

**Inspection report**  
**SURREY**  
**Local Education Authority**

Date of inspection: January 2003

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## **Basic information**

Name of LEA:	Surrey Local Education Authority
Address of LEA:	County Hall Kingston upon Thames Surrey KT1 2DJ
Lead inspector:	Jillian Munday, HMI
Date of inspection:	January 2003

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## Introduction

1. This inspection of Surrey local education authority (LEA) was carried out by Ofsted in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities (December 2001)*. The inspection focused on the effectiveness of the LEA's work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.

2. The inspection was based on a range of material, which included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, and data, some of which was provided by the LEA. That material also included school inspection information; HMI monitoring reports; audit reports; documentation from, and discussions with, LEA officers and members; focus groups of headteachers and governors; staff in other departments at the local authority; diocesan representatives; and other agencies and the LEA's partners. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA (published in June 1998). A questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the work of the LEA, was available to all schools, and the inspection team considered its results. The response rate to the questionnaire was 61 per cent.

3. For each inspected function of the LEA, an inspection team makes a judgment, which is converted into a numerical grade. An inspection team may make up to 52 key inspection judgements. An inspection judgement is made against criteria for each inspected function of the LEA. These criteria, (and the guidance notes on functions of an LEA that may be inspected by Ofsted), can be found on the Ofsted website. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are appended to this report, along with short explanations of what each numerical grade represents. Judgements on inspected functions of an LEA are made during the inspection of the LEA and indicate the effectiveness of the LEA's performance of individual functions at the time of the inspection. The numerical grades awarded by the inspection team complement the areas of the report, which comment on the individual functions scrutinised on this inspection, and, as such, must be considered in the light of those comments.

4. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) profile for the education service. It is intended that the CPA for education will be updated annually so the grades from this inspection will contribute to the next annual assessment.

5. The CPA for the education service takes account of the performance of several aspects of the local service, including pre-school and adult education. The CPA for education is composed of a number of inspection judgements, as well as other performance indicators, such as improvement trends at Key Stage 3. The assessment, published in December 2002, gives star ratings for each local authority for a range of local services, for example social services, benefits, environment etc, whereas this report focuses on the local authority's work to support school improvement.

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## Commentary

6. Surrey has many strengths, no weaknesses and aims for excellence in all that it does. The current extent of good or very good work demonstrates that it is well on the way to achieving its ambition. It has built effectively on the strengths identified at the time of the last inspection, and has addressed the recommendations rigorously. At that time, there were shortcomings in strategic planning, the quality of support provided to schools was inconsistent and the definition of partnership with schools lacked precision. Surrey has improved in each of these areas, and has raised or maintained its performance in almost every other function. It knows itself and its schools well, and is a good LEA. A few areas for development remain, but the breadth of its vision, coupled with the skills of its workforce means that it has strong capacity for further improvement.

7. Standards in schools are high, although the LEA recognises that there is room for further improvement at Key Stage 4, post-16 and in the attainment of vulnerable groups, such as looked after children. At Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, results are well above national averages and above those of similar authorities. At Key Stage 3 they are above the national average, but in line with those of similar authorities. Attendance figures are above the national average and the rate of exclusions is broadly in line with national figures. Very challenging national, local and public service agreement targets illustrate the council's ambitions for high attainment across all areas of its work, but set a demanding agenda for the LEA and schools.

8. Surrey is a large county with very low unemployment and a mainly affluent population. Only one ward is amongst the most disadvantaged 20 per cent nationally, although there are pockets of comparative disadvantage that affect particular schools in other wards. The council has had significant budget pressures to resolve in the current year and is debating its long-term ability to sustain expenditure at existing levels. It has benefited little from additional government funding, which is generally targeted at areas of high social deprivation. Within this context, education is afforded a high priority.

9. A change in council direction and philosophy since the last inspection has released a high level of energy from senior managers, who have been empowered to move forward in developing high quality integrated solutions to problems. New organisational structures have resulted in the establishment of an integrated service for children and young people. The director of this service provides very good leadership encouraging innovation within a framework of professional integrity. Elected members are well-informed, but the scrutiny function of the council requires development if it is to become a consistently rigorous driver of improvement. The council has recognised that central control and decision making may not always deliver what schools and communities need. Its community strategy is, therefore, being put into practice through local committees and pilot confederations of schools are being given responsibility for education decision making.

10. Since 1998 there has been good progress in the quality of the LEA's support for school improvement and in the clarity of the LEA-school partnership. The relationship between the LEA and schools is characterised by professional trust and predicated on a firm belief in the balance between school autonomy and the LEA's responsibility. Schools understand and appreciate the freedom they are afforded, but, in some cases, fail to put into practice the associated responsibility, for example in securing access to education for

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vulnerable groups such as Travellers. Although the LEA's effectiveness in combating racism is satisfactory, it was slow to respond to the recommendations of the Macpherson enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence and much still needs to be done to raise awareness and strengthen procedures in schools.

11. Surrey is a creative and innovative LEA. Senior officers have very good leadership skills, expertise, and commitment to the values of the LEA. They are self-critical, honest about their strengths and weaknesses, and keen to learn from others. Officers have a very good understanding of the national priorities, are keen to tailor these to local needs and approach vigorously the resulting new challenges. They are not afraid to take risks, but are also thorough in their analysis of potential impact.

There are particular strengths in:

- targeting resources to priorities;
  - strategies for promoting continuous improvement, including Best Value;
  - corporate planning and implementation;
  - decision making;
  - the leadership of senior officers and the quality of advice they give to elected members;
  - partnership and collaboration with other agencies;
  - health, safety, welfare and child protection;
  - the school improvement strategy and its implementation, including the EDP;
  - the leadership, deployment, performance management and value for money of services to support school improvement;
  - the expertise of staff to support school improvement;
  - monitoring, challenge and intervention;
  - focusing school improvement support on areas of need;
  - challenging schools to improve, including the use made of performance data;
  - the identification of and intervention in under-performing schools;
  - support for raising standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT);
  - support for school leadership and management, including school governors;
  - assuring the supply and quality of teachers;
  - meeting statutory obligations in respect of special educational needs (SEN);
  - behaviour support;
  - admissions to schools;
  - school attendance;
  - services to support school management; and
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- financial, human resources, ICT administration and catering services.

In all other areas the LEA provides satisfactory or highly satisfactory support.

12. Surrey has made very good progress since its last inspection in 1998. It is a good LEA with excellent capacity to improve further and implement the recommendations of this report. The all round high performance of the education service is reflected in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, published in December 2002. This gave the education service in Surrey three stars (the highest category) for current performance, and three stars for its capacity to improve.

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## Section 1: The LEA's strategy for school improvement

### Context

13. The context of the LEA has changed little since the previous inspection in 1998. Surrey is a large and generally affluent county with small pockets of relative disadvantage. It has a population of 1.1 million and virtually no unemployment. Census data for 1991 shows the proportions of adults in social classes one and two and with higher education qualifications to be well above the national average. The Department of the Environment, Trade and the Regions index of deprivation for 2000 ranks the majority of boroughs in Surrey among the most advantaged in the country. The lowest ranked district is placed 308 out of 354 (with 354 being the least deprived). About 20 per cent of schools are situated in wards with a proportion of adults with higher education qualifications below the national average. Similarly, whilst the overall percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national figure, in eight per cent of schools this proportion is higher than the national average.

14. Surrey local education authority provides school places for 138,606 pupils, a figure that has increased by about 8,000 since the previous inspection. The authority maintains three nursery schools and an early excellence centre, 327 primary schools, and 53 non-selective secondary schools of which 30 have sixth forms. In addition, there are 24 special schools and nine pupil referral units. Twenty-one schools have been awarded Beacon status. Since 1998 the authority has taken the initiative and entered into partnership arrangements with two external organisations to deliver high quality education provision through the regeneration of three secondary schools. Surrey is also characterised by a large independent school sector. The percentage of pupils for whom the authority maintains statements of special educational need is in line with the national average. Minority ethnic communities make up 2.8 per cent of the overall population and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attending Surrey schools represent 4.9 per cent of the school population, compared to 12.9 per cent nationally. Pupil mobility is relatively low when compared with available national data.

### Performance

15. A detailed analysis of the performance of schools is supplied to the LEA annually in the form of a statistical profile compiled by Ofsted. Key features of schools' performance, and changes since the previous inspection are outlined below.<sup>1</sup> Where comparisons are made these are set against performance nationally and performance of the LEA's statistical neighbours<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 2002 data are unvalidated and, therefore, provisional.

<sup>2</sup> Surrey's statistical neighbours are Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hampshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, West Sussex, Solihull, Cheshire, North Somerset and Essex.

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16. Data from Ofsted inspections indicate that in Surrey the number of schools where pupils' performance on entry to school is satisfactory or good exceeds both national and statistical neighbour figures.

17. In 2001, at Key Stage 1 the proportion of pupils attaining at least Level 2 was well above the national average and above the statistical neighbour average. In 2002, there was no change in reading, but performance in other subjects was above the national average and in line with the statistical neighbour average. Level 3 performance was well above national average and above statistical neighbour average in both years, except for writing where standards were closer to the average. The rate of improvement over the years between 1998 and 2001 is broadly in line with the national and statistical neighbour trends. Given the already high base of attainment, schools have made good progress since the last inspection.

18. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining at least Level 4 in Key Stage 2 was well above national levels and above statistical neighbour averages in English, mathematics and science. In 2002, the performance of pupils in English and science remained at this level. In mathematics, performance was above national and statistical neighbour averages. Level 5 performance in 2001 and 2002 was well above the national average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Performance in all three subjects was above the statistical neighbour averages in both years. Although rates of improvement between 1998 and 2001 are below the national trend and close to the statistical neighbour trend, this reflects the high baseline of attainment in Surrey.

19. In 2001 and in 2002 the proportion of pupils achieving at least Level 5 at Key Stage 3 was generally above that seen nationally and in line with that of statistical neighbours. At Level 6 proportions were similarly above national and in line with statistical neighbour averages. The progress pupils made between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 was in line with that seen nationally. The rate of improvement was above the national trend in English, and in line with this trend in mathematics and science. Improvement rates were above those of statistical neighbours in English and mathematics, and well above in science.

20. The proportion of all pupils achieving at least five A\*-C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) remained well above the national average in 2001 and was in line with statistical neighbour averages. The rate of improvement in this indicator is above national and neighbour trends. In 2002, this proportion was above the national average and in line with statistical neighbour averages.

21. In both 2001 and 2002, the proportion of pupils achieving five A\*- G grades was above national figures and in line with those of statistical neighbours.

22. With the exception of boys, who performed slightly better against national indicators, figures for those pupils achieving at least one A\*- G grade in 2001 were in line with national and statistical neighbour averages. However, the rate of improvement for this indicator was below both the national and statistical neighbour trends. In 2002, the proportion of pupils achieving at least one A\*- G grade remained in line with both national and statistical neighbour averages, although girls performed above national averages.

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23. Average point score comparisons in 2001 placed Surrey well above national averages and in line with the statistical neighbour average. The progress pupils in the 2001 cohort made between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 was above the national average. In 2002, the average point score of Surrey schools was above the national average and remained in line with that of statistical neighbours.

