



Office for Standards
in Education

Trafford

Local Education Authority

Inspection Report

Date of Inspection: May 2004

Reporting Inspector:

Rosemary Matthews HMI



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Contents	Page
Basic information	v
Summary	1
Introduction	1
Main findings	2
Recommendations	3
Section 1: Corporate leadership of education	4
Summary table of judgements	4
Corporate planning for education and its implementation	4
Decision-making	5
Targeting of resources	6
Leadership by senior officers	6
Strategic partnerships	7
Support for Early Years	7
Support for 14-19 education	8
Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation	9
Summary table of judgements	9
The strategy for school improvement and its implementation	9
The LEA's monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools and the targeting of support	10
Effectiveness of the LEA's identification of, and intervention in, underperforming schools	10
Asset management planning	11
Providing school places	11
Admissions to schools	12
Section 3: Support to improve education in schools	13
Summary table of judgements	13

Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement	13
Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3	14
Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy and Traveller children	14
Support for gifted and talented pupils	15
The supply and quality of teachers	15
Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management	16
Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement	16
Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)	18
Summary table of judgements	18
The strategy for SEN	18
Statutory obligations	19
SEN functions to support school improvement	20
Value for money	20
Section 5: Support for social inclusion	22
Summary table of judgements	22
The strategy for social inclusion	22
Provision for pupils educated other than at school	23
Support for attendance	24
Support for behaviour	24
Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection	25
Provision for looked after children	25
Appendix A	27
Record of Judgement Recording Statements	27
Appendix B	31
Context of the inspection	31
Context of the LEA	322
The performance of schools	322
Funding data for the LEA	34

Basic information

Name of LEA:	Trafford Local Education Authority
LEA number:	358
Address of LEA:	PO Box 40, Town Hall Talbot Road Stretford Manchester M32 0EL
Reporting Inspector:	Rosemary Matthews HMI
Date of Inspection:	May 2004

Summary

Introduction

Trafford, one of the 10 metropolitan councils making up the Greater Manchester area, is a borough of considerable diversity. Industry, commerce, towns and villages blend together and affluence and deprivation sit side-by-side. Pockets of significant social deprivation present high incidences of crime and disorder, health inequalities and barriers to higher education. The schooling system is equally diverse; secondary education is based on selection at age 11 and almost one quarter of schools is denominational.

Standards of attainment are good. As one of the highest achieving authorities, Trafford's pupils make good progress and perform consistently well. Attainment at all key stages is above or well above national averages and better than similar authorities¹, although there remains variation in the performance of individual schools. Higher level performance is particularly noteworthy.

There have been some significant changes in the education department since the previous inspection. The directorate has been restructured, local education authority (LEA) functions are now undertaken as part of a developing multi-agency children and young people's service (CYPS), and the authority has been awarded Children's Trust status. The senior management team has been restructured from 1 April 2004 to enable senior managers to assume more strategic roles in bringing together services providing direct support to children, young people and their families.

¹ Trafford LEA's statistical neighbours are: Stockport, Sefton, Solihull, Wirral, Bury, Bromley, Southend, Croydon, City of Bristol and Redbridge.

Main findings

Summary: Trafford is a highly satisfactory LEA. It has made highly satisfactory and measured progress since its previous inspection and its capacity for further improvement is also highly satisfactory. The LEA has addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection; it has established good relations with its schools, and offers a very responsive range of services. It is able to evaluate well its own strengths and weaknesses, although sharper measurement of success criteria in planning is needed to assess its progress accurately. The LEA now faces the challenge of redefining its key functions, in consultation with schools and other partners, to make the best use of its finite capacity and resources as it tackles an ambitious agenda to develop integrated and inclusive provision for children and young people while maintaining its high educational standards.

Areas of strength	Areas of weakness/for development
Corporate leadership of education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council priorities addressed well • Strong leadership by senior officers • Good relationships with schools • Strong progress in important partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crucial link between inclusion and attainment not sufficiently clearly stated in plans • Criteria for judging progress and success not always precise in corporate plans • Corporate financial information to schools
Strategy for education and its implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standards in schools • Monitoring, challenge, support and intervention in schools, including the quality and use of data • Managing school place planning and admissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some success criteria, milestones and costs too imprecise in strategic plans • Sharing information on all schools causing concern with key members and diocesan authorities
Support to improve education in schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective development of self-evaluation in schools and a consistent focus on building their capacity for self-improvement, including support for governors • Good knowledge of schools • Aspects of services to support school management • Helping schools to attract and keep teachers through good support for professional development linked to programmes for recruitment, retention and workforce reform • Significant progress in curriculum support for information and communication technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of consistently measurable success criteria and milestones in service planning • Use of the LEA's finite capacity not yet clear in the rationale for the differentiation of support to schools
Support for special educational needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ambitious strategy founded upon wide and open consultation • Improved responsiveness of support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consistently measurable success criteria and milestones in action plans • Poor forecasting and reactive management of the budget • Completion time for statutory assessment
Support for social inclusion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes made in progress towards integrated and inclusive provision for Trafford pupils • The development of an integrated data system and single case manager for vulnerable pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficiently clear definition of inclusion to encompass all aspects of work in the new CYPS • Weak methodology for measuring the cost effectiveness of provision for social inclusion • Systems for demonstrating no child is lost to education

Recommendations

Key recommendations

Planning:

- Ensure that success criteria, milestones and resources in all plans are sufficiently precise so that progress can be assessed accurately, demands on the capacity of CYPS reviewed regularly, and cost effectiveness determined.

Inclusion:

- Define more clearly the inclusion strategy, and its links to higher attainment and better outcomes for children and young people.

Special educational needs:

- Ensure that monitoring systems are applied rigorously and regularly to control the budget for special educational needs (SEN) within estimates, while fulfilling the authority’s responsibilities for SEN.

Other recommendations

Corporate leadership of education

School budgets: urgently rectify problems with corporate financial information and invoice payment and encourage schools to adopt cheque-book management.

Strategy for education and its implementation

Monitoring of schools: specify more clearly the differentiated allocation of time for the monitoring of schools.
Intervention in schools: share regularly information about all schools causing concern with key members and diocesan authorities.

Support to improve education in schools

Support for special educational needs

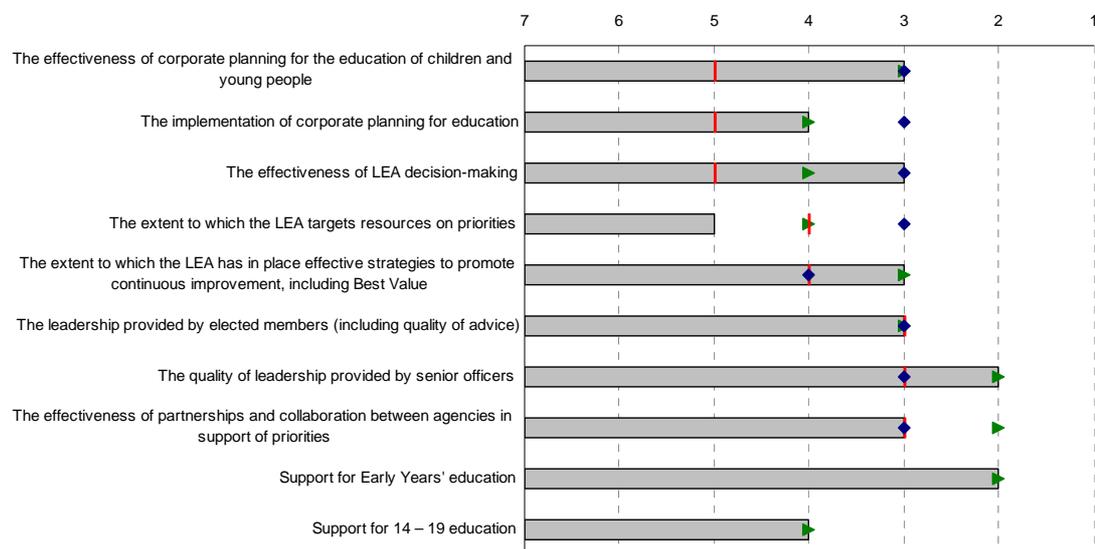
Statutory assessment: give high priority to improving the process and time taken to prepare statutory assessment, and report progress regularly to elected members.

