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IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF
WALSALL
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

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 Authorities*, which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and on discussion with Council members and officers and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views of aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 110 nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. The response rate was 83 per cent.
3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to two nursery, 11 primary, eight secondary and two special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4. Walsall Council serves a diverse area that includes neighbourhoods in which disadvantage is severe. The diversity of the area is reflected in the nature and performance of the schools. Some perform very well and most are improving, but the standards achieved overall remain too low for pupils of compulsory school age, and particularly so among pupils from some ethnic minority groups. The rate of staying-on in further education reflects the limited success which many pupils have at 16.

5. The LEA has been able to contribute little to improvement in school performance in recent years. For much of the 1990s, political instability, evidenced in successive administrations and culminating at one stage in the virtual paralysis of the decision-making process, has handicapped practical action on education. Constraints on Council finances have meant that, although spending on education remains above the level of government's standard spending assessment, the funding of schools relative to that level has reduced.

6. The climate is now a good deal more constructive, and there is a commitment to doing better by Walsall schools. However, while adequate administrative systems are now in place in most areas, in key respects progress has been too slow. The LEA remains well off the pace of developments required by government and evident elsewhere, and behind many of its schools in its capacity to plan and act purposefully.

7. The following functions are performed inadequately:-

- the planning of the education budget;
- the maintenance and improvement of school buildings;
- support for schools causing concern;
- support for school management;
- support for governing bodies;
- the provision of performance data and guidance on its use;
- aspects of support on special educational needs;
- the provision of education for pupils excluded from schools;
- advice on school attendance;
- support for behaviour at school;
- the monitoring and improvement of educational provision for children looked after by the Council;
- support for ethnic minority achievement.

8. Other functions covered in the inspection are adequately performed, with the following functions representing good features of the LEA's support for schools:

- support for early years provision;
- support on numeracy in primary schools;
- support on information and communication technology;
- the provision of music services.

9. The LEA has some strengths and some improvements have recently been put in place, but the list of its weaknesses is formidable. This LEA is not adequately discharging two general responsibilities:- to exercise its functions with a view to raising standards in schools, and to use resources efficiently.

10. There are three features of the LEA which cast doubt on its capacity to make the improvements needed at a sufficient pace.

11. First, the LEA has been slow to pick up, or even define, action on a number of fronts. Action has been hesitant even where needs have been clearly identified by the national agenda, for example, on the restructuring of inspection and curriculum services, and on provision for special educational needs.

12. Second, the management structure and approach adopted by the LEA do not produce either clear strategic direction or adequate operational control. The two-level leadership of the service is confused and the support to schools provided by the plethora of separate units is incoherent. The commitment to improving Walsall's education service is not being adequately shaped by overall planning or in the delivery of services. As a result, hard work and a high level of expertise in some services are being wasted. The lack of good habits in budget planning, service management and evaluation means that the LEA is ill-placed to cope with the Fair Funding regime and, more generally, with the demands that the considerable needs of many Walsall schools and pupils make for sophisticated co-ordinated working.

13. Third, the LEA has not shown itself adept enough to develop the new relations with schools which are at the centre of the government's Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations. Given the opportunity to put the sour legacy of earlier politics firmly behind it, the LEA has so far failed to translate an ambition to work more productively with schools into convincing practice. Schools in many cases lack information, encouragement and stimulus; they are not satisfied with many of the services they receive; nor are they persuaded that the LEA's consultation and communication with them are always grounded in vision and competence.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

14. The Borough of Walsall has much variety. It covers 40 square miles, one-third of which are rural and two-thirds urban, including areas marked by dense disadvantage. The national Index of Deprivation ranks Walsall as the 31st most deprived of English districts, with nine wards classed as deprived. Employment patterns have changed considerably in recent years, with the majority of employment now in small businesses.

15. The total pupil population is a little over 50,000. Some 17.8 per cent of pupils are of ethnic minority origin, compared with about ten per cent nationally. The largest minority groups are Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Eligibility for free school meals is broadly in line with the national averages.

16. Through its extensive provision for early years education, the LEA guarantees every three-year-old at least a part-time place. There are eight nursery schools, seven special schools, 100 primary schools (of which four are foundation), and 20 secondary schools (of which seven, including two grammar schools, are foundation). The popularity of schools, particularly secondary schools, varies widely, with some being heavily over-subscribed.

17. The proportion of primary pupils with statements of special educational need is in line with LEAs with similar socio-economic characteristics; in secondary schools, it is below that in similar LEAs, but in line with the national average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs (65 per cent) are taught in mainstream schools. Over 40 per cent of pupils in special schools are in two all-through schools for moderate learning difficulties.

18. Some 62 per cent of 16 year olds continued with education in 1998, compared with 74 per cent nationally. A higher proportion of leavers in Walsall (17 per cent) went into employment than nationally (8.2 per cent) or regionally (11.4 per cent), with nearly two-thirds of these going into employment without training. The rate of entry into higher education in 1998 was just over 70 per cent of the national average.

Performance

19. A detailed analysis of the performance of schools was supplied to the LEA in an OFSTED profile. It highlights these features of performance:

- attainment on entry to three-fifths of primary schools in the Borough is generally significantly below that found nationally;
- attainment generally and in the core subjects is below national expectations at all stages of compulsory education, with boys usually doing worse than girls;
- pupils of Pakistani and African-Caribbean origin achieve significantly lower results throughout school than the average for the LEA;
- attainment generally rose between 1995 and 1999 in most of the core subjects at Key Stages 1-3;

- there has been improvement in GCSE performance above the national trend, with the proportion of pupils achieving at least five higher level GCSE grades going from 31.8 per cent in 1995 to 36.1 in 1999;
- while there is an overall trend of improvement in attainment in Walsall schools, the differences between schools are wide;
- OFSTED inspections of primary schools confirm that the differences between them are greatest in relation to standards. The quality of provision, the climate, and the management and efficiency of schools are judged to be in line with the national picture and generally better than in similar LEAs;
- except in relation to school climate, secondary schools compare much less well with the national profile and with schools in similar LEAs. The proportion of schools which need much improvement overall is over twice the national figure. The biggest differences among secondary schools are in standards and, to a lesser extent, management and efficiency. Inspection judgements show the level of teachers' expectations and the quality of their methods to be well below the national average;
- provision for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools is judged worse than the national picture by OFSTED inspections, while in secondary schools it is broadly average;
- eleven schools have been placed in special measures since OFSTED inspections began in 1993: two have closed, two have made sufficient progress and no longer require special measures, and one has transferred to the serious weakness category. Currently, three primary, one secondary and two special schools are in special measures. Since September 1997, one secondary and nine primary schools have been identified by OFSTED inspections as having serious weaknesses. On the other hand, two schools, one infant and one special, have been accorded beacon status.
- attendance in primary schools has fluctuated in the last four years; in 1998 it was 92.4 per cent, well below the national figure. Attendance in secondary schools has improved gradually to 90.8 per cent, in line with the national figure, but four schools had attendance of less than 88 per cent in 1998. Rates of permanent exclusion are in line with those found nationally.

20. Taken together, these features of the context and school performance help to define the task facing the schools and the LEA. There is a trend of improvement in standards, and some schools are doing very well, but the trend is shallower than it needs to be and some schools and pupils are being left adrift. The task is at its clearest in the secondary phase. Here there is a gulf in popularity between schools, and aspects of the quality of teaching and school management are not good enough to accelerate progress and to ensure that high achievement at 16 is common.

Funding

21. The LEA has spent above the government's standard spending assessment (SSA) for education in recent years, but at a decreasing level, so that expenditure has converged with the SSA. The LEA was identified by the government as one of a small number of LEAs which failed to pass on the full education SSA increase in 1999/2000. The Council felt prevented from doing so by an unexpected decrease in its SSA for social services.

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000
Budget (£000s)	112,576	120,453	124,965
Education SSA (£000s)	108,890	118,205	124,648
Budget as % of SSA	103.3%	101.9%	100.2%

22. Within the overall education budget, allocation to the phases varies in relation to the SSA. The budget for the primary and secondary phases in 1999/2000 is at 95 per cent of the notional SSA for these phases, while the budget for the under-fives is at 127 per cent.

23. Although Walsall's Local Schools Budget is relatively low (£2,469 per pupil compared to the average for similar LEAs of £2,574), the LEA delegates a high percentage of the budget to schools – the highest of all metropolitan authorities in 1999/2000. Walsall has also had success in bidding for grant funding; for example, £610,000 has been won for its infant class size plan, and the Single Regeneration Budget is providing substantial extra funding in some schools. The LEA has provided matched funding to take up its full Standards Fund allocation in the current year.

24. Generally central expenditure per pupil is lower than in similar LEAs, particularly for special educational needs (at £96 per pupil compared to £134 per pupil for similar LEAs) and for provision for access to education (at £62 per pupil compared to £110).

Council Structure

25. Walsall Council has not yet produced an approach to the management of its education service which can successfully take on the challenges set.

26. For much of the 1990s there was no overall political control of the Council. During a period in which the Labour Party was the majority, a radical agenda was developed for Council organisation and priorities, based on community engagement and integrated service delivery. This did not translate into progressive action on education. Indeed, political management virtually disintegrated in the middle of the decade, with officers left to salvage what they could from an incomplete re-organisation. This reduced and disheartened Council staff and undermined belief in the Council among the schools and its partners. Throughout the decade financial reserves were at a dangerously low level and opportunities were not taken to replenish them at the appropriate time.