24. Based upon 2001 data the performance of students in advanced General Certificate of Education, Vocational Certificate of Education and GNVQ is in line with the national performance. At intermediate level, the performance in GNVQ is above the national level.

25. Attendance figures are better than those seen nationally at both the primary and secondary school phases, whilst figures for unauthorised absence are broadly in line with national indicators. Exclusion figures are in line with national averages for both primary and secondary schools.

26. The performance of looked after children at Key Stage 4 exceeded the national target of 50 per cent attaining one A\*- G grade, but attainment of five A\*- C grades has been variable with only four per cent reaching this standard in 2001.

27. Ofsted school inspection data shows that the proportion of primary and secondary schools that are good or very good in Surrey is above the national average.

### **Funding**

28. Surrey has highlighted education as a top priority and for a number of years, despite pressures on the budget, the council has transferred the full Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) increase and has protected funding for schools. It has analysed the additional pressures that the national 2003 funding arrangements will bring. Education expenditure as a percentage of SSA is budgeted at 100.56 per cent in 2002/2003. The SSA per pupil is above the English counties average, but below the England average.

29. Capital expenditure has increased significantly in the last two years, standing now at £39.4 million, almost double what it was in 2000/2001. Revenue contributions have remained at similar levels, while there has been a significant increase in borrowing and capital grants and a smaller increase in capital receipts.

30. At 86.3 per cent, Surrey delegated its local schools budget in line with similar authorities and nationally in 2001/2002. This has increased similarly in 2002-2003 to 87 per cent. The gross delegated funding per primary and secondary pupil is above the average for statistical neighbours and counties in 2002/2003, and for special schools it is well above all averages, being the second highest among statistical neighbours.

Gross individual school budget (ISB) per pupil:	LEA	Statistical Neighbours	Counties	England
primary	£ 2,208	£2,095	£2,074	£2,223
secondary	£ 2,787	£2,752	£2,777	£2,940
special	£ 12,095	£10,476	£11,147	£12,055

Source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002/03

31. The LEA has taken up almost all Standards Fund grants available to it. However, at £216 per pupil, this is significantly below statistical neighbours (£253), counties (£250) and England averages (£334). Surrey has been successful in obtaining external funding from a range of sources, but it is not a major beneficiary of funds that target disadvantage. The corporate development opportunities team is available to assist both the LEA and schools in attracting external funding.

32. Surrey LEA’s expenditure on centrally-provided services in 2002/2003 is generally in line with comparators. Within special educational needs, however, home-to-school transport has rising costs and there is particularly high spending on independent special schools. The lowest comparative spending area is educational psychology assessment. Funding for statemented pupils is delegated to schools.

	LEA (£ per pupil)	SN (£ per pupil)	Counties (£ per pupil)	National (£ per pupil)
Strategic management	£96	£89	£89	£101
Special education	£154	£153	£143	£160
School improvement	£31	£26	£26	£31
Access	£161	£150	£163	£131

Source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002/03

**Council structure**

33. The present council, elected in May 2001, has 76 councillors, 51 of whom are Conservative, 13 Liberal Democrat, six Labour and six Independent. The structure of the council has changed since the last inspection and business is now conducted through an executive cabinet and seven select committees. Portfolio responsibilities within the executive cover ten areas, one of which is for children and young people. The select committees review decisions made by the executive and make any necessary recommendations for improvement prior to implementation. In addition, they are consulted by both the executive and the council on any forthcoming decisions and on major policy developments. The responsibility for

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securing Best Value in delivering services lies with the executive, but individual reviews of services are carried out by one of four performance review committees. The responsibilities of local committees in Surrey's 11 borough and district councils are set out clearly and focus on engaging residents in the planning, implementation and monitoring of local services.

34. Council priorities are set out in the annual performance plan, and its organisational strategy, which focuses on culture and values, sets the delivery style for this and other plans. Other corporate programmes are targeted at the development of cross-cutting services and activities.

35. A strategy team, consisting of the chief executive and five executive directors of specific services or functions, provides strategic vision and organisational leadership. Its role is to ensure that statutory responsibilities and national initiatives are tailored to meet the specific needs of Surrey through the development of organisational priorities and integrated action across services. Education services form part of the children and young people directorate, which also includes community and children's social care functions.

### **The LEA's strategy for school improvement**

36. The LEA's strategy for school improvement is good. The Education Development Plan (EDP) identifies five local priorities reflecting corporate targets and national themes. The authority's commitment to learning and the development of personal values, as well as to attainment and outcomes, is evident. More detailed action plans, such as those for the implementation of national strategies underpin the EDP priorities.

37. The review and analysis of data are thorough and result in action being well targeted. Wider management information is also used to inform decisions about focused activity. Proposed EDP action from April 2003-2004 is very purposeful. The LEA recognises, through its detailed plans for improvement, that statutory Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 targets and additional public service agreement targets for Key Stage 1, Key Stage 4, unauthorised absence and attainment on entry to school will be difficult to achieve.

38. The school improvement programme strongly promotes key themes that support school autonomy, such as the self-evaluating school, intervention in inverse proportion to success, and partnership working. Success criteria are appropriately specific and measurable. Resources to support the implementation of plans for the current year are identified in service plans and these are monitored carefully. Costings are included in the 2003-2004 action plans to aid review. There is a clear overall framework for monitoring and evaluation.

39. Consultation is good. An appropriate range of partners is involved in discussions about priorities. The process leading to action plans for 2003-2004 has been LEA led but, suitably, has involved some consultation and discussion with elected members and stakeholders. Schools view the LEA's priorities as relevant and the quality of the LEA's strategic planning for school improvement as good. They are able to influence plans and their views are taken on board. Where possible, schools align their development plans with the EDP. This match is discussed as part of the LEA's self-evaluation visit and issues for training and development feed into the annual audit of professional development needs.

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40. Key Stage 2 targets for 2002 were set at a highly ambitious level and were missed by three per cent in both English and mathematics. This results in significant challenges for the LEA and schools if the gaps between current performance and 2003 targets are to be closed. The LEA has rightly put in place specific plans to support schools in meeting the aspiration of these high targets, but additionally, and appropriately, remains focused on improving quality across a wider range of indicators. Key Stage 3 English and mathematics targets for 2003 and 2004 will be equally difficult for schools to achieve without a significant improvement in the rate of progress. At Key Stage 4, improvements of three per cent for five A\*- C attainment, and two per cent for one A\*- G attainment are required if 2003 targets are to be met.

41. Progress in implementing EDP action to achieve other targets is on line and outcomes are clear. For example:

- there has been a reduction in the number of schools requiring LEA intervention;
- work with targeted schools to improve Key Stage 2 writing has resulted in improvements that exceed those seen across Surrey as a whole;
- all schools have completed ICT action plans; and
- action to address recruitment and retention difficulties has resulted in a reduction in the number of vacancies and an increase in the number of newly qualified teachers being retained into a second year of teaching.

42. Progress reports are thorough and include outcome measures. Barriers to improvement are noted and acted upon. The impact of the work of each service is systematically reviewed and the achievement of EDP targets is carefully tracked through performance management reviews and appraisal meetings.

### **The allocation of resources to priorities**

43. The targeting of resources to priorities is good. At the time of the previous inspection, the extent to which the LEA targeted its resources to priorities was inconsistent. Recommendations in relation to planning, consistency of resource allocations and the monitoring of school budgets have now been addressed.

44. The LEA has identified clearly its priorities in its strategic plans and funding, including grant funding, is allocated accordingly. Budget planning processes are thorough, requiring all services to identify pressures, challenges, risks and potential savings. Consultation on priorities takes place with stakeholders; schools, in particular, are able to influence strategic planning, for example through the EDP preparation process.

45. The LEA has met all government spending targets. The level of delegated funding reflects the authority's commitment to self-managing schools. Budget making is accurate and monitoring is good. Although there have been, and continue to be, difficulties in controlling SEN spending in the areas of out-of-county placements and home-to-school transport, the issues have been clearly identified and a strategy for managing the expenditure has been implemented. Remedial action has included a revision of the budget formula for special schools, review of admissions procedures and the allocation of extra resources to these high risk areas.

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46. The funding formula, which is reviewed regularly, deliberately and openly supports the primary sector at a higher level than all comparator averages. Changes in 2002/2003 included the very helpful addition of a social enhancement factor, in order to target areas of greatest need more efficiently. Appropriate adjustments have also been made to smooth out the impact on individual schools of the new sixth form funding arrangements through the Learning and Skills Council.

47. Schools are supported well in their budget making and control. Where monitoring identifies budget difficulties, prompt increased targeted support from a range of services follows. A significant number of schools, notably more than 75 per cent of primary schools, had surplus budgets in excess of five per cent at the end of the last financial year. The LEA has a satisfactory system in place for examining reasons for this and the issue has been discussed at the schools' forum.

### **Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value**

48. Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value, are good. Although this aspect of the LEA's work was not inspected previously, a recommendation was made that it should develop more objective and quantitative targets to assess progress on its key priorities. This has now been addressed fully.

49. The LEA uses Best Value as one tool amongst many to improve its performance. Other measures include: participation in a 'new models for LEAs' initiative with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Office for Public Management; development of a proposed joint venture to deliver its support services to schools; the use of public-private partnerships to deliver secondary school regeneration; and exploration of setting up confederations of schools.

50. The service for children and young people knows itself well. This fact is illustrated clearly in the detailed self-evaluation submitted as inspection evidence. Audits are thorough and an excellent range of management data and information is used to assess progress and target action. In order to further improve and learn from others, the service has commissioned external reviews, the outcomes of which have been acted upon diligently. Consultation with stakeholders is comprehensive. Schools, in particular, value the open approach that has been adopted and know that their comments will result in action.

51. The service for children and young people has an effective performance management framework. It links corporate and education objectives through directorate and service plans to individual staff performance, including service commissioning agreements for service heads. The education service has been a leader within the council on the use of performance management data. It has also achieved Investors in People accreditation. A comprehensive annual performance report is now used to review the authority's overall progress and identify areas for future development.

52. The Best Value Performance Plan is a good, accessible document. Council priorities are outlined clearly, together with plans for achieving them and review of progress to date. The external auditor has identified an improvement in the overall quality of performance indicators. Appropriately, a new corporate post of head of performance has

been recently established to lead further performance management developments across the council.

53. The Best Value review programme was reviewed in 2001 to strengthen the cross-service dimension and integrate the reviews within the council's overall improvement programme. The education service has participated in a large number of cross-cutting Best Value reviews, the most fundamental of which, a review of services for children with SEN, was a major factor in securing improved provision through the creation of the integrated children's services function. A Best Value review of corporate ICT led to a further useful and effective external review of education ICT; this has resulted in improved delivery of curriculum and administrative ICT services.

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## Section 2: Support for school improvement

### Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's support for school improvement

54. The effectiveness of the LEA's services to support school improvement is good. At the time of the previous inspection services were generally well managed. However, there was some inconsistency in performance monitoring and service planning, and anomalies in departmental structures reduced the coherence of the school improvement strategy. Good progress has been made and all but two of the LEA's school improvement functions are now highly satisfactory or better; some are very good. The cost of these services is broadly in line with the national average and they give good value for money.