Support for social inclusion

Pupils’ behaviour: develop the lesson records of specialist support staff further to include clearer details of the skills that need to be acquired by targeted pupils to improve their behaviour.
Health and safety: develop clear procedures for ensuring that all curriculum health and safety updates are circulated to schools in a timely way.
Looked after children: complete personal education plans for all looked after children.
Children not in schools: strengthen systems already in place in order to demonstrate no child is lost to education.

Section 1: Corporate leadership of education

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

Corporate planning for education and its implementation

1. At the time of the previous inspection, these aspects of Trafford's work were unsatisfactory. Corporate planning is now highly satisfactory and its implementation is sound. Members and officers have a shared vision that all children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable, should enjoy a good quality of life and develop as confident and responsible adults. This vision is being put into practice through good leadership from senior officers and highly satisfactory decision-making. The careful establishment of CYPS is bringing together all the main agencies to provide a multi-disciplinary service for children and young people, their families and schools, and is forging important and complex strategic partnerships.

2. The high priority that Trafford has long given to education is now made clear in corporate plans. The authority has responded positively to a recommendation from its previous inspection to improve the planning and evaluation of its services although, with the realignment of services forming CYPS, this process is not yet complete.

3. Corporate plans are closely linked to departmental plans and matched to the cycle of financial planning. However, relationships between plans are not always coherent, their presentation occasionally lacks clarity, and the criteria against which their success is judged

are often insufficiently precise. In addition, procedures to co-ordinate work across different departments are not yet fully in place. Systems to ensure corporate priorities are implemented, chiefly through an annual planning and performance management cycle, are rightly being formalised and strengthened.

4. The strong emphasis on inclusion and lifelong learning includes support for early years education and, more recently, for 14-19 education. This emphasis is backed by a growing range of initiatives targeted at vulnerable groups, which are leading to improvements, for example in the achievement of boys and pupils from minority ethnic groups. However, the essential link between inclusion and improved attainment for all children and young people is not stated sufficiently clearly in the service's strategic and operational plans.

Recommendation

- Define more clearly the inclusion strategy, and its links to higher attainment.

5. The authority's establishment of the CYPS is in line with national policy on providing for the needs of children and young people. Members and officers acknowledge that much remains to be done. For example, while there are several instances of the beneficial effects of a multi-agency approach on individual children and young people, a wider impact cannot yet be demonstrated. The most effective way of establishing multi-disciplinary teams has yet to be decided and how to incorporate health services into the provision is still under consideration. Sensibly, CYPS has identified the completion of a succinct preventative strategy for the inclusion of vulnerable pupils and the implementation of robust processes for continued improvement as key priorities for action.

Decision-making

6. The quality of decision-making by both members and officers has improved from unsatisfactory to highly satisfactory. Clear procedures for making decisions are followed well. Decisions are made in a timely fashion and recorded appropriately. Thorough consultation with stakeholders, together with officers' good knowledge of schools, enables executive members to be well advised before matters of policy are considered, although the range of options offered is sometimes limited by demands on officers' time.

7. The delegation of operational decision-making to officers is clear and effective. Members are well informed and are offered good advice through frequent contacts with senior officers, equipping them to make and challenge decisions appropriately. However, monitoring of the implementation of members' and officers' decisions is not sufficiently thorough. All elected members are able to gain information from officers on request. While opposition members feel that they are insufficiently involved in decision-making, the council recognises, rightly, that rigorous scrutiny is important so that issues are not overlooked in the streamlined decision-making process that now operates. Accordingly, the cross-party overview and scrutiny committee for CYPS operates well, increasingly challenging and influencing policy and procedures. For example, the scrutiny of promoting positive mental health in schools made an important contribution to the draft preventative strategy.

Targeting of resources

8. The allocation of resources to priorities is unsatisfactory, because of poor budget monitoring and difficulties with corporate financial information to schools. Despite these problems, however, many of the other elements of the allocation of resources are considerably better than at the time of the previous inspection.

9. Resources per pupil from the Formula Spending Share are lower than the average for metropolitan authorities. The council has, for the last few years, funded education at slightly over the Standard Spending Assessment and Formula Spending Share levels and resources have been consciously committed to areas which were identified previously as weak. Nevertheless, central resources are tight, with the total cost of LEA central functions being £230 per pupil, compared with an average for metropolitan authorities of £300 and for all England of £325. In some areas, such as asset management planning, this has at times led to constraints on capacity.

10. As described in more detail in Section 4, SEN budgets have been substantially overspent for the past three years. When combined with the overspending on children's social services, this causes considerable pressures on the CYPS budget. The implementation of a new corporate computer system has created difficulties for schools with invoice payment and financial information, particularly for the 50% which have not chosen to have their own cheque books and pay their own invoices. Processes for consulting schools on budget issues are highly satisfactory; the LEA challenges and supports schools well, which has helped them with budget management difficulties.

Recommendations

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urgently rectify problems with corporate financial information and invoice payment.• Encourage all schools to adopt cheque-book management. |
|--|

Leadership by senior officers

11. This has improved from highly satisfactory to good. Senior officers have a sincerely-held vision to provide better outcomes for children and young people by meeting their all-round needs, and are working hard to implement the vision through the development of a Children's Trust and integrated, multi-agency services. Significantly, the LEA's preparation for this inspection demonstrates that it is able to evaluate well its strengths and weaknesses.

12. The commitment to school improvement remains steadfast. Schools receive an appropriate balance of support and challenge, which helps them to achieve high standards. Relationships with schools are good, as officers seek to influence them while respecting their autonomy. Frequent meetings and communication ensure that schools' views are taken fully into account in reaching difficult decisions.

13. The chief executive of CYPS leads its work very well. His considered principles enable him to lead the service with confidence. His commitment to meeting the needs of

children and young people is widely respected by the service, schools, elected members and partners. Senior officers have supported him well. The recently implemented senior management structure is well matched to requirements for successful leadership of a multi-disciplinary service, and consideration is now being given to restructuring middle management.

Strategic partnerships

14. Collaboration with partners remains highly satisfactory, indicating good progress in transitional arrangements for joint work with most other services and agencies. Core to the council's aims, partnerships at all stages are underpinned by determination to improve opportunities for children, young people and families.

15. To this end, the community strategy for 2003-2005, developed by the Trafford partnership board, is a significant achievement in work with partners and the local community. Organised through broad themes, this presents a clear and ambitious vision and framework for key plans and for co-ordinating the work of strategic groups. Aims and intentions clearly promote lifelong learning and fully support the work of CYPS. Within CYPS, its two overarching partnerships, for lifelong learning and for children and young people, have made important contributions to the work of schools and local communities and a range of contributory multi-agency partnerships is working successfully. However, coherence at all levels is not yet assured as links and shared indicators for evaluating success are not fully established, limiting evaluation of the cost effectiveness of partnership activities and their impact on the service's work.

16. Recognising fundamental differences in the way agencies work, considerable progress has been made by CYPS in carefully bringing together the main stakeholders to create the strategic infrastructure for the new service and to secure arrangements for its governance. The organisational and commissioning means through which the service will be delivered is not yet fully in place, but its ambitious draft strategic plan for the next three years fully recognises effective joint working as crucial to success. Officers meet regularly with diocesan authorities who are in no doubt that schools receive good support, for example on asset management planning. However, as information on schools causing concern to the LEA is not shared, the contribution of diocesan authorities to school improvement is reduced.