27. The Council has been administered by the Labour Party as the majority group since May 1998. The Council now has decision-making processes which are distinctly more constructive than they were, but it is still dealing with the heritage of its earlier politics and finds itself poorly placed to meet the present government's requirements and expectations in relation to education.

28. One part of the heritage of the 1994-1996 period is a two-level senior management structure based on service clusters, which for education means both a Corporate Director for Education and Leisure and a Chief Education Services Officer,

who is the statutory chief officer. This structure was designed to promote integrated working across the Council and it does something of that in relation to education's involvement with other services. However, its more pronounced effect is to handicap the planning of the education service itself. The tension between the two senior officer roles is much less creative than it is confusing. The distinction drawn between 'strategy' and 'operations' is differently understood within the system and does not work in practice, with neither strategy nor operations well served. Educational expertise and knowledge of the schools are poorly connected with overall Council management, including budget management.

29. The problem is reflected within the Education Services structure. The Education Services Management Team, which includes a service development officer and three service group co-ordinators, is responsible for planning. Service units, of which there are over 50, enjoy a high degree of operational autonomy, with the members of the planning group having an uncertain role in relation to them and not enough information about their work. Again, neither planning nor action are adequately managed across the piece, with a notable lack of cohesion among the service units, compounded in some cases by discordant salary structures. There are too many units operating within the same territory, and their management does not secure consistency and good connection among them. While there is good quality, both among the units and among individual staff, service provision overall is fragmented and rarely of constant value.

30. That is clearly the view of schools. The survey which was carried out for this inspection in June 1999 paints a gloomy picture, brightened in a few places. Overall, schools rated most LEA services as barely satisfactory or poor, with a few exceptions, some of which were rated as almost good. Of the 85 service functions on which views were sought, only 41 were judged satisfactory or better. Compared with the other LEAs surveyed at the same time, Walsall had the lowest rating on 36 functions. In general, secondary schools gave somewhat higher ratings than the primary schools.

31. Service units use a standard format for planning in a variety of ways and the attempt to connect their plans with LEA objectives has not met with much success. In too many cases the planning does not conform with basic principles. There is rarely a clear definition of the statutory responsibilities which services fulfil. The presentation of services to schools is generally poor. A booklet for schools gives descriptions but these do not properly specify the provision offered, although a few units have produced more detailed service agreements. Evaluation is also largely undeveloped. An annual review of plans is conducted and the outcomes reported to the Education Committee, but it is difficult to see what sense the Committee could make of them because of their disparate nature and the lack of evidence they employ. Aside from District Audit studies, there have been no formal reviews of the value provided by education services, which have not been touched by the Council's approach to Best Value, which is at an early stage.

32. The services provided to schools by the Council are, therefore, with some exceptions, ill prepared for the new relationships called for by the Fair Funding regime. While there is much commitment among individuals to helping Walsall schools, the services generally lack good habits of service definition, planning, presentation and costing. The frustrations of schools, including foundation schools with much experience of other providers, are understandable. The new education strategic plan includes a commitment that 'the LEA will provide high quality services that are customer-driven

and transparent' and that it 'will monitor and review service delivery to ensure that they [the services] will give value for money'. This commitment has yet to be realised.

33. Meanwhile, the Education Committee, whose remit and style are of a traditional kind, is not well placed to develop planning or oversee action. It meets frequently (18 times between September 1998 and July 1999) and receives many reports (326 in the same period), including reports on school improvement. Key elements of the agenda on which it has needed to take decisions have been swamped by the volume of business. Too many of the reports it receives give a fragmentary picture or do not focus on the options and major decisions which the Committee can pursue. The Committee, in line with Council convention, also spends much time on decisions about routine matters. A great deal of senior officer attention is taken up with servicing its meetings.

34. Neither the Council's management structure nor the Education Committee's working practices have, therefore, helped the education service to adapt to new requirements and new relationships with schools. Their deficiencies mean that the education service lacks clear leadership and direction. There is not an adequate statement of the role of the LEA; the approach to school improvement lacks decisiveness and coherence; and many services are not geared up for efficient delivery. In short, the LEA is well behind in pursuing developments now established elsewhere.

Education Development Plan

35. There have been some recent improvements. One of them is the Education Development Plan, which is an advance on the previous planning for school improvement. It has sound features, but it has significant deficiencies as well. Not enough positive action has yet been taken to pursue it and there are doubts, evidenced in this report, about the capacity of the LEA to deliver what it intends.

36. The plan, implemented from 1 April 1999, has been approved by the Secretary of State for three years. The approval is subject to the LEA providing evidence that schools have been supported to set challenging and realistic targets, and that activities are targeted more specifically to identified groups of schools.

37. The school improvement programme in the plan has a sound rationale with appropriate, although overlapping, priorities. The eight priorities are: literacy; numeracy; the improvement of standards at Key Stage 4; improving the quality of teaching; improving the provision for inclusive education; improving leadership and management; schools causing concern; and enhancing the role of ICT. There are, however, issues arising from OFSTED inspections, such as teaching at Key Stage 3, which are not addressed well enough. There is insufficient reference to meeting the needs of ethnic minority pupils; action on special educational needs is not well embedded; and targets for looked-after children are insufficiently supported. There is also little on post-16 education.

38. The quality of the action plans is variable; overall, they are only just adequate. Activities are rarely targeted specifically enough at groups of schools and pupils; they frequently have indistinct success criteria; few of them have timescales for the beginning and end of the work; and in some cases it is unclear how the different LEA

services will contribute. The allocation of resources is generally appropriate, but it would be better to fund some activities through delegation to schools.

39. In the light of the Council's interest in integrated working, the plan might have benefited from discussion across the Council – an exposure which it did not properly receive. Although there are some links specified with other major plans, not enough is being done to work across services in implementing the plan. The links with activities funded through Single Regeneration Budget programmes, for example, have not been made well enough, in advance or subsequently.

40. Despite limited consultation on the Education Development Plan, schools have generally welcomed it as providing much-needed direction. For an LEA with a defunct policy on the secular curriculum and little previous articulation of its stance on school improvement, the plan undoubtedly represents a step forward. There is, nevertheless, justified concern in schools about over-ambition and scepticism about the LEA's capacity to deliver the programme.

41. The concern is underlined by progress to date. Although there are reasonable arrangements given in the plan for evaluation of its implementation, an LEA review of progress prior to this inspection lacked clarity and coherence, in part because of the vagueness of many success criteria. It also illustrated the fact that in about half of the areas covered by the plan not enough has yet been done to move the action on.

The Allocation of Resources to Priorities

42. The Council's budget planning – again handicapped by the political turbulence of the past – is improving, but the approach to setting the education budget continues to lack rigour and suffers from the poor involvement of, and communication with, schools.

43. Improvements in budget planning are constrained by the fragile financial health of the Council and undermined by short term, and late, decision-making and an inability to consult schools meaningfully. The Council's failure to communicate its intentions and difficulties to schools in relation to the settlement for 1999/2000 thickened an atmosphere of mistrust on financial matters. This atmosphere exists despite some positive features in the Council's funding, such as the above average level of delegation to schools and success in bidding for grant funding.

44. Some of the mistrust results from poor financial information and inadequate consultation. Few in schools have a clear picture of the education budget and how it is constructed. Schools do not receive indication of their budgets until the final budget-setting meeting of the Council in March, making financial planning unnecessarily difficult, and the Council's system thereafter produces information which does not fit well with schools' needs and systems. Consultation with schools over the government's new Fair Funding regime was slow to start and it confused many. Working groups of headteachers have been formed to develop arrangements for the delegation and buy-back of services, but their terms of reference and a timetable of meetings are still not firmly established. Progress is being made in the analysis and allocation of central and Education Department overheads on services, but corporate development of cost benchmarking is not far advanced and there is a lack of transparency in the process. Schools are not convinced that the overheads represent good value for money and are fairly allocated.

45. The lack of transparency arises from a general lack of rigour in the analysis of need and the planning of expenditure to match it. The formula which allocates funding to individual schools has not been subject to comprehensive review. There are also questions about expenditure retained centrally which have not been posed or pursued sharply enough or at all.

46. The LEA cannot therefore be said to employ its resources efficiently. Without a fundamental review of its needs and expenditure, the LEA does not have the basis for aligning resources to needs and can only proceed in an *ad hoc*, piecemeal fashion. Moreover, without a rapid and wholesale change in the approach to service delivery, the LEA is likely to find schools going elsewhere to purchase services. Many schools visited had bought back newly delegated LEA services in the current year because of uncertainty over allocations and trading terms and lack of time to consider alternatives. The LEA cannot rely on the same reaction next year.

Recommendations

47. *In order to improve the management of the education service:*

- professional management should be simplified so that it is in the hands of a single chief officer with understanding of schools and their improvement and with the authority to get on with service development and delivery within a clear framework and with defined accountability;
- the Education Committee, or the structure which replaces it, should be enabled to focus efficiently on the planning and review of the exercise of the LEA's main responsibilities.