55. The recently established learning and school improvement portfolio within the Surrey school support service (Four S) covers a wide range of provision to schools, to children and to communities. They reflect the council's objective for co-ordinated and holistic services for pupils and schools. Headteachers and governors support the service principles and developments and have high expectations of its future provision. Plans to develop Four S into a joint public-private partnership are welcomed cautiously by schools, who understand the opportunities such an arrangement might bring, but have some concerns about the potential dilution of service to Surrey schools as a result of business expansion.

56. The leadership of services for school improvement is good. Senior officers provide a very clear vision of continuous improvement; their energy, expertise and enthusiasm for the work are impressive. The effectiveness of strategic planning for school improvement is highly satisfactory. A suitable format is used, with some variation in detail. Plans in the learning and school improvement portfolio and Four S are well linked to the objectives of the council, to the EDP and, in broad terms, to those of the local strategic partnership. However, weaknesses remain in the detail of the success criteria, time frames for action and costings in some team action plans. Procedures for monitoring the implementation of plans are thorough and regular and the outcomes are rigorously evaluated. The information gained about strengths and weaknesses is effectively used to change or amend strategies.

57. The expertise of staff to support school improvement is very good. Through careful recruitment procedures and internal professional development opportunities, the LEA has built a strong team of specialists. The new multi-roles of many staff, which require them to work across a wider range of education functions, are being supported by a detailed audit of their school improvement skills to inform subsequent mentor and training support. The work of Four S is ably enhanced by a large group of associate staff with relevant and current experience in key education areas. Staff deployment is very good and closely focused on the needs of schools. Deployment is monitored by line managers in relation to time allocation, expenditure and balance of deployment to the EDP actions. In order to inform future planning, the LEA is building a valuable database collating the skills and expertise of staff.

58. There are very good performance management procedures in school improvement services. The process is effectively focused on service outcomes and setting future targets, and is clearly defined in guidance for staff. Personal and professional development opportunities are well resourced and associate staff have regular review meetings. Where

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staff or service performance is below the LEA's expectations, suitable support and management procedures are adopted.

### **Monitoring, challenge, and intervention**

59. Procedures for monitoring, challenge and intervention, which were not always consistent at the time of the previous inspection, are now good. The precision of the LEA's monitoring and evaluation ensures good and accurate targeting of resources to areas of greatest need.

60. Headteachers are very clear about the range and precision of the criteria used by the LEA to categorise schools according to need, but this is less true of chairs of governors. These processes have been refined over time through good consultation with headteachers. Schools understand the monitoring and intervention strategy and are aware of the core services that are centrally provided, and those additional services that can be purchased.

61. Good performance and management data about each school are assembled from a comprehensive range of services across the directorate, together with relevant field evidence. Senior officers, conscious of the time and cost implications of such work, are rightly investigating whether greater efficiency could be achieved.

62. Through an attached consultant, all schools receive a core service that is highly focused on the monitoring of each school's improvement plan, self-evaluation outcomes, and procedures for target setting. Within five different levels, schools receive additional amounts of intervention and support dependent upon need and these are clearly specified, but flexible enough to be fit for purpose. Headteachers report a high level of appropriate and good quality intervention by LEA services. A written report of each consultant visit is sent to the headteacher and includes a summary of strengths and areas for improvement. These reports are not sent directly to the chair of governors, which is a limitation of an otherwise highly effective set of procedures.

63. High priority is placed on the support for schools to be self-managing and autonomous, and officers respect this in their day to day contacts with schools. Consultants and schools use an impressive range of data, added value indicators and benchmark information to identify and target areas of weakness. The LEA's partnership with schools is strong and results in a level of mutual and rigorous challenge that prompts strategies for change and improvement that most schools subscribe to and welcome. The outcomes of this productive relationship are a wide range of initiatives and innovative joint thinking with schools.

### **The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring and challenging schools**

64. This area of the LEA's work was good at the time of the last inspection. Although not inspected through detailed fieldwork this time, evidence supports a judgement that this aspect is now very good. In particular, the data provided by the LEA and accessible electronically to all schools have improved and expanded since the last inspection. These data incorporate performance analyses of the LEA and individual schools covering attainment, added value, progress indicators and externally provided predictive data. These

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are supplemented by helpful benchmark information for school managers, including financial data and attainment data analysed in relation to factors such as pupils' gender, minority ethnic group, attendance and exclusion rates.

### **The effectiveness of the LEA's work with under-performing schools**

65. The LEA's effectiveness in identifying and intervening in under-performing schools is very good. Though effective at the time of the first inspection, the LEA's intervention was variable in its quality and timeliness. These processes are now much improved and the strategy has resulted in greater speed and effectiveness in removing schools from the categories that cause concern. The Best Value Performance Plan target to reduce the number of schools in special measures has been exceeded and there has been a reduction in the percentage of schools being placed on the LEA's own intervention register.

66. The majority of schools have standards of attainment that are predominantly well above national averages. The proportion of schools requiring some or significant improvement is below the national average in primary and secondary schools. The proportion of schools on the LEA's list of schools needing additional support and intervention reduced from 12.5 per cent in 1998 to seven per cent in 2002. Currently, two primary schools require special measures, compared with seven at the time of the previous inspection. Five schools have serious weaknesses, of which two are secondary, two are special schools for boys and one is a pupil referral unit. The LEA's record for the time taken to remove schools from special measures and serious weaknesses is in line with national averages.

67. The LEA uses a well-developed procedure for identifying and monitoring the three categories of schools that are cause for concern and require intervention. Schools' involvement in the refinement of the strategy has been detailed. The criteria are transparent and headteachers have a good understanding of the process. A cross-service network group meets termly and uses current data and field knowledge to update information on every school. Interim arrangements also enable all officers to formally raise alerts about any school. Decisions and actions are tackled promptly. This is a thorough and effective process that secures an accurate and up-to-date categorisation of all schools.

68. School intervention plans are detailed and well targeted with clear time frames and outcomes for pupils. The plans are supported by written agreements between the school and the LEA and are monitored, at least termly, at a progress meeting for each school. The procedures with officers, headteachers and governors are both challenging and supportive. Improvement strategies are well matched to the needs of the school, of high quality and provided by very professional officers. Good exit strategies are phased effectively with some flexibility when requested. Consultants' monitoring reports to schools provide a good evaluation of progress and advice for future improvement.

69. The relevant senior officers, including the chief adviser and the regeneration officer, monitor progress in schools that cause concern. Elected members receive regular reports on these schools and progress is scrutinised by the select committee. The LEA has used effectively its statutory powers to appoint additional governors in some schools and to issue formal warning notices.

**Support for literacy**

70. Support for raising standards in literacy is good. At the time of the last inspection Surrey schools benefited from highly satisfactory and effectively targeted support. A high priority continues to be given to literacy and the national strategy is being implemented systematically.

71. Primary school standards are well above the national average and above the statistical neighbour average. However, the LEA fell three per cent short of its 2002 target. The tough challenges of the 8.5 per cent improvement required to meet the national 2004 Key Stage 2 targets are significant and there is no complacency in the rigour applied to plans for meeting these. Equally demanding are the public service agreement 2003 Key Stage 1 targets, which require a further five per cent increase in reading and in writing. Despite encouraging improvements, gaps remain between the attainment of boys and girls and between the highest and lowest performing schools. Rightly, a focus is being placed on action to close these gaps.

72. The LEA's literacy strategy is clearly identified in a range of action plans, including the EDP. The number of different plans, some of which have been national requirements, slightly weakens strategic cohesion, but does not hamper the work in schools. The literacy team is well managed and their work is reviewed systematically through performance management and appraisal processes. Schools understand the means by which varying levels of support are identified and rate the LEA's support as good.

73. Audits and analyses of prior performance are thorough. The strengths as well as the weaknesses of schools' and the LEA's performance are acknowledged. Areas requiring improvement are rapidly translated into focused action, the outcomes of which have been to improve attainment in targeted schools at a greater rate than that seen across Surrey schools as a whole.

74. A suitable emphasis is placed on developing literacy leadership and management in schools. Sharing methodology, networking and disseminating good practice are strong characteristics of Surrey's approach. Very good support is provided to guide schools in their own use of data. Joint working between service teams, for example through family literacy and community-based projects, demonstrates the central position literacy holds in the LEA's strategy to promote social inclusion.

**Support for numeracy**

75. Support for raising standards in numeracy is good. At the time of the last inspection this work was satisfactory, but it was recommended that a strategy for numeracy should be developed. Since then, the national numeracy strategy has been fully implemented and action has been well targeted on the needs of schools.

76. Standards of numeracy in primary schools are well above the national average and above the statistical neighbour average, although the number of schools not meeting their targets fell in 2002 to a figure above that seen nationally. National Key Stage 2 targets for 2004, which require an eight per cent improvement from current levels, and public service agreement Key Stage 1 targets for 2003, which require a two per cent improvement, will not

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be easy to achieve. As a result, highly focused project work is underway to accelerate pupils' progress.

77. Data are used rigorously to establish levels of school support. Schools are provided with an analysis disc to enable them to review the performance of their pupils and this promotes self-evaluation review successfully. It also enables the LEA's numeracy team to target its support and training programme. The analysis of the 2002 results, which forms part of the audit for 2003-2004 EDP action plans, identifies accurately the areas for improvement.

78. Primary schools rate the LEA's support for numeracy as good and praise the work of consultants. The team is well led and some joint work has taken place with other service teams in areas such as family numeracy. In particular, the literacy and numeracy teams work jointly to plan and deliver integrated school support. The training provided by the team is wide ranging and a suitable emphasis is placed on developing management and leadership skills in schools. The high take-up and positive evaluations of training activities indicate that it is correctly targeted and clearly delivered. Such feedback is used consistently in performance management and appraisal procedures.

79. A good range of guidance and documentation is provided for schools. Networks and conferences provide support and a means of disseminating good practice. In addition, a website has been established offering, among other tools, a directory of demonstration lessons. A further strength of the LEA's support has been its work with teachers across all schools and with parents in a high proportion of schools.

### **Support for information and communication technology**

80. Support for ICT in the curriculum is good. At the time of the last inspection this function was unsatisfactory because of weak planning in schools and the LEA's limited personnel capacity, which was reducing its effectiveness. The LEA has since given a high priority to ICT, resulting in considerable improvement. Significant LEA funding has been allocated to this area of work to supplement the resources of the national strategy. Standards of pupils' work are above the national level at Key Stage 3 and the proportion of students attaining an ICT award in Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average.

81. The LEA has a strong vision for a comprehensive and integrated approach to learning, management and information services. This is reflected in the EDP, the ICT strategy for the children and young people's service and the annual action plan for Four S and schools, which focuses on raising attainment in ICT. The leadership and management of ICT are good. The service is fully staffed with teams for curriculum support, data exchange and information services. A thorough audit of the strengths and weaknesses of schools and the LEA has been carried out in the review of the implementation of the National Grid for Learning. Officers have a clear view of the areas for further improvement. The ICT forum, which includes headteachers, ICT co-ordinators and officers, is used effectively for consultation and monitoring.

82. All schools have ICT development plans that are monitored annually by the LEA's consultants. Schools are categorised according to need so that interventions and support from consultants are well focused. The team delivering this service is well led. In addition, schools can purchase support and headteachers report that advice for curriculum ICT is good,

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including that for pupils with SEN. The LEA is developing effective procedures for the collection and analysis of performance data. Annual targets are set for Key Stage 3. The LEA's training for assessment in ICT has been well attended and officers are confident that its accuracy is improving. This work is now being extended to primary schools, with high levels of take-up.