Support for Early Years

17. The authority provides good support for early years education. Integral to corporate planning and that of CYPS, its contribution to lifelong learning is furthered well and the majority of targets for increasing and maintaining the quality and quantity of provision have been achieved and often exceeded.

18. The quality of provision in early years is high, with no nursery education setting graded as unsatisfactory following an inspection. Other registered childcare settings have been assessed as meeting national standards and are generally of a good quality. Although progress in promoting integrated childcare and early education services has been somewhat limited, there are specific examples of successful joint working, particularly in areas of disadvantage. The LEA has provided good support for Foundation Stage practitioners

through a combination of advisory staff and specialist seconded teachers. The level and quality of support are appreciated by both maintained and non-maintained sectors.

19. Implementation plans for the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership have been driven by Sure Start targets. However, despite focused leadership and good participation by LEA officers and members, this partnership has not been pivotal to the work in early years and the structure is currently under review.

20. Statutory responsibilities have been met regarding nursery education for three- and four-year-olds, although the demand for places is not entirely congruent with areas of provision. Increased parental demand for provision in the private sector, leading to surplus places in the public sector, leaves the authority facing considerable pressures on future funding.

Support for 14-19 education

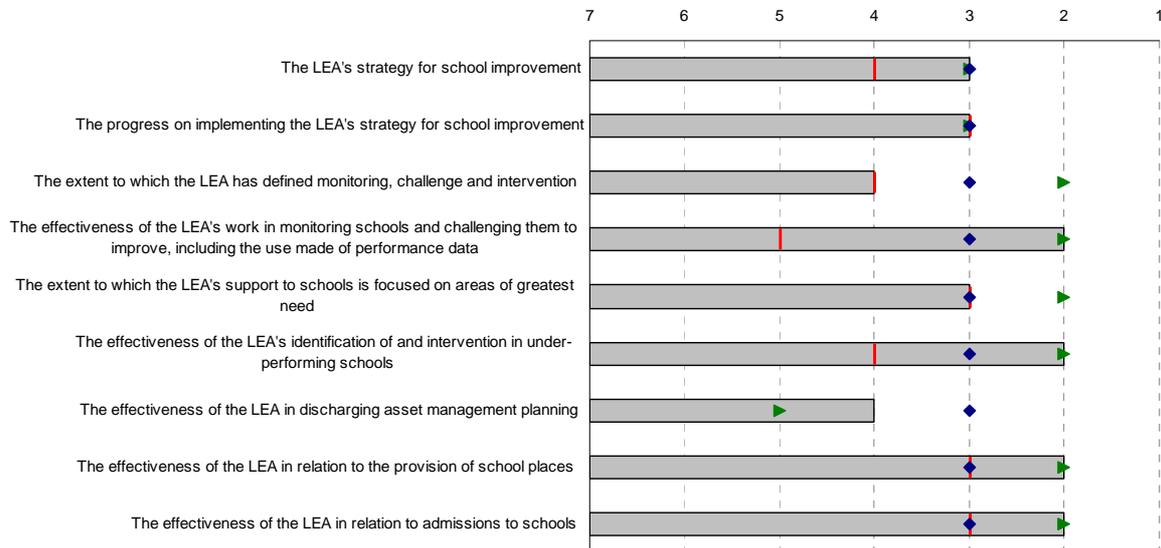
21. The LEA provides satisfactory support for 14-19 education. Falling within the remit of the Trafford learning partnership, the authority's draft strategy is in the early stages of implementation. Developed by all providers, this advocates corporate aims for lifelong learning and is a significant step forward. The strategy clearly details a commitment to flexible, relevant provision backed by comprehensive support and guidance for successful transition to further and higher education and training.

22. The framework for action, involving schools, CYPS, colleges and the Connexions service, is well matched to key objectives. These objectives include an increased flexibility project at Key Stage 4, address concerns over a drop in rates of retention at age 17, and specifically target young people at risk of educational disengagement. Much has been achieved in a relatively short time. The focus on appropriate provision has resulted in good collaboration between 11-16 schools and local further education (FE) colleges for the benefit of pupils at Key Stage 4. Increased flexibility at Key Stage 4 in particular has been successful in significantly reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training. However, within a diverse system of schooling where all seven grammar schools have sixth-form provision, some secondary schools are sceptical about the implementation of the strategy post-16. In reality, provision for higher achieving pupils in FE colleges complements that available from schools, but the LEA is in no doubt that increased choice will require sensitive discussions with grammar schools over post-16 funding arrangements.

23. Currently, the Connexions service, now within CYPS, is working well, particularly on preventative work with specific groups of young people.

Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation

Summary table of judgements



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The strategy for school improvement and its implementation

24. The LEA's strategy for school improvement and its implementation is highly satisfactory, well linked to school place planning and investment in buildings. The Education Development Plan (EDP) for 2002-2007, as part of the LEA's strategic plan and as the major operational plan for CYPS, successfully addresses corporate priorities. It identifies a coherent and feasible key strategic role for the LEA in promoting lifelong learning, ensuring successful schools and advocating inclusion. However, links to other key plans are not sufficiently developed within all priority areas, missing opportunities for combining actions to promote inclusion. Team plans and strengthening procedures for performance management ensure that officers are aware of their role in delivering the council's objectives.

25. Based on a comprehensive audit of local needs, extensive consultation with schools, and thorough evaluation, activities are now well aligned to intended outcomes. However, some success criteria, milestones and resource allocations are too imprecise to measure progress and cost effectiveness. The LEA's strong belief in improvement through influence, rather than direction, is very well demonstrated through its model of devolvement of resources to an Excellence Cluster of schools, backed by an adviser to monitor and challenge progress. Careful monitoring results in suitable adjustments to the EDP, with an impressive feature of evaluation involving doctorate students from a local university, themselves senior

managers in Trafford schools. Most schools are satisfied with the EDP and rate its implementation accordingly.

26. An unfailing determination to ensure that pupils succeed underpins the very strong partnership between the LEA and its schools. Schools are well supported, rigorously challenged and receive timely and appropriate intervention. Performance in all types of schools is often above, and never falls below, the average of similar authorities; gender differences have reduced, the proportion of good or very good schools has increased, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of schools causing concern, and attendance has improved. Targets remain challenging and additional targets for higher level performance are widespread in schools. Apart from English and mathematics at Key Stage 2, where improvement has stalled, as it has nationally, statutory targets are well within reach.

The LEA's monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools and the targeting of support

27. The LEA has defined the purposes of monitoring, challenge and intervention clearly but it has not defined how monitoring will be applied differentially, according to the needs of individual schools.

Recommendation

- Specify more clearly the differentiated allocation of time for the monitoring of schools.

28. Monitoring, challenge and intervention are effective. The quality and use of performance data have improved significantly and are now good, significantly improving the level of challenge to schools, which extends beyond the setting of rigorous targets. The LEA knows its schools well and their needs are identified accurately. Support and intervention are well targeted and effective, although the rationale for the allocation of support which is free to schools, and that which is available for them to purchase, is not sufficiently clear and not always understood fully by them. All schools receive up to three visits per year, which has contributed to the very positive relationships that now exist between the LEA and its schools. This level of support is well received and schools praise the quality of work from visiting officers, in particular link advisers, who offer good assistance with self-evaluation. Notes of visits are routinely completed by link advisers and are of a satisfactory standard. However, where recommended actions are included, these are not consistently evaluative. The quality of intervention has been good since the previous inspection, and has resulted in the LEA successfully supporting all schools that have been placed in its own or Ofsted's formal categories of concern.

Effectiveness of the LEA's identification of, and intervention in, underperforming schools

29. The LEA's support for, and intervention in, underperforming schools has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. It has been highly successful in removing schools from Ofsted's formal categories of concern. One high school has, however, recently

been placed in special measures, but the LEA has acted very quickly and effectively to support the senior management team and governors.

