Waltham Forest

Local Education Authority

Inspection Report

Date of Inspection: January 2005

Reporting Inspector: Vic Chivers HMI

© Crown copyright 2005. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

A report from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Audit Commission (AC) under section 38 of the Education Act 1997.

A further copy of this report can be obtained from the respective local education authority.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Contents

Page

Basic information **ix**

Summary **1**

Introduction 1
Main findings 3
Recommendations 5

Section 1: Corporate leadership of education **7**

Summary table of judgements 7
Corporate planning for education and its implementation 8
Decision-making 9
Targeting of resources 10
Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value 11
Leadership by elected members and advice given to them 12
Leadership by senior officers 13
Strategic partnerships 14
Support for Early Years 15
Support for 14-19 education 17

Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation **19**

Summary table of judgements 19
The strategy for school improvement and its implementation 20
The LEA's monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools and the targeting of support 22
Effectiveness of the LEA's identification of, and intervention in, underperforming schools 23
Asset management planning 25
Providing school places 25
Admissions to schools 26

Section 3: Support to improve education in schools **28**

Summary table of judgements 28

Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement 29
Support for the national initiatives at Key Stages 1 and 2 30
Support for information and communication technology (ICT) 31
Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3 33
Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy and Traveller children 33
Support for gifted and talented pupils 34
The supply and quality of teachers 36
Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management 37
Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement 40

Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN) 42

Summary table of judgements 42
The strategy for SEN 42
Statutory obligations 44
SEN functions to support school improvement 46
Value for money 47

Section 5: Support for social inclusion 50

Summary table of judgements 50
The strategy for social inclusion 50
Provision for pupils educated other than at school 53
Support for attendance 54
Support for behaviour 55
Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection 58
Provision for looked after children 59
Promoting racial equality 60

Appendix A 62

Record of Judgement Recording Statements 62

Appendix B 69

Context of the inspection 69
Context of the LEA 71
The performance of schools 73
Funding data for the LEA 76

Basic information

Name of LEA:	Waltham Forest Local Education Authority
LEA number:	320
Address of LEA:	Sycamore House Forest Road Walthamstow London, E17 4SY
Reporting Inspector:	Vic Chivers HMI
Date of Inspection:	January 2005

Summary

Introduction

Waltham Forest is an outer London authority[1]. The north of the borough is relatively affluent, but some of the most deprived wards in the country are concentrated in the centre and south of the borough. There are high rates of pupil-mobility in some schools and this is a particular challenge to the local education authority (LEA). The percentage of children for whom English is an additional language is well above the national average and rising.

Pupils' performance in Waltham Forest schools is consistently below national levels and is broadly in line with or, in some cases, below that in similar LEAs across all key stages. However, since the last inspection, overall performance, particularly at Key Stage 2, has improved more quickly than in similar authorities and nationally.

At the time of the previous inspection (2002), an external contractor[2] had recently taken over the running of some of the LEA's school improvement functions. Since then, the contractor's influence has greatly increased. It has main responsibility for 28 of the 47 functions inspected, and shares responsibility with the council for a further 14. The remaining functions are the sole responsibility of the council, in particular, the LEA's lifelong learning directorate. The directorate is led by a new director, who took up post in July 2004.

Since the May 2002 elections, no single party has had political control of the council. Labour holds the largest number of seats and currently shares responsibility for running the council with the Liberal Democrats.

[1] Waltham Forest LEA's statistical neighbours are: Lewisham, Hounslow, Walsall, Oldham, Enfield, Rochdale, Brent, Bolton, Ealing and Kirklees

[2] In this report, the term 'LEA' is used to refer to services which it provides itself or are provided for it by the contractor. The term 'contractor' is used only where it is deemed necessary to specifically identify its contribution to the LEA's work.

Main findings

Summary: Waltham Forest LEA has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now highly satisfactory. Good collaboration has created a productive partnership between the council and the contractor, resulting in support for schools and young people that is consistently of much better quality across a wide range of functions. There is now a sharper focus on school improvement by both senior officers and elected members and there have been important improvements in support for pupils with special educational needs. The strategy for social inclusion is sound, but there is not yet a common understanding with schools about its implementation. More remains to be done to improve pupils' attainment and to consolidate recent improvement. However, in partnership with the contractor, and building on its strengths in leadership and steadily improving partnership with schools, the LEA's capacity to improve further is now highly satisfactory.

Areas of strength	Areas of weakness/for development
Corporate leadership of education	
• Priority given to education • Relations between the council and the contractor • Leadership by elected members and senior officers	• Improving learners' attainment in the 14-19 strategy
Strategy for education and its implementation	
• Identification of, and support for, underperforming schools • Use of data to target support • Provision of school places	• Differentiation of regular monitoring visits to schools • Admission of hard to place pupils
Support to improve education in schools	
• Support for the primary and Key Stage 3 strategies	• Capacity to improve the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum • Support for gifted and talented pupils
Support for special educational needs (SEN)	
• Improvement in the support for pupils with SEN • Improvement in statutory assessment processes • The parent partnership service	• Monitoring of annual reviews • Tracking of the achievements of pupils not reaching national curriculum levels
Support for social inclusion	
• Support for health and safety, pupils' welfare and child protection • Leadership of key services • Identification and monitoring of key vulnerable groups	• Ensuring schools' understanding of the LEA's social inclusion agenda • Coherence of approaches to pupil mobility • Developing schools' confidence in managing some behavioural issues • Provision of training to support the recording of racist incidents by all schools

Recommendations

Key recommendation

The strategy for social inclusion: Secure with all schools and other agencies a common understanding of the social inclusion agenda and implement the vulnerable children's strategy consistently across all services.

Other recommendations

Corporate leadership of education

Support for 14-19 education: Redefine the intended outcomes of the 14-19 strategy to express these in terms of learners' attainment by ages 16 and 19.

Strategy for school improvement

Targeting of support: Enhance the networking of schools so that:

- They take the leading role in school improvement.
- There is a sharper focus on improving the performance of the lowest performing schools and groups of pupils.

Admissions to schools: Strengthen the arrangements for admitting hard-to-place pupils in line with recent guidance, to achieve a better balance of these admissions across all schools.

Support to improve education in schools

Support for information and communication technology (ICT): Improve capacity to support schools in their efforts to enhance the use of ICT across the curriculum.

Support for gifted and talented pupils: Develop and implement a new support strategy covering all schools, incorporating clear targets for achievement and the support provided and guidance on supporting the pupils' welfare.

The supply and quality of teachers: Analyse the age-profile of the school workforce to identify issues to be addressed and develop strategies for tackling them.

Support for special educational needs

SEN statutory obligations: Monitor the provision identified in annual reviews to identify the impact on achievement and consider the potential for amendment or cessation of statements.

SEN functions to support school improvement: Improve arrangements for tracking and evaluating the achievements of pupils not achieving national curriculum levels.

Support for social inclusion

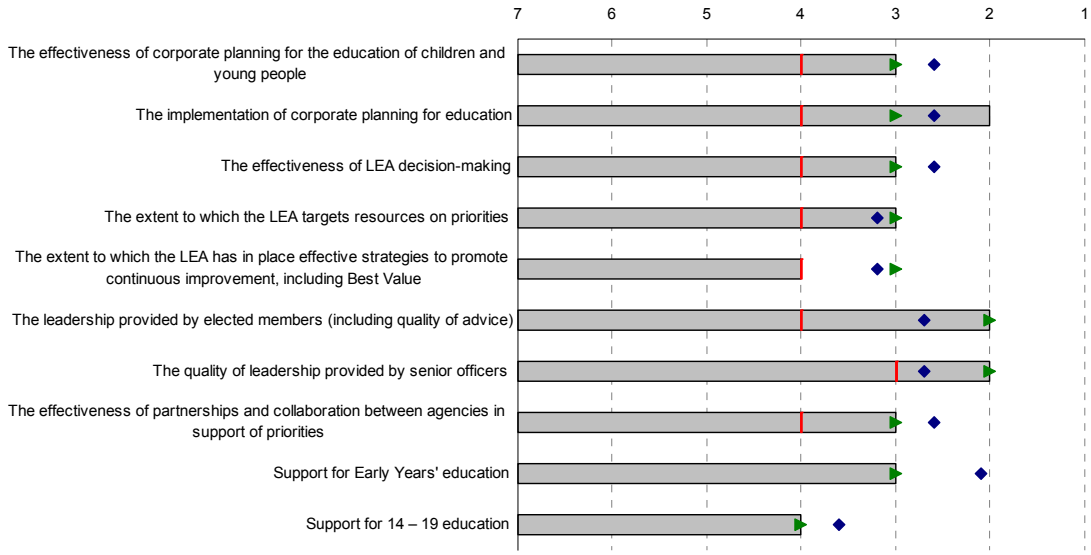
The strategy for social inclusion: Develop a more coherent approach to tackling the challenges posed by high levels of pupil mobility.

