



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Portsmouth

Local Education Authority

Inspection Report

Date of Inspection: May 2004

Reporting Inspector: Linda Kelsey HMI



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Basic information

Name of LEA:	Portsmouth Local Education Authority
LEA number:	851
Address of LEA:	Civic Offices Guildhall Square Portsmouth PO1 2EA
Reporting Inspector:	Linda Kelsey HMI
Date of Inspection:	May 2004

Summary

Introduction

Portsmouth City is one of the most densely populated districts outside London. The city is undergoing major transformation, dealing with its social deprivation problems through high investment. Unemployment is presently at its lowest for 25 years. An average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the number of pupils identified as needing statements of special educational needs is also in line with national averages.

The performance of schools in Portsmouth is satisfactory. Standards of attainment have been improving at all key stages faster than the national rate and this represents good progress, even though at all key stages, except Key Stage 1, they remain below average. Pupils' attendance in primary schools is in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance in secondary schools has recently improved significantly but is still just below the national average. Exclusion rates are in line with the national average.

In 2002 the council moved from a committee based system to a leader and cabinet style administration. Three assistant directors work with a Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, appointed in January 2003.

Main findings

Summary: Portsmouth has made good progress since the previous inspection and it is now a highly satisfactory and effective local education authority (LEA) with good capacity for further improvement. The council has set a high priority for education and social inclusion, emphasising key objectives such as raising attainment. Both council members and all officers demonstrate a high level of commitment and understanding of what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. Standards are rising as a result of the good strategy and its implementation. Support to school leadership and management has also improved significantly and fewer schools are of concern to the authority. In more challenging areas, where the authority is developing an overarching policy for inclusion which subsumes special educational needs (SEN), its strategy is highly satisfactory. Progress has also been good in implementing aspects of that strategy although there is work to do on ensuring that schools understand the impact of the changes before them. The LEA knows itself well, as its self-evaluation demonstrates. Schools value the level of good consultation, honesty and partnership of senior officers and also the commitment of elected members.

Areas of strength	Areas of weakness/ for development
Corporate leadership of education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership and understanding about what needs to be done to bring about improvement in education and to raising standards • Very good provision for children in the early years • Strong partnership work • Allocation of funding to meet changing needs 	
Strategy for education and its implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good strategy which is leading to clear improvement in education provision and standards • Open and clear consultation with schools • Well defined levels of support, and high quality challenge to schools, based on good use of performance data • Good management of the LEA's school buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the number of surplus places in primary schools
Support to improve education in schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for school leadership and management and continuous improvement, including improving the self-evaluation skills of headteachers and staff • Effective sharing of best practice across all schools • Very good support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closer monitoring of the impact of new initiatives on children's learning and standards of achievement
Support for special educational needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good vision for SEN as part of an integrated approach to promoting wider social inclusion • The commitment to early intervention to support pupils without the need for a statement. • Good delegation of funds to schools to support the strategies for SEN and social inclusion • Effective partnership work with voluntary organisations and parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of understanding with schools and other stakeholders of the practical implications of the strategy • Support to schools in evaluating their own provision for pupils with SEN
Support for social inclusion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working between services and agencies • Very good support for improving school attendance • Support for child protection procedures • Multi agency working to improve behaviour in primary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for behaviour in secondary schools

Recommendations**Key recommendations**

There are no key recommendations

Other recommendations**Strategy for education and its implementation**

School places: improve value for money by drawing up a clear medium term strategy to remove surplus primary school places.

Support to improve education in schools

School leadership and management: monitor the impact of initiatives on the performance of all groups of pupils in order to evaluate more accurately the quality of LEA support to schools to raise standards.

Gifted and talented: set up a central register and agree with schools the criteria for the identification of gifted and talented pupils.

Support for special educational needs

Strategy for SEN: ensure schools are convinced of and committed to the strategy for SEN within a social inclusion policy for all schools.