48. *In order to improve services to schools:*

- (a) the number of separate service units should be reduced; and (b) the management of them improved to secure better planning and evaluation, closer connections between services and greater consistency in the quality of delivery;
- a comprehensive statement should set out the services provided to schools, specifying the nature and costs of each service, the means of access to it, the choices which schools have, and the performance standards to be met.

49. *In order to shape more productive action on school improvement:*

- the Education Development Plan should be reviewed, in full consultation with schools, to ensure that (a) all action plans are realistic and unequivocal and have distinct success criteria and clear timetables; (b) activities are carefully targeted at schools and groups of pupils, including pupils from ethnic minorities; (c) the education elements of Single Regeneration Budget programmes are managed together with mainstream school improvement activity; (d) funding is retained centrally only where this is essential to effective management of the activities; and (e) the approach to monitoring implementation is sharpened and applied to Single Regeneration Budget activity.

50. *In order to improve financial planning:*

- a fundamental review of the level and make-up of the education budget, and of the corporate process by which it is set, should be undertaken and schools consulted appropriately within the budget-setting process;
- (a) schools should be given indicative budgets by early February each year to help them plan in a timely fashion; and (b) the financial information schools receive from the corporate accounting system should be closely linked to school needs and systems.

SECTION 3: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of Other Functions

51. This section focuses primarily on the work of the LEA's inspection and curriculum services. As detailed in other sections, few other services in Walsall make strong contributions to school improvement. Those useful contributions which are made are not based on an effective system for pooling intelligence across the services, and are generally not well enough co-ordinated to ensure that schools receive the benefits of integrated action. Overall, the LEA does not exercise all its relevant functions effectively in order to improve standards in schools.

Monitoring, Challenge, Support, Intervention

52. For most of the 1990s, the organisation and deployment of the LEA's inspection and curriculum services, and their impact on schools, have been affected by reductions in staffing, an inefficient structure and insufficient attention to improving the quality of work. The senior inspector has managed three groups: the inspectorate, curriculum development support services, and technical support services. The inspectorate has consisted of ten general inspectors (reduced to nine throughout 1998/99 because of a vacancy) whose pay has been low in comparison with others in the region. These inspectors have been unable to provide adequate coverage and a high proportion of their time has been spent in reacting to schools' problems rather than leading improvement. The day-to-day management of the services, working within a loose agenda and with limited resources, has been sound, but schools have not always had the support which they needed in order to achieve improvement.

53. The LEA has been slow to respond to these problems. A series of reports to the Education Committee from April 1998 has now led to a restructuring of the services under the title of EQUIPS (Effectiveness, Quality and Improving Performance in Schools), establishing it as the LEA's key agency for school improvement. Some senior appointments had not been finalised at the time of the inspection. Four heads of curriculum support services have been re-designated as general inspectors from November 1999, while retaining management of their services. The vacant post of inspector for special educational needs is also filled from November.

54. Schools have had little direct involvement in the debate about the formation of EQUIPS and know little of its proposed structure or operation. They see inspectors as committed and hard working, often over-stretched, almost always responsive, but of variable quality, with some highly regarded for their knowledge and perception. There is a view, justifiable and fairly generally shared, that the service has improved recently and that support is being accompanied by greater challenge.

55. The proposals put to the Education Committee were based on a realistic assessment of the inadequacies of the existing service and a sound analysis of what was needed for the LEA to meet its statutory duties and deliver its Education Development Plan. The restructuring, tardy and hesitant as it has been, will bring the service's work more in line with the Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations, for example on intervention in inverse proportion to success, a reduction in routine visits, and greater emphasis on support and challenge for those schools with greatest need. Under the new arrangements, EQUIPS will have a 'cycle of engagement', not yet

closely defined, with all schools, but the main thrust will be to improve schools causing concern.

56. However, approval and implementation are slow and piecemeal and the eventual structure - while a considerable improvement on that which existed before - will still be insufficient to do all that the LEA is requiring. The service has been trying to do too much and is still over-extended. School improvement is not a function of inspection and curriculum services alone; other services, carefully drawn together, need to be linked together and pull their weight. A more incisive approach to improving the quality of work of the teams is also needed. Management would be easier if the artificial distinctions between the inspection and curriculum services were removed.

57. The expectations placed on EQUIPS by the LEA are great. If they are to be realised, further strengthening of staffing, re-alignment of roles, sharper quality assurance and improved links with other services will be necessary before EQUIPS can hope to meet them. There is much to be done – and it is late in the day for the LEA to be shaping its services to tackle the necessary work.

Collection and Analysis of Data

58. Performance data are provided to primary and secondary schools by two separate units. This is inefficient; among other things, it does not support continuity across the key stages. A recent recommendation to the Education Committee to create a single information system under the management of EQUIPS was rejected.

59. The school survey indicated that schools were satisfied with the provision of pupil performance data but not satisfied with the guidance on their use. The surprise is the degree of satisfaction with the former. Schools are provided with a standard package of performance data which adds little to that nationally available. Schools are placed in local benchmark groups and reference is made to these comparisons in discussions about targets, but not enough has been done to make good use of them. There is some analysis by gender and ethnicity, but the latter is not yet a common feature of schools' analyses.

60. The Curriculum Assessment Team has undertaken some good work on assessment that is appreciated by primary schools. The team was responsible for the successful introduction of the LEA's baseline assessment scheme and has provided good quality training on its use. Training on the Key Stage 1 and 2 tests and tasks has also been appropriate and well received.

61. The LEA's approach to target-setting has received a much more mixed reception. A number of schools visited have developed sophisticated data collection systems to enable them to set targets. Some schools valued the target-setting training they had received; for others it was simplistic. Some found the target-setting discussion with their link inspector to be challenging, but in a few cases the targets that emerged from these discussions were plainly too low. On the other hand, two secondary schools felt they had been pressured into setting unrealistic targets.

62. A few primary schools have received good support from the Curriculum Assessment Team to develop detailed analysis of performance data to aid target-

setting. However, the effectiveness of this work is undermined by the lack of a common system to transfer primary school data to secondary schools.

Support for Literacy

63. In achievement in literacy at Key Stage 2, Walsall has been one of the lowest half-dozen LEAs in the country. The LEA's National Curriculum test results in English in 1999 showed a significant advance from a low base; the improvement in the LEA overall between 1997 and 1999 is in line with the national figure (7.5 percentage points). A key factor in reaching the target of 70 per cent in 2000 will be improvement in writing: in 1999, 46 per cent achieved the expected standard in writing, against 72 per cent in reading.

64. The National Literacy Strategy is managed by the general inspector for English who is assisted by two consultants, one part-time. The team is competent and hard-working. The LEA's approach was unsatisfactory at first but has now improved, except in relation to special schools. Literacy bids and action plans are at least sound and responses to the priorities in the national strategy are confident. Training is well resourced and tailored to schools' needs, although it does not always include sufficient challenge and more needs to be done to spread good practice. Appropriately, writing will be a focus in training this year. Link inspectors have been trained to monitor their schools, but their confidence and quality of advice are variable. The Bookstart programme, under which children receive books twice yearly through health visitors and in other ways from age six months to entering nursery, is a good example of practical co-operation with other agencies.

65. Substantial support for secondary schools has not yet been developed. However, eight secondary schools have held successful summer literacy schools and the national training for secondary schools on the literacy strategy has been provided.

Support for Numeracy

66. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected level by the end of Key Stage 2 rose from 52 per cent in 1997 to 60 per cent in 1999, which exceeds the LEA's target for the year 2000. From a low base, the LEA now appears in a good position to reach its target of 70 per cent by 2002.

67. Although the National Numeracy Strategy only commenced in September 1999, the LEA has been active in its preparatory work. Two mathematics consultants have been appointed to work under the direction of the mathematics inspector, himself quite recently in post. The work of this capable team is well planned and adequately resourced. In addition to training on the national strategy, a range of complementary courses are being run which are well supported by schools and useful material and information is available, including through the LEA's intranet.

68. The school survey judged LEA support for numeracy in primary schools to be more than satisfactory, and school visits confirmed the regard in which this work is held. Training delivered last year was a major contribution to significant improvements in Key Stage 2 results in a number of the schools visited. All schools have received their initial numeracy training, which was considered to be of high quality, challenging and delivered with enthusiasm. The work of the numeracy team, assisting with school audits, planning, the training of co-ordinators and monitoring of lessons, is much

valued. The team is adept at dealing with queries promptly and disseminating good practice.

69. Support in secondary schools, although equally well regarded according to the school survey, has had a less marked impact. However, nearly half the schools visited indicated that they had benefited from a range of recent support, including preparation and monitoring of numeracy summer schools.

Support for Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

70. The Support Service for Computers in Education manages the National Grid for Learning programme and leads on the development of other ICT uses within the curriculum, as well as supporting school administrative systems. The service has provided a high volume and wide range of high quality training, given reliable advice on the purchase of hardware and software and provided valuable technical back-up to schools.

71. The planning for the introduction of the National Grid for Learning has benefited from effective consultation and discussions with schools by a knowledgeable team. The service on the purchase of hardware and software has been efficient. There are close links with the Information Systems Services and with the inspectorate. All schools use e-mail and over 50 per cent have their own school web-pages; all teachers have their own e-mail address. Schools are contributing in large numbers to an imaginative initiative, involving co-operation with other Council departments, to create a web-site which will be fully launched in January 2000. High quality resources associated with it have been distributed to all schools and the project provides a powerful vehicle for the development of ICT use across the curriculum.