83. The LEA's management of the national ICT training programme has been effective. Schools were given suitable opportunities to select training providers, but the quality of the training provided has been variable. Support for the development of the National Grid for Learning has been good. Through the ICT forum difficult decisions about the phasing of resources, for example to primary schools, have been handled well. The ratio of pupils to computers is above the national average in primary and secondary schools and in line with the average in special schools and pupil referral units. A Best Value review in 2001 proposed an independent evaluation of ICT. The outcomes of the evaluation were mainly positive and recommendations regarding improved communication with schools on EDP priorities have been addressed. Consultant work is a strength and there are good strategies for disseminating effective practice, through subject leader meetings, training, extensive use of the website and an informative termly newsletter.

### **Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3**

84. The LEA's support for raising standards at Key Stage 3 is highly satisfactory with areas that need further improvement. Standards in English, mathematics and science are above national averages. Between 1998 and 2001 the rate of progress has been above the national trend in English and in line with national trends in mathematics and science. The LEA has targets for 2004 that are well above national targets. These are very demanding in English, at almost ten per cent above the 2002 attainment, and mathematics, at seven per cent above the 2002 attainment, but much less so in science where the difference is three per cent.

85. The implementation of the national strategy is effective and its management is secure. Recent staff recruitment difficulties in science have been resolved satisfactorily, though not permanently. Action plans for the subjects in the strategy are satisfactory and reflect the priorities of the EDP. In English, monitoring and evaluation is particularly good, as is the use of a range of data to identify areas for improvement. The LEA adopted a flexible strategy for programming the initial training that was welcomed by schools. Most headteachers report that the training and support for Key Stage 3 are good.

86. Support for schools is well differentiated according to need. The Key Stage 3 team uses a good range of performance data to target schools' support appropriately. Consultants work collaboratively across phases and the LEA successfully encourages teacher links between Key Stages 2 and 3. Schools and consultants are skilled in using attainment, value added and predictive data to track the progress of pupil groups between Key Stages 2 and 3 and to identify strengths and weaknesses. In this way, the challenge and support to schools is beginning to encourage continuity for pupils. The LEA and headteachers report that there are improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 3. A well-designed and thorough evaluation of the implementation of the strategy is underway as a collaborative process between the LEA's consultants and each secondary school.

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87. The LEA's current Key Stage 3 self-evaluation procedures for schools focus appropriately on attendance and exclusions issues. However, data are not utilised fully to identify related attainment concerns. Although the attendance of pupils in secondary schools is above the national average, there is considerable variation in Year 9 figures that has implications for the implementation of the strategy in different schools. Equally, although permanent exclusions in secondary schools are in line with national averages, local data indicate a rise in 2001-2002 in three of the four areas of the county.

#### *Recommendation*

#### **In order to improve pupils' Key Stage 3 attainment:**

- make full use of available Key Stage 3 data to identify and address attainment issues that relate to pupils' attendance and exclusions.

#### **Support for minority ethnic groups, including Travellers**

88. The full range of LEA support for minority ethnic pupils was not subject to detailed fieldwork, but the work of the Traveller education service (TES) was inspected. Although the school survey rated support in the bottom quartile of LEAs so far surveyed, 28 per cent of secondary schools and 40 per cent of primary schools did not answer this question. The LEA's evaluation is that provision is highly satisfactory and the available evidence supports this judgement. Performance of minority ethnic pupils is improving, with Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage pupils reducing the gap in relation to Surrey average scores.

89. The Traveller education service provides good support for Traveller pupils and their families. The leadership of the service is good. The Traveller education service's teachers, learning support assistants and field officers demonstrate a very positive commitment to improving the access, attendance and achievement of Traveller pupils. The TES is well placed to make effective working relationships with the wide range of multi-professional teams in the restructured children's and young people's service. There are already examples that prove the value of this cohesive approach. The TES covers a good but challenging range of work, including teaching support, in-service training and the development of curricular resources for use in schools. The service aligns its core work well with a number of local and national initiatives.

90. One of the strengths of the TES is the way it has developed and maintained very good relationships with, and the trust of, the Traveller families, particularly through the work of the newly appointed field officers. Schools work well with the service and value the expertise, advice and support it brings. Service level agreements drawn up with schools set clear and realistic objectives for all parties. The TES has made a good contribution through its training programme to the promotion of inclusion and race equality issues.

91. The service has achieved success in improving overall attendance and the numbers of pupils transferring to secondary schools. Nevertheless the figures for Traveller pupils staying on at secondary schools are a matter of concern. The strategy to address this issue lacks clarity and is not sufficiently well-defined or effectively implemented.

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92. The authority's action for equality statement sets out clear principles to challenge discrimination and to provide equality of opportunity for all. However, the current policy and practice on unauthorised encampments, and, in particular, access and entitlement to education for all Traveller children on these sites, do not reflect consistently these principles.

### **Support for gifted and talented pupils**

93. Support for gifted and talented pupils is highly satisfactory. The proportion of pupils in Surrey schools attaining higher levels in national tests and examinations is well above the national average and either above or well above statistical neighbours. Although pupils' overall Key Stage 1 attainment at Level 2 and above is better than that of statistical neighbours and national averages, writing at the higher Level 3 has only risen above the national level in 2002. Targeted work with individual pupils is underway to improve performance further and schools report an increase in challenge through the use of data. The LEA has updated its policy document into good quality best practice guidance and this is having a clear effect in helping schools identify strengths and weaknesses in provision. Dissemination of good practice is well supported through Beacon and specialist schools.

94. The more able team is well led. Associate consultants specialising in mathematics and dramatic arts contribute to support for gifted and talented pupils and the LEA brokers further support, which is valued by schools. The LEA's six consultants for more able support all have additional responsibilities within the special educational needs or curriculum teams. This has the advantage of an inclusive and integrated approach, but can result in insufficient time being given to initiatives for gifted and talented pupils.

### ***Recommendations***

<p><b>In order to strengthen support for gifted and talented pupils:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• consider the appointment of a consultant who can devote a full-time commitment to developing and supporting the LEA's initiatives in this area; and</li><li>• raise the profile of, and promote more positively, support for these pupils with schools and parents.</li></ul>
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95. There is a comprehensive range of activities to challenge able pupils and to enrich learning experiences in all phases, although these are, as yet, not fully taken up by all schools. The LEA is supportive of pupils talented in the arts and music, but some schools are unaware of the support for pupils talented in sport that is provided through the council's sport development unit. Summer schools are well subscribed and are having a positive effect, not only on those attending, but also on policies and attitudes in the host schools. Master classes are available and a successful initiative has been a debating contest involving many schools and pupils. Independent schools make use of Surrey initiatives and the LEA's pupils make use of independent school facilities in specific projects such as science. An imaginative children's college is being promoted as a virtual college. Local tutor groups are supported through e-mail interactivity.

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**Support for school management**

96. Support for school leadership and management is good and successfully seeks to promote the confidence and autonomy of schools. At the time of the previous inspection, limitations were identified in the LEA's procedures for disseminating good practice and these have been significantly improved. Ofsted inspections indicate that the proportion of schools with good and very good leadership and management is above national averages in primary schools and in line with the national average in secondary schools.

97. The degree of support for school leadership and management is a criterion used in schools' categorisation. Additionally, this support is regarded as a key role of all attached consultants. As a result, schools' development needs are identified at several levels of management and these are reflected in the actions of the good quality plan for leadership development. New headteachers and senior managers are very well supported through a good induction programme that includes mentoring and coaching opportunities. There is a tailored programme for special school headteachers and a designated consultant supports headteachers in small schools. The LEA provides a broadly based professional development programme that includes training for middle managers. It incorporates the national leadership standards and is well targeted to the specialist needs of staff. Evaluations of the courses are good and school survey responses indicate that the training is highly satisfactory, although a few headteachers of primary schools seem unaware of the programme.

98. Where leadership and management are unsatisfactory and intervention is required, the LEA is both challenging and sensitive to the needs of the school. The intervention generally results in good levels of improvement. School self-evaluation, that incorporates a range of best practice, is carried out in partnership with the LEA, and is well targeted on senior and middle managers' responsibilities. These processes are at the core of the LEA's monitoring of schools. A very good range of performance and management data supports school leaders and managers.

99. The dissemination of good practice is now very effective, using a good range of mechanisms that includes a high quality and comprehensive website. The LEA successfully uses its large group of associate staff to bring current school leadership and management expertise into the Four S team. In addition, local or county-wide subject, headteacher, deputy head and specialist networks and conferences ensure good communication and consultation on school management issues.

**Support for governors**

100. The support for governors, which was good at the time of the last inspection, was not inspected through fieldwork. The LEA's self-assessment is that the support is good and, although the school survey raised doubts about this evaluation, focus groups of governors and headteachers endorsed strongly the positive view with a range of evidence. The support for governors remains good.

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**The effectiveness of services to support school management**

101. The overall effectiveness of services to support school management is good. Schools are provided with a choice of the LEA's traded services. Individual services provide clear details of standard packages and supplementary items, which can be commissioned. Although these are currently not integrated into one overall booklet, schools understand and appreciate the clarity of the information about available services. Similarly, although payment mechanisms are not integrated, there are good plans underway to address this. A new draft booklet, giving details of 2003-2004 provision, offers improved information in some areas on what is provided free to schools under the LEA's strategic management costs.

102. Schools' views about the quality of the services are collected through a good variety of mechanisms. Service standards are clear, performance is monitored and failures are acted upon. Contracts can generally be terminated with reasonable notice. The majority of support services are effective, they contribute to school improvement and provide good value for money.

103. Client support is provided for schools who wish to purchase services outside the LEA. However, the LEA generally does not broker services on behalf of schools. It has successfully achieved its intention of enabling schools to be self managing by providing sufficient information on the LEA's services to allow schools to make informed decisions for themselves and obtain comparative service details and costs from alternative providers if they so wish.

104. At the time of the last inspection, **financial services** were highly satisfactory. They are now good. Support from financial consultants is very well regarded by schools. Almost all schools buy back. Highly effective training and well-targeted support, often in conjunction with other support services, is provided for headteachers, administrative officers and governors. A wide-ranging financial service website gives schools access to policies, procedures and budget-making tools. Excellent financial and resource management benchmarking information is available, together with information on how to access national comparative data. Clear links are made between budget setting and educational outcomes. Although the LEA only currently requires an annual budget forecast, medium-term budget forecasting is encouraged and many schools undertake it.

105. The council is in the process of procuring a new enterprise resource package for 2004, which will encompass financial services and enable electronic reconciliation. Currently, however, this is undertaken manually. The speed of this process is variable. Payroll is provided directly to schools by a highly regarded and competent corporate service. Internal audit operates an appropriate system of desk-based reviews and visits to schools, based on a risk assessment. Regular meetings take place with the education finance service to share information.

106. Support for the LEA's budget managers is good. Budgets are effectively managed and monitored.

107. At the time of the last inspection, support for **human resources** was highly satisfactory. It is now good. A corporate Best Value review of human resources in 2001 identified headteachers as the most satisfied customers in a report that was otherwise highly

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critical of corporate services. The high level of satisfaction shown in the school survey for 2002 also supports this. Services have since been usefully restructured. The delivery of both core and traded services to schools by Four S has been separated from the corporate service to the education department.