Support for behaviour: Work closely with schools to extend their capacity to meet the needs of pupils with behaviour difficulties and to clarify the range of provision available for those most at risk of exclusion.

Promoting Racial Equality: Ensure that training on handling and reporting racist incidents is provided for all schools.

Section 1: Corporate leadership of education

Summary table of judgements



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

Corporate planning for education and its implementation

1. Corporate planning to support education is highly satisfactory. The council has a much clearer vision for education and the linking of plans, identified as a weakness in the last report, is now much better. Systems to support the implementation of the council's plans are good.

2. Education is a high priority for the council. School improvement objectives have been shared widely and are understood clearly by elected members. The council has defined its long-term intention to improve educational standards and to raise the aspirations of young people in its statement 'Vision 2012'. The priority being given to education is also reflected in the council's recovery and improvement plan and in supporting action plans. There is a strong commitment among senior members and officers to raising the attainment of vulnerable groups and this is reflected in the council's inclusion strategy and the growing number of productive partnerships. There is a clear corporate planning cycle and this informs both strategic and operational planning.

3. In implementing corporate plans, good systems are in place to co-ordinate the work of the contractor with those of the lifelong learning directorate. There are effective systems to monitor progress and impact. Lines of communication between the contractor and senior LEA officers and elected members are good and

accountabilities have been clearly set out. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of corporate plans is carried out thoroughly by both senior officers and elected members. In general, good use is made of performance measures and, when weaknesses are identified, changes are made to improvement strategies. In a minority of plans, however, intentions are still aspirational and are not supported by detailed strategies with measurable outcomes.

Decision-making

4. Progress has been made in improving the transparency of council decision-making and this is now highly satisfactory. The council has an effective, modernised, structure and decisions are taken in a timely manner. Key, and sometimes difficult, decisions on education matters are supported by clear rationales. Recent major decisions, such as the reorganisation of support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and Building Schools for the Future (BSF), have only been taken following extensive consultation with stakeholders. There is a clear scheme of delegation to officers.

5. Reports to members set out clear options, although some produced by the lifelong learning directorate do not provide sufficient information on the financial implications of proposals. The strategic partnership board, which was established following the 2000 LEA inspection, meets its current remit but its role is not yet sufficiently strategic. The new chair is providing clear leadership to develop the board's role, but this is in an early stage of implementation. Rightly, the council sees discussions on a children's trust as an opportunity to review the board's functions.

Targeting of resources

6. The LEA's targeting of resources is highly satisfactory. The medium term financial strategy continues to prioritise funding for schools and vulnerable children, and to ensure that funding is passed on fully to schools. Changes to the school funding formula take account of schools' views, but are also designed to ensure resources are clearly targeted to meeting need. There is a highly effective, challenging, and very well-regarded Schools Forum which has played a key role in securing substantial additional revenue funding for schools. In addition to its own significant capital investment in schools, the council has secured a major Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract and funding through BSF for a major reorganisation of secondary education. There are rigorous procedures, involving the Schools Forum, for challenging surplus school budgets, and effective support for schools with deficits. Schools receive comprehensive and accurate indicative budgets in time to enable them to make sound resource decisions.

7. The council has strengthened its budget management and monitoring arrangements. Within the current three-year strategy, all services are required to deliver efficiency savings. Although the council spends below Education Funding Spending Share (EFSS) on education services, schools are funded fully. The lifelong learning directorate took prompt action to address budget pressures for 2004-05 and

remained within its cash limit. Better arrangements for sharing information between the council and the contractor have improved the transparency of accounting processes.

Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value

8. The LEA's strategies for promoting continuous improvement remain satisfactory. The inspection endorsed most of the LEA's self-evaluation: evidence that the authority now has a good and developing knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses.

9. The council has adopted an effective performance management system, employing key performance indicators to measure progress in implementing strategic priorities. These are contributing to a greater consistency in the quality of service planning and monitoring. The contractor's service planning cycle and format are aligned with that of the council and its summary service plan is helpfully included in the council's recovery and improvement plan. This plan serves as the council's best value performance plan and is subject to a comprehensive monitoring programme by members and officers.

10. There is currently no scheduled programme of best value reviews as the focus is on delivering the recovery and improvement plan. The council is clear in its expectations that services will seek continuous improvements and efficiencies, but there are only limited mechanisms for formalising this. A start has been made on re-focussing traded services to support education in response to feedback from schools, and these are now benchmarked against similar providers. However, these developments are at an early stage.

Leadership by elected members and advice given to them

11. The quality of leadership provided by elected members has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now good. Senior members have clarified their strategic role in improving education and decision-making processes are far more efficient. Senior elected members have been successful in strengthening relations both with the contractor and with schools. This was illustrated recently during the SEN review and in the development of the council's vision for secondary education. Both initiatives were characterised by extensive discussion and widespread consultation with schools and partners.

12. The scrutiny function is well developed. Scrutiny processes are effective in monitoring the work of the contractor and in challenging decisions taken by cabinet. Good use is made of monitoring data and particular attention is focused on the progress of 'priority' schools. Key education policy matters are reviewed as they are being developed by the council, and effective advice and guidance are offered to the cabinet. The education overview and scrutiny sub-committee has scrutinised the implementation of the post-Ofsted action plan by focussing on a range of key education issues. The council has established a comprehensive system of

performance monitoring and this is complemented by the systems developed by the contractor.

Leadership by senior officers

13. The leadership of senior officers has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The contractor's service is well led and sharply focused on school improvement and raising children's attainment. The new executive director for lifelong learning has brought fresh ideas to tackling several longstanding issues, including early years and support for 14-19 education. Fortnightly meetings of the education management team provide useful opportunities for senior LEA officers to meet with the contractor, and are used effectively for planning, reviewing policy and monitoring performance.

14. Senior officers provide good advice to elected members and work effectively with all political parties to build consensus. Development work to explore the integration of children's services is being led by a member and senior officer group and taken forward by various working groups. A project plan has been drawn up and the experience of working with the contractor is providing a good basis for developing the agenda.

Strategic partnerships

15. The LEA's work in developing key partnerships is highly satisfactory. The partnership between the contractor and the council's lifelong learning directorate is a particular strength. Relations between the contractor and the borough's schools have also improved significantly since the last inspection.

16. There are several examples of effective partnership working improving outcomes for children and young people. The borough has worked with the police on crime reduction issues in schools, with local colleges on the development of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, and with voluntary groups on supplementary schools. A realignment of services within education and social services has created a multi-professional team, including health service providers, which is piloting integrated support for children with disabilities. All of these initiatives are contributing to improving pupils' learning.

17. Some partnerships require further attention. One such partnership is the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), which currently receives insufficient priority from the LEA and its partners. It also remains too early to judge the longer term effectiveness of some other key partnerships, such as those supporting the 14-19 strategy.

Support for Early Years

18. The support for early years is highly satisfactory. The LEA is committed to early intervention and the provision of free part-time nursery education places for all three and four year-olds. There is effective and developing cross-sector and multi-

agency working. The lifelong learning directorate and the contractor are clear about their respective responsibilities and work well together to promote the council's vision for the education and care of young children. Senior officers are knowledgeable and are promoting a comprehensive range of provision in line with national developments and local needs.

19. Good use is made of local information to audit current provision, to predict future needs and take action to address gaps in the range of services. There are clear plans for extending the provision and improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement. Training programmes provide curriculum support and assist settings in developing approaches to evaluating their provision. The foundation stage profile is used extensively in both nursery units and schools, but is less well used in the pre-school sector. Analysis of the foundation stage profile is beginning to be used to target support at specific groups at risk of underachievement.

20. The children's information service provides good quality material for parents and providers on the range of childcare and nursery provision within the borough. The early years consultative forum is a useful vehicle for consulting and communicating with parents and stakeholders. This forum, however, has only recently been formed and not enough work has yet been done to ensure that all partners and stakeholders feel involved fully in the implementation of the strategy. The rate of change, for example, from the move to Sure Start initiatives to the development of children's centres, continues to cause difficulties for some partners.

21. There is good support for childminders, including access to practical business advice and support. Targets for the recruitment of new childminders have been met.

Support for 14-19 education

22. Support for 14-19 education is satisfactory. The LEA and the fellow members of the local Learning Partnership responded positively to the findings of the Ofsted 16-19 Area Wide inspection in 2002, developing an action plan and setting up a 14-19 area inspection implementation group. A 14-19 strategy has only recently been developed, but it has the support of most schools and other partners and builds both on the previous action plan and on initiatives included in the Education Development Plan (EDP). The latest Ofsted figures (2001) show that 78% of young people continued in full-time education at 16. This rose to 87% when all forms of education and training were included. Standards at Key Stage 4 are rising, but there is too much variability between schools. Data show that the number of young people not in education, employment or training is reducing.

