual conferences for headteachers are relevant, well-focused on key issues and help to spread good practice. Annual conferences have recently been established separately for deputy headteachers and other senior managers in response to requests from schools. Meetings between the CEO and headteachers are valued for their openness and ability to have frank discussions on important issues. A Management Development Programme is constructed with the assistance of headteachers; this is good practice and the programme is well matched to needs as a result.

163. There is an induction programme for headteachers new to the job, existing headteachers new to Warwickshire and acting headteachers. Several schools were visited where the headteacher had been on this programme: almost all found it to be well organised and to have influenced their management of their schools. An induction pack of materials for new headteachers is issued by Personnel Services.

164. Aspiring headteachers are taking up the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in increasing numbers with support from the LEA. The LEA has maximised the budget to enable serving headteachers to participate in the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) — 13 in the first year and 26 in the current year. This was rated highly. New headteachers had been supported by the LEA on the Headteachers Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP), which had helped some to implement and sustain improvements in their own schools; the LEA had also provided useful follow-up.

165. The LEA has successfully promoted the career development of a number of headteachers through secondments. These have also helped develop those headteachers' knowledge and expertise and to spread good practice. The LEA has also facilitated industrial links for senior managers through short-term industrial secondments and training. Others have been seconded to headships of other schools and received a very high quality of support. The LEA is extremely pro-active in involving headteachers and other senior managers in, for example, customer focus groups, appointment panels and various planning groups, all of which have served to develop their expertise and breadth of experience. The appraisal of headteachers continues and is effectively co-ordinated by the LEA, although not all headteachers find it sufficiently rigorous and, hence, developmental.

166. Many headteachers have received good support and advice in managing teachers with difficulties or weak teachers. The LEA also takes effective action when weak management is identified. When this occurs, the Chief Inspector, link inspector and area education officer, in discussion with the chair of governors and headteacher, establish a strategy for improving management. When sufficient improvement has not been forthcoming in a reasonable period, the LEA has not shirked tackling the issue decisively.

Support for post-inspection action planning and school development planning

167. *The LEA provides support to schools, much of which is effective, in action planning following an OFSTED inspection, and in school development planning. However, the implementation of plans are not always systematically monitored and success criteria in plans are frequently imprecise and unmeasurable.*

168. In the School Survey, LEA support for school self-evaluation, school development planning and action planning following an OFSTED inspection was rated significantly higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample. In all but two of the schools visited, LEA support to help schools plan improvements and develop strategies has been effective and very effective in a quarter. As a consequence, no plan where the LEA has made an input is unsatisfactory: just under half are good and the same proportion satisfactory.

169. The Schools' Team keeps careful records of schools' plans and monitoring of the quality of plans is good. Although link inspectors discuss progress on the plan with headteachers, and sometimes subject co-ordinators, their implementation is not always systematically monitored and, therefore, less helpful to the school in securing improvements. In addition, a common weakness with school plans, which otherwise are at least satisfactory, relates to imprecise and unquantifiable success criteria. It is in these two areas where the LEA could support schools better and make a good overall quality of support for planning very good.

Support for governors

170. *The LEA provides effective and well-regarded advice, support and training to governors. Consultation and communication between governors and the LEA are good. Importantly, support has been particularly well targeted on those schools where governing bodies most needed help and represents good value for money.*

171. Support to governors was a focus in 21 schools visited. Twenty governing bodies were judged to be making at least a satisfactory contribution to the management of their schools, compared to 15 at the time of their most recent OFSTED inspection: nine showed signs of improvement. The degree of support provided by the LEA was at least satisfactory in all schools: it was better than this in nine. Crucially, it was generally best in those schools where governors most needed support.

172. In the School Survey, the provision of information and advice to governing bodies was rated higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample and schools feedback very positive written comments. Support to schools on the appointment of headteachers and deputy headteachers; the provision of information to schools on legislation and other national developments; and the speed of response by the LEA to schools' concerns were all rated significantly higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample. LEA support for appointments to governing bodies and advice on the constitution of governing bodies were also rated overall higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample, but lower than this by secondary schools.