30. The LEA's knowledge of its underperforming schools is good. It uses data and school self-evaluation effectively to target any support that may be required and all schools receive the necessary level and quality of support. Elected members receive a wide variety of information on services and on the progress of schools in Ofsted's categories of concern. However, because information on all schools causing concern is only shared with two senior members, the ability of key members to evaluate the effectiveness of the LEA is constrained. Diocesan authorities are also not informed of these concerns. The recently agreed protocol for sharing notes of visits with governing bodies, although established relatively late, will further support their effectiveness in the self-management of schools.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the authority can reasonably discharge its statutory functions by sharing regularly information about all schools causing concern with key members and diocesan authorities.

Asset management planning

31. Asset management planning is satisfactory, with many of the processes for prioritisation of resources being good. In the 2002 assessment of its asset management processes, the LEA was judged by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as being compliant with their requirements and as having elements of good practice. In 2003, data supplied to the DfES by Trafford were appraised as being unsatisfactory because of a backlog of condition surveys and the moderation of suitability surveys. Since that time, however, action has been taken to address this problem and the backlog is planned to be cleared by this September. Despite this, the LEA has continued to maintain good information on schools' condition and suitability and has used it well in conjunction with schools, including those in the aided sector, to prioritise capital investment.

32. The LEA links its asset management planning well with school places planning and school improvement issues, particularly in the use of capital investment to help to stimulate improvement in a secondary school with falling rolls. It works well with schools to help them to make the best use of their devolved capital funding. This has ensured that these resources are used in accordance with asset management planning priorities.

Providing school places

33. School places planning is good, with successful action being taken to tackle surplus places in both the primary and secondary sectors. The school organisation committee works effectively. It has been well serviced by the LEA and has been prepared to take difficult decisions; no decisions have been referred to the adjudicator.

34. Primary surplus places, at 6.5%, are below the lowest quartile for metropolitan authorities. Action has been taken to amalgamate primary schools in two areas of the borough and further amalgamation is planned in areas where pupil numbers are declining.

Surplus places overall in the secondary sector, at 5.9%, are also low. At the time of the previous inspection there were three secondary schools with substantial surplus places. One of these, an aided school, has now become sufficiently popular to expand its intake. In the other two, community schools, positive action has been taken through links between school improvement, capital investment, partnerships with FE colleges and regeneration initiatives to aid their recovery.

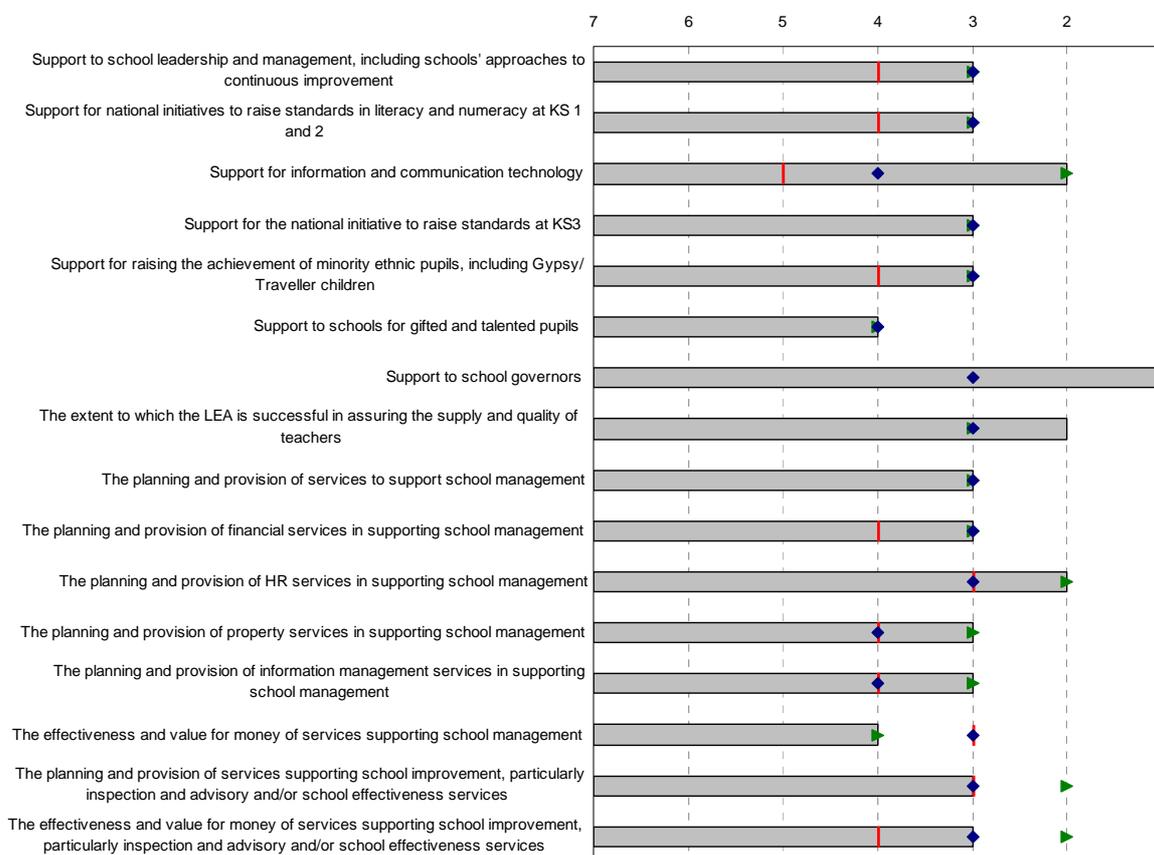
Admissions to schools

35. The management of admissions is good. Since the previous inspection, a comprehensive review of working practices has been conducted. Information to parents has improved and is now good. Electronic mapping is being used to improve place allocation and the simplified application form helps move the LEA towards online applications. Development and training of staff have led to a speeding up of the appeals process.

36. Admission arrangements are fully compliant with the Code of Practice and have been altered to give first priority to looked after children. Secondary admissions are necessarily complex because of the variety of different types of schools. There is, however, good co-operation between the LEA and secondary schools to mitigate potential difficulties and to work towards co-ordinated admissions arrangements.

Section 3: Support to improve education in schools

Summary table of judgements



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Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement

37. Support for leadership and management is highly satisfactory. The previous inspection recommended improved support to schools to implement self-evaluation effectively. Progress has been good and relationships between the LEA and its schools have strengthened. Ofsted inspection evidence since 2000 shows leadership and management, the quality of education and the quality of work in monitoring and evaluating performance in schools above that found in similar authorities and nationally. Over the same period, there has been a significant reduction in the number of schools causing concern.

38. The LEA has given a high priority to developing the capacity of schools to support their own improvement and senior managers are offered suitable opportunities to develop

their leadership roles. The self-evaluation framework, which is updated regularly, forms an effective focus for all link advisers' visits to schools, and challenge and support have been strengthened by the much improved quality of data. Services to support school management are, overall, highly satisfactory and support to governors remains very good. Nevertheless, the growing capacity of schools to be self-improving and discriminating purchasers of services is not yet replicated in the purchasing of support, as a considerable amount is provided without charge.

39. Ofsted inspection evidence also shows the quality of teaching in schools as above that found in similar authorities and nationally. Contributory factors include the secure implementation of national initiatives and satisfactory progress in collecting and disseminating best practice, particularly through co-ordinator and subject network meetings and the current development of a web-based directory of expertise. In addition, support for information and communication technology in the curriculum, previously unsatisfactory, is now good. Successful work on the recruitment and retention of teachers is well linked with support for continuing professional development and workforce reform.

Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3

40. Support to raise standards at Key Stage 3 is highly satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 and performance in all core subjects, particularly at the higher levels, is above that found in similar authorities and nationally; rates of improvement are at least in line with those elsewhere.

