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IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF  
TOWER HAMLETS  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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

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## INTRODUCTION

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

2. The inspection was in two stages. An initial review, carried out in February 19~ established a picture of the LEA's context, the performance of its schools, its strategy and the management of services. The initial review was based on data, some of which provided by the LEA, on school inspection and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with elected members, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners.

3. The second stage of the inspection, carried out in May 1998, involved studies the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 31 school The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support provided by the LEA contributed to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, was effective in contributing improvements in the school and provided value for money. The review also included a survey which was sent to 90 schools and achieved a 73 per cent response rate.

4. This report draws on material from the initial review and from the school visits together with evidence relevant to the themes drawn from recent HMI visits to Tower Hamlets schools.

## COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5 Tower Hamlets is an education authority, like many others, facing massive and necessary change. It faces many problems which it has not confronted effectively in the past. There are, however, signs of recent progress and every reason for optimism that, under effective new leadership, the Authority will make much better use of its resources than has been the case to date. This report contains many criticisms but also pays tribute to what has been, in many ways, a fresh start.

6 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets serves a largely disadvantaged population in the East End of London. Over the last 20 years or so that population has changed radically. Having been largely white working class, it has become much more ethnically diverse. About half the population is of Bangladeshi heritage, and the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is the highest in the country. Developments in the London docklands have had little impact on the problems many people in Tower Hamlets face. Unemployment is high. The population of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than double the national average. Poverty, poor housing and indifferent health are the reality for many inhabitants of the Borough.

7 In such an area, many pupils begin their education at a disadvantage either because they have little English or because they face difficulties at home. For many years, local authority funding arrangements have sought to compensate for such disadvantage. Tower Hamlets' Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for education - the government's assessment of what it should spend - is at £3608 per pupil, the highest in the country. The Borough also spends £7 million - again the highest in the country - on support of bilingual pupils. It has, furthermore, been outstandingly successful in attracting other public and private finance, the latter partly through the Education Business Partnership which brokers support for schools to the value of £1.9 million.

8 Tower Hamlets attracts a unique level of funding, therefore, because it faces extraordinary levels of deprivation. Despite very high levels of expenditure, the fact remains that attainment in Tower Hamlets' schools is unacceptably low at all levels. Standards have improved, but they remain poor. For example, only 26 per cent of pupils gained five or more A-C grades at GCSE, compared with a national average of 43 per cent. Only 47 per cent of pupils achieved level 4 in the Key Stage 2. English tests, compared with 63 per cent nationally. These figures are unacceptable, because they represent lost potential and a denial of the legitimate aspirations of pupils and their parents.

9 They also represent a poor use of public money. The evidence does not suggest that the expenditure deployed to combat disadvantage in Tower Hamlets since its incorporation in 1990 has achieved its primary objective of raising standards. The reasons for this are complex, and the onus for failure lies with the schools as well as the LEA, but to have used resources inefficiently is doubly unacceptable in so deprived a context.

10. From its inception, the main concern of the LEA was with the quantity of educational provision. In this, it had little choice, since in 1990 Tower Hamlets had too few school places and too few teachers. Problems of teacher recruitment remain, but the LEA now provides sufficient school places, having opened ten new schools since 1990. The level of nursery provision is amongst the highest in the country and the percentage of pupils in post-16 education has risen above the national average. These are significant achievements, but they were not accompanied by a vigorous and coherent drive to raise attainment. There have, indeed, been a variety of initiatives, such as the "Closing the Gap" project, but the culture of "improving upon previous best" has simply been insufficiently ambitious in a context of widespread under-performance. Expectations have been generally far too low.

11. The LEA has also suffered, though perhaps less than other council services, from political experimentation by a previous council administration. In 1986 the Borough was divided into a structure of seven neighbourhoods, each responsible for decision making and service delivery. This is now widely conceded to have been a disaster. It drove up costs and paralysed decision-making. A restructuring of education in 1993 divided the department into "business units" and "clients". Again, this added to bureaucracy, and drove costs up even further. From 1994, the Council was for a considerable time, following a change in administration, preoccupied with the need to reconstitute the Borough as a viable unit.

12. There has also been poor management in the LEA itself. From 1994 to 1997, strategic planning came largely to a standstill. The work of individual services was not given impetus and focus by clear leadership from the centre. Elected members were kept well informed about standards in the schools, thanks to a highly capable Research and Statistics Section, but where there should have been a clear strategy for raising those standards, there was instead a planning and policy vacuum.

13. In these circumstances, not surprisingly, the costs of LEA services spiralled, while their effectiveness was uncertain - and in any case not evaluated. The LEA delegates only 89.7 per cent of the potential schools budget. Centrally it retains £1208 per pupil of which £170 is for central support services. These figures are too high, as are the costs of individual services, such as finance and personnel. Headteachers are rightly concerned about the levels of finance retained by the LEA. They should be (and most are) equally concerned that there are no service specifications and that the operation of these services is piecemeal, their strategy incoherent and their remit insufficiently focused on school improvement.

14. There are, moreover, particular concerns in three major areas. The first is that although support for the 19 schools involved in the National Literacy Project (NLP) has been satisfactory or better, the overall support for literacy is inconsistent and in some respects weak. Section 11 support for bilingual pupils, for example, is too variable, and often poorly coordinated with other services. Bilingual pupils need high quality support, and the management of the service is not currently ensuring that they get it. At the same time, the needs of pupils other than bilingual pupils must be addressed.

15. Secondly, support for special educational needs is high in cost, but variable in effectiveness. Expenditure, at over £10 million, is too high. There is a rapid and unchecked growth in statements in the secondary phase, no clear strategy based on analysis of needs and no evaluation of the effectiveness of provision.

16. Thirdly, the Inspection and Advisory service (IAS) is poorly regarded by schools. Its emphasis on monitoring has unnecessarily duplicated the national inspection arrangements and diverted resources whilst the work of link inspectors has varied unacceptably in quality. This has been especially true of their contribution to the LEA's literacy and numeracy projects which are, rightly, major priorities. The LEA participates in the National Literacy Project (NLP) and the National Numeracy Project (NNP). Support for literacy beyond that from the specialist staff working on NLP has been inconsistent, often hampered by lack of co-ordination between parts of the education service. Not all link inspectors have the skills to offer valuable support. Plans to increase their future role should therefore be considered. Given the low standards achieved so far, it will be important to ensure that all support for literacy is consistently of high quality and coherently delivered.

17. These three examples, which could be further multiplied - much the same is true, for example, of the Education Welfare Service - illustrate a general pattern of high cost services of doubtful effectiveness. It cannot be said that Tower Hamlets LEA has served its schools or its pupils uniformly well or that it has made effective use of its uniquely high levels of funding to meet the acute needs of its population. In the course of this inspection HMI visited 31 schools; of these, 16 had made good progress and ten satisfactory progress since their Section 10 inspections. The LEA had, however, made little impact in seven of the ten secondary schools and in seven of the 19 primary schools. Its impact on standards was satisfactory in each of the three special schools/units.

18. This was the legacy inherited by the new Corporate Director for Education on her arrival in 1997. Fortunately, she is fully aware of the shortcomings listed here and has set about tackling the massive agenda that faces her. She is unequivocal about the need to raise standards urgently, and has won the enthusiastic assent of headteachers to a more challenging and ambitious approach.

19. The strategic plan recently published coherently reflects national policies and the local context. It sets challenging targets for schools and specifies three major areas for development with teaching, as it should be, at the forefront. Numerous key activities are listed and some timescales are very tight. Overall, however, the plan is sound and should be put into practice, underpinned by service plans to provide operational detail and costings. The move to change the focus of the IAS is also generally welcome, though the funding of the service will need to be reconsidered in the light of emerging developments in national policy.

20. These are, however, the first signs of improvement. There has been poor management and services have not always provided value for money. A change in organisational culture is needed, but the need is acknowledged and a good start has been made. At last, raising attainment is at the top of the agenda, where it should always have been, and there is a new optimism about the schools and the LEA. This report broadly endorses that optimism.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. *In order to implement its Strategic Plan the LEA should:***

- i ensure that those parts of the Strategic Plan which relate to schools are reflected clearly in the resource planning supporting the LEA's Education Development Plan;
- ii publish separate service plans to underpin the delivery of the plan and details of how the plan will be monitored and evaluated.

### **B. *In order to ensure that schools have effective professional advice and support (the LEA should:***

- i ensure that the operation of the reformed Inspection and Advisory Service is based on intervention in schools only where this is necessary and funding should only be retained for that purpose;
- ii establish ways of monitoring school performance without unnecessary school visiting.

### **C. *In order that progress is urgently made in raising standards of literacy and numeracy the LEA should:***

- i co-ordinate and develop the newly established language and literacy support service to provide greater coherence and improved management in this area.

### **D. *In order to improve the support for pupils with special educational needs, the LEA should:***

- i bring to a speedy conclusion its review of special educational needs and update its policy;
- ii develop a strategy which efficiently matches needs and provision, curtailing the growth in expenditure and the number of statements.

**E. *In order to improve support for pupils for whom English is an additional language the LEA should:***

- i ensure that targets for improvement are set and met, where there are identified weaknesses in Section 11 support;
- ii ensure that Section 11 staff are deployed where most needed rather than where they have traditionally been located.

**F. *To support improvement in attendance the LEA should:***

- i define more clearly the criteria for deployment of Education Social Workers to schools;
- ii make procedures consistent and regularly evaluate the work of the Education Social Work service;
- iii clarify the operation of the Attendance Panel and the Out of School Panel to identify a consistent approach to considering referrals for poor school attendance;
- iv continue, as a matter of urgency, to seek to reduce the extent and impact of pupils taking extended holidays in term-time.

**G. *In order to provide schools with efficient services that meet their needs, the LEA should:***

- i as a matter of urgency require the heads of all LEA services to produce, in consultation with headteachers and governing bodies, detailed service specifications which include service objectives, costs and charges, and performance measures;
- ii audit and reduce the expenditure of high cost services.

## **SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA**

### ***The Socio-Economic Context***

21. Tower Hamlets Local Education Authority (LEA) was established in 1990 following the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). It serves one of the poorer areas in the country, beset by high levels of unemployment. In 1997, 59 per cent **C** primary and 66 per cent of secondary pupils were eligible for a free school meal; these figures are more than double the national averages. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is the highest in the country. Many pupils in Tower Hamlets schools suffer from problems of poverty, poor housing and frequently indifferent health. Nevertheless, headteachers believe that most parents have high expectations for their children. Most pupils are well behaved and keen to succeed. The social deprivation is neither an explanation of, nor excuse for, educational underachievement but it does illustrate the challenging task faced by the LEA.

### ***The Pupil Population***

22. In January 1998 the school population was 36,784 of whom 661 attended nursery schools, 22,170 attended primary schools and 13,452 attended secondary schools. (This includes 153 pupils on roll at the PRU). In addition, 501 pupils were on roll at Tower Hamlets' special schools. The LEA also funds 81 pupils on roll at special schools not maintained by the LEA. In 1998, 3.6 per cent of the school population had a statement of special educational needs. Of pupils in mainstream school 2.3 per cent had a statement, which is virtually the same as the national figure. However, this masks a rapid growth in the number of statements for secondary pupils. By 1997 this was 5.0 per cent compared to 3.9 per cent nationally. This includes the 2.0 per cent of secondary pupils who are in special schools. The Authority has a much higher percentage of under-5s in educational provision than is the case nationally. At the other end of the age range the staying-on rate post-16 has improved greatly since 1990, when it was one of the lowest in the country, to the current level where, at 70 per cent, it is above the national average of 68 per cent.