173. There is a good take-up of courses by governors, and many governing courses to be good, and almost all governing bodies found some of them valuable and were having an impact back in their schools. In-house training has been particularly well matched to the needs of individual governing bodies and was seen to lead to, for example; more effective structures and working practices; better use of data and improved skills in setting targets; and more effective monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school, sometimes through better planned observation of lessons by governors. A few governing bodies had bought in the package 'Development Needs Analysis', which had led to a detailed report, action on which was effectively followed up by the Governor Training Manager. The series of courses for new governors are highly regarded, providing good value for money and an effective induction for new governors.

174. Consultation and communication between governors and the LEA are good. Informative and well-organised meetings - Governors' Forum and patch meetings - occur throughout the year. Governors feel that they have opportunities to respond to debates, and that their views are valued by the LEA. The newsletter is well produced and a valuable source of information, updates and summaries of detailed documents. It is much used by some chairmen to brief their governors and set agenda items for meetings. The Governors' Support Service is readily accessible by phone and responds promptly and constructively to requests for advice or information.

175. Governing bodies are also well supported by other services in WES, such as Personnel, Finance and Premises. Several have had expert and effective support and advice from Personnel on competency issues, and on the appointment of a headteacher or deputy headteacher. Good advice has been provided by Finance to many governing bodies on monitoring budgets, providing costings and improving medium-term planning. A few governing bodies have received welcome advice on managing budget difficulties. About half the schools had received good support and advice from Premises relating to health and safety issues, dealings with outside contractors, transfers to new sites, extensions and improving school buildings.

176. Inspectors came across noteworthy examples of effective use by governing bodies of LEA manuals on governance; model policies on, for example, health and safety, personnel and behaviour; and advice on setting up appraisal systems for teachers. When it was especially necessary, the LEA has shown tact, diplomacy and tenacity in working with governing bodies. The LEA knows its governing bodies well, is appropriately proactive, and provides support which is well matched to schools' needs and good value for money.

APPENDIX I CONTEXT OF THE LEA

(a) Characteristics of the pupil population

Indicator	Date	Source	LEA	National
1. Number of pupils in LEA area of 1997 compulsory school age	1998	DfEE Form 7	70700	
2. Percentage of pupils entitled to 1997 DEE free school meals				
i. primary	1997	DfEE Form 7	12.7	22.8
ii. secondary	1997	DfEE Form 7	9.0	18.2
3. Percentage of				
(i) adults with Higher Educational qualifications	1997	ONS Census of population	14.6	13.5
(ii) children living in households in Social Classes 1 and 2			35.5	31.0
4. Ethnic Minorities in population aged 5-15. Percentage of ethnicgroup:	1991	ONS Census of population		
Asian			0.2	0.5
Bangladesh			0.0	0.8
Black African			0.1	0.6
Black Caribbean			0.3	1.1
Black Other			0.4	0.8
Chinese			0.2	0.4
Indian			3.6	2.7
Other			0.6	1.1
Pakistani			0.2	2.1
White			94.4	89.9
5. Percentage of pupils:				
(i) with a statement of SEN	1997	DfEE Form 7		
primary			2.2	2.6
secondary			3.6	3.9
(ii) attending special school	1997	DfEE Form 7		
primary			1.2	1.1
secondary			2.2	1.6
6. Participation in education:				
(i) % 3- and 4- year olds on the roll of a maintained school	1997	LEA	66.5	56
(ii) % pupils aged 16 remaining in full time education.	1998	LEA	68.4	69.3 (1997)
(iii) % pupils aged 16 staying on in the LEA's maintained school sixth forms	1998	LEA	32.2	34.4 (1997)

(b) Organisation of schools

Number of:	Number	County	GM	VA
Nursery schools	9	9	0	0
Nursery classes	30	30	0	0
Infant schools	37	36	1	0
Junior schools	31	30	1	0
All-through primary schools	132	127	5	3
Comprehensive schools (11-16 and 11-18)	20	16	4	0
Grammar/high schools (11-18)	17	13	4	2
Special schools	11	11	0	0
Pupil Referral Units	3	3	0	0

(c) Pupil/teacher ratio

	Year	LEA	National
All	1997	19.3	18.6
Nursery	1997	21.1	18.9
Primary	1997	24.5	23.4
Secondary	1997	17.4	16.7