23. Strong collaborative and increased multi-agency working is a key feature of the LEA and its partners' approach. Pathfinder projects are in place to widen curriculum choice and these are helping to create broader pathways that are better suited to the diverse needs of students. Nevertheless, providing a mix of opportunities for young people who are not evenly distributed across the borough is a continuing challenge. The strategy identifies clearly the benefits it is designed to

deliver, but these are not expressed in terms of learners' attainment. This is an impediment to effective monitoring and evaluation.

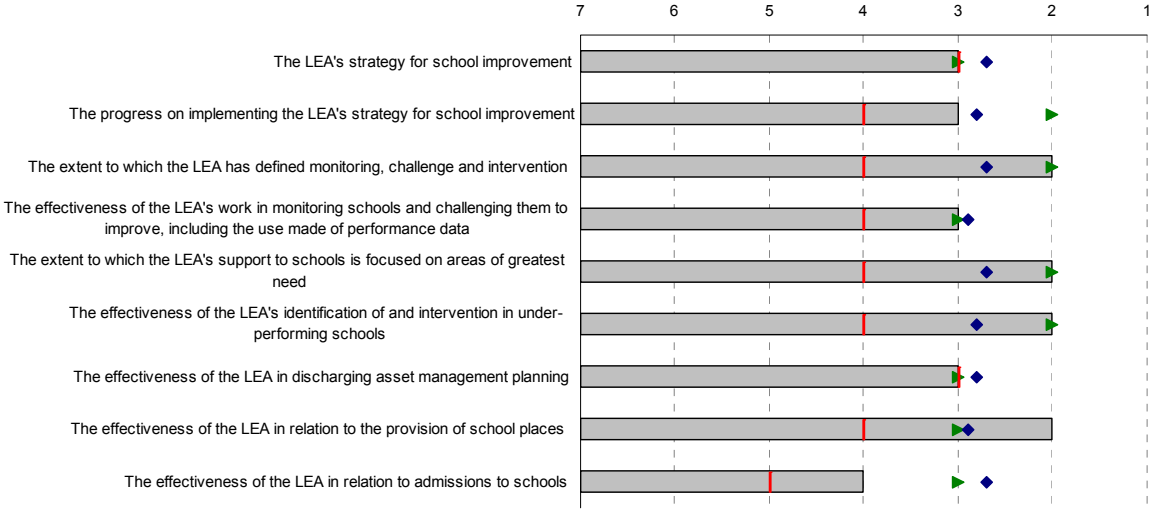
24. Various working groups are in place to help build capacity across the authority and in the schools. Joint planning is supported by the 14-19 practitioners group and joint training programmes. Although development has been fairly slow, collaboration among centres has helped to launch several new programmes leading to vocational GCSEs. Students from four schools are involved in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Increased Flexibility programme. The Aim Higher programme is helping to raise the aspirations of learners, and neighbourhood renewal funding is helping to support asylum seekers, promote extended schools and create new work-based learning programmes, especially in the south of the borough.

Recommendation

- Re-define the intended outcomes of the 14-19 strategy to express these in terms of learners' attainment by ages 16 and 19.

Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation

Summary table of judgements



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

The strategy for school improvement and its implementation

25. The LEA's strategy for school improvement and its implementation are highly satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, pupils' performance has improved and there has been a significant reduction in the number of schools causing concern. Good progress has been made in the last three years in improving support to schools, especially in relation to the provision and use of data and the attention given to priority schools. This is acknowledged and recognised by headteachers, who now have more confidence in the leadership by the education management team and welcome the improved clarity of communication, regular consultation and determination to raise standards. There is good capacity for further improvement.

26. The strategy sets out clear priorities, in line with both national and local needs. The successful bid for BSF has built on both the EDP and the compact with the DfES to demonstrate how standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 can be raised. Plans are based on a thorough audit of performance and have ambitious targets. However, in some plans, especially those relating to Excellence in Cities (EiC), it is less clear how actions and resources will lead to the required rise in standards and meet the LEA's ambitions for vulnerable children.

27. In implementing the strategy, the school improvement service's performance management system helps to ensure that priorities are addressed effectively by the experienced and highly committed staff. A key element of the role of school effectiveness advisers is working with headteachers to ensure that school self-

evaluation is focused on raising attainment. Regular reports ensure that senior officers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service.

28. Implementation of the strategy is also monitored thoroughly by elected members. The council's education overview and scrutiny sub-committee receives regular and frequent reports on the post-Ofsted action plan and on the progress being made by priority schools. Members have rightly focused on areas where improvement is needed, such as in raising the attainment of underperforming groups of pupils. Where monitoring has identified shortcomings, the LEA has responded by reviewing and then adjusting its plans.

29. The LEA did not meet any of its key attainment targets in 2004 and these have now been extended until 2006, in agreement with the DfES. Better and more consistent support for schools has contributed to pupils' performance improving at Key Stages 1 and 2 more quickly since the previous inspection than in similar LEAs and nationally.

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

30. The LEA's definition of monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools is good and its effectiveness in targeting support is highly satisfactory. The LEA's approach is defined clearly in the school effectiveness team's handbook, which includes an 'alerts' system that is used to identify schools causing concern. The LEA now knows its schools well and works in partnership with them to develop their own self-evaluation skills. Visits by advisers to schools are followed up with helpful reports.

31. For the past three years, each school has received three monitoring visits a year, focused on standards, teaching and learning, and leadership and management respectively. Schools identified as priority schools receive additional support. While generally welcomed by schools, this approach does encourage some over-dependency on the LEA and too little opportunity for schools to take increasing responsibility for their own improvement and develop their roles as purchasers of services. Recent developments have encouraged successful schools to identify the priorities for monitoring visits, and this is to be welcomed. Plans are also now in hand to transfer more of the leadership of the school improvement programme to schools through the developing networks. There is scope for implementation of these plans to be speeded up.

32. The LEA provides extensive and well-received data packs to schools to support target setting, and school effectiveness advisers are trained and experienced in the use of the data. The level of challenge to schools provided by advisers is mostly good. Currently, fewer than half of primary and junior schools meet their annual targets. However, the LEA's capacity to address this is highly satisfactory, as the support provided by the school improvement staff is complemented by the development of the various school networks.

Recommendation

- Enhance the networking of schools so that:
  - They take up the leading role in school improvement and raising attainment at all key stages.
  - There is a sharper focus on improving the performance of the lowest performing schools and groups of pupils.

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

33. The LEA's work in identifying and supporting underperforming schools is good. Progress since the previous inspection has been good, as is the LEA's capacity for further improvement. There are now no schools in special measures and only two with serious weaknesses. There has been a reduction in the number of schools identified by the LEA as giving cause for concern and the speed with which these are identified has improved. The 'alerts' criteria that lead to this designation are effective. A monitoring group, including headteachers, reviews the progress of the priority schools on a regular basis. School effectiveness advisers, who manage support to such schools, are rigorously held to account for the schools' performance.

34. The intervention and support provided to schools on the priority list are effective. As well as the support provided by advisers, the expertise of headteachers and other staff from successful schools is also utilised, both on a one-to-one basis and through the links established with local school networks. Coordinated support between advisers and consultants has led to a more rapid rise in standards in schools receiving intensive support. Two secondary schools have been effectively supported by the London Challenge team. Effective school improvement work by the LEA has also supported a number of infant/junior school amalgamations; resulting in higher standards.

Asset management planning

35. Asset management planning is highly satisfactory. There is a well resourced and clearly prioritised capital programme, which is designed to drive school improvement while maintaining a balance of school places. The LEA has improved the quality of information on the condition, suitability and sufficiency of its school buildings, and investment priorities are agreed with schools. The authority was slow to ensure that schools held devolved formula capital in their own budgets, but it now monitors schools' use of devolved funding effectively.

36. Significant additional capital funding has been secured by the LEA through, for example, a PFI and BSF, as well as from the council's own substantial capital resources.

Providing school places

37. Planning and provision of school places is good. Comprehensive pupil projections and trends in pupil numbers are used effectively to predict the impact of different planning options by area and at the level of individual schools. The authority analyses the impact of changes as they begin to take effect. Close links with the council's housing and planning departments and with the admissions and school improvement services, help to identify emerging trends. Surplus places are within guidelines and there are sound strategies for ensuring sufficient secondary provision and continuing to reduce primary surplus places.