108. Service planning within Four S is good. Consultants provide highly effective support for schools, administration officers, new headteachers, and schools causing concern or those with difficult personnel issues. The service level agreement entitles schools to unlimited casework support. Casework support is good and instances of grievances and industrial tribunals are low. Capability proceedings are effectively resolved. Industrial relations are good, as are relationships with teaching unions.

109. **Property services** are satisfactory, having improved since the last inspection when they were unsatisfactory. However, there are still some remaining and significant limitations to be addressed and schools' views still indicate dissatisfaction. Maintenance is provided through a buyback indemnity scheme, purchased by three-quarters of Surrey's schools. Full out-of-hours cover is available for all, not just those schools that buy into the scheme. The work of the maintenance consultant has been very variable, although efforts by the council's construction management unit to bring about performance improvement have had some recent success. A new contract has been agreed with an alternative consultant from April 2003. Rightly, this places much greater focus on quality, performance management and development.

#### *Recommendation*

**In order to improve its property services to schools:**

- the council should monitor rigorously the new management contract to ensure improved quality in the services provided for schools.

110. The LEA project manages major building programmes centrally. There is satisfactory support to schools for bidding and joint projects. A number of more recent projects have been delivered on time and have provided sound value for money. The construction management unit has ceased to use the main design consultant, whose performance was poor. It has, instead, increased its use of more effective panel consultants and implemented a rapid action team process with the LEA, which has clarified responsibilities and links between the LEA, the construction management unit and schools in the management of major projects.

111. The quality of support for **ICT in school administration** is good. The Best Value review and the further external review, have led to an effective five-year education ICT strategy that incorporates both curriculum and administration ICT, and is aligned to the corporate plans. The education information management strategy ensures there is good management of data, which are only collected once from schools. Electronic communication is well developed, with an appropriate protocol, and is of significant benefit to schools. The rolling out of access to broadband for schools is in line with DfES targets.

112. Traded services are suitably divided into a support package, which includes training, and a repair package. Helpdesk support is good. Schools rate guidance and training as very

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useful and almost 98 per cent of them purchase this support. Schools are also highly satisfied with the quality of technical support for ICT. However, they remain concerned about the speed of technological change and the ability of the service to respond to the level of demand from schools.

113. **Cleaning and caretaking** is now highly satisfactory. It was poor at the time of the last inspection. The prices tendered by contractors have risen significantly, but are now more realistic. Just under 60 per cent of schools use the central contract. Schools' returns to the LEA indicate a higher degree of satisfaction than the school survey. Contract monitoring is undertaken regularly, with commitment to resolving any problems. The performance of contractors on site, however, is variable. Difficulties are compounded by recruitment and retention issues, although flexible solutions are being implemented wherever possible. Site specifications are drawn up individually for each school. Schools are also supported if they wish to make their own arrangements for cleaning and caretaking. A training programme has recently been introduced for caretaking staff that includes a range of health and safety issues.

114. At the time of the last inspection, **grounds maintenance** was satisfactory. This function has not been re-inspected. The LEA's self-assessment judges the client service as highly satisfactory, but recognises, as confirmed by focus groups and the school survey, that there has been variable service by contractors in different parts of the county.

115. **Catering services** are good and almost 90 per cent of schools purchase the service. The funding for school meals was delegated to all schools in 2000. A framework agreement with Surrey commercial services is in place, which has been updated in 2003 to be more responsive to individual schools. It includes a profit sharing element for those schools in profit. All equipment repairs and maintenance costs are included in the agreement, together with management support and advice on health and safety and nutritional standards. Support is given to encourage the take-up of free school meals. Support for tendering is also available for those schools who wish to purchase elsewhere. Surrey commercial services undertakes benchmarking, which indicates it is in the top quartile for performance overall against comparators. Management is effective and the service has acquired Investors in People status. Regular performance monitoring takes place and any concerns are dealt with appropriately.

### **The LEA's work in assuring the supply and quality of teachers**

116. Recruitment and retention pressures were not prioritised by schools and the LEA in the 2001 EDP, but in the last two years progress has been rapid and work to assure the supply and quality of teachers in the short term is now good. Corporate developments, however, have been slow to emerge. Work is only now at the review stage and beginning to draw appropriately on the strengths of existing departmental initiatives. The absence of corporate plans to address wider employment issues, such as affordable housing and transport, hinders enhanced development of the LEA's work to retain high quality school staff.

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*Recommendation***In order to improve both recruitment and retention rates of teachers and other workers:**

- the council should expedite the development of its strategy and target action at identified key barriers such as housing and transport.

117. Teaching vacancy levels have been high and the LEA has rightly forged ahead with some creative plans. Headteachers are involved fully in implementing developments and schools rate the LEA's support for recruitment and retention as highly satisfactory. The LEA's successful approaches include housing and accommodation packages; newly qualified teacher recruitment and support; accredited career paths; and international recruitment and development opportunities for serving staff.

118. Vacancy figures dropped by 30 per cent between 2001 and 2002. There has been a significant rise, to 88 per cent, in the number of newly qualified teachers being retained into a second year of teaching in the authority. Recruitment difficulties are also a feature of other parts of the service for children and young people but, as yet, a joint strategic approach within this directorate has not been pursued.

119. A clear strategy supports the continuous professional development framework and programme. Supporting career development and encouraging professional growth are central principles of the framework, alongside a strong emphasis on school autonomy. This means that schools are given high quality opportunities, but are responsible for evaluating impact and are held accountable for long-term outcomes. Management information is used well to ensure provision is matched successfully to identified needs. Schools rate the LEA's work in this area as very good.

120. External associates, quality assured by the LEA, are used widely to deliver professional development activities. There are good links with national and regional providers. Headteacher and newly qualified teacher induction programmes are of good quality and highly regarded by participants.

### **Section 3: Special educational needs**

#### **Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's special educational needs provision**

121. The LEA's provision for special educational needs is highly satisfactory and is good in some areas. Much of the vagueness and confusion about the strategy and funding of SEN reported in the previous inspection and in the Best Value review have disappeared. Some confusion remains in schools, however, and although the integration of special needs policies and activities within the EDP is a strength, there is a corresponding loss in clarity. The new children and young people's service and the introduction of multi-professional teams, bringing together workers from education and social care disciplines, are already proving effective in focusing provision more sharply and providing more coherent services. Members and officers are aware of the continuing budget pressures in the SEN area and are taking suitable longer-term management decisions to address them.

#### **The LEA's strategy for special educational needs**

122. There has been a significant improvement in the effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for SEN and provision is now highly satisfactory. In 1998, provision was unsatisfactory and the inspection report made a number of recommendations about the clarity and resourcing of policies, which were reinforced by the Best Value review on SEN and disabilities (September 2000).

123. Much of the impetus for this improvement has come from the newly integrated structure of children's services, which has taken forward an effective review of policies and implementation. Most schools are now clearer about policy and strategy for SEN. They understand the concepts of pupil entitlement and inclusion and how Surrey intends to deliver on them. However, some confusion remains. This is, in part, owing to the decision to integrate strategic planning for SEN and inclusion across the EDP, embedding principles and activities within all priorities in preference to maintaining separate strands.

124. The LEA is just embarking on its second SEN development plan, which clearly sets out its ambitions to restructure support for SEN with the clear aim of raising achievement for all learners. Two major reviews have been undertaken, into emotional and behavioural difficulties provision, and into learning and severe learning difficulties and autism provision. These are already having a positive influence on the management and organisation of SEN. Schools were consulted well during these reviews. There are mixed, but largely positive, reactions to the outcomes. The development plan and its associated reviews have been founded on a clear knowledge of current and projected pupil needs within the context of an inclusive approach and a refocusing of special provision. Significant shifts of revenue and capital have been achieved to make the developments realisable.

125. Elected members have demonstrated their commitment to the SEN strategy and have taken the difficult decisions required to align funding to strategy at a time when there were other significant pressures on the council's budget.

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**Statutory obligations**

126. Momentum has quickened since 1998 when the LEA was meeting its statutory obligations satisfactorily, and provision is now good.

127. The assessment and administration of statements is sound with 85 per cent being completed within 18 weeks, once the statutory exceptions are taken into account. Steps are being taken with the new primary health care trusts to improve the current level of 68 per cent completion of statements, including the statutory exceptions. Statements are well maintained and are drafted with clear outcomes. Provision is properly monitored and annual reviews carried out promptly.

128. Criteria for referrals are clear, straightforward and understood by schools. An investment by support services at pre-referral stages is proving effective in reducing later referrals. The original moderation panel has been abolished in favour of a new process that includes headteachers. The process involves assessment panels, placement panels, area managers' meetings and joint commissioning groups. Although largely effective, some headteachers find it complex and time consuming. There is an appropriate emphasis on ceasing statements. The LEA is now seeking ways of maintaining a proper level of provision in mainstream schools without the requirement of maintaining a statement. Casework management has been reorganised on an area basis and steps are being taken to ensure consistency of approach prior to delegating budgets to area managers.

129. Through the parent partnership service, the LEA offers good information and guidance for parents, including a much used and valued telephone help line. Although located within the LEA structure, the service operates independently and retains its impartiality and the confidence of parents. SEN case officers are trained alongside local mediators, which is beneficial to all sides. Wherever possible, conciliation is used to avoid the necessity of going to a SEN tribunal. Although tribunal hearings have increased, so too have the number of cases withdrawn or found in favour of the LEA.

130. The integrated children's service is already benefiting SEN provision by enabling statutory obligations to be met more precisely and swiftly. A children's partnership board, chaired by the executive director, provides a good strategic basis for multi-agency working.

**School improvement**

131. This aspect of the LEA's work was not subject to fieldwork in this inspection, but the available indicators support the LEA's self-evaluation grade of highly satisfactory. Since 1998, when provision was satisfactory, Ofsted inspections of mainstream schools, especially those with units, indicate an increasing level of high quality SEN provision. Special schools have been removed from special measures within the minimum timescale and four special schools have attained Beacon status. Responses to the school survey indicate that support services are valued, although there is concern about the pressure the education psychology service is under as a result of recruitment and deployment difficulties.

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**Value for money**

132. At the time of the previous inspection value for money was unsatisfactory. Significant progress has been made and it is now highly satisfactory. Resources are better aligned to prevention, early intervention and inclusion to meet pupils' needs. There has been an important shift of resources since 2001 towards supporting the earlier stages of the SEN Code of Practice. The LEA tracks referrals according to disability and provides a budget and expenditure map. It is thus able to compare resource input with performance and so ensure good value for money is achieved through the funding delegated to schools.

133. Nevertheless, as a whole, the SEN budget remains under pressure owing to an increase in agency and out-of-county placements and to the SEN transport budget. Officers and members are well aware of these pressures and are taking action to resolve them. The special needs reviews are intended to lead to a significant decrease in out county costs within five years, but the expected rise in the meantime has been allowed for as a 'spend to save' exercise. The contract for running school transport has four years to run, but the contractor is being asked to account for the increase in costs. In the coming financial year the children and young people's service is considering making more flexible use of resources by, for example, keeping care accommodation open longer.