41. Key Stage 3 development is secure within the EDP. Here, the LEA has correctly identified transition across phases as a key priority as secondary schools receive pupils from a very large number of primary schools, both from within and beyond Trafford.

42. Much improved data now identify underperformance both in schools and by pupil groups. Additional support, which furthers the capacity of schools for self-improvement, is well focused. Support for newly-appointed heads of department and newly qualified teachers has been a particular priority and is showing evidence of positive effect. Co-ordination of the Key Stage 3 strategy at a senior level within the schools is also contributing to its impact and ensuring links to other areas of school improvement.

Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy and Traveller children

43. Support for minority ethnic pupils has improved since the last inspection and is now highly satisfactory. Previously, data about the attainment of minority ethnic pupils were not collected. The LEA now publishes and analyses good quality data, including progress measured by the value added to achievement. The data are not complete, however, because the achievement and progress of Traveller children are collected separately, despite the majority of Traveller pupils already included in the data of their local schools.

44. The LEA commissioned a detailed report on minority ethnic achievement in 2003. Its recommendations have been incorporated into the EDP. The operational plan for the service is well aligned to these recommendations and linked to the broader work of the school

improvement service, within which support for minority ethnic pupils is suitably located. Performance of minority ethnic pupils broadly matches national trends, except that achievement by pupils of Indian heritage is below that in similar authorities. The improvement in data means that areas of underperformance are now correctly identified and suitable actions contained in service planning.

45. Support to improve the attainment of minority ethnic pupils reflects the priority given to the development of school self-improvement. Redrafting of the framework for school self-evaluation is in progress to integrate race and equality issues across each of its sections. Support for English as an additional language now rightly concentrates on building capacity within schools to meet the needs of these pupils.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

46. Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. Performance of pupils in Trafford schools at the higher levels at Key Stages 2 and 3 is above that found in similar authorities and nationally. The LEA has used national definitions for the identification of gifted and talented pupils in schools, but presently it only collects data to track the progress of identified pupils within its Excellence Cluster. It has not yet identified all gifted and talented pupils in order to inform its planning and to monitor their progress.

47. Reflecting its objective for school self-improvement by acting as a broker and facilitator, the LEA is supporting some good collaborative work from specialist schools. It is also developing joint working with external bodies and with its own specialist services such as the six music centres, particularly to provide opportunities for talented pupils. Best practice is shared through link advisers, regular meetings of co-ordinators and via the newsletters from the school improvement service. Summer schools have been well received, but the LEA has not assessed the longer-term impact of these.

The supply and quality of teachers

48. Work to assure the supply and quality of teachers in Trafford is good. Without any external funding for a recruitment strategy manager, the LEA is achieving coherence in its work on recruitment and retention, professional development and workforce reform through effective co-ordination by a senior adviser.

49. There is a relatively high rate of retention of teachers, but there are recruitment difficulties principally in core subjects for the secondary phase. To support recruitment, the LEA is beginning a graduate training programme in collaboration with a group of North-West authorities. It also provides a successful teacher supply agency and an effective pooled recruitment system for its primary schools on a costed basis.

50. A very clear and helpful framework for the professional development of teachers from newly-qualified staff through to headship indicates potential needs, sources of support, and routes of progression. A suitable range of purchased in-service training, using local, national and brokered sources is offered. Two valuable projects are under development to support school improvement; one is using expertise from higher education to track and measure the impact of training on teaching and learning, whilst the other is developing a

website directory of expertise and best practice. Identification of best practice has improved and is shared through newsletters, subject networks, lead teachers and visits by advisers and consultants.

51. Newly-appointed headteachers are well supported by induction programmes, mentoring and link advisers. Suitable support for newly-qualified teachers is provided through a purchased service level agreement; this includes a good example of collaborative working between schools through which best practice in subjects and themes is identified in a range of host schools and visits by newly-qualified teachers facilitated.

Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management

52. The planning and provision of information management services are highly satisfactory, with a secure infrastructure to assist schools. Broadband connections are in place in 93% of schools, with the remainder having the option to install them. However, the information management strategy is now outdated and therefore does not provide sufficient impetus for schools; this is currently being revised in consultation with schools. In the interim, schools vary in their use of information software and electronic communication, not helped by the duplication of information sent to them by fax and hard copy.

53. As identified elsewhere, the quality and range of performance information available to schools are now good. Schools have access to a good range of software linked to their pupil data systems, enabling them to develop their own use of this information, and they receive effective training and support to do so. The service agreement for support provided from the corporate centre is in the process of being updated.

Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement

54. These functions for the support of school improvement are highly satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection, operational planning was not sufficiently in line with the EDP and the strategic plan, and the work of the advisory services was insufficiently differentiated to needs.

55. Service plans in CYPS now link to strategic plans and the EDP. An annual planning and performance management cycle has been introduced across all services with increasing use of consultation with partners and clients contributing to service planning. However, the success criteria and milestones identified in many of the service plans are not sufficiently precise to assess accurately and regularly the progress being made.

56. Schools have strong confidence in the capacity of the LEA to support school improvement. The school improvement service remains a small, very responsive and effective service, using a clear and costed service level agreement for additional support to schools and brokering support if local expertise is not available. Tailor-made packages of support for schools causing concern have been particularly effective. The differentiated entitlement of schools to monitoring and support funded centrally is now addressed by variation in the length of time taken to conduct visits. However, systems presently in place by which to plan and analyse the deployment of the service are not sufficiently comprehensive to ensure a consistent match to service and school priorities and to assess the

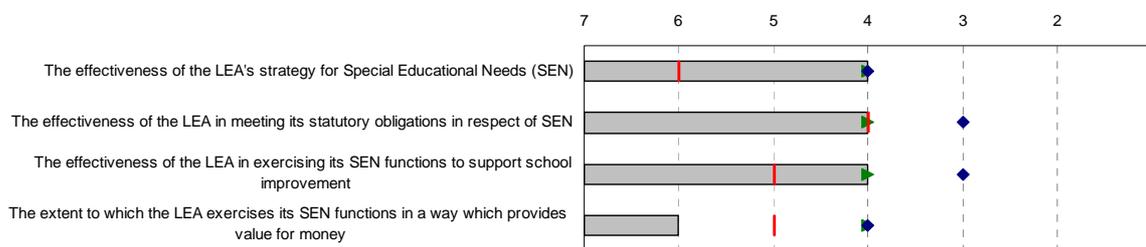
demands on present and future capacity of the service. Nevertheless, although value for money is good as schools perform well, the absence of sharp success criteria in service planning and of detail in the analysis of staff deployment means that cost effectiveness is less clear.

Recommendation

- Ensure that success criteria, milestones and resources in all strategic and operational plans are sufficiently precise so that progress can be assessed accurately, demands on the capacity of CYPS reviewed regularly, and cost-effectiveness determined.

Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

The strategy for SEN

57. The strategy for SEN is satisfactory. As a result of the previous inspection identifying an absence of any effective strategy for SEN and weak planning, the LEA subsequently commissioned a review with an independent chair. Extensive consultation followed, which resulted in the formulation by the LEA of its SEN strategy and policy containing six principal objectives derived from the review's 17 recommendations. The main components of the strategy are now integrated within the EDP. Progress on implementation has been steady, but too slow in a number of important aspects.

58. The strategy for SEN identifies the correct key issues, and sets out an ambitious action plan. Implementing the strategy is, however, only one important strand of fundamental change in this relatively small LEA as it develops integrated services for children. The demands placed upon the LEA to change its methods of management and operation to achieve the benefits of integration, whilst maintaining the quality of services to all its schools and other groups, are very considerable. The LEA, with finite central capacity, has been right to ensure that the steps it takes to implement the SEN strategy reflect the contiguous changes being made to its service structure and that developments can be both embedded and maintained before moving too far onto the next stage. Levels of delegation of SEN funding remain low, but plans are in progress to increase them in 2005. The objective to increase delegation is sound and will allow CYPS to concentrate its expertise on more complex cases of SEN; however, the timescale identified to implement these proposals is ambitious.