23. Pupil mobility is a feature of both primary and secondary schools in the Authority. A significant number of pupils visit the Indian sub-continent with their families during term time on extended holidays.

### ***The Organisation of Schools***

24. The main features of the organisation of Tower Hamlets schools are listed below (more detail is provided in Appendix 1);

- The Authority maintains a total of 106 schools;
- Of the 13 secondary schools, six have sixth forms;
- Additionally there is one grant maintained school which also has a sixth form;

- nine of the primary schools are Church of England schools and 12 are Roman Catholic;
- there is one Church of England secondary school and two Roman Catholic;
- there is one Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) managing three off-site centres, additional part-time groups, individual tuition and hospital tuition;
- eighty-eight per cent of all three and four year olds in Tower Hamlets are in nursery provision - well above the London average of fifty seven per cent.

### ***Education Funding***

25. Tower Hamlets is a very well funded Authority. It has the highest standard spending assessment (SSA) per capita of any authority in the country. It also has one of the lowest levels of delegation of funds to schools.

26. The general school budget (GSB) plus the additional grant aid received by the LEA amount to expenditure of £3680 per pupil compared with a London Borough average of £3048 and a national average of £2605. Tower Hamlets delegates only 89.7 per cent (1997/98) of the potential schools budget (PSB) to schools. Overall, Tower Hamlets centrally spends £1208 per pupil of which £170 per pupil is on central support services. This is higher than for any other authority so far inspected.

27. The LEA has been very successful in bidding for and securing additional finance from other sources. At over £7m in 1997/98, its level of Section 11 expenditure (grant-funded from the Home Office) is the highest in the country, both in absolute terms and per pupil. Its Standards Fund allocation for 1998/99 is over £2.25m. This is the second highest allocation for a London LEA in absolute terms and the highest per pupil allocation. In addition to the successful Central Stepney Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) bid of £18.5m, Tower Hamlets has also secured from the SRB a borough-wide education programme involving £10.5m worth of expenditure over seven years. The Education Business Partnership (EBP) generates additional funds and services in kind which last year amounted to £1.9m.

### ***The Council, The Education Committee and the Education Department***

28. To secure extra finance is, however, one thing; to ensure its coherent use another. The lack of coherence is illustrated, for example, by the disparate resources which go into supporting language and literacy. Schools are likely to have SI I money. They may also be involved in literacy projects organised by the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS), and they may be provided with reading mentors through the EBP but these resources are all deployed independently of one another; the LEA does not ensure that they are brought together for maximum effect nor indeed that each is always effective.

29. Since it assumed responsibility for education in 1990 the London Borough of Tower Hamlets has initiated a series of changes which have had a detrimental effect on education.

30. In 1986 the Liberal Democrat administration instituted a policy of de-centralisation of decision-making and service delivery through seven autonomous neighbourhoods. Education was not fully de-centralised, but support services including finance, personnel and transport were delivered to schools through the neighbourhood structure and youth and community education was fully de-centralised.

31. In 1993 the central departments of the Council were restructured as 'business units' and 'clients'. It was intended that services would become more business-oriented and targets were set for their revenue income. These changes diverted effort from more obviously urgent tasks and added layers of bureaucracy. The IAS chose to pursue routes of external income generation, thus preserving much of the service, rather than concentrating on providing guidance and support to its own schools. The focus on a neighbourhood structure and de-centralisation ended following a change of political administration in 1994. A new Education Directorate was formed from existing personnel and there followed a long process of restructuring which was replicated across the council, thus allowing attention again to be diverted from the need for a concerted thrust to raise achievement.

32. In addition to the Education Committee, there is a Youth and Community Committee which includes oversight of mother tongue teaching and study support. The Education Committee has five sub-committees, including a School Improvement Sub-Committee which meets every two months. These mechanisms have been used to feed a comprehensive range of performance data back to members. Amongst other things they receive annual reports from the Chief Education Officer/Corporate Director, and from the head of IAS. Feedback is given on the Section 10 reports of the Authority's schools and the progress of schools with weaknesses. In short, members have been kept well informed about low standards in their schools, but have not always taken sufficient timely action to improve them.

33. The Education Directorate is one of five of the Council's corporate services. The Corporate Director for Education (CD(E)) manages three heads of service following a rationalisation of the service in the last financial year. A further restructuring is planned in the current financial year in order to implement the LEA's strategic plan but it will be important to restructure only with a clear view on how this will contribute to delivering major priorities, that is to say, ensuring that all LEA activity is geared to improving standards.

## **SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF LEA SCHOOLS**

### **34. *Children's performance on entry to school is generally low.***

Results from the LEA's baseline assessment in 1997 indicate that pupils of Bangladeshi origin perform at lower levels than their peers of Caribbean and English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish (ESWI) origin in all areas of experience.

### **35. *Attainment remains below national averages at all the stages of compulsory education,***

- In 1997 the proportion of pupils achieving level 4 in the Key Stage 2 English tests was 46.7 per cent, whereas nationally the proportion was 63.2 per cent.
- In 1997 the proportion of pupils achieving level 4 in the Key Stage 2 mathematics test was 50.7 per cent, whereas nationally the proportion was 62 per cent.
- In 1997 the proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A-C at GCSE was 26 per cent, whereas nationally it was 43.3 per cent.
- In 1997 the proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A-G at GCSE was 79.2 per cent, whereas nationally it was 88.5 per cent

### **36. *The overall rate of improvement in attainment is generally at or above the national rate, albeit starting from a very low base.***

- In 1997, Tower Hamlets was ranked 131/132 LEAs for the performance of its schools in the Key Stage 2 English tests but ranked 11/132 for improvement from 1996. Similarly, Tower Hamlets ranked 126/132 in the mathematics tests but was ranked 37/132 for improvement. The LEA was ranked 9th in terms of improvement in GCSE attainment.
- Tower Hamlet's rate of improvement in the Key Stage 2 English tests between 1995 and 1997 was 19 per cent. The rate nationally was 15 per cent.
- Tower Hamlet's rate of improvement in the Key Stage 2 mathematics tests between 1995 and 1997 was 19 per cent, which matched the national rate.
- The proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A\*-C at GCSE in Tower Hamlets rose by 6.9 per cent between 1994 and 1997; it rose nationally by 2.6 per cent.
- The proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A-G at GCSE in Tower Hamlets rose by 6.7 per cent between 1994 and 1997; it rose nationally by 1.5 per cent.

- Although attainment in all cases is below the national average in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A-C, nine schools have made significant progress from 1990 to 1997; for example, in one mixed comprehensive school the proportion of pupils attaining five or more grades A\*.C rose from 7.6 to 39.5 per cent between 1990 and 1997; in another school it rose from 3.1 to 29.1 per cent over this period.

**37. *OFS TED evidence confirms that attainment is generally below national norms for the core subjects of the curriculum.***

The quality of education and ethos of Tower Hamlets schools compares favourably with other schools nationally. The efficiency of both primary and secondary schools compares unfavourably with schools nationally. To date, five maintained schools in Tower Hamlets have been judged to require special measures: four maintained primary schools and one special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Three secondary, eight primary and one special school have been identified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses. Further details of the educational performance of schools in Tower Hamlets are presented as Appendix 2.

## **SECTION 3: THE LEA STRATEGY**

### **ROLES, PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

38. Education has always been a declared priority of the Council. The Chair of the Education Committee and the Chief Education Officer designate published in 1989 an extensive and detailed Educational Development Plan entitled 'Getting It Right'. This concentrated on structural matters such as the need to provide sufficient school places as well as on the need to improve pupil achievement.

39. The joint vision and aims embodied in that Plan have been reiterated by members and the Director of Education in annual reports up to and including 1994/1995, and the need to raise attainment was re-emphasised in the 1995 Annual Report.

40. The LEA's strategic planning, nevertheless, largely came to a standstill during 1994-1997. Such planning as did exist was not widely shared or used. Although some individual services had their own plans these were not informed by an overall strategic direction in the LEA and therefore activities were piecemeal. There were initiatives to raise achievement for pupils from minority ethnic groups. The 'Closing The Gap' project was also in place with its emphasis on study support. However, such strategies were either peripheral or to an extent obscured the need to address the underperformance amongst all groups including disadvantaged white pupils.

41. This lack of planning was inexcusable. Members and officers had been aware that standards were low in their schools, and that some schools had serious problems. This was the situation which the new corporate director for education inherited on her appointment in April 1997. Her arrival led to the preparation and publication of a Strategic Plan (1998-2002) which is being implemented from April 1998. The plan has been received enthusiastically by governors and in schools. It reflects national policies and the local context and is the result of extensive consultation.

42. The recently published strategic plan sets targets for Key Stage achievement and for attendance and work is in progress to set targets for attitude. The achievement targets look challenging because they require very significant increases in performance. Nevertheless even if these are realised it will still only bring the LEA by the year 2002 into line with the national averages of 1997-98. For the most part schools have accepted these targets. The problem is that some have very little idea of how to meet them.

43. There are three development areas outlined in the plan. These are accompanied by strategic aims which focus on raising achievement. The plan asserts the community's entitlement to services of high quality. In addition it highlights the need for schools to develop their own capacity for management and self-evaluation, and the part that parents and others might play in raising achievement. These are worthy aspirations, which now need to be defined more precisely and thought through in terms of the detail of their implementation. It is not enough to provide an outline of the tasks to be undertaken, time-scales and success criteria. The resource implications need to be spelt out, and the

respective responsibilities of schools and the LEA must be clarified. More thought should also be given to how different aspects of the plan are to be monitored.

44. The CD(E) is reviewing the purpose and functions of the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS). The new proposals need greater clarity, in particular with respect to the principle of intervention in inverse proportion to success, and the increased delegation of funds to schools. They do, however, reflect the objectives of the strategic plan, and they should ensure that schools are provided with performance data, supported in meeting targets and helped to evaluate their own performance. They suggest a number of days' entitlement to school-based support according to the phase or type of school, but they do not spell out how this will relate to the performance of schools.

45. The CD(E) has made a good start. Schools welcome the strategic plan and the proposals to change the role of the IAS. Consultation with teachers and governors has been good and has helped schools to have confidence in the CD(E) and her planning. Overall, the strategy is sensible. The need now is to firm up on those areas where there are gaps and to implement the plan.

### **STATUTORY DUTIES OF THE LEA**

46. The LEA is fulfilling almost all of its statutory duties. Training for appraisal is not up to date and there is some non-compliance in schools. Both the sex education and special educational needs policies are out of date.

### **BUDGET-MAKING, THE BUDGET STRUCTURE AND CONSULTATION OVER THE LMS FORMULA**

47. The LEA delegates only 89.7 per cent of PSB (58.3 per cent of the total educational expenditure) and therefore holds back more than most other LEAs. Central services are very costly and there is no evidence of any attempt to measure, much less monitor, the value for money they represent for schools. At over £170 per pupil, the level of net expenditure on support services is unacceptable. It is the highest of any authority inspected to date. There are unacceptably low levels of delegated budgets for services such as finance, personnel and the IAS. Much of the non-delegated central expenditure, however, relates to the revenue consequences of capital expenditure which has been very high over the decade while Tower Hamlets addressed high levels of basic need for new school places. A further element relates to both grant-funded and authority-funded expenditure for the LEA's Section 11 programme.

48. Consultation on the Local Management of Schools (LMS) formula is formalised through the Heads Consultative Group and this has led to changes, for example, the adjustment to the education and social needs (ESN) element. Some heads lobbied for a reduction in this element because it is partly based on London Reading Test results in which bilingual pupils tend to score poorly. They argue that schools with a high proportion of ethnic minority pupils are 'double funded' when Si 1 is also taken into account. The ESN element was therefore reduced from 10 per cent to 7 per cent but is still the subject of controversy.