Source: DfEE

(d) Class size

percentage of classes

Size of class	Year	LEA	National
31 or more KS1	1997	39.7	29.0
KS2	1997	46.8	37.9
36 or more KS2	1997	3.5	2.3
32 or more KS2	1997	3.8	3.5

(e) Surplus places

% Surplus	Year	LEA	National
Primary	1997	19.09	10.0
Secondary	1997	13.37	12.0

(f) Finance

Indicator	Source	Year	LEA	National
% expenditure in relation to standard spending assessment	CIPFA	1998/99	103.9	
Funding per pupil: £ per pupil				
Primary 0-4	CIPFA	1998/99	2188	1355
5-6			1105	1258
7-10			1094	1224
£ per pupil				
Secondary 11-13	CIPFA	1998/99	1488	1673
14-15			1991	2041
16+			2582	2527
Aggregated schools budget: £ per pupil				
Primary	CIPFA	1998/99	1517	1663
Secondary			2115	2276
Special			7110	7713
General schools budget: £ per pupil				
Primary	CIPFA	1998/99	2078	2273
Secondary			2739	2984
Special			10,865	12,201
Potential schools budget:				
Primary	CIPFA	1998/99	1738	1792
Secondary			2284	2389
Special			8029	8930
Capital expenditure: £ per pupil	CIPFA	1998/99	119	131

APPENDIX 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

PUPILS' ATTAINMENT

Attainment at age 7 (Key Stage I)

	Year	% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above					
		Teacher Assessment			Tasks/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1995	84.4	81.0	+3.3			
	1996	81.1	79.3	+1.8			
	1997	83.0	80.4	+2.6			
	1998	83.4	81.4	+2.0			
English (reading)	1995	81.2	79.1	+2.1	80.8	78.5	+2.3
	1996	81.3	78.6	+2.7	81.3	78.0	+3.3
	1997	83.0	80.1	+2.9	82.4	80.1	+2.3
	1998	82.8	80.8	+2.0	82.6	80.1	+2.5
English (writing)	1995	82.2	77.6	+4.6	85.8	80.4	+5.4
	1996	78.0	76.6	+1.4	82.3	79.7	+2.6
	1997	80.5	77.5	+3.0	82.8	80.4	+2.4
	1998	81.4	78.9	+2.4	83.0	81.4	+1.6
Mathematics	1995	80.9	78.4	+2.4	82.1	79.2	+2.9
	1996	83.7	82.2	+1.5	83.7	82.1	+1.6
	1997	85.3	84.2	+1.1	83.7	83.7	0
	1998	85.9	85.5	+0.4	84.3	84.8	-0.5
Science	1995	86.2	84.7	+1.6			
	1996	86.0	84.1	+1.9			
	1997	86.9	85.5	+1.4			
	1998	88.1	86.5	+1.6			

Source: DfEE

2. Attainment at age 11 (KEY STAGE 2)

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 4 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1995	57.1	56.8	+0.3	54.5	48.5	+6.0
	1996	61.6	60.1	+1.5	60.7	57.1	+3.6
	1997	62.9	63.4	-0.5	64.8	63.2	+1.6
	1998	67.8	65.3	+2.5	66.1	64.8	+1.3
Mathematics	1995	55.9	54.5	+1.4	47.9	44.9	+3.0
	1996	59.7	59.9	-0.2	55.3	53.9	+1.4
	1997	62.5	64.1	-1.6	61.2	62.0	-0.8
	1998	69.0	65.3	+3.8	60.4	58.5	+1.9
Science	1995	60.9	64.5	-3.6	75.3	70.2	+5.1
	1996	63.8	65.1	-1.3	64.9	62.0	+2.9
	1997	68.5	69.5	-1.0	67.8	68.8	-1.0
	1998	74.8	71.6	+3.2	72.9	69.3	+2.5

Source: DfEE

Attainment at age 14 (KEY STAGE 3)