59. Difficulties in managing and monitoring the development of the SEN strategy, coupled with significant challenges in forecasting and funding the increasing demands for SEN support, have led to slippage in its implementation. The result has been that some key building blocks of the strategy, such as an agreed and clear definition of inclusion to cover all

services within CYPS, and the development of criteria for entry to, and exit from, levels of support for SEN, have been subject to delay.

60. The detailed action plan for implementation of the strategy, showing timescales, is updated every six months and shared with elected members. The LEA has identified accurately the areas of slippage and reasons for them, and taken action to tackle them in a pragmatic and realistic way. However, schools perceive a delay in implementing some aspects of the strategy and their expectation of increased delegation is overshadowed by their concerns about funding levels and the LEA's capacity to support SEN.

61. Poor forecasting of needs in the past, regular overspending in SEN budgets managed reactively, and continuing high costs of out-of-borough placements present constraints in moving the services and support systems smoothly into the planned model of integrated services. The revised management structure of CYPS identifies clearly the roles and responsibilities for implementation, but effective and regular co-ordination and monitoring remain a high priority. However, the LEA has the capacity to meet its objectives successfully.

Recommendation

- Ensure that action plans contain consistently measurable success criteria and realistic milestones by which to judge progress in the implementation of the SEN strategy, and share the evaluation of progress and reasons for any slippage fully with elected members, schools and relevant partnership groups.

Statutory obligations

62. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its statutory responsibilities. The percentage of pupils with statements in primary and secondary schools is below the levels found in similar authorities and nationally, although the number of statements maintained has risen by approximately one-tenth since the previous inspection.

63. A parental forum has been established successfully and a good parent partnership service is in operation. There is a low incidence of cases referred to the SEN tribunal. Attendance of CYPS staff at annual reviews has improved; this is planned principally at points of transition and, for specific cases, identified by the LEA or schools. The quality of out-of-borough placements is monitored, but there has been some slippage in the coverage of such monitoring due to staffing difficulties.

64. The Audit Commission examined performance in the production of statements as part of the council's 2003 audit plan. It reported too few statutory assessments prepared within the recommended time. There has been a very recent improvement in the time taken to complete statutory assessments as a result of revisions to staffing and sharper monitoring of the process, although performance remains below that of similar authorities and nationally. The Audit Commission made 19 recommendations to the LEA and these are being implemented with urgency; targets set for completion of statements are ambitious given the low starting point of the LEA. Although the LEA's action plan identifies the correct steps to

be taken, success criteria and milestones by which to judge progress accurately are not sufficiently precise.

Recommendation

- Give consistent, high priority to the action plan to improve significantly the process and time taken to prepare statutory assessment, and report progress regularly to elected members.

SEN functions to support school improvement

65. The effectiveness of the LEA in supporting SEN within school improvement remains satisfactory. Support services make regular use of client group surveys to assess their effectiveness and incorporate the results in service plans, which are consistently linked to priorities in the EDP and the strategic plan. Schools judge most SEN support services to be good or improving.

66. Monitoring and evaluation of support for SEN in school improvement have been strengthened by the location of the senior adviser and advisory teacher for SEN within the school improvement service. An evaluation of SEN work in all schools has been completed and reported to the LEA and schools. Recommendations made to schools are now the subject of differentiated visiting to assess progress. The overall strengths and weaknesses identified in the provision for SEN in schools as a result of these visits have been built into the new and comprehensive handbook for SEN co-ordinators. Inclusion is also being supported through monitoring visits to schools by link advisers, the introduction of a new inclusion award for schools and a satisfactory range of training opportunities, which have received positive evaluations from participants.

67. In preparation for the delegation of more SEN support to schools in 2005, criteria for entry to, and exit from, levels of support are under development and partially complete. A programme to build the capacity of schools to use these criteria effectively and efficiently is yet to be developed. Some outreach work between mainstream and special schools is in place, but its provision is arranged by the schools themselves on an *ad hoc* basis. The LEA is developing an essential partnership between its support services, six special schools and the three pupil referral units (PRUs), to promote inclusion and to develop the outreach role as an important component of its support for inclusion.

Value for money

68. Value for money for SEN is poor. Trafford spends considerably more centrally on SEN than other LEAs because its level of delegation remains low. Planning of the SEN budget and its management have been weak; the budget has been overspent by £1 million or more for each of the last three years. Whilst the high costs of out-of-borough placements, the increasing costs of early intervention and the increase in the number of complex cases have added to pressures on the budget, budget management has been reactive and inadequate, and the LEA is not able to assess accurately the effectiveness of its allocation of SEN resources and the value obtained from the expenditure.

69. Elected members have increased the SEN budget annually from reserves to meet this overspending in order to support the development of CYPS and inclusion. Since the previous inspection, the SEN budget has doubled and the number of pupils supported has risen by approximately 50%. Tighter systems to monitor and control the current budget have been implemented in this financial year, with explicit responsibilities assigned to senior staff, and monitoring conducted and co-ordinated monthly. Whilst it is too early to assess the impact of these controls, senior officers recognise the imperative to control spending within agreed estimates and that elected members cannot continue to use reserves to provide an expanding budget.

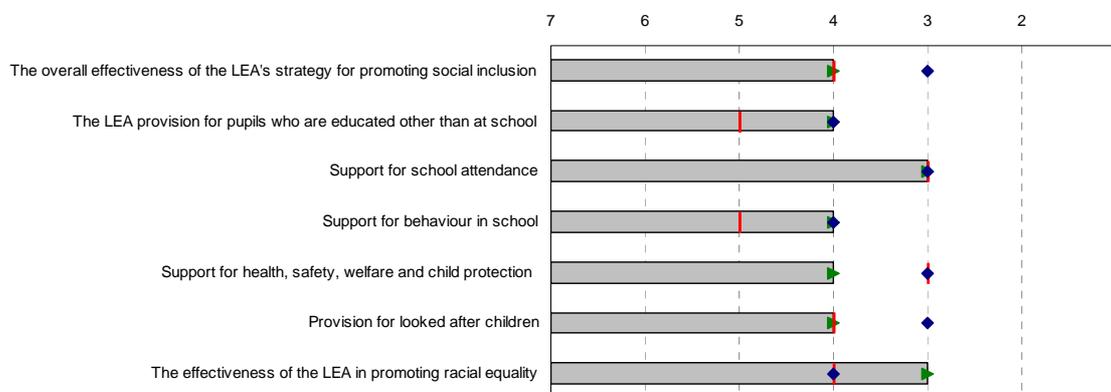
70. Out-of-borough placements, which absorbed nearly half of SEN resources in 2000, have been reduced by one-fifth since 2002-03, but the rapidly increasing costs of such placements have required a rising cash budget and still account for over one-third of the total budget for SEN. There are feasible plans to reduce these placements progressively and to improve provision available within the borough, but the success of these plans is dependent upon achieving strong and accurate budget management as a matter of urgency. Special educational needs transport costs continue to absorb over one-quarter of the SEN budget. The LEA recognises the need to be more precise and demanding on the specification and monitoring of contracts for both transport and out-of-borough placements in order to guarantee value for money.

Recommendation

- Ensure that monitoring systems are applied rigorously and regularly to control the budget for SEN within estimates, whilst fulfilling the authority's responsibilities for SEN.

Section 5: Support for social inclusion

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

The strategy for social inclusion

71. The strategy for promoting social inclusion is satisfactory. Inclusion features prominently in the council's agenda for improvement and is reflected well in the work of CYPS. The LEA has been planning this reorganisation very carefully over the last two years, with senior officers taking measured and timely decisions in defining a service that has Trafford's children at the heart of its provision. This approach has worked well, particularly in ensuring that organisational changes occur simultaneously with redefined staff roles and responsibilities.