49. In a significant minority of the schools visited headteachers expressed concern about the existing over-centralisation of LEA services and the relatively low level of financial delegation. This was confirmed by the survey of schools. Headteachers and Governors were generally unclear about the structure and operation of LEA services. A consistent finding within all schools was that there was insufficient information available with which to ascertain whether LEA services to schools provided value for money. The LEA undertakes annual client satisfaction surveys asking headteachers to grade each of the LEA's services. However, there is little evidence of the findings affecting service delivery.

50. The strategic plan highlights the need to reconsider the overall financial structure of the LEA and the relationship between central services and schools described within the current LMS scheme.

## **SCHOOL PLACES AND ADMISSIONS**

51. Planning for school places is good in Tower Hamlets. This has been confirmed by the District Audit<sup>1</sup>. Since 1990, 10 new schools have been opened, including one new secondary school. Secondary transfer, which is arranged centrally, is well organised.

52. There has been a considerable increase in pressure for places in some secondary schools. The LEA has consulted with parents and reviewed admissions criteria. The proposed new criteria are responsive and sensible. They increase choice by introducing the allocation of a proportion of secondary places according to linked primary schools. Diocesan representatives report successful liaison with the LEA on issues to do with the planning of school places and admissions criteria. Liaison between services is good and ensures that all pupils have a school place. The Authority has a satisfactory appeals arrangement.

### ***Provision for pupils who have no school place***

53. Provision for pupils who have no school place is generally satisfactory. Approximately 360 pupils each year receive support provided by the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). It is made up of five separate units including a hospital tuition unit. The PRU was inspected by OFSTED in May 1998. The report notes that when prior learning is taken into account, pupils are making satisfactory progress in almost all their lessons and good progress in many of them. The quality of teaching is a strength and the curriculum offered to full-time pupils is broad and balanced. The PRU operates within a sound framework, but the LEA should ensure that monitoring procedures are in place and that the unit's budget is separated from the budget of the Support for Learning Service so that the actual costs of running the PRU can be calculated with accuracy. It is at present impossible to make value for money judgements.

<sup>1</sup>District Audit, Planning School Places. 1996/97

54. The LEA has a draft behaviour policy for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. £1,420,805 is directed to support behaviour and is used to provide education at the PRU. The only preventative work is a GEST funded project which helps to reintegrate pupils and work with those at risk of exclusion. An out-of-school panel considers referrals for the PRU but it does not act as a forum for policy formation.

### **LIAISON WITH OTHER SERVICES, VOLUNTARY GROUPS AND EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

55. The LEA takes steps to ensure effective co-operation with schools and with other local authority departments in the provision of its services. Heads feedback to the LEA on its services through a survey which, although not well used in the past, is now informing strategic planning. Liaison with headteachers and governors has developed over the last year and is good. Mechanisms include the Headteachers' Consultative Group, the Headteachers' Forum, the Governors' Forum and working groups such as the Director's School Improvement Group. Every effort is made to elicit the views of parents by questionnaires and surveys. There has been joint working with other departments, for example with Social Services on the Children's Plan and the Early Years Development Plan (EYDP). An integrated Early Years Service provided jointly by Education and Social Services was introduced in April 1998.

56. The LEA forms productive partnerships with voluntary groups and other external agencies including The London East Training and Enterprise Council (LETEC), and other local businesses. The LEA officers work with the Education Business Partnership (EBP) which acts as an effective channel for links between schools and business. It helps in the setting up of work experience, provides mentors for senior staff and pupils and has frequently arranged sponsorship of school activities.

## **SECTION 4: THE ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF LEA SERVICES**

### **INSPECTION, ADVICE AND CURRICULUM SUPPORT**

57. In the past the Inspection and Advisory Service spent too much time on monitoring and inspecting thereby wastefully duplicating the national arrangements for inspection. Last year 35 per cent of its time was spent on inspection and monitoring within the LEA, and 12 per cent on inspections contracted from OFSTED. The latter has fallen to 8 per cent this year. Members of the IAS know individual schools well, but support has not always been effective in helping those schools with weaknesses to improve. Time for support has been reduced by the demands of the LEA's own monitoring programme and a commitment in the past to earning revenue from OFSTED inspections.

58. The quality of support that the IAS delivers is too variable. Individual members of IAS fulfil a number of roles. All, for example, have a subject advisory function, some have a phase role and most act as link inspectors. The competence that such a remit requires is beyond the skill and experience of some inspectors and advisers. This is not to say that each should not have a broad remit but that skills and responsibilities need to be better matched. The outcome of the present system is that there are examples of good and effective support in literacy, numeracy, the arts, pre-OFSTED support and the programme devised for newly qualified teachers but the work of link inspectors in reviewing their schools, supporting headteachers, and giving advice and guidance is far too variable.

#### ***Functions and Resources for the Inspection and Advisory Service***

59. The main functions of the Inspection and Advisory Service currently are:

- pre- and post-OFSTED advice to schools and to governing bodies;
- LEA reviews of schools;
- link inspection visits;
- annual reviews of schools;
- management support to headteachers and school governors;
- national curriculum monitoring;
- surveys, for example in 1997/98 the attainment of boys and girls, GNVQ, banding and streaming, and continuity and progression;
- other duties include support to schools causing concern, education otherwise, budget advice, language projects, community education, SEN, and headteacher appraisal.

60. There are 17.5 full time equivalent (FTE) advisers and inspectors and 6.9 FTE inspectors or consultants. The composition of the team enables National Curriculum coverage but there is a shortage of primary expertise and the LEA has been unable to recruit successfully in this area. Inspectors within the AS are currently linked to a group of schools and provide support to headteachers in a variety of ways, including monitoring the progress of the school development plan or action plan, ensuring compliance with the National Curriculum through conducting an Annual Review, and leading pre-OFSTED, mid-OFSTED and post-OFSTED reviews. The LEA has deployed IAS staff to support the National Literacy Project and the National Numeracy Project, recognising the need to maximise support in these areas. However, inspectors who are not specialists in literacy, for example, in their link inspector role are also expected to support the NLP. Not all have the expertise to evaluate literacy lessons and to offer appropriate guidance. This issue must be addressed for both literacy and numeracy, whether by better training of link inspectors or by supporting these priorities with skilled personnel from other sources. The IAS employs headteachers as consultants, but amongst other IAS members there is a shortage of management expertise to support headteachers and governors; again, link inspectors often lack the experience and expertise to win the confidence of headteachers.

### ***Patterns of Work and the Services Programmed for Support and Advice***

61. The Inspection and Advisory Service gathers a considerable amount of information on its schools, including detailed analysis of performance undertaken by Research and Statistics and information from a range of other sources including the analysis of Section 10 reports, written reviews of subject specialists' visits to schools, the LEA's own mid-OFSTED inspection cycle, and published surveys commissioned by members. Visits to schools by inspectors and advisers are both informed by this information and subsequently contribute to it. Visits are supposed to be written up with main findings and recommendations and copied to the headteacher, but the quality of these notes was found to be very variable.

62. Data is collected on the take-up of INSET and on courses which have been cancelled. The only service level agreement held by the IAS is for professional development. The termly central INSET programme covers a reasonable range of subjects. Each adviser/inspector organises termly co-ordinators and heads of departments meetings. A curriculum fortnight was organised across the LEA in spring 1997 focusing on good teaching in the primary school. A literacy INSET day, organised by subject, was recently held for all secondary schools. This had been useful in some subject areas, but the quality was not consistently good.

63. Despite a number of mechanisms for identifying in-service needs, schools in general are unaware of how the LEA identifies the courses offered in its published in-service programme. Both primary and secondary schools make increasingly selective use of LEA provision; only 35 per cent of schools buy into the service level agreement; in some cases it fails to meet the schools' needs, and for others the quality is unreliable. Nevertheless, recent in-service training for literacy and numeracy, and the induction of newly qualified teachers are well regarded and having a positive impact on standards, quality and management within the schools that use this provision.

64. In a small number of schools, link inspectors have made a major contribution in bringing about improvements in standards. However, almost half the schools are critical of the support they have received. This is an unacceptable figure. Relationships have broken down in two schools owing to over-critical monitoring during the mid-OFSTED review, but a more frequent problem is the perception of schools that the link inspection either lacks expertise or is unavailable to provide the support required. Almost all the schools valued the pre-Ofsted advice provided by the Link inspector; which consisted of staff and governor briefings or mini inspections negotiated with the school. In two schools the link inspector provided good support in the development of the post-Ofsted action plan, helping to manage its implementation and monitoring its progress. In one of the schools the link inspector had usefully supported the senior management team by clarifying their relationship with the governing body. However, in two schools with serious weaknesses, the link inspector had failed to identify and co-ordinate support for under-achieving pupils and for senior management.

65. Curriculum guidance produced by the IAS is limited in quality and quantity. In art, music, physical education and English there is guidance for teachers on the preparation of schemes of work and in the case of art, on the production of policies. In one school, the co-ordinator for art had benefited from being a member of an LEA working party to produce subject schemes of work. Guidance and support for personal, social and health education were praised by some schools but the lack of sex education policy had caused difficulty for at least three others. The LEA has published its own materials for mathematics which are used well in conjunction with the National Numeracy Project materials. Good advice which complements the NLP is contained in the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines of the LEA and the use of these guidelines has contributed to the improvement in literacy standards in one nursery school and one primary school.

66. There is limited evidence within the visits to schools of the use of IAS produced curriculum guidance. At least two primary schools have gone out of the Authority to purchase curriculum guidance in a range of subjects where they needed help which was not available locally. Similarly, a number of secondary schools were purchasing materials or advice from other LEAs. Seeking guidance from other sources is not a problem; what is at issue is whether the funding of the IAS means that schools are in effect paying twice for the same service.

### ***Evaluation***

67. The IAS evaluates its in-service courses through the completion of questionnaires at the end of sessions and has detailed data on the uptake of provision. Occasionally inspectors will follow up the impact in schools, particularly after a long course conducted over a period of time. This is reported to members through the Chief Inspector's Annual Report. The IAS is also one of the services included in the LEA's client satisfaction survey completed by schools.

68. There are mechanisms for ensuring that inspectors' visits to schools conform to agreed standards. The programme to which the inspectors and advisers work ensures that, on paper at least, all schools have their entitlement of visits. However, there are no mechanisms for ensuring that visits are targeted where most needed, that they are

needed against which school improvement and the impact of the inspection and advisory service can be measured.

69. The service evaluations have not been well acted upon in the past but they have contributed to the CD(E)'s consultation paper and proposals to revise the role of the service. These are sound in so far as they identify the support and guidance that the IAS could give to schools, and in highlighting how the service would intervene where schools are in difficulty. They emphasise the need for self-evaluation by schools, the LEA's role in this, and in relation to target setting. As part of the consultation on the proposals the CD(E) is rightly considering the structure of the team and the balance of expertise. The decision has already been taken to reduce the amount of time spent on OFSTED inspections and to cease doing them in Tower Hamlets schools.

70. There are two aspects of the proposals which need much greater clarity. Firstly, the notion of 'entitlement' will need to be more clearly articulated particularly in the light of government policy for LEAs to produce education development plans. Secondly, the role to be played by the 'linked school development adviser' needs reconsideration. The current link inspector's role has not been very successful and the CD(E) will have to ensure that the linked development advisers have the expertise and qualities necessary to avoid replicating previous problems.