72. All aspects of ICT support and provision were judged as more than satisfactory in the school survey, with a large number of positive written responses provided. This was reflected in the great majority of the school visits, which indicated that the impact of the support has been considerable. Whilst many schools will need to take full advantage of the national training programme to develop ICT pedagogy within subject areas, the service can be credited, as one school put it, with 'creating an ICT culture within the LEA'. There is, however, a need to develop an approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the investment in ICT more generally.

Support for Schools Causing Concern

73. Walsall has had a high proportion of schools causing concern. It is a worrying fact that three of those schools which have been or are in special measures were placed in the category in 1999. Until recently, the LEA has had no clearly defined strategy for supporting schools causing concern. Past practice, while it has had some successes, has been inconsistent and the early identification of schools at risk and action to improve them have not been successful enough. The LEA has sometimes been caught out by adverse inspection judgements on schools which it plainly did not know well enough. It has sometimes been slow to act and its action plans on schools in special measures have been of mixed quality. Input on school action plans has been too dependent on the variable skills of link inspectors. Support for schools with serious weaknesses has sometimes been insufficient and uncoordinated. Specialist cover for special schools has been inadequate in the long period in which the inspector post has been vacant.

74. On the other hand, support for schools has sometimes been strong. For example, one school for which the LEA's action plan was weak received useful additional support and staff training; multi-disciplinary groups have been formed to help schools in special measures to improve; the delegation of budgets has been removed if judged necessary and staff have been replaced, although sometimes too slowly; and experienced headteachers have been well used in acting roles.

75. The Education Development Plan is promising a much-needed improvement in approach. It stresses the importance of early identification and provides a protocol to govern pre- and post-inspection procedures. A new system for recording information about schools has been devised, but it needs to be specifically related to inspectors' visits, as intended, and to draw in evidence from other services, and it also needs to be accompanied by rigorous oral and written feedback to schools. All schools have been placed by inspectors in one of six categories of effectiveness. The LEA believes that all schools have been informed of their category, although this has not always involved thorough discussion of the triggers of concern.

Support for Governors

76. In responding to the survey, schools rated information and advice to governing bodies on their work as less than satisfactory. The inspection confirms the view that governing bodies are not well supported. Advice on administrative matters is effective but much of the other support is reactive and of variable quality. The management of it lacks vigour and the service contributes little to the LEA's school improvement strategy.

77. The governor support service is unnecessarily divided into two units, one for administration and one for support. It does not achieve its aim of providing a comprehensive training and support service to school governors. There is no handbook which gives details of the LEA's provision and the termly newsletter provides minimal information. Training is limited, although some good courses, both centrally and for individual governing bodies, have been run.

78. There are no regular meetings for chairs of governing bodies and those for contact governors do not always take place. Consultation is mainly through the Walsall Association of Governors, of which much is expected. However, this body is relatively new and cannot be expected to fulfil the LEA's role.

79. Governing bodies receive efficient administrative support on agendas and minutes but the position on the clerking of meetings is unsatisfactory. Since inspectors and officers were withdrawn from the role of clerk due to the pressure of other commitments, the LEA, which still has the Chief Education Services Officer as the nominal clerk to those governing bodies which adopt him, has not helped schools to find satisfactory alternatives. Inspectors or officers attend particular meetings to give professional advice, but the LEA has provided no training for clerks so that governing bodies can benefit from regular, well-informed support. Those governing bodies which have employed a member of the clerical staff to take minutes do not have the benefit of advice on the law and procedures which a trained clerk would provide. Those whose meetings are clerked by a governor are acting against government advice and will be obliged to change their practice by April 2000.

80. Action to improve support for governors appears in two Education Development Plan priorities:- to improve leadership and management and to improve the performance of schools causing concern. Currently, despite the involvement of individual inspectors and officers, the LEA makes little coherent contribution in these respects. The governor support service is peripheral to the LEA's school improvement strategy and, without greater vision and dynamism, is unlikely to improve greatly.

Support for School Management

81. The LEA's support for management across a range of areas was regarded as less than satisfactory in the school survey. While it has some positive features, provision to develop school management lacks co-ordination and is not supporting headteachers adequately in their planning and evaluation.

82. The LEA provides limited general advice on school management other than through the link inspector, although the local management officers make a regular contribution on budget planning and control. Routine visits by link inspectors last year, normally one a term, were occasionally supplemented by activities targeted on particular needs. The work of link inspectors was generally welcomed by schools, but there is clearly variation in the nature and quality of the support provided. Despite the engagement of link inspectors with schools on their planning over the years, the LEA has undertaken no systematic evaluation of school development plans or their implementation. Belatedly, guidance has just been issued on the format of development planning. The LEA has an arrangement with a neighbouring LEA on training in school self-evaluation and individual inspectors have supported some schools well in their use of it. However, there was little evidence of self-evaluation being embedded in the majority of schools visited.

83. The professional development of senior staff has some good features but the programme is weak overall. There have been some useful inputs providing a national perspective; some management training has been available from Wolverhampton University, with which the LEA is in partnership; the LEA has sponsored participants in the national headship training schemes; and it has made use of school management expertise in seconded posts and provided development opportunities in doing so. However, the programme has lacked co-ordination and has had limited coverage. There has been no induction programme for new headteachers, although a peer mentoring arrangement exists, co-ordinated by a primary headteacher, which participants have found of varying usefulness. The headteacher appraisal scheme has barely functioned for some time.

84. Cluster groups of schools were set up some years back to foster co-operation at management and other levels. There is now little LEA support for and use of them, although it is clear that they can work well as a result of local initiative and resourcing.

Other Areas

85. Concerns arising from OFSTED inspections about teachers' expectations, planning, methods and organisation are being addressed through the national literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools but not across the curriculum and the phases as a whole, although there has been good work in a few areas. The analysis of

training needs is insecurely based and the provision made is fragmented. The Education Development Plan proposes to improve it.

86. Although responses to the school survey showed that schools were satisfied with the LEA's support for teaching in general, it was clear from the visits that appreciation of training quality was concentrated in a few fields, notably literacy, numeracy, ICT and assessment. Support on health education, driven and provided by the Health Authority, is also strong in the schools that take it up. The Education-Business Partnership, which the LEA helps to fund, makes useful contributions to the development of vocational courses and teachers' understanding of business, but the LEA's direct involvement in the work is less than it should be. There has been some recent LEA support of value in other fields, including religious education, the humanities and physical education. Sometimes on LEA advice, schools frequently look to other providers than the LEA for support – the foundation schools heavily so. Provision for newly qualified teachers is improving in line with new national requirements.

87. A bright feature of curriculum support is the music service. This has developed over the last ten years and provides curriculum support, training, instrumental teaching and workshops. A little over seven per cent of Walsall's pupils receive formal tuition on instruments (other than percussion) – a proportion lower than might be expected as tuition is free. However, 500 young people regularly attend evening music sessions at the music centre and the service is involved in a number of community musical activities. The service is well planned and monitored. It is well regarded by schools and recently received a national award for outstanding achievement. (The provision made by the LEA for outdoor education was not covered in the inspection. Some 1300 pupils attend the Bryntysilio centre each year. Secondary schools responding to the school survey judged the provision made for extra-curricular sport and outdoor pursuits as more than satisfactory.)

Recommendations

88. *In order to secure an effective contribution to school improvement from inspection and curriculum services:*

- (a) the staffing of EQUIPS should be strengthened in quality and quantity to deliver the Education Development Plan; and (b) a sharper system established for monitoring the quality of the service.

89. *In order to improve the effectiveness of the use of performance data in schools:*

- (a) a single performance data information unit should be set up; and (b) the active use of data, including analysis by gender and ethnicity, should be promoted.

90. *In order to improve support for the teaching of literacy:*

- more should be done to spread good practice, giving close attention to the teaching of writing;
- better support on the teaching of literacy should be given to special schools.

91. *In order to provide better support for schools causing concern and reduce the number of them, new procedures should be implemented to:*

- (a) judge accurately the effectiveness of all schools, identifying early those which are at risk; (b) give schools clear, accurate, written feedback on their strengths and weaknesses; and (c) provide well-defined, timely support according to need, drawing in all relevant services.

92. *In order to improve the quality of support for governors:*

- (a) communication and consultation with governors should be improved; and (b) the provision of support and training should be based on better anticipation of need and more consistent delivery;
- governing bodies should be helped to make satisfactory arrangements for the clerking of meetings.

93. *In order to provide effective support to school management:*

- (a) guidance should be offered to schools on self-evaluation; and (b) judgements reported to schools on the quality and implementation of their plans;
- a development programme should be agreed for school managers, including an induction programme for new and acting headteachers, and the part which LEA provision will play in it set out.

94. *In order to support the improvement of teaching in line with the intentions of the Education Development Plan:*

- a coherent programme of professional development should be produced which helps schools to identify needs and sources of support.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate Planning

95. There is little doubt generally about the importance which is accorded to education within the Council's overall approach. It is reflected in the Council's corporate plan for 1999/2001. Action on the area defined as 'Young People' has had bearing on provision in schools and inspires arrangements for working with partners on key objectives. The action area directly focused on education is 'Creating a Learning Borough', where the 'impact objectives' are:- to improve the effectiveness of schools (with six sub-objectives); to ensure access to educational entitlement; to ensure the provision of additional learning opportunities; and to ensure that education policies meet defined needs.