72. Some major plans, such as the community strategy and the recently issued CYPS strategic plan, outline ways in which the authority will promote inclusion for its communities, including support for vulnerable pupils. However, the authority has yet to publish a policy statement that clearly outlines all aspects of its strategy for inclusion, which is leading to ambiguity about the nature of the LEA's approach in some schools. Operational plans for the different services that contribute to inclusion are not yet consistently clear in their use of success measures and timescales as indicators of cost effectiveness.

Recommendations

- Define, more clearly, the LEA's inclusion strategy.
- Improve the quality of success measures in individual service plans as an aid to evaluating the impact of the strategy.

73. Procedures for scrutinising the authority's effectiveness in delivering more inclusive provision are generally good, as is information received by members. Data have improved significantly since the previous inspection and now support officers and members effectively in reviewing and targeting provision.

74. Overall, services are working satisfactorily. The new multi-disciplinary approach to support for vulnerable pupils is at an early stage, but officers are well positioned to ensure that this strategy affords coherent provision. Support for behaviour, attendance and looked after children are all appropriate to the needs of schools and their pupils. The LEA's support for pupils educated out of school is improving in direct proportion to the improvements being made in the overall quality of data being provided to schools, officers and members. Effectiveness in promoting racial equality is highly satisfactory, with a multi-agency group taking the lead for race equality across CYPS.

Provision for pupils educated other than at school

75. Provision for pupils educated other than at school is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the LEA has made sound progress in addressing the recommendation to increase the amount of tuition received by this group. All reasonable efforts are now made to provide full-time education.

76. The LEA rapidly ascertains appropriate levels of support for sick children, those with mental health problems, and pregnant school girls. All pupils receive proportionate support based on their personal needs and current medical condition. The quality of home education is assessed well and the LEA is very clear in reporting unsatisfactory provision to parents.

77. Since the previous inspection, significant improvements have been made in the quality and range of pupil data. The LEA's database for pupils educated out of school is accurate and includes most categories of children. However, procedures for those who are not on the roll of a school or who do not have alternative provision are less clear. Officers are confident that no child is lost to education, but systems for demonstrating this require strengthening.

78. With the recent registration of a Key Stage 4 PRU, there is now provision across all key stages for permanently excluded pupils. All PRUs have multi-disciplinary staff and each provides outreach support to pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. Although primary schools are generally satisfied with the current level of support, secondary schools remain to be convinced that recent changes will provide what they feel is needed.

79. Although the overall costs of the service are relatively low when compared to similar LEAs, there is no clear strategy for measuring its cost effectiveness.

Recommendation

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen systems already in place in order to demonstrate no child is lost to education. |
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Support for attendance

80. Support for attendance is highly satisfactory. Attendance is well above national averages at both primary and secondary levels, with the rate of improvement since the previous inspection better than that found nationally in both phases. The LEA is not complacent, and continues to focus on schools and pupils where attendance is a cause for concern. A number of successful initiatives promote attendance, including truancy sweeps with the police. Bespoke training for schools and targeted support for parents whose children have poor attendance records are also used effectively by educational welfare officers.

81. Since the previous inspection, the LEA's support for attendance has been placed under the management of the multi-disciplinary service and reorganised into separate primary and secondary teams with specialist staff deployed according to identified needs in schools. At primary level, each of four education welfare officers is attached to an area cluster of schools and line-managed by a primary link adviser. At secondary level, support is targeted on specific schools. It is too early to judge fully the success of this strategy but, currently, primary schools are more positive than secondary schools. The LEA will be better placed to judge the overall effectiveness of its service when the recently revised attendance strategy is implemented fully.

Support for behaviour

82. The LEA has addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection and is now providing a satisfactory level of support for pupils with behaviour problems. The work of specialist staff, which comes under the auspices of the multi-disciplinary service, is well focused on the specific needs of pupils in schools. The programme for in-school support is clear, logically planned and sensibly uses a combination of withdrawal and in-class support. Individual reports and records of work with targeted pupils are detailed, but planned lesson outcomes sometimes lack specific focus on the skills that need to be acquired by pupils as an aid to improving their behaviour.

Recommendation

- Develop the lesson records of specialist support staff further to include clearer details of the skills that need to be acquired by targeted pupils as an aid to improving their behaviour.

83. The specialist support service is also sensitive to the needs of teachers. There is a range of suitable out-of-school programmes to support pupils with challenging behaviour, in addition to a variety of support materials and courses to aid teachers in their work with these pupils. Improved data and target-setting on exclusions, as part of the link advisers' work with schools, are helping to focus resources more specifically. The LEA's service planning for behaviour support is satisfactory overall, but is weak in respect of success criteria and clear milestones. This means that the service is not yet in a position to assess the cost effectiveness of its provision, despite having relatively low costs when compared to other LEAs. The head of the service is in the early stages of developing a methodology to address this.

Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection

84. These aspects are satisfactory. The LEA takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it meets statutory requirements within health and safety generally, and in its implementation of child protection procedures in particular. The LEA links well with the Area Child Protection Committee, with recent changes establishing a clearer role for LEA nominated officers. There is a range of suitable training courses for designated teachers. A child protection register, with the names of designated teachers, is kept up to date but has yet to be completed fully in terms of information about recent and relevant training. The LEA's officers are aware of this and are beginning to make contact with those schools where there is a gap. The LEA's response to child protection issues is timely and appreciated by schools. The quality of health and safety guidance provided to schools is good. Curriculum health and safety guidance is brokered on a needs basis from other LEAs, but the authority's updating of guidance on curriculum safety issues is inconsistent.

Recommendation

- Develop clear procedures for ensuring that all curriculum health and safety updates are circulated to schools in a timely way.

Provision for looked after children

85. This aspect continues to be satisfactory. There has been an increased emphasis on provision for looked after children, both within and out-of-borough, over the last 18 months because of the organisational change to CYPS and, also, because of greater awareness on the part of members. However, not all the work has been successful and, currently, only 70% of looked after children have completed personal education plans.

Recommendation

- Complete personal education plans for all looked after children.

86. The attainment of looked after children in Trafford follows the national trend but is below the LEA's averages at all key stages. However, attainment at Key Stage 2 is better than the comparable national average, although at Key Stage 4 performance is well below that expected nationally.

87. Those pupils currently in Trafford's care are being supported well. Residential homes have designated study support areas and all looked after pupils have access to computers to aid their work. Each child also has a leisure plan with a pass to local sports centres. The quality of pupil data has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is developing further in response to the LEA's intention to designate single case managers to act as advocates for vulnerable pupils, including looked after children. The LEA has piloted some early data developmental work within its proposed integrated referral, assessment and tracking system in response to these proposals, but it is too early to judge fully the differences that will result from this initiative.

88. Members are taking all reasonable steps to ensure that they meet the council's statutory requirement to act as the corporate parent for Trafford's children in care. They

make regular visits to residential homes and there is a clear plan to reduce the number of pupils in residential care while improving the quality of provision. Information updates on looked after children are provided to members and a corporate parenting group, comprising members and officers, has recently been formed to ensure that appropriate funding and resources are made available to improve provision. This group has yet to develop fully its role into one of overview of provision, but an encouraging start has been made.