## **SERVICES TO GOVERNING BODIES**

71. Support from the governors' service is varied in quality and uptake. There are, in almost equal proportion, examples of schools where the LEA's support for the governing body is good, has been well received and effective and others where the support is not good enough and where the governing body is ineffective.

72. Support to governors was more often thought to be effective by governors and headteachers of primary schools than of secondary and special schools. Evidence from Section 10 inspections indicates that despite some governing bodies being particularly effective, there are a number of schools which fail to meet their statutory responsibilities, or where skills in financial or strategic planning require improvement. However, LEA officers have not always taken the initiative in offering specific support and guidance to governing bodies, when needed.

73. Governor support and the training of governors are managed within an overall governors' service section. Both operate on service level agreements with schools. Support for governing bodies is provided primarily by the support officers whose remit is to offer support to governors in discharging their legal responsibilities. Only forty-five per cent of all schools buy back governor training. Additionally, some governing body meetings are supported by the link inspector.

74. Clerks from the governors' support service act as the first line of contact with the LEA for governors and are regularly briefed by lead officers. Governing bodies who do not buy the service are also advised of items which the Education Committee wishes to consult upon through written termly briefing reports and the circulars provided for all governing bodies.

75. The training programme is developed in regular consultation with governors, inspectors and senior officers and formally endorsed by the LEA's consultative governors' forum. Courses are open to all governors, although local voluntary groups, such as the Collective of Bangladeshi Governors, tend to secure funding to run their own courses with trainers recommended by the service. In recent years, there has been an annual Tower Hamlets Governors' Conference on school improvement and raising levels of achievement.

76. The strategic plan for the Education Service proposes activities and support for governing bodies which should leave them much better placed to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and to support their schools.

## **OTHER SERVICES WHICH IMPROVE ACCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT**

### ***Services which support pupils with special educational needs***

77. Overall expenditure on special needs support is unacceptably high at over £10 million. As in most aspects of LEA expenditure, Tower Hamlets spends more than the national average. The GSB for Tower Hamlets Special School Budgets represents £18522 per pupil compared to a national level of £12,595. Special education provision for each statemented pupil is one and a half times the national average. The same applies to the costs of the Education Psychology Service. The Authority maintains 1,227 statements of special educational need (SEN). There are nine special schools and £1.5 million is spent annually on transport for pupils with special educational needs.

78. There is no clear sense of LEA priorities and strategy for SEN. The quality and effectiveness of support for SEN are not rigorously monitored. The LEA has not looked, for example, at the progress made by pupils according to the type and level of support received from the Support for Learning Service (SLS).

79. The current policy for SEN pre-dates the Government's Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs and a revision is specified in the Strategic Plan. A Code of Practice Strategy group was set up in response to the government's Code of Practice for SEN but it has not met since August 1997 and it has made little impact on strategy or practice. However, the LEA meets its statutory duties.

80. The Authority's budget for special schools is £5,319,999 and the cost of a place is £10,431. The SLS has a budget of £5,582,000 which includes provision for pupils without a school place. The average additional cost of supporting a statemented pupil is £3,916 for staffing support. £1.5 million is spent on special school transport; this exceptionally high amount will be addressed by the strategic plan and is said to be a legacy from the time when services were decentralised and each neighbourhood organised its own transport service.

81. Despite the dramatic rise in pupils in mainstream school with statements of special educational need since 1990, statementing criteria remain unclear. Research and Statistics section report on the attainment of pupils with statements in national tests but SEN provision is not being evaluated for its effectiveness, for example, in raising pupil

achievement. The LEA are not therefore able to demonstrate that the growth is justified. The fact that it is happening to a greater extent in the secondary phase suggests that it may be because of insufficient preventative action earlier on.

82. A large Support for Learning Service (SLS) provides support for pupils with statements in mainstream schools. It employs 187 full time equivalent (FTE) special needs assistants and 117 FTE specialist teaching staff but there are no arrangements to monitor and evaluate their work. The SLS undertakes preventative work and intervention to support non-statemented pupils with SEN, but only in the 16 schools which purchase such a Service Level Agreement.

83. Five hundred and one Tower Hamlets pupils are being educated in its special schools and 81 Tower Hamlets pupils are on the roll of Special Schools which are not maintained by the Authority. There is no policy on inclusion. There has been some recent restructuring of special school provision to make it more age or phase specific, but the overall number of special schools remains too large. A new boys' EBD secondary school with only nine pupils on roll has recently opened following the closure of a mixed EBD school. Unusually, the LEA continues to maintain two 'Supported Curriculum' schools but the purpose of these and their admissions criteria are vague - as indeed are the criteria for other special schools.

84. HMI visited two EBD schools (plus one in the month before the review) and one speech and language unit. Each was making satisfactory progress in addressing issues identified by OFSTED inspection or the LEA's annual reviews. Inspectors had helped them to form their action plans and had given guidance on implementing the plans. Headteachers valued the advice and support received from the SEN inspector and their links with the EPS and the ESW service. The support provided by the parents' advice centre is also well regarded and effective. The work of special needs assistants in mainstream lessons was too variable. At best it was expert and well deployed, effectively supporting pupils in making progress. At worst it was not well targeted nor prepared and made little contribution to pupils' progress.

### ***Education Psychology Service (EPS)***

85. The Education Psychology Service (EPS) is staffed by the full-time equivalent of psychologists supported by 3.5 administrative staff. The service has a budget of £642,600 which represents well above national expenditure per pupil. It excludes the costs of the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP), who was until recently acting as the head of the SEN division. This left the EPS without substantive leadership and placed the PEP in the position of being responsible for analysing pupils' special needs whilst also controlling the SLS which should meet those needs: an unacceptable conflict of roles.

86. The Service has a Development Plan which identifies the priorities, responsibilities and allocation of resources. Statutory assessments and the drafting of Sections 2 and 3 of statements of SEN are the major focus. The LEA's Client Satisfaction Surveys over the last two years show that there has been a high level of satisfaction in schools with the quality of support provided by the EPS but that schools do not think that they get sufficient time from their EP. They question, for example, the frequency and duration of

visits to school. Nevertheless, the service is sufficient to enable the majority of statements to be completed in a timely manner.

### ***The Education Social Work Service (ESWS)***

87. The ESWS costs are well above national averages. Schools face challenging attendance issues such as extended leave and lateness. They require more support through the development of policies, guidance and advice. The ESWS is deployed in three area teams. An additional team is deployed to primary and secondary schools which have unsatisfactory attendance and a further eight assistant education social workers are deployed to schools with particular problems. Some schools purchase additional support from a local charitable foundation, the East London Schools Fund (ELSF). Each school has a named ESW officer from the LEA and receives a stipulated number of visits every term. Each officer usually covers one secondary school and an average of five or six primary schools. Referral criteria to the ESWS have not been clarified although the principal education social worker is working towards a stipulation of either two weeks' continuous or four weeks' broken absence.

88. The LEA has appropriately reviewed attendance and the work of the Education Social Work Service (ESWS). A task group made recommendations on the ways in which attendance can be raised. These recommendations now form a useful action plan which is comprehensive, detailed and prioritised. However, it is too early to evaluate its impact in schools.

89. ESWS procedures for liaising with schools are generally good and relationships, for the most part, positive but staff deployment and referral procedures are too informal. The ESWS visit every school regularly. Generally, however, the time given to the school or the number of cases which should be followed up, are not clearly defined. Referral is too dependent on identification by the school rather than on clearly defined and statistical criteria. As a result, schools are unable to assess whether they are obtaining a fair allocation of time and have no mechanism by which they can monitor the response of the service.

90. Referral procedures for serious intervention such as prosecution are inconsistent. The LEA makes prosecutions for non-attendance at school but, in some cases, too much time elapses before prosecution is considered. The policy not to accept attendance panel referrals after Christmas of Y11 needs to be operated with flexibility so that pupils who have previously had good attendance records are followed up. There also needs to be greater clarity about the respective roles of the attendance panel and the panel which considers referrals for out of school provision so that attendance cases do not bypass the attendance panel.

91. Overall, child protection procedures are satisfactory. Schools have mixed views on the helpline which the ESWS provides to advise schools on child protection cases before referral to the Social Services Department. Some schools find it helpful whilst others make referrals directly to Social Services and sometimes seek advice from the Police.

### ***Services which support raising the attainment of minority ethnic pupils***

92. Around 60 per cent of pupils in Tower Hamlets schools are bilingual and one in seven teachers are employed in Section 11 funded work. Needs and resources are therefore both considerable. Nevertheless, despite high levels of resources, low attainment as a feature of Tower Hamlets extends to pupils from minority ethnic groups as well as others. The LEA has found that, for example, at the end of Key Stage 2, bilingual pupils have lower scores in all subjects. The LEA has collected data to show the impact of extended leave on the performance of bilingual pupils but it remains questionable how well the Authority is targeting its resources effectively to support and raise attainment amongst pupils from minority ethnic groups; the same question as has to be asked for all pupils.

93. Support for bilingual pupils is complex. It has two major strands. There is Section 11 funded work which supports pupils from nursery to the end of compulsory schooling. Additional projects such as after school mother tongue teaching are a second strand delivered by the Youth and Community Section of the LEA. Thus, provision for bilingual pupils comes under two separate council committees: Education, and Youth and Community. The Authority needs to consider whether this is in the best interests of providing well co-ordinated, coherent services.

94. Many officers share responsibility for services to raise the attainment of minority ethnic pupils. There is a Head of Bilingualism who is lead officer for Section 11, and an Adviser for Bilingualism who monitors Section 11 funding and works with the mother tongue project. Monitoring the effectiveness of the services is the responsibility of the IAS and the Director of the Language Support Service. A Language Support Service (LSS), part funded by SRB, delivers the Section 11 projects. These comprise: an under-fives project to develop language and support structures in nursery provision, language and attainment projects (LAP) in Key Stages 1 to 4, and a home-school liaison project. The most prominent feature of the LSS work is the LAP projects. These provide structured language support delivered by additional teachers or classroom assistants, usually in mainstream lessons but sometimes through withdrawal sessions.

95. The provision is not, however, sufficiently well coordinated, nor does it form a strategically coherent package with the Authority's other initiatives to raise attainment, for example, the literacy project. Schools are, for example, receiving conflicting messages from the Language Support Service and the mother tongue projects about the use of languages other than English in lessons; other than when pupils are very new to learning English, schools, quite rightly, do not usually want them to use languages other than English, but this approach has not been consistently supported by each service.

96. There is no clear role agreed for Section 11 staff vis-à-vis the literacy project. Some Section 11 teachers and classroom assistants are making a valuable contribution through effective support to bilingual pupils during literacy sessions whilst some others do not play an active part even though they are present. There are also examples of bilingual pupils being withdrawn for language support at times when working with the rest of their class would be more beneficial for them.

97. Not all Section 11 staff are sufficiently skilful in providing language support. Paragraph 151 indicates the proportion of support that is effective and the smaller proportion that is of poor quality. At best, pupils are carefully targeted and there is good liaison and shared planning between Section 11 staff and classroom teachers. At the other end of the spectrum however there are Section 11 teachers who do not demonstrate the teaching skills needed to provide effective support. This is, perhaps, reflected in the observations of those headteachers who have said that they would like LSS money to be devolved so that they may select and employ their own staff.

98. The Authority is tackling extended leave by trying to reduce the amount of time taken or persuading parents to use summer holidays. There is little evidence of a coordinated approach to helping these minority ethnic pupils to catch up when they return to school. Consideration could be given, for example, to targeting (in collaboration with LSS staff) extra-curricular Study Support for such pupils.