96. The statutory Education Development Plan, discussed earlier, is prefaced by an overall strategic plan for the LEA which relates, although not well enough, to the Council's strategic plan. It does not itself provide an adequate account of what the LEA needs to do, and why, to achieve its four 'impact objectives'; nor does it present a context or a case for the exercise of the LEA role. There is little sense that the LEA needs to, and indeed does, work with major partners to carry out some important tasks. Many of the 'key activities' have merit in principle, but some of them simply postpone the action needed to another occasion, while others are too ambitious or indeterminate to provide a basis for action. Major areas of work are apparently missed or lost in generalisation. Connection with other plans which the LEA has produced at around the same time is slight. Precise definition of targets, timescales and means is lacking; so is clear articulation of how the activities listed will help to 'improve learning for all', the central objective. As a bridge between the Council's overall intentions and the detailed planning of action in relation to schools, the plan fails to carry weight.

97. While this overall statement of the LEA's strategy is inadequate, the LEA can do rather better in the production of detailed plans. The Education Development Plan is one example, and there are other reasonable plans produced within the last year to meet new government requirements. Education has also contributed appropriately to the plans of other services. Comment on these plans is made later, along with comment on the general development of multi-agency working, to which the education service is making a serious, albeit uneven commitment.

98. However, where education is in the lead, the process of planning leaves much to be desired. It tends to be either ponderous or rushed, and it often fails to engage early and well enough with headteachers, governors, trade unions and other Council partners, and, thereafter, to inform them well enough.

99. The school survey shows that Walsall is rated unsatisfactory on aspects of planning and communication, and notably so on the extent to which schools believe they influence LEA policies and on the planning of the education budget. Consultation arrangements are not well defined, and the conduct of them has done little to secure the reputation of the LEA and to progress the business smoothly through well-informed debate. Councillors are rarely involved directly. School staff have not been well served. The main forum for discussion with governors is the Walsall Association for Governors, but governors have been peripheral to policy development. Nor have the dioceses been adequately involved.

100. The process of policy development and planning has been better in some cases than in others. The Early Years Development Plan is an example of a process which worked effectively. Provision for the early years is one of three topics on which there has been a distinct effort to draw in the views of a range of interested parties through the setting up of commissions. The other topics have been special educational needs (with a report being produced in 1996) and lifelong learning (on which a report was produced in September 1999). These have had value, although much of the value of the commission on special educational needs has been subsequently lost.

101. The policy-making of the LEA at its least impressive is illustrated by its erratic stance towards Education Action Zones. Another poor example concerns the restructuring of the inspection and curriculum services, which, despite being subject to much discussion in the Education Committee, has not involved significant debate with the schools. A third is the lack of a strategy to fix a new relationship with the formerly grant-maintained schools, with whom discussions on a range of issues have been unsatisfactory.

Management Services

102. Some management support functions are effective in promoting school improvement. Support from the local management officers and for administrative ICT enables staff in schools to be more effective. Schools also benefit from efficient payroll services and basic personnel support. However the asset management function and the service providing day-to-day repairs are not achieving a consistent satisfactory standard.

103. The service on personnel management and administration is delivered by two units within the corporate Personnel Service Unit who are 'out-posted' to education. The service is satisfactory in its support for day-to-day functions and good on payroll, working closely with local management officers on budget implications. However, it is inconsistent in the quality of its advice on employment issues, and there continue to be difficulties in recognising the distinctive position of schools in relation to corporate personnel policies.

104. Support on finance management is generally well regarded; it gives close operational support to a large number of schools. However, more needs to be done, including by providing better central information, to enable schools to manage budgets for themselves. Schools receive two complementary finance support services which are not yet delegated. The local management officers provide an expert, flexible and responsive service on overall financial management and systems. In addition, as most schools do not use full bank accounts, the Finance Unit provides basic support in detailed processing and monitoring of transactions and a peripatetic bursar service. This service is satisfactory, although it needs to work around the corporate accounting system, widely seen as a source of obfuscation and delay.

105. The service on the administrative uses of ICT is a strength of the LEA. It is proactive, responsive, efficiently managed, properly linked to other functions and has well-used means of consulting with schools. An indication of the quality of the service is that, with one exception, foundation schools have purchased it in the past. The

infrastructure is advanced. The level and range of use of ICT for administration by school staff is high as a result of effective training and other support.

106. Services on property management are problematic. The LEA has been slow to identify that many of its school buildings are not fit for purpose, and that capital expenditure on them needs greater priority. Capital expenditure is at half the average for similar LEAs. The LEA has re-invested receipts from the disposal of school premises; it has gained over £4 million of New Deal for Schools funding to remove and replace the worst buildings; and it is supporting a public/private partnership scheme to rebuild an aided school. Nevertheless, there is a serious backlog of work which current funding, now delegated to schools, is inadequate to deal with.

107. The LEA's new Asset Management Plan has defined the scale of the problem. Although there is not yet a robust system of full condition surveys shared with each school, the initial surveys have identified that a high percentage of schools require work to address breaches of legislation. The LEA must now pursue the implementation of the plan with vigour and in partnership with schools. A public/private partnership scheme to tackle building maintenance problems is under development, and the LEA administers a 'bond' scheme which recycles surplus balances to fund property development in schools. Preparations for evaluating suitability and sufficiency are in hand. However, higher levels of funding, improved management and deployment of technical expertise are needed, underpinned by a shift in attitude which treats schools as customers of a service.

108. Schools were given insufficient time and guidance on the delegation of funding in the current year for structural repairs and maintenance to exercise their responsibilities appropriately. A Commissioning Unit was set up two years ago, bringing together a range of services. To date the service has been too variable in quality and high in cost, and schools are considering other providers next year. The basis for the fees schools spend on the Commissioning Unit is not clear, and in some schools it is over 15 per cent of their total budget for repairs and maintenance. Links between education and the corporate contract 'cluster' need to be clearer to ensure the major task of improving buildings is co-ordinated with the implementation of the School Organisation Plan and initiatives to support school improvement.

109. The service quality, responsiveness and costs of cleaning, grounds maintenance and other premises care services are also variable and will benefit from close analysis in Best Value reviews.

Recommendations

110. *In order to improve the planning of the education service:*

- a full and coherent statement, drawing on the various plans produced to date, should set out how the LEA's main responsibilities in relation to schools are to be exercised, specifying targets, performance measures and timescales;
- an approach to consultation and communication with the LEA's partners should be defined and pursued, designed to enable their full and timely engagement in forming and reviewing policy and action.

111. *In order to tackle the poor condition of school buildings:*

- plans for school organisation, school improvement and building condition should be coherently linked;
- the quality of condition surveys and other information to schools on repairs and maintenance should be stepped up;
- (a) the effectiveness and the value for money of the Commissioning Unit should be improved; and (b) priority given to Best Value reviews of cleaning, grounds maintenance and other premises services.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

Strategy

112. The LEA's management and development of its policy on special educational needs are inadequate. The LEA policy is based on a presumption of mainstream provision: at the heart of the difficulty for this LEA is that it has not successfully articulated and debated what this means in practice. One consequence is that the future role of special schools, which has been under review, remains obscure.

113. Progress in reviewing and improving provision for special educational needs in Walsall has been faltering. This is despite two major reviews: a commission established by the LEA in autumn 1996 which reported in December 1997; and a study by the District Auditor which reported in December 1998. Between them, these reviews made a wide range of recommendations, on most of which the LEA has not taken effective action.

Statutory Obligations

114. While the LEA may be said to be formally keeping its policy and provision for special educational needs under review, it is doing so to little effect.

115. The LEA has not been able to live up to national and its own expectations on efficient administrative processes in relation to special educational needs. The rate at which statements of special educational needs are produced continues to be low, despite the District Auditor's recommendation in 1998. The LEA's response, apparently still in draft, rejected the 100 per cent target for completion of statements within the required timescale and suggested instead 40 per cent in 1999/00, rising by 20 per cent in each of two subsequent years. This is unacceptable. It is also difficult to understand, since the system which the LEA uses could be readily modified to ensure a much higher rate than 40 per cent.

116. While the LEA's response on this issue shows a leisurely approach to meeting its responsibilities, the response on the recommendation about attendance at annual reviews – that there will be 100 per cent attendance by an LEA officer – offers an unnecessary commitment of time. With a rigorous system for monitoring individual education plans, selective attendance, giving priority to the most complex cases, would be appropriate.

Improvement and Value for Money

117. An important recommendation emerging from the commission set up by the LEA was that special educational needs services to pupils and schools should be better co-ordinated. There have been no significant improvements in this respect. The LEA continues to have numerous separate specialist services. That the services are separate units is not in itself problematic: what is necessary is that they are managed coherently. They are not. The funding of them is not based on a systematic analysis of the level and nature of the services needed. Some of the basics of effective management, such as review of workloads and working practices, are missing; individual service plans vary considerably, with some being rudimentary; service

evaluation is undeveloped; there is no common approach to record-keeping across the services and insufficient interchange of information.