134. The delegation of SEN resources to area teams is being phased over a sensible time scale. Some budgets already delegated to schools may, with schools' agreement, be withdrawn and managed centrally prior to possible re-delegation through the proposed scheme of confederated schools.

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## Section 4: Promoting social inclusion

### Summary of effectiveness in promoting social inclusion

135. The LEA's overall approach to social inclusion has developed significantly in the last two years. Activities are firmly centred on the council's self reliance framework and are predicated upon a belief that individuals and communities must be supported and enabled to take responsibility and act autonomously. The successful regeneration of three secondary schools with surplus places has made a positive contribution to the LEA's school improvement and social inclusion priorities, by securing higher quality school places in disadvantaged areas. The LEA's work with vulnerable and disaffected young people has been largely successful, although there are shortcomings in its strategies to combat racism and to improve attendance on transfer to secondary education for the children of Travellers.

### The strategy to promote social inclusion

136. The LEA's work to promote social inclusion is highly satisfactory. The corporate plan focuses appropriately on the regeneration of disadvantaged areas, the development of the individual and the promotion of community well being. Departments work in a co-ordinated way to address these priorities. There is good understanding across all services of the council's stance on social inclusion. The LEA supports and promotes a number of projects that make good contributions to the council's strategy.

137. The LEA has an unequivocal stance on social inclusion. It gives clear messages to schools through its agreed framework on ways of working, and through guidance on matters such as exclusions and attendance. However, there is no single overarching social inclusion policy statement, which pulls together and makes explicit the LEA's expectations. Not all schools put into practice the responsibility that autonomy brings, and there are examples of inappropriate action, for example regarding admissions to school. The LEA is right to pursue these issues rigorously and to challenge schools' behaviour, directing their action when necessary.

### *Recommendation*

<b>In order to specify the position on social inclusion:</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• produce a statement that reflects the LEA's unequivocal stance on social inclusion within the county council's strategy on self reliance.</li></ul> |
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138. The LEA monitors comprehensively the achievement of vulnerable groups and has identified key areas for improvement. Although the attainment of looked after children is generally in line with the national average, cohorts are small and standards fluctuate. Appropriately, the LEA identifies achievement by this group as an area for improvement. Schools are given training and support in setting targets for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including children from Traveller families. Overall attendance compares favourably with the national average. Further improvements in levels of absence and links with attainment are being targeted through a local public service agreement project.

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139. The behaviour support plan steering group maintains a strategic overview of behaviour and attendance issues and has monitored social inclusion projects. Given the increasingly complex network of social inclusion funding and activity, there are sensible plans to establish a social inclusion strategy group under the leadership of the head of children's service to oversee the work being undertaken.

140. Multi-agency working is evident through teams such as the youth offending team and the youth support service. The newly established multi-professional teams within the children and young people's service are beginning to have a demonstrable effect on procedures surrounding case studies and individual pupil support. In these cases schools report that the support of other agencies, including the police and health services, has been marshalled quickly and early responses have been possible.

141. Where it is available, funding has been successfully obtained to support the delivery of social inclusion projects. However, Surrey qualifies for few nationally funded initiatives. Schools have valued the opportunities provided by the addition of a social enhancement factor to schools' budgets.

### **The supply of school places**

142. At the time of the last inspection, the planning of school places was highly satisfactory and it remains so. School place planning officers link well with school improvement and children's services teams responsible for admissions and school building projects. The school organisation plan complies with statutory requirements, relates to other strategic plans and has been appropriately consulted upon. Significant emphasis is placed on school improvement, particularly in the secondary sector where several regeneration projects have led to an increase in numbers on roll. Growth in the requirement for secondary places is being carefully managed so that it will not create significant surplus at the end of this decade when numbers reduce again. The external auditor has identified forecasting as accurate in the secondary sector, but with room for improvement in the primary sector. The LEA is confident, however, of being able to access additional health service data to improve this situation. The school organisation committee is a clearly independent body, which functions well.

143. There were 12.8 per cent surplus places overall in primary schools in 2002 and 6.6 per cent in secondary schools. Surplus places in the primary sector have increased slightly over the last three years, but the LEA has also taken measures to remove places through school reorganisations. Further reviews are being considered in consultation with schools, dioceses and other stakeholders. Almost a fifth of primary schools have more than 25 per cent surplus places; this is a reflection, in part, of the number of small rural schools in the county. Twenty per cent of secondary and seven per cent of primary schools are more than ten per cent overcrowded. The large number of Surrey pupils who attend independent or voluntary aided schools, cross-border movement in some areas of the county and no fixed catchment areas, further complicates planning.

**Admissions**

144. At the time of the last inspection, support for admissions was good. No fieldwork has been carried out, but the LEA's self-evaluation indicates it remains good and the judgement therefore remains the same.

**Asset management**

145. Asset management planning is highly satisfactory. The DfES assessed the LEA's asset management plan as satisfactory. The LEA is in the middle of a rolling programme to re-survey the condition of all its schools. It has a five-year programme in place to reduce the condition backlog, which is well below the national average. Annual condition update meetings with the buildings' maintenance consultant have been introduced for all schools. These inform the LEA's annual review meetings that aim to establish action plans for each school, identifying priorities and funding responsibilities. Suitability and sufficiency surveys have also been undertaken consistently across all schools and in line with DfES deadlines.

146. Appropriate model asset management planning policies, guidance and training are provided for schools. Useful consultation takes place with schools and other stakeholders regarding policy, priorities and implementation. The LEA views the asset management planning process as a significant contributor to its overall aim of bringing about school improvement; clear links are accordingly made with capital strategy, curriculum support and school place planning. Many of the organisational developments, such as annual review meetings, have been relatively recently implemented. As a consequence, schools acknowledge that there has been improvement, but still do not find the priorities and allocation of resources totally transparent.

**Provision of education for pupils who have no school place**

147. Provision of education for pupils who have no school place is highly satisfactory. Much has been achieved in meeting the recommendations of the previous inspection, when provision was unsatisfactory. The review of provision for emotional and behavioural difficulties led to the establishment of a new behaviour support service that is now part of the multi-professional team structure. The service gives good support to pupils at risk of exclusion and to those being reintegrated following exclusion.

148. Progress in consolidating the resources and expertise of pupil referral units has been rapid since 2000. A number have been amalgamated and form an effective part of a broader continuum of provision for pupils with behaviour difficulties. In the current year a £1 million refurbishment programme has been undertaken in pupil referral units. The status of heads of centres has, rightly, been enhanced and all now have access to leadership support and training. Subject leader posts have been introduced and are having an effect in key curriculum areas: all units now have updated curriculum policies. Management committees have been established in all pupil referral units. The involvement of elected members in these committees signals the high degree of council commitment to the provision of appropriate support for disaffected pupils. Although progress in improving the performance of the pupil referral units' pupils at GCSE is disappointingly slow, evidence from Ofsted

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inspections is that the units are now offering better provision, value for money and learning opportunities.

149. Full-time education has been available to all permanently excluded pupils since September 2002. Links with further education, 'not school' and other initiatives are all used and monitored to help provide for pupils that are difficult to place. There are sound systems in place to monitor the number of exclusions and to ensure that pupils are assessed and placed within the required time. Clear guidance leaflets are available for pupils and their parents or carers. An innovative points score system has been agreed with secondary heads to improve reintegration rates. This has, so far, proved effective with all heads contributing to its success. More than 20 per cent of excluded pupils are now reintegrated within 50 school days of exclusion.

150. The new integrated approach within the children and young people service is already having an impact, partly through the co-location of teams. As a result, previously difficult cases are being progressed more quickly. Changes in health service structures have delayed the development of links, but more effective protocols are now being established. Provision for pupils out of school for reasons other than exclusion is satisfactory. Pupils out of school for medical reasons are supported with laptops for e-learning and this helps maintain the link with their own school. Support is given to sustain the education of schoolgirl mothers and return them to school as quickly as possible. There is good guidance for parents who wish to educate their children at home, and home education is supported and monitored by an advisory teacher. The LEA has satisfactory procedures for tracking pupils at risk of becoming lost to education.

### **Attendance**

151. There has been continued improvement since the last inspection, when LEA functions in relation to attendance were satisfactory, and provision is now good. Attendance rates are above national figures and in line with statistical neighbours. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with national figures and has now stabilised after a period of increase. Authorised absences show a significant reduction. Individual schools with low rates of attendance receive well-targeted support and this is significantly reducing absence in these schools.

152. The LEA has a clear strategy that is well understood and supported by schools. Officers and schools see good attendance as a key factor in school improvement and effectiveness. Service level agreements set out clear expectations of service delivery and the formula used for targeting education welfare resources is understood by schools. Model attendance policies have been produced and schools have found these helpful.

153. The education welfare team is now integrated into the new multi-professional team structure and this has enabled the development manager for welfare and protection to devote more time to professional leadership. A number of team members have been seconded into project work. This has had a good effect on initiatives and developmental work, all of which is benefiting schools. However, the availability of social workers for casework remains a problem. Although full-time replacements for these team members have been difficult to recruit, good job share opportunities have been taken up with a resulting positive change in

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working practices being evident. Schools have reported a welcome change in social workers' understanding of the education context for children and young people.

154. Some valuable initiatives have been established to support improvements in attendance. Booklets have been produced to explain responsibilities to young people and parents and to encourage them to seek help. Following concerns expressed by headteachers about general practitioners apparently condoning absences, the service is now working with community paediatricians to tackle the problem. Early indications are suggesting positive results. The number of home visits made as a result of referrals is significantly fewer than national and statistical neighbour averages. This is a direct result of Surrey's policy to intervene at home only if the home is clearly the source of the problem; school issues are dealt with directly at school. Primary referrals have reduced significantly as a result of more schools taking ownership themselves of attendance issues. Truancy patrols regularly take place and condoned absence is now a major target of the service. Robust prosecution policies are pursued.

### **Behaviour support**

155. Support for behaviour is good. A number of initiatives have led to improvement since the previous inspection, when it was satisfactory. Progress has been made through the restructuring of behaviour and pupil support services, the broad review of the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties leading to enhanced provision, the successful introduction of learning support units and increased rates of reintegration. This has led to a welcome reduction in the number of schools requiring support as a result of behaviour management.

156. The percentages of permanent and fixed-term exclusions are reducing in line with statistical neighbour and national averages. Computer systems have now changed and exclusions are reported centrally, which is leading to more accurate recording. Detailed reports are produced giving exclusions data by school and pupil grouping. The behaviour support plan is monitored regularly and this has led to focused intervention in specific schools or with identified 'at risk' groups of pupils. As a result, an increase in the number of drug related offences leading to exclusion has been tackled successfully.

157. The LEA has a clear strategy set out in the behaviour support plan, underpinned by a detailed audit of behaviour carried out by Four S. The audit, rightly, identified teaching and learning as the key to better behaviour. Other priorities arising from the audit have been tackled including a greater consistency in policy development and the regular dissemination of good practice. Support for non-teaching staff has recently been identified as a priority for future action. Regular monitoring and reporting has led to a range of initiatives that are enhancing the capacity of schools, reducing exclusion and raising attainment.