99. Section 11 staff are supposed to be assigned by the LSS to schools according to the language needs of pupils at the individual school. However, over time some individual members of staff have become strongly associated with a particular school even, wrongly, assuming additional paid responsibilities at a school. This has led to a resistance to being redeployed to other schools even though the patterns of need have changed. This, coupled with teacher recruitment problems, has resulted in inequities in the pattern of language support provision. The LEA must fulfil its responsibilities by insisting that staff employed by the LSS work where they are most needed and directed.

100. The LEA must confront the issues of support to minority ethnic pupils in a more strategic and well coordinated way. It should, for example, devise a system to coordinate all provision to support language and literacy; there should be a clear language and literacy policy. Headteachers should be more involved in monitoring the work of the LSS. Action should be taken to ensure that all LSS staff are competent in their role.

### ***Study Support***

101. Study support aims to develop independent learners and to widen educational and social experience. Community groups and schools have established centres usually after school and on Saturdays. The scheme maintains a network of 31 out of school hours study support centres and includes: GCSE revision schemes; SEN help; additional teaching for A level; girls' only groups; reading groups; IT classes; peer tutor schemes, and summer 'university study' courses.

102. Two thousand, four hundred and seventy five pupils participate in study support of whom nearly half are of minority ethnic origin. Sixty per cent of Y11 attend revision schemes. The scheme is partly funded by SRB with secondary schools and Voluntary centres receiving funding to operate study support schemes. The Research and Statistics section has shown that pupils who regularly attended the scheme increased their GCSE grades by an average of 0.7 grade. This cannot be considered good value for money.

## **MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

### ***Finance Services***

103. All finance services are currently located within the Support Services Directorate. The finance function is driven by three imperatives: financial regularity, probity and control. Over the past three years, actual expenditure has been very close to the overall budgeted figure, with a slight tendency to underspend.

104. The emphasis on financial regularity, probity and control is reflected in the form of reporting to members. Long, very detailed reports on education finance are regularly submitted to the Education Committee. In contrast, headteachers are given very little guidance and advice on managing and monitoring their budgets. Schools are sent computer printouts approximately 10-13 days after the end of the month, but this is slow by comparison with other LEAs and the format is unhelpful. During school visits, it was noted that there were several occasions where advice was provided by way of independent consultancy services purchased by the school. The Audit Commission survey (see Appendix 3) indicated that Tower Hamlets schools were significantly less satisfied with the provision of financial monitoring information than the other LEAs so far surveyed. Furthermore, an external audit review of the Education Finance Service recommended that the LEA consider the introduction of peripatetic bursary support and additional financial administration and training. This service could well serve the needs of the Education Committee by producing higher level, shorter reports and thereby free up time to provide enhanced services to schools.

### ***Information & Communications Technology***

105. An estimated £221,000 is retained centrally to fund the LEA services on IT. Compared with other LEAs included within the Audit Commission Cost Survey, the IT services are higher cost than the average but comparable with those in other London boroughs.

106. The service works to priorities established in the LEA's Information and Communications Technology strategic plan for 1998-2002. The document is clear and coherent. It provides a strategic framework within which information technology services are oriented to meet the needs of schools. It also ensures that service priorities are framed to reflect the wider LEA priorities, for example, in developing IT support and the process of gathering performance data for use in monitoring and target setting. The schools' IT section provide a comprehensive set of services which includes specific support to schools' senior management teams to enable them to manage their growing IT facilities and make effective purchasing decisions. The School Survey results indicated that Tower Hamlets schools' satisfaction with the IT support service is similar to that in other LEAs. The LEA's own client satisfaction survey indicates a high level of satisfaction.

107. The section runs training for school administrators and managers. The LEA's client survey for 1997/98 indicated a high level of satisfaction with this.

108. The Authority finds it difficult to keep track of the number of personal computers and associated hardware in schools. Inventory information requests do not always receive a full and thorough response. No school has a network link to the LEA. The LEA has submitted a bid for funding under the National Grid for Learning initiative in order to create a comprehensive system of links to the Internet.

### ***Schools' Personnel Services***

109. The school's personnel service provides a range of statutory and non-statutory services for schools. Unusually for Tower Hamlets, a substantial part of the service, 70 per cent, has been delegated to schools. However, the Schools Survey and the LEA's own client satisfaction survey indicate that Tower Hamlets schools have a relatively poor opinion of this service. Furthermore, despite the delegation of the service to schools, the cost per pupil is over four times the average for schools included in the Audit Commission Cost Survey. Despite 82 per cent buy-back of the service by schools, the service does not provide value for money. While it was clear from the experiences of some schools visited that the service had been responsive and provided valuable support to schools facing specific crises, there were a significant number where insufficient support had been given to school management teams facing personnel problems.

### ***Property Services***

110. Most property functions, and their associated budgets, are delegated to schools. Grounds maintenance, energy, water rates and property rates are entirely the responsibility of schools. Building maintenance is a shared responsibility between schools and the LEA. The LEA's responsibilities for building maintenance and asset management are located in the Development Service. It ensures that the LEA has appropriate premises and facilities management, and provides property advice and support to schools. The service has been effective in meeting rising basic need: since 1990, the LEA has spent £90m on additional places at 10 new schools.

111. Expenditure on maintenance and repairs is driven by health and safety considerations and the strategic target of ensuring a suitable standard of buildings for national curriculum delivery. Priorities and a five year rolling programme are derived from annually updated stock condition information. The LEA Development Service is currently piloting a ground breaking private funding initiative (PFI) scheme for the maintenance of LEA schools, but this requires an analysis of maintenance costs and needs which must be far more accurate and reliable than anything that has hitherto been provided if the scheme is to be successful.

### ***Evidence from visits to schools***

112. The LEA's own client satisfaction survey and the Audit Commission Schools Survey both indicate that schools are relatively satisfied with the property services provided. During school visits there were examples of the LEA Development Service working closely and effectively with school management teams to support individual school redevelopment.

113. In general, Tower Hamlets' management services are costly and poorly regarded by schools. The total cost of central support services is over £170 compared with a median figure of less than £77 for other LEAs so far surveyed. The Schools Survey results show that Tower Hamlets schools have a significantly poorer opinion of LEA services than the average for schools in other LEAs so far surveyed. The evidence from school visits indicate that the LEA's organisational structure and lines of communication do not effectively match the needs of schools. There are few service descriptions, specifications, performance measures or charges to define what should be provided to schools. It is impossible for staff or governors to determine what level of service they should expect or what standards should be achieved. A consequence of this is that it is impossible to determine the value for money that services represent and it is difficult for headteachers to hold service providers to account.

114. However, there are exceptions. The property and, in particular, the information and communications technology services have a more systematic customer-oriented mode of service delivery and schools have a high degree of satisfaction with both of these as a consequence. Furthermore, the perception of the service delivered by the LEA in each service category is not consistent. The School Survey showed that services that were overall poorly regarded also received a significant minority of responses that rated the services as very good. Achieving consistency in service delivery needs to be a clear aim for all LEA management services.

## **SECTION 5: LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS**

### ***Introduction***

115. This section of the report evaluates the LEA's contribution to improving standards through the inspection of particular themes which are illustrative of the LEA's work. The evidence is drawn from HMI visits to the schools and other inspection evidence.

116. Of the 31 schools visited, 16 were judged to have made good progress overall since the Section 10 inspection. A further 10 schools had made satisfactory progress. Five schools had made unsatisfactory or no progress. The rate of improvement was less satisfactory in secondary schools than in primary and special schools.

117. The LEA had made little impact in seven of the 10 secondary schools visited. In three of these schools standards were deteriorating, although in the other four, despite the lack of LEA support, the schools were making good progress. The LEA had made little impact in seven of the 19 primary schools visited and in two of these standards were deteriorating. Good or satisfactory progress was being made in the remaining five primary schools, without the LEA needing to intervene.

118. In general, the primary schools already judged in inspections as being effective made the best use of LEA support to raise standards or maintain high standards. Where support from the LEA was most effective, the link inspector had played a pivotal role in coordinating services, and in some cases recommending external consultants to support the implementation of the school's action plan. Such interventions have had a clear focus on raising standards. Where schools were involved in the National Literacy and National Numeracy Projects, support had led to improvement.

119. In the schools making unsatisfactory progress and in several others where the rate of improvement could have been faster, the LEA had given them little help to devise and implement strategies to address the key issues identified in inspection reports. For some schools, the analysis of performance and evaluation of progress had been insufficiently rigorous to help the school; in others the balance between re-inspection or review and offering support had not been helpful. Headteachers and governors did not feel they had been provided with a clear enough agenda and advice on how to move forward.

### **LEA SUPPORT FOR TARGET-SETTING**

120. The Research and Statistics (R&S) Section has been in operation since the establishment of the LEA in 1990 and carries out a detailed analysis of performance data which is used by the IAS to plan school visits. Test results are scrutinised in terms of raw scores as well as contextually, using pupil background indicators such as: gender, language fluency, ethnic origin, free school meals, nursery experience and years in full-time education in the UK. These analyses are presented to the Education Committee and are used to identify priorities for strategic planning. Data is also supplied to the headteacher and officers' School Improvement Group.

121. The new proposals for the role of the IAS have implications for performance data and target setting. The new arrangements propose:

providing each school with relevant qualitative information and help with interpretation;

evaluation to be undertaken in partnership with schools and in the context of the school development plan and the Education Development plan;

interpretation of information both qualitative and quantitative provided by OFSTED and the LEA focused on raising achievement.

122. The LEA produces an analysis of GCSE scores against pupil background factors. A comprehensive GCSE examination statistics bulletin was produced in January 1998 analysing GCSE performance by individual schools and over time since 1990.

123. The Research and Statistics Service is well regarded by schools but they do not always use the data provided with sufficient rigour. Although schools rate the guidance on interpreting performance data highly, primary schools in particular would benefit from further training and advice on how to use the data effectively. Nevertheless, some primary schools visited were making good use of data to help to improve standards of literacy, and in one primary school where Key Stage 2 results in mathematics and English have risen significantly, data provided by R&S had been well used to target individual pupils.

124. Secondary schools have Key Stage assessment results, London Reading Test scores and, in some schools, cognitive ability test scores. A number of secondary schools are also involved in YELLIS (Year II information systems) and other ways of assessing value-added. Where performance data is used rigorously it is usually the result of a school-based initiative. There is little evidence of link inspectors suggesting ways in which the data can be used to help set targets and raise standards. Under-performing schools need particular help to use data and targets to inform their strategic planning and to raise attainment.

## **SUPPORT TO IMPROVE LITERACY**

125. Tower Hamlets is one of the three lowest scoring London Boroughs in national tests for 11 year olds. As such, it agreed to take part in an OFSTED reading survey in 1996. This found that reading standards were very low and that the quality of teaching in many schools was unsatisfactory or poor. Some schools were, however, achieving very much better results than others in reading. There was a wide variation within and between schools in the performance in reading of different ethnic groups. White pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were a particular cause for concern when their reading performance was compared with other groups.

126. The LEA is one of the authorities participating in the National Literacy Project (NLP). This involves 19 schools in most of which standards in literacy were low at the start of the project. Many other schools within the Authority have adopted some of the features of the project, such as the literacy hour, shared reading and grouped reading

and writing tasks. The schools directly involved in the NLP have mostly made progress, usually by more than the national average.

127. Raising standards in literacy is rightly a major priority of the LEA. It has set targets of 80 per cent of pupils reaching level 2 or higher in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 by 2002, and 70 per cent of pupils reaching level 4 or higher in the Key Stage 2 national tests in English by the same year. These, when translated into individual school targets, which range from between 60 per cent to 90 per cent, are demanding goals and reflect the priority which the LEA is placing on raising attainment in literacy.