118. Incoherence at the centre is reflected in the service to schools. There is no comprehensive definition of the services provided, and individual services vary considerably in their presentation and in the extent to which the nature and standards of service are specified. There is particular confusion about the role of the Learning Support Service, whose work is, however, appreciated in schools.

119. The services are dominated by casework with individual pupils, responding to referrals for advice from schools and others and in some cases providing teaching where this is specified in statements. Without adequate criteria for judging priority, the services are in a poor position to manage the volume of work.

120. It is not surprising, therefore, that the LEA's action to improve provision and outcomes in schools is unsatisfactory. The LEA has insufficient information about the quality of provision and is not well placed to influence it. Aside from the provision of training, and some recent steps to develop outreach activity involving special schools, there is little work at a strategic level with individual schools. The development of mainstream school provision for special educational needs features in the Education Development Plan, but the latest progress report shows little headway.

121. Effectiveness in improving provision depends on knowledge of the schools' work. A key commitment in the LEA policy statement is to 'ensure through monitoring and review that children with statements of special educational need are having their needs met and that resources to support them are being used efficiently'. The means for this monitoring to be carried out are set out in the policy statement but have not been employed. The recent appointment of an inspector for special educational needs, a post vacant for some time, is seen as key to improvement in this respect.

122. In relation to the efficient use of resources, the analysis by the District Auditor in 1998 recorded weaknesses in the analysis of expenditure, differences in spending which did not reflect a strategy, and uncertainty in schools about income and expenditure. Among other things, the study recommended devolution of resources for pupils with statements and delegation of learning support. In 1999 the LEA undertook its own analysis of school expenditure. Unfortunately the survey which it carried out was undermined by poor guidance and a low response rate. As a result, the information recently returned to schools, including a notional expectation of expenditure, is of little value to them.

123. The LEA response to the recommendation to devolve funding for statements is over-cautious. In the great majority of cases what the statements provide for is the time of non-teaching assistants or, in secondary schools, teachers. Since the schools recruit the staff themselves and are responsible for their deployment and supervision, it is difficult to see the case against devolving funding, certainly to secondary schools.

124. There is no system for monitoring the impact of expenditure on special educational needs. The intelligence which the individual services could contribute on mainstream school provision is not pooled effectively. There has also been little recent engagement at a strategic level with special schools individually or collectively. There is no training plan for special educational needs. Training for special educational needs co-ordinators in schools has had substantial take-up over the years but it has not been

well enough related with strategic developments or followed up with individual schools. There are regular meetings of special educational needs co-ordinators convened by the Learning Support Service which, although valuable in the past, have recently been preoccupied with administrative matters.

125. An important recommendation of the commission in 1997 was to connect work on special educational needs with the growing activity on literacy. The LEA is sponsoring projects in two schools designed to promote faster progress for pupils with difficulties, but the approach to school-wide intervention lacks energy and focus. The link between special educational needs and other school improvement activity is weak.

126. Positive judgements made by headteachers and other staff relate by and large to contributions made by individual members of services. Many of these contributions have clear value: they offer practical help, derived from experience and understanding of school practice and needs and are given in a straightforward fashion; they show sensitivity with pupils and parents; and they involve prompt responses to requests and good feedback. There were also illustrations of poor service practice, inept communication, and a few cases of insensitive responses.

127. In general, there is much justified criticism in schools of the lack of clarity and pace in policy development and most staff interviewed are uncertain about where the LEA's approach to inclusion is heading. Many have poor understanding of the pattern and allocation of service provision, which is highly variable across the schools and not systematically proportionate to need. Slowness of response by the Education Psychology Service and sometimes other services is regarded as endemic. While most schools find statements of special educational needs helpfully written, which they are, the length of time taken to produce them is a cause of frustration. Of concern, too, are disjunctions and poor communication between services.

128. The most general problem, however, is that the overall provision made by the schools is insufficiently monitored and supported. For this reason, the value of much good work by individual support services is not maximised. It is, for example, obvious that schools make quite different judgements about which children should be included on special educational needs registers and about the extent of the help they should receive within the school and from outside it.

Recommendations

129. *In order to improve provision for special educational needs:*

- a re-statement of LEA policy on special educational needs should be presented for consultation, combined with proposals for specialist provision and targets for improvement in LEA support for schools and pupils;
- (a) all statements of special educational needs (excluding legitimate exceptions) should be prepared within the required timescale; and (b) reviews of statements undertaken rigorously and reported on time;
- the roles, working practices and deployment of special educational needs support services, in relation both to pupils and to advice on school-wide issues, should be clearly set out;

- coherent management of support services should be introduced, including effective exchange of information among the services, pertinent discussion and training on common issues, and clear evaluation of their work;
- (a) the funding for services that is not directly associated with statutory responsibilities and with action within the Education Development Plan should be delegated to schools; and (b) funding for statements of special educational needs should be speedily devolved to secondary schools in the first instance;
- systems should be put in place (a) to monitor and advise on the quality of school provision for special educational needs and its outcomes and (b) to ensure that fruitful connections are made with mainstream school improvement activity.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The Supply of School Places

130. The number of surplus places in schools has reduced from 1995 to 1999 (in the primary phase from 13.5 per cent to 10.5 per cent, and in the secondary phase from 13 per cent to 6.4 per cent) as a result of rationalisations of primary schools and rising secondary rolls. Within this overall picture there are 12 primary schools with more than 25 per cent surplus places and 11 which are over-full. The main issue in the secondary sector is that there are eight over-full schools.

131. A 1999 District Audit study reports that the LEA has improved its management of school places over the past few years, particularly in relation to the quality of forecasting and sharing information with schools. This has informed the development of a concise School Organisation Plan which highlights key issues and makes recommendations which affect every phase. The plan was issued for consultation and agreed by the School Organisation Committee in September.

132. The implementation of it will require decisive action, based on good information and effective consultation, to link the rational organisation of school places with improvement in accommodation and support for the raising of standards. To date the LEA's approach has been *ad hoc*. Officers are aware that decision-making through the School Organisation Committee will present a challenge. Schools appear insufficiently aware of the issues, and there is as yet no detailed strategy for consultation of them and other interested parties.

133. Action needs to cover provision for special educational needs, sixth forms and pupils excluded from schools. Earlier work on special schools and units has focused on accommodation, and has not been based on an explicit policy and timetable for action on the overall provision for special educational needs; a review of special schools is to be completed by the end of 1999, but no arrangements are yet in place to make progress. There is as yet no clear approach on sixth forms, in which numbers, based on a previous policy of allowing all schools to offer provision, range from 18 to 242. Provision for excluded pupils is referred to below.

134. The production and implementation of the infant class size plan has been well handled, mainly with the agreement of schools. The plan has included the removal of sub-standard temporary accommodation.

Admissions

135. The LEA manages its part in school admissions efficiently, although schools administer all admissions except secondary transfer. Information for parents is good. In 1999, 94 per cent of applicants to community secondary schools were successful in their first preference. Appeals are relatively few and are well managed. There are arrangements in place to keep admissions policy under review.

Provision for the Early Years

136. Walsall's belief and investment in provision for the under-fives, mostly through the use of nursery nurses, has been established over a long period. The Early Years

Development Plan sets out a generally clear approach to consolidating and improving it. A commitment to guaranteeing at least three terms nursery education for all children will be met in January 2000. The majority of children already have the opportunity of a nursery place in the term following their third birthday.

137. A District Audit study in December 1998 reported progress on recommendations made in its 1996 report and in tackling the new government agenda. However, action on some recommendations, including improving management, dealing with vacant nursery places in schools, defining a distinctive role for the more expensive nursery school provision and introducing a training strategy to ensure qualified teacher input in all settings, had been slow. Now that the appointment of a head of an Early Years Unit has been made, the required developments are being pursued, drawing together the various parties involved across and outside the Council, including an inspector and an advisory teacher for early years, both recently appointed. Useful draft curriculum guidelines and training arrangements are now in place. However, because of the delay, most of the necessary action on the distribution of places will not take effect until September 2000 and the proposals which have been developed on the role of the nursery schools are not yet agreed by the Education Committee.

138. The recent history of work on early years demonstrates three things:- first, that the LEA continues to be committed to funding extensive provision; second, that it can work well with its partners; and third, that with capable operational management, it can produce a clear plan of action to respond to national initiatives and audit recommendations – although more slowly here than should have been the case.

Provision of Education Otherwise Than at School

139. The LEA has pupil referral units for pregnant schoolgirls and pupils with school phobia, catering for some 40 pupils.

140. The Disaffected Pupil Support Service manages the alternative provision made for excluded pupils. In-school and short-term alternative provision other than home tuition are very limited. In 1998/99 104 pupils were given alternative provision because of exclusion. Home tuition for 4.5 hours a week is the standard allocation for pupils in Key Stages 1-3. The provision is both inadequate and inefficient; it does not guarantee access to the provision defined in statements of special educational needs; and the LEA does not have an appropriate system for assuring and reviewing its quality. In Key Stage 4 alternative provision is made in further education colleges or other settings, with the amount of time involved varying in relation to the circumstances. Records of work are kept but there is no tracking of the progress of pupils at any key stage. The home tuition allocation is due to rise to 10 hours a week by March 2000 and there is a plan, not yet agreed by the Education Committee, to make full-time provision by 2001/02.