38. There is a comprehensive School Organisation Plan and an active School Organisation Committee which has tackled some difficult proposals relating to closure of special schools. Planning also takes account of pupil mobility to assess pressures from movement across boroughs and within Waltham Forest. Projections are shared with schools who advise on issues affecting numbers.

Admissions to schools

39. The LEA has successfully addressed the recommendations of the previous report and now provides a satisfactory admissions service. The service was reorganised in March 2004 to improve access and support for parents. Admissions booklets are well written, available in a range of community languages and provide helpful checklists to guide parents through the process. During 2004/05, the LEA piloted pan-London admissions arrangements using a range of approaches to ensure parents and schools were well informed about the changes and deadlines. At the same time, the authority consulted effectively on changes to reception class admissions to be implemented from September 2005.

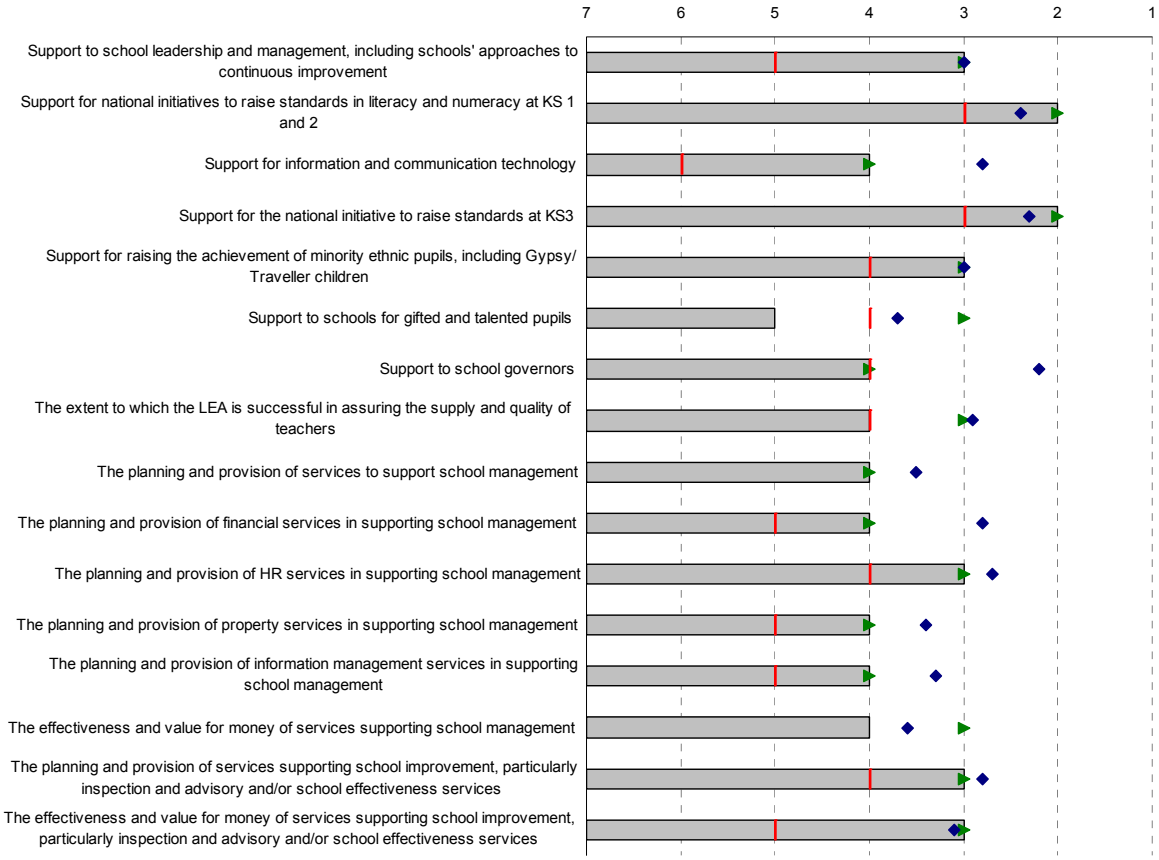
40. For September 2004, 76% of parents' first preferences were met and 92% of applicants received an offer at a preferred school. There were a high number of appeals, particularly for the single sex girls' schools, although all of these had been resolved before the start of the autumn term. The admissions criteria prioritise the needs of pupils from vulnerable groups in line with the code of practice, but further work is still required, for example, to implement protocols with schools relating to the admission and transfer of looked after children. Although the authority has exercised its responsibilities to secure places for hard-to-place pupils, many of these tend to be placed in schools with surplus spaces, although other schools may be more appropriate to their needs.

Recommendation

- Strengthen the arrangements for admitting hard-to-place pupils in line with recent guidance, to achieve a better balance of these admissions across all schools.

Section 3: Support to improve education in schools

Summary table of judgements



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

Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement

41. The authority's work in this area is highly satisfactory and much improved since the previous inspection. The LEA has identified schools with weaknesses in leadership and management and taken firm steps to address these, including using its statutory powers. The percentage of schools judged by inspection to be have good leadership and management has risen. Where the LEA has given an area a clear priority and recruited able staff, improvements are readily visible. Where it has not accorded an area such a high level of priority, for example, support for gifted and talented children, they are not.

42. The authority provides highly satisfactory advice for schools on developing self-evaluation techniques, based on the data it supplies. The authority knows where good practice exists within schools, has used a range of strategies to disseminate this and is active in promoting a range of networking arrangements for

schools. Mechanisms are in place for the LEA to benchmark its services against similar providers. School management is also helped by support from LEA services for schools and young people now being consistently of much better quality across a wide range of functions.

43. Support for school governors and personnel services for schools (which were not subject to fieldwork) are satisfactory and highly satisfactory respectively.

Support for the national initiatives at Key Stages 1 and 2

44. Support for the national initiatives at Key Stages 1 and 2 is good and there has been good progress since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages remains below that nationally and in line with similar LEAs. However, since the last inspection, the LEA's support has contributed, particularly at Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics, to performance improving more quickly than in similar authorities and nationally.

45. The literacy and numeracy strategies have been merged effectively into the new primary strategy. This primary team uses data to analyse strengths and weaknesses at school, pupil-group and individual pupil level, and then targets identified weaknesses in a very precise way. Seventeen primary schools are currently participating in the primary leadership programme and 10 in an intensive support programme. Identified needs within these schools are precisely targeted for intervention and support and this has resulted in marked improvements. The impact of such intervention is carefully monitored and analysed to inform future activity.

46. Schools not involved in intensive support programmes benefit from other very good training opportunities. Good practice from these programmes is disseminated effectively, including through self-support networks. The work of the primary team is integrated very well with other strategies operating in the borough. Staff have considerable expertise and are well led and managed.

47. The latest pupil performance targets agreed for 2006 are challenging, but realisable. The work of the LEA and, particularly the sharp improvement resulting from highly targeted intervention, gives confidence that these can now be achieved.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

48. Support for ICT is satisfactory and there has been progress since the previous inspection. However, the LEA has failed to secure an effective champion for ICT across the curriculum and therefore its capacity to improve further is weak.

49. The previous report made five recommendations. These concerned planning, auditing and evaluation, technical support, access to e-mail and websites and the need for a new corporate ICT support system. Progress on addressing these recommendations has been satisfactory, although the pace of implementation was initially too slow and many new developments are at a very early stage. An ICT adviser has been in post on a part-time basis since summer 2004, but LEA officers

have different understandings of this post and this lack of clarity is a significant weakness.

50. The arrangements for promoting ICT at Key Stage 3 are highly satisfactory, particularly the arrangements for moderating teacher assessments and promoting interactive teaching through the use of whiteboards. The authority has been helping schools moderate teacher assessments at Key Stage 2 for three years, and is now developing this process further. These arrangements have contributed to pupils' attainment levels improving.

51. The LEA has satisfactory knowledge of the systems in use in schools. The new strategy for ICT is satisfactory, although implementation is still at an early stage. The proposed move to the London Grid for Learning will allow all schools to access a wide range of new teaching materials, but it also has yet to be fully implemented.

Recommendation

- Improve capacity to support schools in their efforts to enhance the use of ICT across the curriculum.

Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3

52. Support for the national strategy at Key Stage 3 is good. There is a clear strategy which is well understood by schools. The authority uses data effectively to analyse strengths and weaknesses in school provision. Groups of vulnerable pupils are also effectively identified, and their needs actively targeted. Levels of pupils' attainment are rising in line with the national pattern, but there are also examples of sharp rises in pupils' attainment following tightly targeted intervention.

53. There are good links with the primary strategy and the LEA is now making pupils' attainment data from Key Stage 2 available to secondary schools in a timely manner. The authority supports schools in analysing and using the data well. The work of the support team, its commitment to working in partnership with schools, the developing networking and the effective dissemination of good practice, are all positive features of the LEA's support.