158. A comprehensive range of well-targeted guidance is available for schools. The work of learning support units has been integrated successfully with behaviour support strategies and their achievement in improving behaviour and raising attainment has been disseminated to all secondary schools. Schools value the work of the behaviour and pupil support service, although a few regard the advice given as predictable or unrealistic. Regular

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evaluations are carried out of school satisfaction levels, and service criticisms are followed through with individual schools.

### **Health, safety, welfare and child protection**

159. The LEA's provision for child protection is good, having been satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The children and young people's directorate fulfils all its statutory obligations and the education service plays a full part in child protection committees and procedures. The area child protection committee is active and effective. It is appropriately resourced and supported by the LEA. Clear and comprehensive procedures are in place and there are good relationships between key agencies at strategic and operational levels, which have been strengthened by the creation of the integrated directorate. There has been some success in involving the independent sector.

160. The education welfare service, which takes the lead on child protection matters, is well led. Providing the new management arrangements maintain the strong leadership, then there is good capacity to make further improvements. The service is clear on its child protection advisory role and schools appreciate its support. A current priority is to give greater clarity to responses to allegations against staff in schools. The intention of setting up care committees in all schools to review concerns about individual children and agree preventative packages, has been delayed in some instances by the availability of social workers and concerns about conflicting legislation in the Human Rights Act. Local committees meet regularly with the full participation of schools and the education welfare service.

161. Although there is still a backlog of training, schools report that the quality is good. The officer responsible for co-ordinating specialist child protection education actively seeks schools' priorities for training. Uptake of courses is good with 84 per cent of child protection liaison teachers attending two-day courses and nearly all others receiving relevant support and training. Lists of designated teachers are well maintained and comprehensive. Governor training has been identified as a priority, especially in regard to their responsibilities for school staff.

162. Health, safety and welfare functions were not inspected previously. There is a clearly defined policy for health and safety, and provision is highly satisfactory overall. Although the school survey placed support for health and safety in Surrey in the bottom quartile of all schools surveyed nationally, this was not borne out in interviews and focus groups of headteachers. A small number of governors, however, expressed concerns regarding their responsibilities in relation to health and safety and building maintenance. Good detailed guidance on health and safety policies is given in the schools' manual. Risk assessment and management are generally of a high order. The specialist consultant at Four S monitors the arrangements for school journeys and gives appropriate advice. This work is highly regarded by schools.

### **Looked after children**

163. The LEA meets its statutory requirements in relation to looked after children highly satisfactorily. There are currently over 800 children in the care of the local authority, of

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which approximately 560 are of school age. Some of these are educated in other LEAs. The council takes its corporate parenting responsibility seriously and looked after children are a priority in the corporate plan. There is a clear delivery strategy in the quality protects plan. Members receive regular reports, visit all community homes and set targets for improvement.

164. At Key Stage 4, the LEA has exceeded the national target of 50 per cent attaining one GCSE A\*- G. The percentage of looked after pupils attaining five GCSE A\*- C grades has shown considerable fluctuation. Elected members rightly believe this performance should be better and are actively seeking ways to improve further the support for looked after children and to ensure that challenging and realistic local targets are set.

165. A new post of development manager has been established to lead, develop and co-ordinate the service, which is delivered through dedicated teams at local level. The integrated delivery of children and young people's services is already having a good effect on joint working. However, headteachers continue to report too slow a response time from social workers and are also critical about the timeliness of information on changes to placement.

166. Each school has a designated teacher. Satisfactory initial training has been provided, but follow up support and guidance has lacked the necessary specific focus on the particular needs of looked after children. Personal education plans have been introduced and are in place for all looked after children, although they are not yet subject to regular and systematic monitoring by the LEA. A range of community projects and initiatives complements the overall provision.

167. Sensible development of a joint assessment framework and the integration of the two management databases are underway. The looked after children and schooling group is given proper status by being chaired by the head of service. The cost of support to schools for looked after children is monitored as part of a pooled budget. Each school is allocated £500 per looked after child, but they do not necessarily directly target the funds at the needs of these pupils; this scheme is rightly being evaluated.

### **Measures to combat racism**

168. The LEA has made recent progress in its work to combat racism, and provision is satisfactory. However, the authority was slow to address this issue and much still needs to be done to tackle some significant shortcomings.

169. Race equality issues are addressed suitably in a range of plans including the EDP. Other policies and procedures, such as the council's race equality scheme and action plan, are in place and awareness in schools and among council staff is being raised. Work on promoting race equality in schools is co-ordinated through a children and young people's equalities group. There is still, however, a perception in some quarters that combating racism is not a necessary priority for schools in an authority such as Surrey. Schools themselves report a mixed picture on the LEA's activity: while there is consensus that a clear strategy is emerging, its impact is still patchy. The LEA provided guidance and a policy framework for schools before the deadline for schools to have such policies in place. Fewer than 75 per cent of schools currently have policies in place.

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*Recommendation***In order to strengthen effectiveness in combating racism:**

- raise the profile of support for schools in addressing racism and ensure that anti-racist policies are given high priority throughout all aspects of the council's work.

170. The council was late in responding to the recommendations of the Macpherson enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. However, these are now being addressed through an equalities action plan and progress towards meeting agreed targets has been reported regularly to the performance review committee. An equalities forum has now been established, supported by an equalities strategy group, and the executive director for children and young people is taking a personal lead in promoting its work. The introduction of racist incident monitoring in schools has been too slow and too many schools remain unclear as to what constitutes a racist incident.

*Recommendation***In order to support schools better in combating racism:**

- pursue with greater vigour the monitoring and follow-up of action plans and policies, and racist incidents in schools.

171. The ethnic backgrounds of job applicants in Surrey are monitored. The percentage of non-white applicants is significantly above that of the overall population, but the percentage of those appointed is broadly in line with the population. Targets for recruitment are being prepared, but have not yet been set.

172. An innovative internal training programme for staff has been piloted. Equalities training for staff in schools has been provided by the ethnic and language minority achievement services and the Traveller education service. Several school governing bodies have also received race equality training. However, provision as a whole is on a limited scale and much more needs to be done for schools.

173. Several imaginative curriculum related projects have been introduced to tackle issues of racist bullying in primary schools and discrimination in secondary schools. Early years' settings are being well supported in providing for minority ethnic groups and good work is undertaken in relation to Traveller children. The LEA's agreed religious education syllabus encourages pupils to learn about world religions. Members of the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education recognise the need to broaden representation and to have a common view on the multi-faith debate.

174. In part due to the lead being given by the executive director, supported by the equalities co-ordinator and championed by an elected member, links with other services on combating racism are improving. There is also some consultation with local minority ethnic groups, notably in Woking, but, as yet, impact on policies and practice is limited. Community learning partnerships are now being harnessed to address local issues of racial harassment.

## **Section 5: Corporate issues**

### **Introduction to corporate issues**

175. Corporate direction and priorities are clear. The council is determined in its aspiration to provide high quality services to the community and is unambiguous in placing education as a key priority. Plans focus on the needs of the more disadvantaged areas and of vulnerable people. Equally, the belief that central decision making might not always deliver the best for local neighbourhoods is fundamental to Surrey's developing community strategy. Recent changes in organisational structure, resulting from the council's people first initiative, are leading to greater coherence in the implementation of plans. The work of elected members, officers and other partners is characterised by positive relationships and mutual respect and trust. Innovative approaches are encouraged and risk assessments are being used more rigorously to secure quality. Within this positive climate there are areas for further development, including more consistency in the levels of scrutiny applied to the LEA's planning and activity.

### **Corporate planning**

176. Corporate planning is good. Considerable progress has been made in securing better procedures for implementing and evaluating plans and these are now also good, having improved from being unsatisfactory in the last inspection. Surrey's Best Value Performance Plan, 'Making Surrey a Better Place', is the county's strategic plan. Its six clear priorities are the outcome of an effective consultation process with the public and partners. Local and national priorities are carefully balanced and good attention is given to the identified needs of geographic areas and vulnerable groups. Elected members regard education as having prime place among the priorities, a commitment that is reflected in the allocation of resources.

177. One of the six Best Value Performance Plan strands focuses on learning and development and sets out the actions to achieve national and local targets. Service plans are framed by the corporate priorities and provide the underpinning detail necessary to the achievement of targets. Planning and review cycles are clear and incorporate financial planning. Reviews and audits, which include service specific information, lead well into the next stage of planning. The performance management system is well designed and defines clear accountabilities for the achievement of plans.

178. The corporate strategy team of executive directors monitors progress and ensures coherence of action and strategy. The broader responsibilities of the reorganised directorates have helped to secure consistency, as has the restructuring of the children and young people's service. Progress against targets and performance indicators is reported to the executive on a quarterly cycle. Where there is delay or where targets are missed, departmental action plans are presented to the relevant member portfolio holder, who monitors subsequent progress.

179. Structures and responsibilities for community planning have been carefully thought through. The establishment of 11 local committees that feed into the community planning structures is an effective way of ensuring that both decision making and accountability are

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held close to the point of need. There are good examples of local needs being met speedily through these new arrangements, such as in local transport and road maintenance decisions.

### **Decision making**

180. Corporate decision-making structures were satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Since that time, they have been reformed in line with legislation. A good structure is now in place to secure accountabilities and ensure the approval of plans and the review of outcomes. Consultation with stakeholders is usually thorough and has led to greater understanding and ownership of actions, although a few governors remain unclear about their role in decision making.

181. The council is willing to make difficult decisions based on thorough audit and analysis of need and full consultation with stakeholders. For example, it undertook a public private initiative for the regeneration of three secondary schools. The necessary records are kept of these decisions and, where appropriate, minutes of meetings are published. Schools are clear about the basis on which financial decisions are made and have been fully involved in discussions about budget formulae. The council is clear about the needs and priorities of the education service and is well informed about current pressures relating to SEN provision and school transport. In its discussions about council funding for the coming year it is very aware of the difficult decisions to be made, but remains unswerving in the aim to preserve its financial commitment to schools.

### **The leadership of elected members and officers**

182. The leadership provided by elected members is highly satisfactory. There is a clear structure of officer and member responsibility and accountability. Lead responsibilities in the council are carried out well. Elected members are committed to supporting schools as autonomous institutions and understand their responsibilities in enabling this. The executive member for the children and young people's service has a good understanding of key local and national issues, yet balances this with a practical and hands on approach to work with Surrey's schools. The council's scheme of delegation is unambiguous and applied effectively.

183. The select committee for children and young people provides satisfactory scrutiny and quality assurance of the work of the children and young people's service. Members who have a secure understanding of the work of the service lead it, and it is one of six such committees charged with this function across the range of council activity. There are good examples of committee questioning resulting in targeted intervention, such as in relation to school transport. However, the knowledge and confidence of committee members is not yet sufficiently secure to guarantee a consistent rigour of enquiry and debate. A weakness of the current structures, already under review, is that performance review committees examine Best Value reviews, yet have no formal links into the select committees.

184. Senior officers provide very good leadership. To a great degree the LEA's innovative approach to its work has only been possible as a result of the drive, commitment and high expectations of these officers. They give clear, well-researched and impartial advice to members, have a strong relationship with schools and external partners, and act decisively when necessary. They have a very clear understanding of the breadth of the

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council's work and are highly committed to the values of the council and of public service. Officers' work with schools is characterised by high expectations. Headteachers are elected to serve on councils through which they represent their peers in debating priorities and policies with the LEA. The relationship is challenging, but founded on mutual trust and common values.