128. A literacy action plan is being drawn up which will build upon the generally successful experience of the NLP, and upon other projects such as Reading Recovery LIFT (a Key Stage 1 project), Family Literacy Courses and Summer Literacy Schools. The LEA must however, avoid the danger of conflicting approaches and ensure that there is a consistency in teaching literacy. The NLP and National Literacy Strategy (NLS) emphasise a balanced approach but with a strong focus on the systematic teaching of phonics and spelling, especially at Key Stage 1; only strategies which support this should be included in the Action Plan and supported by the IAS. The LEA strategy will be led by a newly appointed literacy co-ordinator (the incumbent English inspector) and will involve four literacy consultants: two funded by the Standards Fund and two by SRB. The strategy is necessarily ambitious in that it will provide intensive training for all the LEA's primary schools. It is intended that three teachers per school will be trained as key teachers and that all schools will have access to a range of consultant support, twilight training sessions and extra funding for resources. This is a greater level of commitment than the minimum requirement of the NLS but is needed, given the present low levels of literacy.

129. HMI made visits to nine primary schools and three secondary schools to judge the effectiveness of the LEA's literacy work to date. Evidence was also collected from a range of other visits, so what follows is based on judgements made in 19 primary schools, 10 secondary schools and two special schools. Specialist HMI visits to NLP schools outside of this inspection are also drawn upon. NLP consultancy support has generally been satisfactory, but the various services that support literacy are not always effectively managed and co-ordination between them is lacking. The LEA is developing a Literacy Centre at the Professional Development Centre (PDC) and has a coherent training programme, which has already started. This will provide training for all staff who have a contribution to make to supporting literacy, for example classroom assistants. Most schools visited have made some improvement in standards in literacy over the past year. All the schools have made at least satisfactory progress, although in two primary schools, improvements in one Key Stage have been offset by a drop in standards in the other. One primary school has made considerable improvement over the past year: from 62 per cent to 81 per cent of pupils at level 2 or above in Key Stage 1; and from 16 per cent to 46 per cent at level 4 or above by the end of Key Stage 2. There was also evidence of a new impetus to raising literacy standards in two secondary schools where standards were very low. There continue to be differences between the performance of different ethnic groups in English. For example 42 per cent of Bangladeshi pupils attained level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 national tests compared with 54 per cent of pupils of English, Scots, Welsh and Irish descent.

130. The support by the LEA in bringing about improvement is very variable but it is generally satisfactory or better in those schools which have received support from the specialist NLP team member. LEA support overall for literacy was judged to be satisfactory or better in exactly half of the schools visited. It was better than satisfactory in only a quarter of these schools. In a minority of the schools, the impact of good advice and support was hindered by weak management within the school and/or changes of personnel and roles. Some schools, including those which have made the most progress, have brought about their improvements themselves without any tangible support from the LEA. The intention is that the link inspectors will be much more involved in giving direction to the literacy strategy, but recent experience shows that whilst some link inspectors give high quality, effective advice on literacy matters, others are not able to provide such support. This is therefore a flawed tactic unless the LEA is able to ensure that only those with suitable expertise in literacy act as link inspectors/advisers.

131. One feature of LEA support universally approved of by primary headteachers and class teachers is the library at the Professional Development Centre (PDC) which allows each primary teacher to order a considerable number of books which are then delivered promptly. This service has been of considerable help to schools seeking to broaden the scope of the reading material used by their pupils.

132. In several of the schools visited there was a lack of co-ordination between the work of NLP and other activities which had a role to play, for example, Language and Attainment Project (LAP) work. There were, for example, occasions when LAP staff attended the literacy hour, but made no contribution and did not appear to have a role. However, there were also examples of good practice when LAP staff had received training and where they and mainstream staff had worked together in lessons to develop language and literacy and where pupils consequently made good progress. Responsibility for this lies with both the LEA and schools' management but the LEA has no policy for such co-ordination and it has not provided direction. Uncertainties about the lines of accountability of LAP teachers and support staff compound the lack of coordination found in such schools. With the advent of the NLS, schools will need a clear steer from the LEA on issues such as the management of the contribution of Section 11 teachers and the role of additional support within the literacy hour and other forms of language and literacy work. At present, most schools are too unclear about this.

133. The LEA needs to ensure that all officers and schools are aware of the priority of promoting literacy in both primary and secondary schools. It should give a lead in drawing together relevant projects to ensure that there is collaboration and a system for building on the work of one another. Line management should be clear and provide headteachers with the opportunity, within agreed criteria, to deploy and manage resources as best fits the needs of their school. More emphasis should be given to continuity from Key Stage 2 to 3. A Language and Literacy Policy to cover early years through to Key Stage 4 should be developed.

## **SUPPORT TO IMPROVE NUMERACY**

134. The attainments in mathematics by pupils attending schools in Tower Hamlets are improving. Nevertheless, they remain well below the national averages at the end of all Key Stages and the gap between the attainments of pupils nationally and the average for pupils in the LEA's schools widens significantly from Key Stage 1 (a gap of 4.9 per cent) to Key Stage 3 (a gap of 26.2 per cent). Because results have been improving nationally, as well as in Tower Hamlets, the reality is that the gap has not closed significantly over the last three years except at Key Stage 1; indeed at Key Stage 3, pupils' attainments have fallen further behind national averages during the past three years.

135. The Authority participated in the National Numeracy Project in 1996/7. Sixteen schools are involved in the first phase and a further 18 joined the second phase in 1997/8. Participation was by open invitation, but some schools were steered into the project earlier rather than later. The project is co-ordinated by a primary inspector with expertise in mathematics and is supported by two numeracy consultants. The project is welcomed in schools because of its clear structure and the opportunities that it provides to build teacher confidence. There has been a good take-up of training for the numeracy project and invitations to meetings have been extended to governors as well as headteachers; mathematics co-ordinators from non-participating schools also attend the training.

136. Numeracy and mathematics were the focus of visits to five primary and two secondary schools. There was too little evidence from the two secondary schools visited to make a general judgement on the quality and impact of LEA support for numeracy or mathematics across the LEA's secondary schools. However, if the findings from these two visits are representative, then they point to little support for numeracy or mathematics being given to, or sought by, secondary schools.

137. Evidence from visits to the five primary schools where numeracy and mathematics were a specific focus yields a more consistent and reliable picture. In four of the five schools improvements have most frequently resulted from involvement with the National Numeracy Project; attendance at courses and meetings; or visits to the schools by the inspector for mathematics or a numeracy consultant.

138. These visits to schools, whether to discuss schemes of work, approaches to assessment, the management and organisation of lessons or to observe teaching, have all been helpful and enabled schools to improve their own monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' standards of attainment. There are examples of dissemination of good practice by the LEA. Some of the schools considered the number of mathematics courses provided by the LEA to be insufficient; other providers had been recommended by the LEA or schools had found appropriate provision by their own efforts.

139. There is a division of inspectorate responsibility for mathematics between the primary inspector and the secondary inspector, but some links have already been made between Key Stage 2 initiatives and work in Key Stage 3. The LEA should build on the progress being made in NNP. Better continuity between Key Stages 2 and 3 is needed

given the widening gap between Tower Hamlets and national performance in Key Stage 3. The LEA should prepare a numeracy policy.

## **SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS REQUIRING SPECIAL MEASURES AND THOSE WITH SERIOUS WEAKNESSES**

140. The LEA has met its statutory duties in relation to schools in special measures and has provided constructive support to those headteachers and governing bodies. Since 1993 five maintained schools have been judged to require special measures. With the exception of one special school, most of the schools have only been identified as requiring special measures in the past 12 months and the full impact of support has yet to be felt.

141. Post-inspection advice and support to address areas of under-performance in schools with serious weaknesses has not been a strong or consistent feature of the LEA. Two secondary schools recently inspected by OFSTED have been judged to have serious weaknesses for the second time; improvements in addressing the key issues from the first inspection reports have not been sustained. A more systematic programme to support schools with serious weaknesses and those in difficulty is envisaged in the new proposals for the IAS. Although the detail is not yet worked out, an action plan, explicit strategies for intervention and the resources necessary will be determined for each school experiencing particular problems. The CD(E) will have oversight of the programmes and be directly responsible for the budget for such support. This is welcome and timely.

### ***Evidence from visits to schools***

142. One third of the schools visited had been identified by OFSTED as schools with serious weaknesses. In many of these schools high staff turnover and difficulties in recruitment and retention continue to have a detrimental impact on schools' ability to raise levels of attainment. Only two schools, one special and one primary, considered the support from the LEA to be appropriate and effective. Even where schools have moved from under-performance to comparative success, headteachers expressed the view that earlier intervention by the LEA would have made a difference. Too often, schools reported difficulties in securing support from advisers because of their commitments to OFSTED inspections.

143. Pre-OFSTED support is generally well regarded by the schools but it would now be more productive for the IAS to consider whether an entitlement to support is of more value following an Ofsted inspection than preceding it. More than half of the schools report no involvement of the link inspector in helping them to formulate an action plan, even when the key issues arising from the Section 10 report indicate that the school might not have the necessary expertise in strategic planning.

144. Although there is no written policy for supporting schools in special measures, there are well understood procedures. Additional funding is allocated to support schools in special measures and those with serious weaknesses through the Standards Fund. In addition the LEA plans to set up its own 'standards' contingency fund to support

schools experiencing difficulties. Prioritising and formalising support to such schools is an essential part of the CD(E)'s proposals for the IAS. The IAS routinely reports to the Education Committee through the School Improvement sub-committee, on the progress of schools with serious weakness or in special measures.

## **SUPPORT TO IMPROVING ATTENDANCE**

145. The Education Social Work Service (ESWS) provide schools with support to improve attendance. Their role has been discussed in Section 4. In 1994 the LEA's attendance rate was almost 4 per cent below the national figure. Since then, the gap has almost halved. Attendance at primary and secondary schools is 91.5 per cent and 89.2 per cent respectively. The rates of unauthorised absence have reduced. Nevertheless, there is still too much variation between the attendance rates of different schools, although many work in similar socio-economic contexts. Raising attendance is a target within the strategic priority for reducing social exclusion in the LEA's strategic plan (1998-2002). The target is to increase attendance year on year by at least 1 per cent and reduce unauthorised absence by at least 1 per cent.

146. Most schools have clear policies on attendance. These policies differed in the detail, vigour and consistency with which they were implemented. All the schools used the comparative attendance data provided by the LEA which usefully compares schools' attendance rates to that of other schools in the borough. Invariably the schools with the highest attendance had been successful in developing a consistent approach across the school. They monitored attendance carefully to identify problems and followed these up persistently.

### ***Evidence from school visits***

147. The support provided by the ESWS is more effective in secondary schools than in the primary schools. Attendance in nearly half the schools visited compared well with the national levels, despite absence because of extended leave and religious observance. In other schools visited, attendance varied between an average of 82-88 per cent over a school year. Rates of unauthorised absence were high and lateness was prevalent. Attendance fluctuates between terms and was often poorest in the Spring term. In most secondary schools, however, attendance rates did not show a marked decline in Y10 and Y11. The poor health profile of the population was a significant factor in rates of absence.

148. The quality of record keeping in registers varies and sometimes includes errors and in two schools did not comply with D1EE guidance. In one school, for example, periods of work experience and study leave were recorded as 100 per cent attendance. A large number of schools continue to use manual recording systems for registering attendance. Where computerised systems have been introduced, this saves time and enables the systems to be used effectively to develop a high standard of recording or to analyse attendance rates and provide individual pupil records easily. Although ESWs regularly inspect registers, inconsistencies are not always picked up.