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 5 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1995	65.9	63.9	+2.0	54.3	55.3	-1.0
	1996	61.2	60.3	+0.9	57.8	56.6	+1.2
	1997	61.5	60.2	+1.3	60.8	56.6	+4.2
	1998	64.0	62.5	+1.5	66.2	65.2	+1.0
Mathematics	1995	64.0	62.4	+1.6	61.0	58.0	+3.0
	1996	66.7	61.5	+5.2	63.1	56.7	+6.4
	1997	66.2	64.0	+2.2	65.5	60.7	+4.8
	1998	68.2	63.9	+4.3	65.0	59.9	+5.0
Science	1995	60.7	60.6	+0.1	57.4	56.4	+1.0
	1996	63.5	59.7	+3.8	62.7	56.4	+6.3
	1997	59.5	62.2	-2.7	65.5	60.8	+4.7
	1998	60.2	62.4	-2.2	59.5	56.5	+3.0

Source: DfEE

Attainment at age 16 GCSE results in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
1 A*-G	1994	96.1	93.7	+2.4
	1995	95.9	93.5	+2.4
	1996	95.5	93.9	+1.6
	1997	95.5	94.0	+1.5
	1998	96.5	95.2	+1.3
5 A*-C	1994	43.7	40.7	+3.0
	1995	45.2	41.2	+4.0
	1996	44.8	42.6	+2.2
	1997	45.5	43.3	+2.2
	1998	47.0	44.7	+2.4
5 A*-G	1994	92.0	87.0	+5.0
	1995	92.1	87.5	+4.6
	1996	90.5	88.1	+2.4
	1997	91.0	88.5	+2.5
	1998	92.6	89.8	+2.8
Average point score per pupil	1994	35.3	33.5	+1.8
	1995	35.8	34.6	+1.2
	1996	35.8	35.0	+0.8
	1997	36.1	35.6	+0.5
	1998	37.9	36.8	+1.1

Pupils aged 15 at the beginning of the school year and on the roll in January of that year

Source: DfEE

Attainment at age 18: A level results and GNVQ results in maintained schools

Average point score per pupil

Number entered	Year	LEA	National	Difference
2 or more	1994	16.4	15.1	+1.3
	1995	17.6	15.9	+1.6
	1996	16.5	16.8	-0.3
	1997	17.2	17.1	+0.1
	1998	18.1	17.6	+0.5
Less than 2	1994	3.1	2.7	+0.4
	1995	3.1	2.7	+0.3
	1996	3.1	2.7	+0.5
	1997	2.7	2.7	0.0
	1998	2.5	2.8	-0.3
Advanced GNVQ	1998	13.1	10.9	+2.2

Source: DfEE

Vocational qualifications of 16 year olds in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries	1994	97.6	87.9	+9.7
	1995	96.7	85.3	+11.4
	1996	66.7	79.2	-12.4
	1997	87.0	80.1	+7.1
	1998	68.3	77.3	-9.0

Source: DfEE

Vocational qualifications of 16 to 18 year olds in maintained schools

Percentage of students

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries	1994	96.1	84.8	+11.3
	1995	100.00	80.2	+19.8
Pass entries (Advanced)	1996	85.6	79.3	+6.2
	1997	83.1	75.4	+7.7
Pass entries (BTEC)	1998	100.00	82.7	+17.3
Pass entries (Intermediate)	1996	63.4	69.1	-5.7
	1997	62.3	68.9	-6.7
	1998	93.0	72.5	+20.5

Source: DfEE

The percentage of students who were in the final year of a course leading to approved vocational qualifications and who achieved them on the basis of the work done in that year

Attendance

Percentage of pupil sessions	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Attendance in Primary schools	1995	94.1	93.6	+0.5
	1996	93.9	93.4	+0.5
	1997	94.5	93.9	+0.6
	1998	94.3	93.8	+0.5
Attendance in Secondary schools	1995	91.8	90.6	+1.2
	1996	91.3	90.5	+0.9
	1997	92.0	90.9	+1.1
	1998	91.7	91.0	+0.7

Source: DfEE

Exclusions

Permanent exclusions

Rate per 1000 pupils

	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Primary schools	1996	0.2	0.3	-0.1
	1997	0.3	0.4	-0.1
	1998	0.2	0.3	-0.1
Secondary schools	1996	2.3	2.9	-0.6
	1997	2.6	3.4	-0.7
	1998	2.9	3.3	-0.4

Source: DfEE

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