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

54. Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils is highly satisfactory. The authority has had notable success in raising the attainment of Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage pupils and rates of attainment of some other groups are also better than in similar authorities. Effective use is made of data on achievement of pupils by ethnicity to identify the need for and to target support. Schools' access to the data also enables them to target pupils most at risk of underachievement. There are good links with other initiatives, such as EiC and the Education Action Zone.

55. The borough receives a relatively large number of asylum seekers. The needs of these children are identified appropriately and support programmes are promptly put in place. The primary team has targeted, for example, higher ability pupils and these programmes have had a significant impact on pupils' attainment. Grants attracted by the authority are used appropriately and linked effectively to school improvement and raising attainment. All of these initiatives are supported by the strong commitment of elected members.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

56. Support for gifted and talented pupils has deteriorated since the previous inspection and is unsatisfactory. A recommendation in the report to improve target setting and the programmes provided for individual children has not been addressed satisfactorily. The LEA has also not fully embraced the notion of supporting the full range of gifted and talented pupils across the borough.

57. The authority has not given sufficient priority to the identification of, and support for, gifted and talented pupils. Support is focused largely through the EiC project and not all primary schools are included. The gifted and talented co-ordinator left the authority early in 2004 and alternative arrangements have not had a sufficiently high profile. While the issue of gifted and talented pupils is a theme for advisers' monitoring visits, this has not been sufficient to ensure that the interests of the pupils are given sufficient prominence in all schools.

58. General guidance on identifying gifted and talented pupils has been circulated and all EiC schools maintain a gifted and talented pupil register. Specific financial support for talented pupils is available through money delegated to schools, although there is no central oversight of this. The authority has enabled some pupils to attend appropriate summer schools and has formed links with two universities to promote the education of identified pupils. Outline guidance has been circulated on the safety and welfare of gifted and talented pupils. Improvements since the previous inspection in pupils attaining level 5 or higher at Key Stage 2, and level 6 or more at Key Stage 3 have been in line with similar LEAs.

Recommendation

- Develop and implement a new support strategy covering all schools, incorporating clear targets for achievement and the support provided and guidance on supporting the pupils' welfare.

The supply and quality of teachers

59. Support to improve the supply and quality of teachers remains satisfactory. The LEA offers an extensive continuing professional development programme based on an analysis of need. In recent months it has been developing a systematic set of pathways for career development, but this has not yet been published to schools. The LEA is active in promoting the national training and development strategies and uses university training departments to good effect. Induction and mentoring

arrangements, for both headteachers and newly qualified teachers, are effective and valued by schools. The LEA has been active in promoting the recruitment of newly qualified teachers and has put significant effort into the recruitment of headteachers.

60. Insufficient work has been done on analysing the composition of the current teaching force. This means that the authority is not currently able to anticipate future difficulties accurately and develop targeted action to address them. Although both LEA officers and schools have identified the recruitment and retention of middle managers in schools as a key issue, the authority has only partly started to address this. Nevertheless, the LEA has made a highly satisfactory start on the government's agenda for re-modelling the workforce, including providing training and support for teaching assistants.

Recommendation

- Analyse the age-profile of the current school workforce to identify issues that need to be addressed and develop further strategies for tackling them.

Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management

61. The effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management are satisfactory. Working groups, involving headteachers, school bursars and administrative officers, have helped to bring about positive improvements to services. Regular customer satisfaction surveys indicate that schools have more confidence in the services provided and this is reflected in some improved levels of buy-back. Progress has been made in benchmarking service costs against other authorities and providers and some prices have been reduced as a result. An inter-authority brokerage service, developed with a neighbouring borough and the DfES is also due to be launched shortly. This is intended to extend the range of alternative providers offered.

62. Many of the developments and improvements are still not sufficiently secure. Some services, such as payroll, deteriorated while changes were made to their provision. Benchmarking information is not shared with schools, reducing their capacity to access alternative providers, although many are astute about comparing costs with schools in neighbouring authorities.

63. The LEA service level agreement manual has been revised to take account of schools' requirements for options, ordering and invoicing. The manual is comprehensive and very clear about core and traded services. Pricing and costing are explicit and schools are able to purchase service combinations which match their needs, including group purchases. The manual, and traded services fair, are available in sufficient time for schools to plan and negotiate purchases. Schools are surveyed regularly on service quality and delivery, and complaints are dealt with promptly. While the contractor and the council benchmark services against similar providers in line with best value principles, there are no formal best value reviews.

Although the revised service level agreement manual includes helpful guidance for schools on securing best value, no specific training is currently being offered to complement its use.

64. The planning and provision of financial services have improved and are now satisfactory. The introduction of the council's new financial system coincided with the implementation of new financial management systems in schools and the introduction of consistent financial reporting requirements. This has resulted in school financial systems having more accurate and reliable financial data. The process of putting it in place, however, created substantial work and duplication. Schools receive more appropriate training and guidance on budget setting and management and are able to identify future training needs. Links with payroll have been unsatisfactory and while work is in hand to improve this, some schools have chosen to purchase this service elsewhere.

65. The planning and provision of property services have improved and are now satisfactory. Following the previous inspection, the LEA reviewed its service level agreements to ensure that schools' needs were addressed. Schools are now more directly involved in consultation about specific projects, particularly those using devolved formula capital. The schools in the grouped PFI project have specific involvement in project development and management, although the requirements for their time have been underestimated. Schools now have improved options to purchase technical support and emergency cover. Guidance on schools' premises responsibilities has also been updated and is being reissued.

66. The authority's support for administrative ICT is satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection and, with the appointment of key staff, significant progress is now being made. An entirely new, and overdue, ICT strategy has been launched and there are now appropriate links between the ICT strategy to support the administration of schools and that to support the curriculum. Some difficult, accumulated, hardware issues are being resolved and the websites are being made more accessible and useful. Technical support is also much improved.

Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement

67. Planning and provision of services to support school improvement are now highly satisfactory. Advisers and consultants have appropriate qualifications and experience and their visits to schools focus on improvement issues and are based on close scrutiny of data. Most headteachers perceive them to be both challenging and supportive. Senior officers and members ensure that performance is managed and regularly monitored, and are prepared to take difficult decisions – for example, to amalgamate schools.

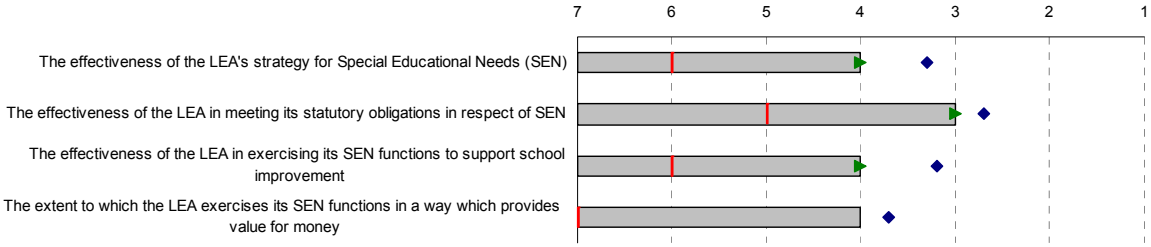
68. Services to support many vulnerable pupils have improved significantly since the previous inspection. However, other areas of comparative weakness, for example, support for gifted and talented pupils, have not yet been given sufficient

priority. A minority of service plans are also not expressed clearly enough in terms of improving pupils' performance.

69. The effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement are highly satisfactory. The LEA has rightly concentrated on improving its knowledge of schools and on raising standards. This has begun to have a positive impact on pupils' attainment and is being achieved at costs that are in line with similar authorities.

Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)

Summary table of judgements



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

The strategy for SEN

70. The authority's present strategy for SEN is satisfactory. It has addressed the major weaknesses identified in the previous report and, albeit fairly recently, put in place secure foundations for future development. A new and revised strategy for 2005/06 is incorporated in the vulnerable children's education inclusion strategy. This document reflects the corporate commitment to raising the achievement of pupils with SEN and to promoting inclusive practice across the borough.

71. The development and implementation of the strategy has been led well by senior officers and reflects the priorities and activities included in other key plans. The consultation process has resulted in a shared understanding of the respective roles of members, officers, schools and partner agencies. Strategic planning and implementation to agreed timescales have led to the re-organisation of special school provision, the restructuring of SEN support teams and a borough-wide training programme for meeting the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and communication difficulties. Special schools have a clear role in extending the range of provision in the borough.

72. Improvements to SEN budget management have meant greater transparency in the allocation of resources and better targeting of funds to identified needs. However, delays in implementing a revised formula for delegating funding for SEN, limits the capacity of mainstream schools to make flexible use of resources to improve pupils' achievement, and to meet a broader range of needs.