Appendix A

Record of Judgement Recording Statements

Name of LEA :	Trafford Local Education Authority
LEA number:	358
Reporting Inspector:	Rosemary Matthews HMI
Date of Inspection:	May 2004

No	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	Fieldwork*
	Context of the LEA		
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	4	NF
	Overall judgements		
0.1	The progress made by the LEA overall	3	
0.2	Overall effectiveness of the LEA	3	
0.3	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	3	
	Section 1: Corporate strategy and LEA leadership		
1.1	The effectiveness of corporate planning for the education of children and young people	3	
1.2	The implementation of corporate planning for education	4	
1.3	The effectiveness of LEA decision-making	3	
1.4	The extent to which the LEA targets resources on priorities	5	
1.5	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value	3	NF
1.6	The leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice)	3	NF
1.7	The quality of leadership provided by senior officers	2	

1.8	The effectiveness of partnerships and collaboration between agencies in support of priorities	3	
1.9	Support for Early Years education	2	
1.10	Support for 14 – 19 education	4	
Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation			
2.1	The LEA's strategy for school improvement	3	
2.2	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement	3	
2.3	The performance of schools	2	
2.4	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge and intervention	4	
2.5	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	2	
2.6	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	3	
2.7	The effectiveness of the LEA's identification of and intervention in underperforming schools	2	
2.8	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	4	
2.9	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	2	
2.10	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	2	
Section 3: Support to school leadership and management, including schools' efforts to support continuous improvement			
3.1	Support to school leadership and management, including support for schools' approaches to continuous improvement	3	
3.2	Support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at KS 1 and 2	3	NF

3.3	Support for information and communication technology	2	NF
3.4	Support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3	3	
3.5	Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/ Traveller children	3	
3.6	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	4	
3.7	Support for school governors	1	NF
3.8	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	2	
3.9	The planning and provision of services to support school management	3	NF
3.9a	The planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management	3	NF
3.9b	The planning and provision of HR services in supporting school management	2	NF
3.9c	The planning and provision of property services in supporting school management	3	NF
3.9d	The planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management	3	
3.10	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school management	4	NF
3.11	The planning and provision of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	3	
3.12	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	3	
Section 4: Support for special educational needs			
4.1	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs	4	
4.2	The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	4	

4.3	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	4	
4.4	The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money	6	
Section 5: Support for social inclusion			
5.1	The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion	4	
5.2	The LEA provision for pupils who have no school place	4	
5.3	Support for school attendance	3	
5.4	Support for behaviour in schools	4	
5.5	Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection	4	
5.6	Provision for looked after children	4	
5.7	The effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality	3	NF

**NF' under fieldwork means that no fieldwork was conducted on this function during this inspection.*

JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 7-point scale:

Grade 1: Very good; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Highly satisfactory; Grade 4: Satisfactory;
Grade 5: Unsatisfactory; Grade 6: Poor; Grade 7: Very poor

[**Note:** in the case of JRS 1: socio-economic context of the LEA and JRS 2.3: performance of schools, grades relate to comparisons against national averages: Grades 1-2: Well above; Grade 3: Above; Grade 4: In line; Grade 5: Below; Grades 6-7: Well below]

Appendix B

Context of the inspection

This inspection of Trafford LEA was carried out by Ofsted in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997.

This report provides a commentary on the inspection findings, including:

- the progress the LEA has made since the time of its previous inspection in June 2000;
- the overall effectiveness of the LEA and its capacity to improve further;
- the LEA's performance in major aspects of its work;
- recommendations on areas for improvement.

The summary is followed by more detailed judgements on the LEA's performance of its individual functions, which sets the recommendations for improvement into context.

All functions of the LEA have been inspected and judgements reached on how effectively they are performed. Not all functions were subject to detailed fieldwork, but in all cases inspectors reached their judgements through an evaluation of a range of material. This included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, data (some of which were provided by the LEA), school inspection information, HMI monitoring reports, and audit reports. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA and a questionnaire seeking the views of all schools on aspects of the work of the LEA. In those areas subject to fieldwork, discussions were held with LEA officers and members, headteachers and governors, staff in other departments of the local authority, diocesan representatives, and other agencies and LEA partners.

The functions that were not subject to detailed fieldwork in this inspection were:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value;• the leadership provided by elected members;• support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at Key stages 1 and 2, and support for information and communication technology;• support for school governors;• the planning, provision and value for money of services to support school management, including financial services, human resources services and property services; |
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- | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality. |
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Inspection judgements are made against criteria that can be found on the Ofsted website. For each inspected function of the LEA an inspection team agrees a numerical grade. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are to be found in Appendix A. These numerical grades must be considered in the light of the full report. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment profile for the education service.

Context of the LEA

Trafford, one of the 10 metropolitan councils making up the Greater Manchester area, is a borough of considerable diversity. Industry, commerce, towns and villages blend together and affluence and deprivation sit side-by-side. Pockets of significant social deprivation present high incidences of crime and disorder, health inequalities and barriers to higher education. Three wards are particularly disadvantaged.

The schooling system is equally diverse. In the primary phase there is a mixture of 10 infant, 10 junior and 53 primary schools. Secondary education is based on selection at age 11; provision comprises 7 grammar schools, all with sixth forms, and 11 high schools, one with post-16 provision. Six are single-sex schools. Five schools have Beacon status and there are 13 specialist schools. Twenty-three primary and four secondary schools are denominational. There are 6 special schools, 3 PRUs and 11 units for pupils with SEN, attached to schools. Two colleges of further education are located within the borough's boundaries. Educational provision is available in a variety of settings for all three- and four-year-olds whose parents seek it. Three-quarters of early years education is provided in 54 nursery units attached to primary and infant schools.

There are currently 2,054 children in school nurseries, 17,515 pupils in primary schools, 16,355 in secondary schools and 474 in special schools, including pupils who receive part-time provision. The percentage of the school population from minority ethnic heritage is broadly in line with the national figure, as is the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds mainly attend five primary and two secondary schools. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in maintained primary and secondary schools is in line with national figures and those of similar authorities, but masks a large variance between schools. The percentage of pupils with statements of SEN in mainstream schools is below average, and in line with the average for special schools.

The performance of schools

The performance of schools in Trafford is good. As one of the highest achieving authorities, pupils make good progress and perform consistently well. Attainment at all key stages is above or well above national averages and better than similar authorities, although there remains variation in the performance of schools. Higher level performance is particularly noteworthy.

Rates of improvement overall are above the national trend and trends in similar authorities. At Key Stages 1 and 2, good progress has been made in reducing the gap between the performance of girls and boys, already standing at less than the national gap.

Despite high performance which exceeded a number of the LEA's targets for 2003, improvement has stalled at Key Stage 2, and Level 4 targets for English and mathematics were not met. With these exceptions, challenging targets for 2004 are well within reach.

Section 10 inspection judgements show a higher proportion of good or very good schools than the national average. In 2004, following a period when no schools were in Ofsted categories of concern, one secondary school was deemed in need of special measures. Currently, seven schools are causing some concern to the LEA.

In 2002/03, attendance in both primary and secondary phases (95.2% and 93.3% respectively) was well above national figures and those for similar LEAs. Unauthorised absence in both phases was below on both measures.

Most recent data on the rate of permanent exclusions from primary schools (0.4%) are above national figures and those for similar LEAs. The rate of exclusion from secondary schools (1.4%) is lower on both comparisons.

Funding data for the LEA

SCHOOLS BUDGET	Trafford	Statistical neighbours average	Metropolitan Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Individual schools budget	2,511	2,632	2,623	2,708
Standards fund delegated	56	49	59	61
Education for under fives	25	90	62	96
Strategic management	21	29	33	29
Special educational needs	196	135	109	120
Grants	21	33	76	53
Access	22	51	53	55
Capital expenditure from revenue	0	21	18	24
TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET	2,853	3,041	3,031	3,145
Schools formula spending share	2,646	2,823	2,812	2,904

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04

LEA BUDGET	Trafford	Statistical neighbours average	Metropolitan Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Strategic management	82	91	115	95
Specific Grants	3	11	12	16
Special educational needs	19	29	25	32
School improvement	16	28	34	36
Access	106	112	102	133
Capital expenditure from revenue	0	1	3	2
Youth and Community	55	54	70	74
TOTAL LEA BUDGET	280	325	362	388

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04

Note:

All figures are net

Averages quoted are mean averages; the original DfES Comparative Tables quote median average figures, not the mean average.

Notes