Attendance

141. Substantial support to improve attendance features in the Education Development Plan. Neither the issue of attendance nor the Education and Welfare Service itself have had a sufficiently high profile in the LEA in the past. A panel of headteachers and service officers now monitors the service development plan. The

LEA's member attendance panel is meeting with some success, with the invitation to parents to come to the panel prompting better attendance by some children.

142. The Education Committee has recently approved in principle the phased expansion of the Education Welfare Service in order to meet increased demand, although no evaluation of the service to schools was provided to support the case. The school survey indicated that schools are generally satisfied with the support received. The service is spelled out, although not specifically enough. All schools receive the minimum of one visit per week from an education welfare officer and a half-termly visit from a senior officer. Schools in special measures or having serious weaknesses receive additional support.

143. The work undertaken by officers follows a common approach, involving referrals from schools and reporting back within five working days. However, the management of time is inefficient. Some 27 per cent of schools did not make a referral to the service within a given fortnightly period, making a routine weekly visit of little point. The half-termly visit by a senior officer is also unnecessary in the majority of cases.

144. In visits to schools, examples of good preventative practice were found, as well as illustrations of the benefits of routine work, which is sufficient to meet the needs of most schools. However, in order to address problems in the minority of schools where attendance is low, a more proactive and targeted approach is needed. These schools are not receiving a strong enough lead on improving attendance. The approach to target-setting is not systematic. There is also no documented guidance for schools and insufficient dissemination of effective practice by other means.

Behaviour Support

145. OFSTED inspections show behaviour and school procedures to be in line with the national picture in primary schools, and better than the national picture in secondary schools. Permanent exclusions have been broadly in line with national figures in both phases over the past three years. However, the LEA target on permanent exclusions for 1999/2000 is not challenging enough. While the LEA believes it cannot rely on the information provided about fixed-term exclusions, the reported use of fixed-term exclusions has fallen by nine per cent in 1998/99, although in some secondary schools the rate recorded is very high.

146. The Behaviour Support Plan has some good features, including the actual and proposed liaison with other bodies it defines. However, it does not provide an audit of the position in the LEA and has few targets and only timescales for these targets where they were required.

147. The LEA meets its responsibilities in relation to the process by which permanent exclusions are pursued. There is a new database tracking permanent exclusions, but this has not yet been analysed fully. The system is a welcome, if tardy improvement. The average time taken for new provision to be arranged for pupils permanently excluded from school is 16 days. Accurate records of fixed-term exclusions need to be maintained and analysed.

148. The main expenditure on behaviour support is channelled through the Disaffected Pupil Support Service (DPSS) and is at what should be a more than

adequate level for this LEA. The DPSS provides support in school, including a multi-disciplinary behaviour support team, in which Social Services is involved and which has worked with three secondary schools in a productive fashion. The service responds to demand from primary schools but provides an entitlement of 7.5 hours a week to all secondary schools, except foundation schools.

149. The planning of the work of the DPSS has drawn on the views of schools and others, but not, unfortunately, the Education Psychology Service or the inspectorate in 1999. The DPSS does not have criteria to determine its work and the evaluation of the effectiveness of its involvement with individual pupils is limited. It now logs its work with pupils through a new case management scheme and has audited the referrals made. There is some evidence of impact on preventing exclusions and on improving behaviour and attitudes. There is also some evidence from project work of improvement in school systems and pupil behaviour.

150. Few of the primary schools visited had had experience of excluding pupils permanently and difficult behaviour was not common. There is, however, a tendency in the LEA to under-estimate the impact of even a very small number of difficult pupils in a school with little experience of handling them. In general, the schools would benefit from more guidance about behaviour and discipline policy and practice, although some had found training on assertive discipline and audits of behaviour in school helpful.

151. The extent of exclusions varied very widely in the secondary schools visited, although it is reducing overall. The contribution made by the LEA, where there was one of substance, was mixed. There were examples of effective work by the DPSS in relation to individual pupils, but as many examples of poorly planned interventions which were not followed through.

152. There is a strong case for increased delegation of funding for behaviour support, at least for secondary schools with distinct needs. Clear definition and exemplification of what the service can do and how it works with schools would help to make practice and benefits more consistent. There has been no comprehensive communication with schools about the implications of recent government guidance on pupil support. Greater scrutiny of and advice on school systems, including the development of short-term in-school provision, would provide a helpful backdrop for work with individual pupils. Better evaluation of the impact of this work is important. Finally, both the inspectorate and special needs support services need to be better involved.

Health, Safety and Welfare

153. The operation of policy on health and safety at work was not examined in detail in the inspection. The LEA's policy and practice was reviewed by consultants in 1998 and a new policy adopted by the Education Committee in 1999. Basic advice on risk assessment is provided to schools and a programme of monitoring visits is made. A particular concern about dust extraction in workshops is being addressed through a bid for capital funding.

154. The Council is committed to inter-agency work to safeguard pupils' welfare and promote social inclusion and the LEA contributes appropriately and in some cases well to these efforts. There are appropriate structures for planning joint work and productive activity, for example, through a multi-agency behaviour support team, referred to

earlier, on teenage pregnancy and on youth offenders. The LEA has appointed a former headteacher to co-ordinate some multi-agency initiatives on its behalf.

155. The Council's Children's Services Plan 1997/2000 has a large number of priority objectives, among which work with education, including disaffected young people, features appropriately. The review identified some progress in this work, for example in relation to preventative programmes for disaffected pupils and the production of the Behaviour Support Plan, but little progress in others, notably the educational and health needs of looked-after children.

156. The Education Committee received a report on the *Quality Protects* Management Action Plan in February 1999, unfortunately after it had been submitted. This included the setting up of a joint officer steering group involving Social Services and Education. Given the limited information then available, the plan had little to say about the educational attainment, attendance and exclusions of children looked-after by the Council and its target for improved attainment is therefore notional. The target on attainment at GCSE is, appropriately but surprisingly, 10 percentage points higher than in the Education Development Plan. The plan says little about the involvement of schools generally. While work on looked-after children is proceeding, as numbers have risen rapidly much remains to be done. The LEA is not yet at the stage of identifying where educational provision is being made for all the children concerned: in July 1999, 58 children (18 per cent of the total) were unaccounted for in this respect.

157. The general effectiveness of liaison between education and Social Services is rated unsatisfactory in the school survey, although support on child protection comes out better. The arrangements covering the school role in child protection procedures appear sound. The chief issue for the schools is on communication with Social Services about children at risk for other reasons. While the number of instances where the issue of liaison was identified in school visits was too small to make a firm judgement, there clearly is difficulty about understanding and information, on both sides, which the Council needs to investigate.

158. The Health Action Zone in which the Council is involved has targets and activities relevant to education. The programme has a clear rationale and approach, building on the experience of a healthy schools project operating for three years. It recognises that young people in Walsall have less healthy lifestyles than in many parts of the country. Walsall also has one of the highest pregnancy rates for under-16s in the country and good efforts are being made to reduce it. There is a tradition of well-defined and resourced work on health education generally, in which the contributions of the school nurse service and of advisory work in schools figure prominently. There is good liaison evident in some schools on the health and wellbeing of the youngest children. The Bookstart programme, which involves health visitors, is referred to elsewhere as a good example of practical co-operation. Specialist health services appear adequate.

159. Links with the police has been affected by the reduction in dedicated liaison officer time following police re-organisation. There are nevertheless several schemes running to promote attendance at school, road safety, and awareness of drug misuse, site security, and a positive approach to crime prevention.

160. The Council and its partners have looked to Single Regeneration Budget funding to promote inter-agency work in local areas. The principle and the financial backing are welcome. The development is, however, slow. Although the Council is keen to involve schools more in the areas concerned with the work of the Local Committees, strong, substantial and focused activity is the exception rather than the rule.

Ethnic Minority Pupils

161. The school survey indicated that schools are satisfied overall with the provision for ethnic minority pupils, secondary schools more so than primary. However, the support for ethnic minority pupils has had a weak basis in policy and a low profile. Its delivery through different services, different line management and varying approaches, results in inconsistent provision and inadequate connection with mainstream improvement work.

162. The LEA decided in the first year of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant to maintain its former Section 11-funded staffing establishment, devolving responsibility to schools for the 100 teachers concerned. Under the grant, the LEA retains responsibility for monitoring, support and training. The action plan for the use of the grant appears sound and it sets broad priorities. There is, however, insufficient reference to the poor performance of Pakistani pupils (which is the focus of an LEA task group which made an initial report in 1999) and the approach to be taken on the performance of African-Caribbean pupils, particularly boys. The action plan is mainly clear in its target-setting on attainment, although some targets are modest; there is no analysis of or targets for attendance and exclusion. The plan says little about the monitoring and evaluation.

163. The opportunity was not taken in the production of the plan to rationalise the overlapping provision made by the three services concerned with equal opportunities and ethnic minority pupils. Pupils whose needs did not apparently entitle them to support from the Section 11-funded service may currently receive support from the Minority Group Service. In addition, the small African-Caribbean Community Project Service supports a range of curriculum initiatives in primary schools. At least some schools are unaware of the range of services available. There have been no effective mechanisms for disseminating good practice among the schools, including ways of ensuring that general activity to improve standards in schools benefits under-achieving groups. The Education Development Plan provides only a weak reflection of what is set out in the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant plan and there is little sign of active interest and involvement on the part of other services.