73. Good use is made of national and regional data to benchmark performance and to measure the impact of the SEN strategy. Elected members take an active involvement in monitoring the implementation of plans and their effect on school communities and pupils' performance.

Statutory obligations

74. The arrangements to meet statutory obligations to identify and assess pupils with SEN are highly satisfactory. Good progress has been made in developing systems and procedures to fulfil statutory duties and to ensure that the allocation of resources is transparent and proportionate to need.

75. There is a determination to ensure statutory obligations are understood and met at both strategic and operational levels. The leadership of the SEN manager has been effective in securing the confidence and co-operation of schools. There is a commitment to early identification and assessment, and to increasing the provision for Waltham Forest pupils within the borough, thereby reducing the need for expensive out-of-borough placements. Greater transparency and a sense of fairness in the arrangements for formal assessment have been achieved by agreeing with schools the criteria for assessment and by the involvement of school-based staff on the statutory assessment panel. Clear criteria have been set for ensuring officer attendance at priority annual reviews and for the monitoring of out-of-borough placements.

76. The procedures for completing statutory assessments have improved. In 2003/04, 87% of statements were completed within the recommended timescales, well above the national average. Arrangements have been introduced to monitor the annual review process. However, these reviews do not yet consistently ensure that provision outlined in statements continues to meet children's needs and is having an impact on achievement.

77. The quality of communication with parents is much improved. Clear information in relation to SEN policy and provision is available via the contractor's link to the authority's website. However, it is not clearly signposted for parents who may not be aware of the contractor's role within the authority. Parents find the SEN service supportive and officers accessible. Very occasionally, where the agreed service standard for involving parents is not followed, parents' confidence in provision is undermined. However, comprehensive quality assurance measures have been recently introduced to ensure that the work of the SEN team and the quality of reviews and communications to parents are monitored regularly.

Recommendation

- Monitor the provision identified in annual reviews to identify the impact on pupils' achievement and the potential for amendment or cessation of statements.

SEN functions to support school improvement

78. The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement is satisfactory. Substantial progress has been made since 2002 when the provision was poor. However, while improved practice is emerging, much is recent and still too new to demonstrate its impact and sustainability.

79. Good use is made of performance data to monitor progress and analyse trends in performance of the lowest 20% of attainers across the borough. SEN data is provided to schools as part of the annual target setting process, but there is no common assessment system for tracking the progress of pupils not achieving at national curriculum levels. Monitoring and evaluation have been strengthened by the introduction of joint monitoring visits to schools by school effectiveness advisers and educational psychologists. However, this approach is at an early stage of implementation and the initial visit focuses on monitoring provision and insufficiently on evaluating the effects of schools' arrangements on pupils' achievement. Special schools are well supported and challenged by the school effectiveness advisers.

80. The SEN code of practice is now being implemented well. Schools have access to advice on strategies to raise attainment of pupils with SEN through initiatives such as the primary strategy and training programmes provided by the SEN support teams, the educational psychology service and local special schools. The recently updated SEN guidance manual provides practical support and information to special needs co-ordinators in schools. Clear guidance is also available to identify the actions schools should be taking to support pupils with different levels of need and to enable them to review and evaluate their provision.

Recommendation

- Improve arrangements for tracking and evaluating the achievements of pupils not achieving national curriculum levels.

Value for money

81. The LEA's support for pupils with SEN provides satisfactory value for money. There have been significant improvements following an authority-wide review of SEN provision and since the implementation of the current SEN strategy. However, many of these arrangements are new and methods for evaluating their impact on pupils' achievements are not yet fully established.

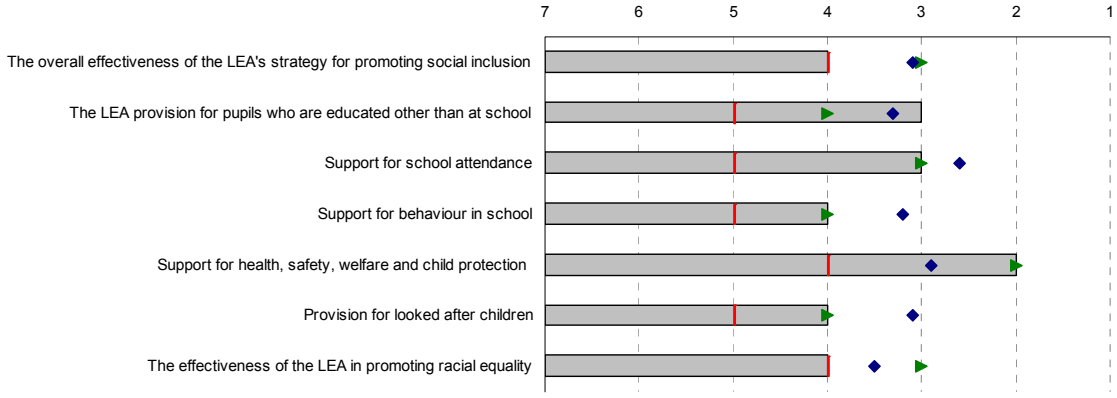
82. The authority has taken positive steps to ensure that it is in a position to secure sound value for its SEN expenditure. A dedicated finance officer has been appointed to address the weak funding arrangements identified in 2002. Previous confusion in sources of funding has been resolved and there are clear and transparent arrangements for allocating funding to need. Improved budget management is supporting school improvement. Consultation with the Schools Forum has led to changes in the formula for the allocation of resources. Consequently, the needs of children at school action plus can be met in a more effective and targeted way, thereby reducing the number of statements required. Arrangements for elected members and officers to monitor the impact of SEN expenditure on provision and pupils' performance have improved.

83. Historically, the borough's special schools have attracted a high number of pupils from other authorities. While income has been generated through these placements, it has been at the cost of local provision for Waltham Forest children.

Consequently the LEA has incurred high out-of-borough costs where it has been unable to provide for certain types of need within its own resources. The SEN strategy is addressing this problem. Local special schools are being equipped to provide in-borough provision for pupils with more complex learning needs and mainstream schools are being supported to meet a wider range of learning needs. This is beginning to release funds from the out-of-borough budget to promote inclusive practice across mainstream schools. A pupil referral unit catering for 15 primary aged pupils has substantially reduced the cost of expensive out-of-area placements for pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Improved procedures in the statutory assessment process ensure that criteria are applied consistently by the SEN panel in allocating funding, thereby underpinning the SEN strategy's intention to provide locally for Waltham Forest children, if at all possible.

Section 5: Support for social inclusion

Summary table of judgements



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

The strategy for social inclusion

84. The LEA's strategy for social inclusion continues to be satisfactory. There is a stronger commitment and lead from elected members to promote social inclusion, although further work is required to ensure a wider range of elected members are involved. The Vulnerable Children's Strategy group provides strategic leadership and this has led to improvements in the quality of key services. Community cohesion is good. Relationships with schools are developing but some schools do not yet fully share the LEA's agenda for social inclusion. Much of the work is not yet sufficiently embedded, and there are still some gaps and inconsistencies in provision. Schools remain to be convinced about the quality of some services for vulnerable children. For example, despite improvements in support for behaviour, there are still concerns about the variability and quality of the provision.

85. Multi-agency work is developing and in some areas is highly satisfactory, but it has yet to have an impact across all services. The integration of the minority achievement strand in the primary and secondary strategies has established links with the school effectiveness team and this is beginning to give a higher profile to the work. Although advisers and educational psychologists have begun conducting joint monitoring visits to schools, a common vision of social inclusion has yet to be agreed with the schools. However, the improved use and sharing of data has enabled the LEA to track and monitor the whereabouts of vulnerable children, including looked after children placed out of the borough.

86. There has been a significant reduction in the number of children educated other than at school and the LEA has been successful in reducing the number of exclusions especially of Black Caribbean boys. However, the Admissions Forum has

not yet given sufficient attention to the procedures for re-admitting excluded pupils. Schools report a high degree of racial harmony in schools. This is borne out by Ofsted school inspection indicating a low level of racism in schools. However, the LEA has not been proactive enough in offering training for all schools to ensure the recording and reporting of racist incidents is approached consistently.

87. While the LEA recognises the challenges of pupil mobility, its approach currently lacks coherence across all services. Significant numbers of pupils move into the borough, but at present they are represented disproportionately in certain schools. There is also further work to do to ensure that all of these pupils are integrated into their new schools and achieve well.

Recommendations

- Secure with all schools and other agencies a common understanding of the social inclusion agenda and implement the vulnerable children's strategy consistently across all services.
- Develop a more coherent approach to tackling the challenges posed by high levels of pupil mobility.