### **Partnership**

185. Surrey demonstrates some of the very best approaches to coherent partnership work for education. A good partnership with the county's schools is the foundation of this success. Systems are well established to ensure that strategic partnerships have clear and shared objectives that enable action to be jointly developed in local communities and areas of the county. Many of the key partners, such as the police service, health trusts, youth service, Connexions and the local learning and skills council support these objectives. The LEA is working effectively with some long established and other new partners and the overall Surrey strategic partnership encompasses many of the young people's issues that are key areas for the LEA.

186. 'Giving young people a voice' is now embedded in all services provided for children and young people. A clear platform is emerging for them to challenge and change services in their area. Local education officers provide valued support to schools, particularly at times of crisis and emergency. Local directors support more active community democracy and work with district and borough councils.

187. The LEA's objectives for partnership are appropriately concerned with joint policy development and service delivery. These objectives are secured well in very good operational networks. The recently developed public private partnerships, in three secondary schools, are radical attempts by the LEA to deal with under-performance. At present, the actions are progressing well and the balance of responsibilities is appropriate, secure and operating effectively.

188. A successful project for young people who are looked after, is provided by a multi-agency team led by the youth development service and part-funded through the Connexions service. The outcomes are encouraging. With groups of schools, the LEA is piloting collaborative approaches for curriculum development, family links, extra-curricular activities and jointly funded staff. This work is the precursor to the LEA's objective for confederations of schools that will provide enhanced education through extended schools together with multi-agency services for local communities.

189. The LEA has a good partnership with the dioceses that enables appropriate consultation, discussion and curriculum development. The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education has a suitable and agreed syllabus for 2000-2007. The syllabus is used, by the LEA and the dioceses, to support training and curriculum development. Good multi-faith guidance for schools is being prepared.

190. Surrey's approach to partnership is wide-ranging and, inevitably, highly complex. In most cases, the LEA's officers, school staff and partners understand the communication and information links and are confident and well supported in their work with young people.

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**Support for early years**

191. Early years work in Surrey is securely based on principles and values that focus appropriately on improving the quality and diversity of early years' provision and creating more childcare places.

192. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership is a highly effective organisation through which all sectors work amicably yet rigorously to achieve common goals. The mutual trust and the quality of working relationships are impressive. Strategic and implementation plans demonstrate a commitment to the achievement of EDP plans, national targets and Surrey council's priorities.

193. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership is well managed. There is an appropriate operational model of an executive, functional subgroups and local area network and support groups. The executive committee balances strategic and local issues well. Administrative systems ensure funding is applied fairly and consistently and financial probity is secure. Resources are allocated to meet identified needs. Where targets are not met, as in the recruitment and retention of childminders, actions and resource allocations are reviewed. Similarly, gaps have been identified in childcare provision in rural areas and it is recognised that these need to be addressed.

194. The LEA supports the partnership well and working links with the early years service are highly successful. The LEA has supported the development of capital projects, including a recently established children's centre. There has been joint development of a training programme to raise the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage.

195. Surrey has had a baseline assessment scheme in place since 1992, using it systematically to produce value-added data for schools. Recent national developments have led to the trialling of the Foundation Stage profile and its use in Surrey is now being discussed by a joint working party. A strong and highly appropriate emphasis is being placed on continuous assessment, but for this to be of value it is recognised that it must be adopted consistently across all settings.

196. Children's individual needs are identified early and good support is given through the Portage schemes and other initiatives. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership provides significant special educational needs support for settings and training has raised the knowledge and awareness of staff. However, schools report that children in maintained nursery provision sometimes miss out on early intervention and that, in these cases, additional support is hard to access.

197. Schools and settings have been supported well in providing appropriately for vulnerable groups, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds. For example, curriculum materials with a multicultural emphasis have been provided for settings, training in cultural sensitivity has been undertaken, recruitment drives have been targeted at Asian women and all documentation is available in a number of languages.

198. There has been an increase in the provision of wrap around care and the partnership is keen to consider new ways of meeting the needs of a flexible workforce. Extended provision is at the forefront of developments and the children's centre and projects such as

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the neighbourhood nursery are carefully targeted at reducing social exclusion and building family self reliance. Further projects are in hand, but these are not yet fully aligned with Surrey's wider emerging plans for the development of self reliance within local communities and for extended primary schools.

### **Support for 14-19 education**

199. The LEA is very effective in its work with key partners for 14-19 education and headteachers have high praise for the leadership provided by officers. Collaboration with the police and youth justice services, the Connexions service, the local Learning and Skills Council and Surrey council's own youth service is well established and strengthening. There is a genuine sense of joint work, a commitment to improvement and a desire to be at the leading edge of developments. The partners use a good range of training, conferences, networks and projects to support 14-19 developments. A joint strategy has recently been established for an integrated 14-19 curriculum in Surrey.

200. Standards in Key Stage 4 are at or above the national average and in advanced courses, post-16 students in Surrey's schools reach standards that are in line with the national average (see further details in paragraphs 22-24 and 26). The LEA believes that these standards should be higher. Because about three-quarters of post 16 programmes in schools are level three advanced qualifications, the LEA is rightly targeting work to develop more opportunities for level two accreditation.

201. The LEA has a secure partnership with the Learning and Skills Council. Effective joint work is carried out with schools through the LEA's existing four area groups and this is a good strategic approach. Particularly valuable is the data research project that is developing mechanisms for tracking students' achievement and progress 14-19. The partners report some early successes with this work. The LEA has promoted school collaboration through the small sixth forms' consortium to support curriculum development. One very good outcome is the Surrey graduation certificate that is now used in 15 secondary schools. It incorporates advanced level accreditation, applied skills and citizenship activities, a model that closely matches some of the intentions of the British Baccalaureate. However, headteachers of special schools report that for post-16 students with special educational needs the provision is of limited quality and range.

202. The Connexions service, that provides guidance to young people from 13 to 19, is only recently established, but joint work with the LEA is developing well. Its work is being appropriately aligned with the structures and processes of the LEA, schools and the youth service. A number of key services, within the children's and community services, have allocated resources towards achieving the overall priorities and targets of the Connexions service. The national Trident programme for work experience and work links, supports a large number of Surrey's Key Stage 4 students. It provides extended work experience opportunities, programmes designed to reduce the risk of exclusion, and an initiative to encourage students into science and technology professions. The LEA, with its partners, is supporting school-based projects to look at models for curriculum flexibility at Key Stage 4, the Surrey bridges project to provide vocational pathways 14-19 and a work related learning initiative in Key Stage 4.

## **Appendix 1: Recommendations**

The report has made a number of recommendations, which are key to the progress of the LEA. Work should begin on them immediately. They are:

### **In order to strengthen effectiveness and support schools better in combating racism:**

- pursue with greater vigour the monitoring and follow-up of action plans and policies, and racist incidents in schools; and
- raise the profile of support for schools in addressing racism and ensure that anti-racist policies are given high priority throughout all aspects of the council's work.

### **In order to specify the position on social inclusion:**

- produce a statement that reflects the LEA's unequivocal stance on social inclusion within the county council's strategy on self reliance.

### **In order to improve pupils' Key Stage 3 attainment:**

- make full use of available Key Stage 3 data to identify and address attainment issues that relate to pupils' attendance and exclusions.

### **In order to improve both recruitment and retention rates of teachers and other workers:**

- the council should expedite the development of its strategy and target action at identified key barriers such as housing and transport.

### **In order to strengthen support for gifted and talented pupils:**

- consider the appointment of a consultant who can devote a full-time commitment to developing and supporting the LEA's initiatives in this area; and
- raise the profile of, and promote more positively, support for these pupils with schools and parents.

The report also makes the following recommendation:

### **In order to improve its property services to schools:**

- the council should monitor rigorously the new management contract to ensure improved quality in the services provided for schools.
-

## Appendix 2: Record of Judgement Recording Statements for the inspection

No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
<b>SECTION 1 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY</b>			
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	1	
2	The performance of schools	2	
3	Funding, including the co-ordination of external funding	4	
4	The LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	2	
5	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	2	
6	The extent to which the LEA targets its resources on priorities	2	
7	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement including Best Value	2	
<b>SECTION 2 SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT</b>			
8	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge, and intervention and shared those understandings with schools	2	
9	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	2	
10	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	1	NI
11	The effectiveness of LEA identification of and intervention in under-performing schools	1	
12	Support to schools for raising standards in Literacy	2	
13	Support to schools for raising standards in Numeracy	2	
14	Support to schools for raising standards in and the curriculum use of information and communications technology	2	
No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
15	Support to schools for raising standards at Key Stage 3	3	
16	Support to schools in raising standards of ethnic minority and Traveller children including the effective deployment of the ethnic minority and Traveller achievement grants	3	NI
17	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	3	
18	Support for school leadership and management including support for schools effort to achieve Best Value	2	
19	Support to school governors	2	NI

20	The effectiveness of its services to support school management	2	
20a	Financial services	2	
20b	Human resources	2	
20c	Property services	4	
20d	Services for ICT in school administration	2	
20e	Cleaning and caretaking	3	
20f	Grounds maintenance	4	NI
20g	Catering	2	
21	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	2	
22	The effectiveness of the leadership of services to support school improvement	2	
23	The effectiveness of the deployment of staff to support school improvement	1	
24	The effectiveness of strategic planning of services to support school improvement	3	
25	The effectiveness of the performance management of services to support school improvement	1	
26	The standard of expertise of staff to support school improvement	1	
27	The effectiveness of services to school improvement	2	
28	Value for money of services to support school improvement	2	
<b>SECTION 3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS</b>			
29	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for SEN	3	
30	The effectiveness of the LEA in taking steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	2	
31	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	3	NI
32	The extent to which the LEA has exercised its SEN functions to meet the requirements of value for money	3	
<b>SECTION 4 PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION</b>			
33	The overall effectiveness of the LEA in promoting social inclusion	3	
34	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	3	

No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
35	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	3	
36	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	2	NI
37	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to provision for pupils who have no school place	3	
38	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to school attendance	2	
39	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to behaviour at school	2	
40	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to health and safety, welfare and child protection	2	
41	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to children in public care	3	
42	The effectiveness of the LEA in combating racism	4	
<b>SECTION 5 CORPORATE ISSUES</b>			
43	The clarity, consistency, coherence and feasibility of corporate plans	2	
44	The effectiveness of the procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans	2	
45	The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making (particularly financial decision-making)	2	
46	The quality of leadership provided by elected members	3	
47	The quality of the leadership provided by senior officers	1	
48	The quality of advice given to elected members	2	
49	The effectiveness of the co-ordination of actions in support of priorities involving collaboration between several agencies	1	
<b>OVERALL JUDGEMENTS</b>			
50	The progress made by the LEA overall	1	
51	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	1	
52	The overall effectiveness of the LEA	2	

*Note:* An X in the 'NI' column means that fieldwork was not conducted on this function during this inspection.

JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 1 to 7 point scale:

- Grade 1 – Very good
- Grade 2 – Good
- Grade 3 – Highly satisfactory
- Grade 4 – Satisfactory
- Grade 5 – Unsatisfactory
- Grade 6 – Poor, significant weaknesses
- Grade 7 – Very poor, fails to provide effective support to schools