149. Schools and the LEA are understandably concerned about the effects of pupils taking extended leave in term times. The LEA's policy provides guidance on administrative procedures and advises schools to remove pupils from the roll when they have been absent for six weeks or more. This is operated scrupulously in some schools, more flexibly in others. One school, having taken legal advice, operates its own policy. In most schools parents are advised of the likely detrimental impact on their children's attainment. However, there are some signs that extended holidays are lessening among pupils in Key Stage 4, in some schools. The Research and Statistics Section has conducted a valuable analysis of the effects of extended leave on attainment and is currently working with the DfEE and the Bangladeshi High Commission to address the issue. Whilst the LEA looks for ways to reduce extended leave it also needs to look for ways to mitigate its effect and to make the most of the experiences that pupils have had on leave. As has already been suggested, study support might be used to help pupils to make up lost time.

### **SUPPORT TO RAISE THE ATTAINMENT OF MINORITY ETHNIC PUPILS**

150. The services which are provided to raise the attainment of minority ethnic groups have been discussed in Section 4. Overall, bilingual children in the borough enter school with lower levels of attainment than monolingual children. On the evidence of the results of the baseline assessment, Caribbean children enter school as the highest achieving group, but, relative to their peers, the rate of progress slows as they get older. Despite the participation of bilingual children in nursery education they are still twice as likely as monolingual children not to reach national expectations in English at Key Stage 1. By Key Stage 2 the relative performance of bilingual children in relation to monolingual groups has improved but remains lower than national expectations. At GCSE the performance of minority ethnic groups is improving, albeit from a low base. A higher percentage of bilingual Bangladeshi pupils - 27 per cent - now attain five or more passes at grades A\*-C at GCSE than monolingual pupils of English, Scottish and Welsh and Caribbean origin. Between 1990 and 1997 Bangladeshi pupils doubled their average GCSE point score from 15 to 30 and the number gaining 5 + At-C also doubled. However, given the high levels of resources for Section 11 and other SRB initiatives, much more needs to be achieved.

151. Aspects of Section 11 provision were evaluated in 13 primary and 6 secondary schools by means of the review and as part of a separate OFSTED inspection looking at the achievement of minority ethnic pupils. Support was effective and pupils were making sound progress in only five of the primary schools and four secondary schools. In these, Section 11 staff were skilled and well prepared for the lesson, having planned their contribution with the class teacher. In two secondary schools and one primary the support offered was of poor quality and an inefficient use of resources because of weaknesses in teaching. Section 11 staff collaborated with literacy initiatives in only half the secondary and primary schools. Their contribution to the literacy hour and other literacy initiatives is too variable but examples of satisfactory or good practice were found in almost half the primary and secondary schools. Where weaknesses occurred, this was usually because of confused line management systems and lack of direction, and/or because of a lack of appropriate expertise on the part of the Section 11 teachers. There are plans to provide all Section 11 staff with literacy training. There is evidence that the best Section 11 support occurs in schools where there is a good literacy or language

policy and good co-ordination of these areas under strong leadership from senior management.

152. There were three examples of schools where the level of provision was insufficient to meet needs, but in a quarter of all schools visited Section 11 staff were being deployed to inappropriate work or responsibilities beyond their remit; in at least half the schools there had been no monitoring of Section 11 by LEA inspectors. Headteachers were rightly critical of this and of the wide variation in the capability of Section 11 teachers.

## **SECTION 6:**

## **LEA SUPPORT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING TEACHING**

153. Teacher recruitment and retention continue to be problems for the LEA. They were among the most pressing issues to be addressed eight years ago when the LEA was set up and are again highlighted in the new strategic plan. A substantial recruitment and retention package was put in place in 1990, but fully delegated to schools in 1993. The LEA has tried to attract teachers from abroad and has helped good teachers from, for example, Australia to obtain qualified teacher status. It has established a bank of supply teachers available through an SLA. They are well regarded, but not always sufficient in number to meet need, so some schools make their own arrangements for supply cover. Nevertheless, difficulties with teacher recruitment and retention have had an impact on the quality of teaching in three of the primary schools and two of the secondary schools visited. It is an issue in a further four primary schools, although some schools have developed strategies to overcome the problem. There were schools visited where the turnover of staff was higher than in the LEA as a whole and it would be prudent for the LEA to explore why these schools had a poor record of teacher retention.

154. Support to teaching is varied in quality and impact. Although the LEA has made a contribution to raising the quality of teaching in the primary schools, there are a small number where teaching is deteriorating and too little support has been provided to arrest the decline. The quality of teaching is generally improving in secondary schools. There are some examples of good in-service provision, particularly in literacy, numeracy and the arts in primary schools, but overall the impact of in-service provided by the LEA has been patchy and not always related to the needs of schools. Secondary schools are becoming increasingly selective in its use. The most effective support to improve teaching has been the shared monitoring of classroom teaching between inspectors and headteachers which was carried out with headteachers in 34 primary, nursery and special schools in 1996-97. Induction programmes for newly qualified teachers (NQT) are organised by the IAS and run from the Professional Development Centre. Schools are invited to purchase this programme either as a single session or group of sessions. This year, 43 primary schools (51 teachers) participated in the scheme, and 11 secondary schools (30 teachers). Some primary and early years teachers also attend sessions. The courses are very well regarded by most who attend them; they are appreciated for their relevance, practicality and opportunities to get advice and to share good practice.

155. Appraisal is dealt with by the IAS rather than personnel section. The LEA appraisal scheme was prepared and published in 1991 by a group of officers and teacher representatives. It was accompanied by a central training programme. However, little is going on at the present time, and in many schools appraisal arrangements have fallen into disuse. Headteacher appraisal was updated in 1995. The Annual Review of each school picks up the progress made on appraisal each year. A review of appraisal features as a priority within the LEA Strategic Plan for 1998-2002. A revised policy and guidelines will be produced.

156. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching in seven primary schools visited and in one school where standards were good at the time of the Section 10 inspection the status quo has been maintained. In three others the quality remains as it was at the time of the Section 10 inspection. However, in three schools teaching, which had been unsatisfactory at the time of the Section 10 inspection, had deteriorated.

157. The LEA has made an effective contribution to the quality of teaching in seven schools, and some contribution in three others. Nevertheless, in six schools, including the three where there was deterioration, the LEA had not acted effectively to raise standards. The contributions include support and guidance to heads and teachers from the link inspector and from subject specialist inspectors as well as targeted in-service training. However, the quality of these contributions was not always good enough. Of greater concern are the examples where the LEA knew that teaching was weak and management not strong but the LEA, having identified the problems, did not intervene to ensure that they were put right.

158. Of the 10 secondary schools visited, teaching had improved in six since the Section 10 inspection. In a school where teaching had been good overall, the status quo had been maintained. Despite this positive picture, in only two of the schools had LEA support had an impact and that was in schools where the quality of teaching was already satisfactory. This is indicative of the extent to which secondary headteachers purchase advice from beyond the Authority and also of the ineffective targeting of the work of the IAS.

159. In six primary schools, there was evidence that the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS) had monitored the quality of teaching. Four of these six schools had participated in the joint LEA/headteaching monitoring exercise. All four schools had benefitted from the experience and in three schools, subject co-ordinators were using the lessons learnt to monitor their curriculum areas. There was evidence of improved planning and better targeting of resources in these schools.

160. All the secondary schools had received monitoring by the IAS through subject inspector visits; In addition, in some schools, link inspectors had reviewed action plans or held mid-OFSTED reviews. Reports from these reviews were generally detailed and often left clear recommendations for action specifically related to teaching. However, at least two of the schools had been unable to make the necessary improvements suggested in the review and had received no follow up support from the LEA.

161. Some schools had had a mid-OFSTED review conducted by the IAS and managed by the link inspector. Schools viewed these reviews with varying degrees of enthusiasm. For example the judgements of one mid OFSTED review identified a situation in which weak teaching had further deteriorated, yet the LEA did not offer support and the school felt demoralised by the experience. Given the increasing amount of performance data available and OFSTED's inspection system, a mid-OFSTED review conducted in every school, irrespective of need, is a questionable use of resources and one for which funds should normally be delegated to schools.

## **SECTION 7:LEA SUPPORT TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOLS**

### **SUPPORT TO HEADTEACHERS AND SENIOR MANAGERS**

162. Support to management, particularly within secondary schools, is limited. Where primary schools are well managed already, the support of the link inspector has been valued. By contrast, link inspectors have had only limited impact in secondary schools and in those schools where management is already weak. In too many cases, the LEA has not appropriately targeted weak management or provided the level of support required. In-service training for senior managers has reduced, and there is inadequate support for headteachers who are new to the LEA. The new strategic plan of the LEA recognises these significant weaknesses, but considerable progress will need to be made. An audit of training needs and a matching training programme is planned. An induction programme and mentoring support are to be introduced as well as new opportunities to experience and share good practice. If the implementation of these proposals is of high quality, they should make a positive impact.

163. The new strategic plan appropriately identifies the importance of ensuring that schools develop the capacity to improve as self-managing institutions, and stresses the role of the LEA in providing information, advice and support to schools but it is not clear how this is to be achieved.

164. In 1993/94 the Professional Development Centre ran twenty management courses which attracted 300 participants. By 1995/96 this number had fallen to 97 and by 1996/97 it had fallen still further to 78 because managers were pursuing alternative provision such as National Qualifications for Headteachers. Courses from the LEA have included modules for headteachers, training for prospective headteachers and middle management. Middle management courses are still run by subject specialist inspectors/advisers. The LEA is an accredited Headlamp Trainer and assessment has been offered but there has been little uptake. Two senior management courses have been run in conjunction with the London Institute of Education. Management support received a below average rating in the LEA's own client satisfaction survey to schools.

#### ***Evidence from school visits***

165. In the schools visited the efficacy of the LEA's support to management was far too patchy. There are two particularly worrying features. Firstly, the LEA had put its most effective support into schools where management was already sound or good. The LEA had made an insufficient contribution to those schools that needed it most; that is to say those where Section 10 inspection had clearly identified weaknesses in management. Unsurprisingly, management remained weak in these schools.

166. Although the majority of headteachers in the primary schools valued the opportunity to talk to their link inspectors through the Annual Review process, they felt overall that the Annual Review was conducted for the LEA's, not the schools' benefit, and was of only limited value in helping them manage strategically. A more critical picture emerged in the secondary schools, where senior managers largely regarded the Annual Review as a statistical exercise carried out for the LEA's benefit. Where headteachers

valued the Annual Review process discussion included both the quantitative and qualitative data which has been compiled by the LEA over the year.

167. As has already been discussed, the quality and influence of the link inspector are too variable. However, in just over half of the primary schools the link inspector has a positive impact on management through, for example, the provision of good advice to the headteacher, monitoring of the progress of the school development plan or action plan, and in some cases training co-ordinators to monitor their subjects. Link inspectors are most effective in primary schools with strong headteachers who are capable of targeting the inspection where it is most needed. In two examples where the Section 10 report identifies management as a weakness the link inspector has been unable to provide the quality or amount of support required for improvement. The role of the link inspector is less well defined in the minds of secondary school headteachers and only two were supportive of the role.

168. Post inspection action planning was judged to be satisfactory or better in nearly two thirds of the schools visited. Plans were clear, well-formulated, were not over-ambitious and had detailed targets and other success criteria. Weaker plans tended to reflect leadership issues identified in the inspector's report. However, an absence of LEA involvement in post-inspection action planning was most evident in those schools which did not have the capacity to effect change by themselves. The involvement of link inspectors in post-inspection planning varied considerably across the schools and ranged from very good to negligible. In a third of schools but predominantly primary, the link inspector was actively engaged either in joint monitoring or critical evaluation over a prolonged period. In one secondary school not only did the link inspector help to develop the action plan but the subsequent mid-term review was a collaborative process involving joint visiting by heads of departments and inspectors. In some schools the link inspector acted as a broker not just between the schools and LEA services but also offered advice on obtaining external consultants.