Provision for pupils educated other than at school

88. The provision for pupils educated other than at school has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now highly satisfactory. Members and senior officers demonstrate a clear commitment to identifying and meeting the needs of the pupils, and make good use of data to plan provision. Information management systems have been developed to maintain accurate lists of pupils educated out of school and to help co-ordinate cross-agency working in monitoring attendance, performance and placements. The information is analysed to identify trends and implications for further development. To help tackle the high level of pupil mobility, a common transfer system is used throughout the borough and the LEA database is updated monthly by schools. This facilitates monitoring, auditing of need and allocation of resources.

89. There is clear guidance for parents who wish to educate their children at home and there have been improvements in the arrangements for monitoring the health and safety and educational provision for this group, in partnership with the parents. Good provision is made for children with medical needs through the hospital education service. There is also a range of appropriate support for pregnant schoolgirls and their families. The social inclusion and re-integration team work with schools to support a phased return of pupils educated out of school to mainstream schooling, in local schools, colleges or with private providers. Arrangements are in place to meet the statutory requirement to provide suitable full-time education for all excluded pupils. However, many of these developments are recent and some schools remain to be convinced about the coherence of the provision.

Support for attendance

90. Support for attendance is highly satisfactory, having been unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. A new Principal Education Welfare Officer has been appointed and a comprehensive reorganisation of the service has led to significant improvements. The strategic direction of the service is much clearer and good use is now made of partnership working, with for example welfare officers as members of various cross-agency working groups. Links with the school effectiveness team are in the early stages of development and while data collection has improved, there is still more to be done to monitor and improve the attendance of different groups. Secondary attendance, which has consistently been above the national average, has continued to rise. Primary attendance remains below the national average, although rising.

91. The re-focussing of the service has been achieved through a co-ordinated training programme based on identified needs. The establishment of two court officer posts has resulted in a significant increase in prosecutions, although fixed penalty notices are not used at present. The use of ICT has helped staff to track the causes of non-attendance, while the 'Fast Track' initiative is enabling support to be better targeted at primary schools with the lowest levels of attendance. Focused work on 40 pupils in transition from years 6 to 7 has led to improvement in attendance for two-thirds of them. The service has worked hard to improve its relationship with schools by consulting over proposed changes. The formula for allocating resources is clear, transparent and focused on priorities.

92. Much of the work is at an early stage or still being planned, so has not yet been sufficiently embedded. The attendance strategy is still in draft form. Links with advisers lack consistency and data on tracking the attendance of different groups will not be available until later in 2005.

Support for behaviour

93. The support for behaviour is satisfactory. The authority has made progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous report and in strengthening its support. A protocol for the reintegration of excluded pupils has been agreed with secondary schools and there are now three pupil referral units. However, delays caused by the SEN re-organisation process, building works and ensuring the quality of provision, have reduced the capacity and overall impact. Although there have been satisfactory improvements, much remains to be done to ensure co-ordinated and comprehensive support across all schools to meet the needs of pupils most at risk of exclusion.

94. Good use is made of available data to identify patterns and trends in attendance and exclusions. Prompt action is taken to challenge schools which are identified as excluding large numbers of pupils or when there is a suggestion of unofficial exclusions. Although there has been a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions, there has been an increase in the use of fixed-term exclusion and the authority is working with schools to reverse this trend.

95. The effective adoption of nationally-funded initiatives is improving the quality and range of support for behaviour. Most secondary schools have set up learning support units and appointed learning mentors as part of the EiC initiative. The Key Stage 3 strategy consultant has worked in all secondary schools to audit need and tailor programmes to develop whole-school policies. Similar developments have occurred in some primary schools. Improved co-ordination of the work of the behaviour support team and the behaviour improvement project team is helping to achieve greater consistency in the advice and support available to schools. Formal evaluations of the range of support are positive, but the impact of improvements is not yet being felt by all schools.

96. The planning of support for behaviour is now comprehensive, based on a detailed analysis of local need. Good relationships and working practices have been developed with a wide range of agencies including social services, the youth offending team, the local Connexions partnership and child and adolescent mental health services. A range of initiatives has been introduced to meet the needs of pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. However, budget restrictions and delays in implementation have reduced the confidence of some schools in the capacity of the support provided, especially to help those pupils most at risk of exclusion.

Recommendation

- Work closely with schools to extend their capacity to meet the needs of pupils with behaviour difficulties and to clarify the range of provision available for those most at risk of exclusion.

Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection

97. Support for the welfare and protection of children is good. This is due to the good strategic leadership by knowledgeable key staff, focused on clear priorities. Training is appropriate, relevant and up to date and monitoring to ensure all schools meet their legal requirements is rigorous. Excellent relations with schools contribute to the quality of the child protection service, which is very well managed.

98. Two dedicated child protection officers provide high quality information to schools through a handbook and regular newsletter. This guidance, together with an extensive training programme for all designated teachers, has ensured that no school inspected by Ofsted has been found to have less than satisfactory arrangements for child protection. Good partnerships have been established with social services and the service closely monitors the quality of child protection policies and referrals. Designated teachers' records are monitored to ensure all current and new designated teachers have received up-to-date training. Immediate action is taken to address any identified gaps. Exchange of good practice through benchmarking and cluster groups ensures the sharing of best practice.

99. Support for health and safety is also good. Schools receive detailed guidance and support for health and safety through service level agreements.

Improved data collection has enabled the LEA to develop a good record of health and safety issues identified in schools.

Provision for looked after children

100. Provision for looked after children is satisfactory. There is now good strategic leadership and a clear sense of direction through the 'Going for Gold' delivery plan. The improved quality of data has led to closer monitoring of attendance and attainment. However, there are some inaccuracies in the data as the LEA faces the challenge of tracking pupils' movement within the LEA and across its boundaries. Some targets were not reached in 2004 and the percentage of looked after children for whom there is an up-to-date review is much lower than in the last academic year. The Admissions Forum has also yet to agree protocols on admissions for looked after children.

101. The improvements in the service have come in part from more co-ordinated working across health, social services and education, including agreeing protocols on data sharing. There are now dedicated officers for SEN and the education welfare service. A call centre monitors attendance daily, including the looked after children placed outside the LEA. Monitoring of personal education plans has improved as a result of a training programme for designated teachers. A multi-agency team has been established to help raise the attainment of looked after children and the corporate parenting group meets every six weeks to monitor their progress. Elected members receive regular training and are involved in activities to celebrate pupils' achievements.

Promoting racial equality

102. The LEA's promotion of race equality remains satisfactory. Progress in this area has gained momentum following recent key appointments. The authority is on track to meet the Level 3 standards set by the Commission for Racial Equality by Easter 2005 and has an action plan in place to meet both the Level 5 standards and the full requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act by 2006.

103. The LEA ensures schools fulfil their statutory responsibilities to have an appropriate race equality policy and action plan in place. It also ensures that all schools return racist incidents monitoring forms, but does not provide sufficient challenge to schools over potential under-reporting. Analysis of racist incidents is reported to members and schools. Training, when provided, is good but there is no overall strategy to provide explicit support on the handling and reporting of racist incidents to all schools. The LEA has been successful in recruiting a high proportion of governors from minority ethnic groups.

104. Guidance on developing schools' race equality policies places high emphasis on the narrowing of gaps in the performance of different ethnic groups. The promotion of race equality is covered by advisers during monitoring visits to schools and schools receive feedback on the extent and nature of racist incidents across the LEA. The LEA monitors the quality of schools' race equality policies and analyses

Ofsted school inspection reports. The dissemination of good practice is under-developed. Reporting to elected members also lacks sufficient in-depth analysis.

Recommendation

- Ensure that training on handling and reporting racist incidents is provided for all schools.