164. A useful pack on a range of equal opportunities issues, including renewed advice on the handling of racial harassment, was launched by the Equal Opportunities Unit at the time of the inspection; the pack will provide the basis of training. Despite this initiative, there is little sign that the LEA, its investment in service funding notwithstanding, has a clear view of how to promote greater success for pupils at risk of under-achievement. No schools visited had received detailed support for the development of their grant-related policy, the setting of targets or any monitoring of progress. The allocations of the former Section 11-funded support, continued this year, often do not appear to relate to current need and the deployment in some cases is not based on a sensible strategy. From April 2000, money rather than staffing will be devolved to schools on the basis of a new formula. Schools are rightly concerned

about the implications of a formula which has not yet been finalised and are uncertain about the employment status of existing staff.

165. Walsall's active involvement, initially through senior officers, in the regional education service for traveller children shows a commitment to responding to the challenge of ensuring suitable provision. The wide availability of nursery education is a distinct advantage in this respect. However, data on the progress of individual pupils are not analysed centrally and this is a weakness.

Recommendations

166. *To ensure positive action on school places:*

- clear working arrangements to progress the recommendations made in the new School Organisation Plan should be established;
- the review of provision for special educational needs should be moved on rapidly;
- an approach to sixth form provision should be fixed within the School Organisation Plan.

167. *In order to improve provision for pupils excluded from schools:*

- better alternative education for those younger pupils permanently excluded from school should be provided as a matter of urgency;
- the monitoring of alternative provision in Key Stage 4 should be stepped up.

168. *In order to improve the overall level of attendance of pupils:*

- the arrangements for the allocation of education welfare officer time should be recast so that time is efficiently used and support deployed in proportion to need;
- exemplars of attendance policy with advice on procedures, including dealing with term-time holidays, should be produced in consultation with schools, and good practice disseminated.

169. *In order to improve support for behaviour at school:*

- the system for supporting schools and pupils should be overhauled, so that (a) schools are helped systematically to consolidate and improve school policy and systems and (b) work by the service with individual pupils is made of consistent value;
- funding for behaviour support to secondary schools with distinct needs should be delegated, with the work of the peripatetic team concentrated in schools where poor behaviour is a rare, though still troubling factor;
- the issue of behaviour should be a priority for the inspectorate and special needs support services in their contacts with schools.

170. *In order to improve the contribution of the education service to inter-agency work on pupils' welfare:*

- (a) an investigation should be made of communication between schools and Social Services to establish the extent of difficulties; and (b) action taken to remedy them;
- the required action on the education and welfare of children looked-after by the Council should be pursued urgently with Social Services.

171. *In order to raise standards of attainment of ethnic minority pupils:*

- schools and community interests should be consulted closely on the formula to be used to allocate the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant from April 2000;
- the structure and management of the services working on equal opportunities and ethnic minority achievement should be simplified and their work based on a clear statement of policy, specifying what other services will also contribute;
- schools should be supported in forming and following their future plans to use the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, with good practice in analysing pupils' progress and raising their achievement disseminated.

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In order to improve the management of the education service:

- professional management should be simplified so that it is in the hands of a single chief officer with understanding of schools and their improvement and with the authority to get on with service development and delivery within a clear framework and with defined accountability;
- the Education Committee, or the structure which replaces it, should be enabled to focus efficiently on the planning and review of the exercise of the LEA's main responsibilities.

In order to improve services to schools:

- (a) the number of separate service units should be reduced; and (b) the management of them improved to secure better planning and evaluation, closer connections between services and greater consistency in the quality of delivery;
- a comprehensive statement should set out the services provided to schools, specifying the nature and costs of each service, the means of access to it, the choices which schools have, and the performance standards to be met.

In order to shape more productive action on school improvement:

- the Education Development Plan should be reviewed, in full consultation with schools, to ensure that (a) all action plans are realistic and unequivocal and have distinct success criteria and clear timetables; (b) activities are carefully targeted at schools and groups of pupils, including pupils from ethnic minorities; (c) the education elements of Single Regeneration Budget programmes are managed together with mainstream school improvement activity; (d) funding is retained centrally only where this is essential to effective management of the activities; and (e) the approach to monitoring implementation is sharpened and applied to Single Regeneration Budget activity.

In order to improve financial planning:

- a fundamental review of the level and make-up of the education budget, and of the corporate process by which it is set, should be undertaken and schools consulted appropriately within the budget-setting process;
- (a) schools should be given indicative budgets by early February each year to help them plan in a timely fashion; and (b) the financial information schools receive from the corporate accounting system should be closely linked to school needs and systems.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In order to secure an effective contribution to school improvement from inspection and curriculum services:

- (a) the staffing of EQUIPS should be rendered adequate in quality and quantity to deliver the Education Development Plan; and (b) a more convincing system established for monitoring the quality of the service.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the use of performance data in schools:

- (a) a single performance data information unit should be set up; and (b) the active use of data, including analysis by gender and ethnicity, should be promoted.

In order to improve support for the teaching of literacy:

- more should be done to spread good practice, giving close attention to the teaching of writing;
- better support on the teaching of literacy should be given to special schools.

In order to provide better support for schools causing concern and reduce the number of them, new procedures should be implemented to:

- (a) judge accurately the effectiveness of all schools, identifying early those which are at risk; (b) give schools clear, accurate, written feedback on their strengths and weaknesses; and (c) provide well-defined, timely support according to need, drawing in all relevant services.

In order to improve the quality of support for governors:

- (a) communication and consultation with governors should be improved; and (b) the provision of support and training should be based on better anticipation of need and more consistent delivery;
- governing bodies should be helped to make satisfactory arrangements for the clerking of meetings.

In order to provide effective support to school management:

- (a) guidance should be offered to schools on self-evaluation; and (b) judgements reported to schools on the quality and implementation of their plans;
- a development programme should be agreed for school managers, including an induction programme for new and acting headteachers, and the part which LEA provision will play in it set out.

In order to support the improvement of teaching in line with the intentions of the Education Development Plan:

- a coherent programme of professional development should be produced which helps schools to identify needs and sources of support.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

In order to improve the planning of the education service:

- a full and coherent statement, drawing on the various plans produced to date, should set out how the LEA's main responsibilities in relation to schools are to be exercised, specifying targets, performance measures and timescales;
- an approach to consultation and communication with the LEA's partners should be defined and pursued, designed to enable their full and timely engagement in forming and reviewing policy and action.

In order to tackle the poor condition of school buildings:

- plans for school organisation, school improvement and building condition should be coherently linked;
- the quality of condition surveys and other information to schools on repairs and maintenance should be stepped up;
- the effectiveness and the value for money of the Commissioning Unit should be improved; and (b) priority given to Best Value reviews of cleaning, grounds maintenance and other premises services.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

In order to improve provision for special educational needs:

- a re-statement of LEA policy on special educational needs should be presented for consultation, combined with proposals for specialist provision and targets for improvement in LEA support for schools and pupils;
- (a) all statements of special educational needs (excluding legitimate exceptions) should be prepared within the required timescale; and (b) reviews of statements undertaken rigorously and reported on time;
- the roles, working practices and deployment of special educational needs support services, in relation both to pupils and to advice on school-wide issues, should be clearly set out;
- coherent management of support services should be introduced, including effective exchange of information among the services, pertinent discussion and training on common issues, and clear evaluation of their work;
- (a) the funding for services that is not directly associated with statutory responsibilities and with action within the Education Development Plan should be delegated to schools; and (b) funding for statements of special educational needs should be speedily devolved to secondary schools in the first instance;
- systems should be put in place (a) to monitor and advise on the quality of school provision for special educational needs and its outcomes and (b) to ensure that fruitful connections are made with mainstream school improvement activity.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

In order to ensure positive action on school places:

- clear working arrangements to progress the recommendations made in the new School Organisation Plan should be established;
- the review of provision for special educational needs should be moved on rapidly;
- an approach to sixth form provision should be fixed within the School Organisation Plan.

In order to improve provision for pupils excluded from schools:

- better alternative education for those younger pupils permanently excluded from school should be provided as a matter of urgency;

- the monitoring of alternative provision in Key Stage 4 should be stepped up.

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- funding for behaviour support to secondary schools with distinct needs should be delegated, with the work of the peripatetic team concentrated in schools where poor behaviour is a rare, though still troubling factor;
- the issue of behaviour should be a priority for the inspectorate and special needs support services in their contacts with schools.

In order to improve the contribution of the education service to inter-agency work on pupils' welfare:

- (a) an investigation should be made of communication between schools and Social Services to establish the extent of difficulties; and (b) action taken to remedy them;
- the required action on the education and welfare of children looked-after by the Council should be pursued urgently with Social Services.

In order to raise standards of attainment of ethnic minority pupils:

- schools and community interests should be consulted closely on the formula to be used to allocate the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant from April 2000;
- the structure and management of the services working on equal opportunities and ethnic minority achievement should be simplified and their work based on a clear statement of policy, specifying what other services will also contribute;
- schools should be supported in forming and following their future plans to use the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, with good practice in analysing pupils' progress and raising their achievement disseminated.

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**Office for Standards in Education
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE**

Tel: 0171 421 6800

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Walsall LEA
The Civic Centre
Darwell Street
WALSALL
WS1 1DQ