169. There is variability in the quality of other services to support management. The primary schools visited made more use of the LEA's services than the secondary schools, with the majority of the primary schools purchasing service level agreements (SLAs) for a wide range of services. All the primary schools report that SLAs were appropriately met, although there are some minor complaints that advice from personnel has on occasions been unreliable. In one primary school internal audit had thrown up issues related to financial monitoring; that school had to go beyond the LEA to obtain the support and advice needed to improve the situation. Secondary schools were more critical of Finance services and IT systems. However, there is evidence that personnel had provided advice which was timely and expert. Two secondary schools complained that the budget statement provided by the LEA was often late - albeit accurate, and that the Phoenix information system was inadequate to provide the level of service required. The lack of advice for schools on the strategic management of the budget or of benchmarking data in these areas was a further complaint.

170. Services to support headteachers and senior managers, therefore, need to be improved. This applies to both professional advisory support and operational services. Most importantly, the LEA needs to target its support more effectively and to intervene where weaknesses in management are identified.

## APPENDIX I CONTEXT OF THE LEA

### (a) Characteristics of the pupil population

Indicator	Date	Source	LEA	National
1. Number of pupils in LEA area of 1997 compulsory school age		ONS population Estimates mid-year 1996	33,392	
2. Percentage of pupils entitled to 1997 DEE free school meals	1997	DfEE Form 7		
i. primary		Primary 1997	68.3	22.8
ii. secondary		Secondary 1997	65.5	18.2
3. Percentage of pupils living in households with parents/carers				
(i) with Higher Educational qualifications	1991	ONS Census	11.3	13.5
(ii) in Social Class 1 and 2	1991	ONS Census	8.8	31.0
4. Ethnic Minorities in population aged 5-15.	1991	ONS Census	12.7	
Percentage of ethnicgroup:			35.1	
Asian			1.5	0.5
Bangladesh			46.7	0.8
Black African			2.6	0.6
Black Caribbean			3.4	1.1
Black Other			2.0	0.8
Chinese			1.1	0.4
Indian			1.1	2.7
Other			2.4	1.1
Pakistani			1.0	2.1
White			38.3	89.9
5. Percentage of pupils:				
(i) with a statement of SEN	1998	LEA & DfEE Form 7		
primary			1.8	2.6
secondary			5.0	3.9
(ii) attending special school				
primary			0.8	1.1
secondary			2.6	1.6
6. Participation in education:	1998	LEA		
(i) % pupils under 5 on the roll of a maintained school			88	56
(ii) % pupils aged 16 remaining in full time education.			70	67.4

## (b) Organisation of schools

### Types of school

1. Number of:	Number
Nursery schools	7
Infant schools	10
Junior schools	10
Junior and infant schools	56
Middle schools	0
Secondary schools 11-16	7
11-18	6
Special schools	9
Pupil Referral Units	1

### Surplus places

% Surplus places	Year	LEA	National
Primary	1998	0.25	10.0
Secondary	1998	0	16.7

### Pupil/teacher ratio

	Year	LEA	National
All	1998	18.0	19.6
Nursery	1998	16.1	19.2
Primary	1998	20.9	23.4
Secondary	1998	14.8	16.7

Source: DfEE

### Class size

#### Rate per 1000 classes

Size of class	Year	LEA	National
31 or more KS1	1997	72.1	289.6
KS2	1997	54.9	379.0
36 or more KS1	1997	0.0	22.9
KS2	1997	0.0	35.0

Source: DfEE

### c) Finance

Indicator	Source	Year	LEA	National
% expenditure in relation to standard spending assessment	Audit Commission	1997/98	100.2	
Funding per pupil: £ per pupil	CIPFA	1996 .97		
Primary 0-4			1914.4	1278.8
5-6			1406.5	1180.2
7-10			1440.8	1149.4
£ per pupil Secondary	CIPFA	1996 -97		
11-13			1828.5	1567.4
14-15			2180.6	1931.4
16+			2390.3	2440.0
Aggregated schools budget: £ per pupil	CIPFA	1996 .97		
Primary			1896.7	1486.0
Secondary			2580.6	2052.7
Special			9398.8	7945.2
General schools budget: £ per pupil	CIPFA	1996 .97		
Primary			2822.4	2021.8
Secondary			3921.3	2694.2
Special			18522.3	12595.0
Potential schools budget:	CIPFA	1996 .97		
Primary			2109.0	1664.6
Secondary			2913.4	2232.6
Special			10157.9	8819.1
Capital expenditure: £ per pupil	CIPFA	1996 .97	272.7	128.9

\* These figures are from CIPFA but only approximate.

## **APPENDIX 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

### **I BASELINE ASSESSMENT**

The LEA introduced a scheme for baseline assessment three years ago. Children are assessed on entry to reception classes during the autumn and spring terms. In 1997 the Authority conducted an evaluation of the results based on returns from 38 schools which constituted a 56 per cent return and involved a total of 944 children. The assessment profile consists of five sections: social/emotional skills, self-help, physical/motor skills, cognitive and speech/language/communication; these are loosely comparable with the SCAA 'desirable outcomes'. Pupils are given a score between 1 and 5 with 1 for 'never' and 5 for 'always'. Higher scores represent higher assessment levels; the average score on the assessment profile was 104 out of a possible total of 175. The results indicated that pupils of Bangladeshi origin were assessed at lower levels than their peers of Caribbean and English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish (ESWI) origin in all areas of experience.

## 2 PUPILS' ATTAINMENT AT AGE 7: KS1 TESTS/TASKS

Key Stage 1	Year	LEA	National	Difference
English teacher assessment				
Level 2+	1995	71.0	81.0	-10.0
	1996	68.1	79.3	-11.2
	1997	69.4	80.4	-11.1
Reading – Test				
	1995	62.2	78.5	-16.3
	1996	64.9	78.0	-13.1
	1997	97.1	80.1	-13.0
Writing – Test				
	1995	72.4	80.4	-8.0
	1996	69.1	79.7	-10.6
	1997	79.0	80.4	-1.4
Maths – Teacher Assessment				
Level 2+	1995	70.9	78.4	-7.5
	1996	76.9	82.2	-5.3
	1997	77.1	84.2	-7.1
Maths – Test				
	1995	70.3	79.2	-8.9
	1996	75.7	82.1	-6.4
	1997	78.9	83.7	-4.8
Science – Teacher Assessment				
Level 2+	1995	76.0	84.7	-8.7
	1996	75.5	84.1	-8.6
	1997	76.8	85.5	-8.7

Source: DfEE

### 3. ATTAINMENT AT AGE 11: KS2 TESTS

Key Stage 2	Year	LEA	National	Difference
English – Test				
Level 4+	1995	27.8	48.5	-20.7
	1996	36.2	57.1	-20.9
	1997	46.7	63.2	-16.5
Maths – Test				
Level 4+	1995	31.5	44.9	-13.4
	1996	41.1	53.9	-12.8
	1997	50.7	62.0	-11.3
Science – Test				
Level 4+	1995	51.6	70.2	-18.6
	1996	47.2	62.0	-14.8
	1997	55.4	68.8	-13.4

Source: DfEE

**4. ATTAINMENT AT AGE 14: KS3 TESTS**

<b>Key Stage 3</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>LEA</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>English – Test</b>				
Level 5+	1995	32.8	55.3	-22.5
	1996	33.3	56.6	-23.3
	1997	30.9	56.6	-25.7
Level 6	1995	8.3	20.0	-11.7
	1996	9.7	25.9	-16.1
	1997	6.4	22.7	-16.3
<b>Maths – Test</b>				
Level 5+	1995	32.3	58.0	-27.1
	1996	29.4	56.7	-28.8
	1997	34.5	60.7	-28.4
Level 6	1995	12.7	33.2	-17.3
	1996	11.3	33.2	-15.9
	1997	15.1	37.1	-21.4
<b>Science – Test</b>				
Level 5+	1995	29.3	56.4	-27.1
	1996	27.6	56.4	-28.8
	1997	32.4	60.8	-28.4
Level 6	1995	7.9	25.2	-17.3
	1996	5.7	21.6	-15.9
	1997	7.8	29.2	-21.4

**5. ATTAINMENT AT AGE 16**

**GCSE RESULTS IN MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

	Year	LEA	National	Difference
% pupils 5+ A*-C	1994	19.1	40.7	-21.6
	1997	26.0	43.3	-17.3
% pupils 5+ A*-G	1994	72.9	87.0	-14.1
	1997	79.2	88.5	-9.3
% pupils 1+ A*-G	1994	89.5	93.7	-4.2
	1997	91.8	94.0	-2.2

Source: DfEE

**6. VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF 16 YEAR OLDS IN MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

% of Pupils					
Level Achieved	Sex	Year	LEA	National	National Difference
Pass Entries	All	1994	100.0	87.9	12.1
Pass Entries	All	1995	68.0	85.3	-17.3
Pass Entries	All	1996	48.0	79.2	-31.2
Pass Entries	All	1997	100.0	80.1	19.9
<b>The percentage of pupils aged 15 (at the beginning of the school year and on the roll in January of that year) who are registered for and obtaining all the approved vocational qualifications or units for which they were studying</b>					

Source: DfEE

## 7. ATTAINMENT AT AGE 18

A Level Results			Average point score per pupil		
Number Entered	Sex	Year	LEA	National	National Difference
2 or more	All	1994	8.9	15.1	-6.2
2 or more	All	1995	9.0	15.9	-6.9
2 or more	All	1996	9.4	16.8	-7.4
2 or more	All	1997	10.0	17.1	-7.1
Less than 2	All	1994	2.3	2.7	-0.4
Less than 2	All	1995	2.0	2.7	-0.7
Less than 2	All	1996	2.5	2.7	-0.2
Less than 2	All	1997	2.1	2.7	-0.6

Source: DfEE

## 8. ATTENDANCE

	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Attendance in primary schools	1995	89.8	93.6	-3.8
	1996	90.2	93.4	-3.2
	1997	91.5	93.9	-2.4
Attendance in secondary schools	1995	88.6	90.6	-1.9
	1996	88.8	90.5	-1.7
	1997	89.4	90.9	-1.5

Source: DfEE

## 9. EXCLUSIONS

Permanent exclusions (rate per 1000 pupils)	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Primary schools	1996	0.4	0.3	0.1
	1997	0.4	0.4	0.0
Secondary schools	1996	3.6	2.9	0.7
	1997	3.4	3.4	0.0

Source:DfEE

**10. VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF 16 TO 18 YEAR OLDS IN MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

% OF PUPILS					
Level Achieved	Sex	Year	LEA	National	National Difference
Pass Entries	All	1994	100.0	84.8	15.2
Pass Entries	All	1995	100.0	80.2	19.8
Pass Entries (Adv)	All	1996	84.5	79.3	5.2
Pass Entries (Adv)	All	1997	74.1	75.4	-1.3
Pass Entries (Int)	All	1996	60.8	69.1	-8.3
Pass Entries (Int)	All	1997	75.4	68.9	6.5
<b>The percentage of students who were in the final year of a course leading to approved vocational qualifications who achieved them on the basis of the work done in that year.</b>					

Source: DfEE

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

**Telephone 0171 421 6800**

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Chief Education Officer,  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets,  
Education Department,  
Mulberry Place,  
5 Clove Crescent,  
LONDON E14 2BG