Appendix A

Record of Judgement Recording Statements

Name of LEA :	Waltham Forest Local Education Authority
LEA number:	320
Reporting Inspector:	Vic Chivers HMI
Date of Inspection:	January 2005

No	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	Fieldwork*
	Context of the LEA		
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	6	
	Overall judgements		
0.1	The progress made by the LEA overall	3	
0.2	Overall effectiveness of the LEA	3	
0.3	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	3	
	Section 1: Corporate strategy and LEA leadership		
1.1	The effectiveness of corporate planning for the education of children and young people	3	
1.2	The implementation of corporate planning for education	2	
1.3	The effectiveness of LEA decision-making	3	
1.4	The extent to which the LEA targets resources on priorities	3	
1.5	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value	4	
1.6	The leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice)	2	
1.7	The quality of leadership provided by senior officers	2	

1.8	The effectiveness of partnerships and collaboration between agencies in support of priorities	3	
1.9	Support for Early Years education	3	
1.10	Support for 14 – 19 education	4	
	Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation		
2.1	The LEA's strategy for school improvement	3	
2.2	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement	3	
2.3	The performance of schools	5	
2.4	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge and intervention	2	
2.5	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	3	
2.6	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	2	
2.7	The effectiveness of the LEA's identification of and intervention in underperforming schools	2	
2.8	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	3	
2.9	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	2	
2.10	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	4	
	Section 3: Support to school leadership and management, including schools' efforts to support continuous improvement		
3.1	Support to school leadership and management, including support for schools' approaches to continuous improvement	3	
3.2	Support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at KS 1 and 2	2	
3.3	Support for information and communication technology	4	
3.4	Support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3	2	
3.5	Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/ Traveller children	3	

3.6	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	5	
3.7	Support for school governors	4	NF
3.8	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	4	
3.9	The planning and provision of services to support school management	4	
3.9a	The planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management	4	
3.9b	The planning and provision of HR services in supporting school management	3	NF
3.9c	The planning and provision of property services in supporting school management	4	
3.9d	The planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management	4	
3.10	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school management	4	
3.11	The planning and provision of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	3	
3.12	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	3	
	Section 4: Support for special educational needs		
4.1	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs	4	
4.2	The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	3	
4.3	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	4	
4.4	The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money	4	
	Section 5: Support for social inclusion		
5.1	The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion	4	
5.2	The LEA provision for pupils who have no school place	3	
5.3	Support for school attendance	3	
5.4	Support for behaviour in schools	4	

5.5	Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection	2	
5.6	Provision for looked after children	4	
5.7	The effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality	4	

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

JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 7-point scale: Grade 1: Very good; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Highly satisfactory; Grade 4: Satisfactory; Grade 5: Unsatisfactory; Grade 6: Poor; Grade 7: Very poor

Note: in the case of JRS 1: *socio-economic context of the LEA and* ***JRS 2.3:*** *performance of schools,* ***grades relate to comparisons against national averages:***

Grades 1-2: Well above; Grade 3: Above; Grade 4: In line; Grade 5: Below; Grades 6-7: Well below.

Appendix B

Context of the inspection

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

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

- the progress the LEA has made since the time of its previous inspection in 2002;
- the overall effectiveness of the LEA and its capacity to improve further;
- the LEA's performance in major aspects of its work;
- recommendations on areas for improvement.

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

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

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

- support for school governors;
- the planning and provision of human resources.

Inspection judgements are made against criteria that can be found on the Ofsted website. For each inspected function of the LEA an inspection team agrees a numerical grade. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are to be found in Appendix A. These numerical grades must be considered in the light of the full report. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment profile for the education service.

Context of the LEA

Waltham Forest is an outer London authority serving a population of just over 230,000, 36% of whom are from black and minority ethnic groups. The north of the borough is relatively affluent, but the 2004 index of multiple deprivation indicates that one third of the population lives in some of the most deprived wards in the country. These are concentrated mainly in the centre and south of the borough. The proportion of adults and children recognised as suffering income deprivation is 17%. Four wards feature in the most deprived ten per cent nationally; one more than at the time of the previous inspection. Almost two-thirds of the working population are employed outside the borough. Adult unemployment is above the national average and rates vary considerably across the borough.

The school-age population (35,725) has remained largely static since the previous inspection, with some shift in balance from primary to secondary schools. A large influx of new arrivals and refugees seeking asylum contributes to high pupil-mobility rates for some schools. The percentage of children for whom English is an additional language is well above the national average at 34.7% and has risen since the last inspection, and quite sharply in primary schools. The percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals continue to rise and are above national figures in primary schools and well above in secondary.

The proportion of pupils with statements of SEN in primary and secondary schools has remained largely static since the previous inspection. At 3.2% and 4.6% respectively, it is now above the national average in both the primary and secondary sectors. The proportion of primary-aged pupils placed in special schools (1.6%) is well above the national average, while that for secondary pupils (2%) is above. However, only two-thirds of pupils in special schools are in-borough residents. Nursery places are available in 42 of the LEA's 48 primary and infant schools. Currently, all four-year-olds and over 90% of three-year-olds receive at least part-time nursery provision.

Waltham Forest has 86 schools: four nursery schools; 58 primary schools, including 10 infant schools and 10 junior schools; 17 secondary schools, of which three provide for pupils aged 11-18; and five special schools. There are three pupil referral units. Three secondary schools have specialist status and there is one full service extended school. Of the four Beacon schools, a nursery school has been designated as a Centre of Excellence and became the LEA's first children's centre in November 2004. Twenty schools (both primary and secondary) belong to one of two Education Action Zones. The EiC programme is in place in 18 primary and all the secondary schools.

The performance of schools

Pupils' performance in Waltham Forest schools is consistently below national levels and is broadly in line with or, in some cases, below that in similar LEAs across all key stages. However, since the last inspection, overall performance, particularly at Key Stage 2, has improved more quickly than in similar authorities and nationally.

Attainment on entry to schools is below the national baseline. In 2003, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 and above at the end of Key Stage 1 was below the national average. Performance remained in line with similar LEAs, but there was evidence of relative improvement in pupils' writing. At Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 4 and above was below the national average in English and mathematics and well below in science. Performance was below similar LEAs in English and science, but standards in all core subjects improved significantly by comparison. Unvalidated data for 2004 show some further improvement at both key stages, including boys progressing more quickly than the national average and higher attainment by black Caribbean pupils. At Key Stage 2, pupils' performance in mathematics and science remains below that in similar LEAs, but in English and mathematics has improved appreciably since the last inspection and more quickly than in similar authorities and nationally.

Pupils make progress at Key Stage 3 at the national rate and this tends to quicken at Key Stage 4. In 2003, at Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 or above was well below that found nationally in English and mathematics, and below national levels in science. Performance in English and mathematics was below that in similar LEAs. At Key Stage 4, performance was below that found nationally for all key indicators, though in most cases broadly in line with similar LEAs. Unvalidated data for 2004 show some improvement. At Key Stage 3, the LEA closed the gap with national performance in English and mathematics, although standards remain well below those nationally in all three core subjects. At Key Stage 4, there was further improvement in the performance of pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C, in line with that made by similar LEAs.

The LEA did not meet any of its key attainment targets in 2004 and these have now been extended until 2006, in agreement with the DfES. The authority is reducing the number of schools failing to meet the national floor targets at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. In 2004, 48% of primary schools achieved the minimum target of 65% of pupils gaining level 4 and above in English at Key Stage 2 and 29% of schools in mathematics. At Key Stage 3, 65% of secondary schools met the 2007 national target of 60% of pupils attaining level 5 for English and mathematics and 29% of schools met the target for science. The number of schools failing to achieve the target fell for English and mathematics, but rose for science. All secondary schools achieved the 2004 floor target of 20% of pupils achieving five A*-C grades at GCSE and are on track to meet the 2006 target of 25%. Improvements since the previous inspection in pupils' attaining level 5 or higher at Key Stage 2, and level 6 or more at Key Stage 3 have been in line with similar LEAs.

The proportion of primary and secondary schools graded good or very good in Ofsted inspections is low compared to both similar LEAs and nationally. There are currently two schools which have been found to have serious weaknesses, but no other schools are in an Ofsted category of concern.

Attendance rates in primary and secondary schools have improved since the previous inspection and are in line with the national average in secondary schools,

but are now below in primary. The rates of unauthorised absence are above national levels. Permanent exclusions were above national rates in 2001, but LEA data show that they have since fallen significantly.

Funding data for the LEA

Schools budget	Waltham Forest	Statistical neighbours average	Outer London Average	England Average
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Individual schools budget	**3,339**	**3,059**	**3,152**	**2,900**
Standards fund delegated	98	81	64	63
Excellence in Cities	82	51	36	35
Schools in financial difficulty	0	6	4	4
Education for under fives	74	73	75	85
Strategic management	29	37	28	30
Special educational needs	13	145	165	126
Grants	35	23	19	26
Access	56	70	59	60
Capital expenditure from revenue	67	29	23	24
Total schools budget	**3,794**	**3,573**	**3,624**	**3,354**
Schools formula spending share	**3,685**	**3,436**	**3,485**	**3,197**

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2004-05

LEA budget	Waltham Forest	Statistical neighbours average	Outer London Average	England average
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Strategic management	101	114	98	99
Specific Grants	0	16	13	14
Special educational needs	15	33	42	36
School improvement	33	38	40	38
Access	153	124	132	142
Capital expenditure from revenue	8	1	2	2
Youth and Community	84	82	66	75
Total LEA budget	**395**	**407**	**393**	**406**

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2004-05. Note: All figures are net. Funding for schools in financial difficulty excludes transitional funding.Averages quoted are mean averages; the original DfES Comparative Tables quote median average figures, not the mean average.

Notes