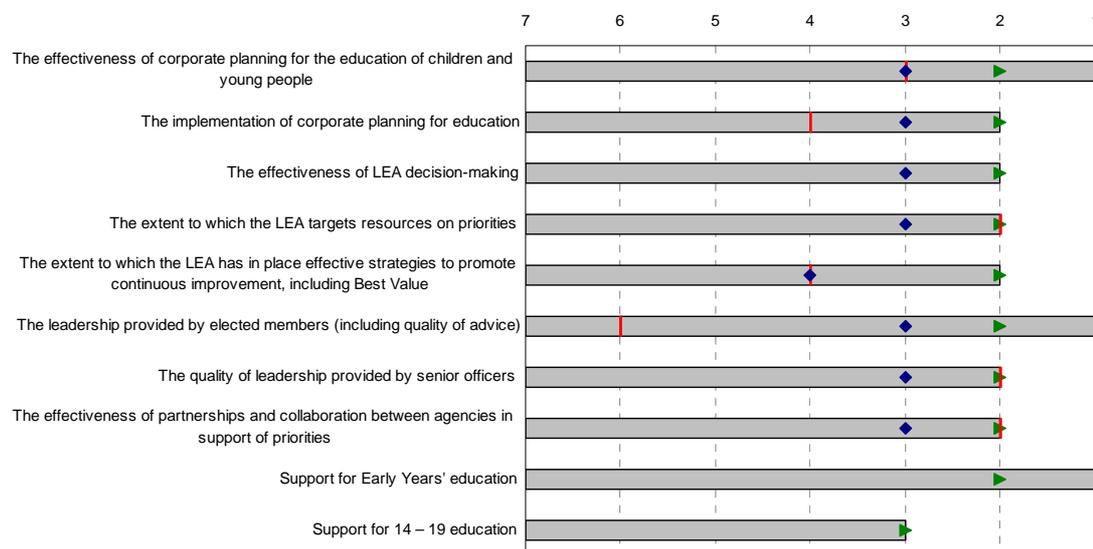
Functions to support school improvement: improve the support for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools by developing further materials to help schools evaluate their own provision.

Support for social inclusion

Behaviour: improve behaviour support in secondary 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. The LEA's corporate planning is now very good and its implementation good. These functions have improved since the previous inspection through strong leadership by members and senior officers, better cross-departmental working, and effective monitoring and scrutiny. Capacity for improvement is good.

2. The council's corporate plans give high priority to education, and emphasise raising pupils' attainment. This commitment is reflected in the relatively high level of funding allocated to education. In 2003-4, the council spent more than 3% above the Formula Spending Share (FSS). The LEA has a good track record of setting budgets which meet changing needs and ensures that action is effective.

3. Leadership is exceptionally strong. Both elected members and senior officers demonstrate a high level of commitment and an understanding of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. Relative roles and responsibilities of members and officers are clear. Both groups make considerable efforts to get to know their schools well and seek the views of headteachers and governors. For example, schools are now represented on the education management team. However, despite these considerable efforts, a small minority of mainly secondary schools remain unconvinced that consultation is adequate and planning fully reflects their priorities. Decision-making is good. Elected members do not shy away

from taking unpopular decisions on issues such as school closures, if they conclude that action is in the best interests of the pupils concerned.

4. The council's corporate planning system is now coherent and fully integrated with departmental, strategic and operational plans. Since the last inspection, the council has recognised the need for a more direct link between service and financial planning. A new medium term financial strategy has been put in place but is still at an early stage. Priorities are fully reflected in operational plans including those of partnership groups. Within the council, there is increasing evidence of effective cross-departmental working, for example with social services, to improve the attainment of looked after children, and with engineers to improve transport to school. As a result, the LEA is well placed to respond to the government's proposals for developing integrated children's services. The LEA also seeks innovative ways of working with external partners to deliver its priorities. For example, a number of local projects have been developed with business to promote the achievement of underperforming groups of children, especially boys from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds.

5. There are clear arrangements for checking whether the LEA is achieving what it set out to do. The Performance Management and Information Board (PMIB) involves senior officers and council members who challenge rates of progress. The council's executive and scrutiny function each have an explicit formal role in monitoring performance, including the budget. Effective action is taken when problems arise, such as in the recent case of a new school building where unexpected technical and financial issues were resolved quickly.

6. In particular, the scrutiny function has developed considerably since the last inspection. It now has a very clear role and focuses its effort on topics of underperformance and high importance to the LEA. Its contribution is valued by the Executive, and its advice actively sought.

7. Overall, the LEA knows its own strengths and areas for further development well. This is evident in its self-evaluation for the inspection.

Targeting of resources

8. The inspection fieldwork concentrated on the LEA's monitoring and challenging of schools with budget deficits or high budget surpluses. At the time of the last inspection, the LEA was good at targeting its resources on priorities. This remains the case. A high priority is given to education and resources are allocated flexibly to support changing priorities. For example, in 2003-4, additional resources were allocated to priorities such as attendance, school improvement, and ICT in schools. These were key areas where specific improvements were needed but could not be achieved without additional funding.

9. Officers monitor budgets rigorously and have a very detailed knowledge of individual schools. Although half of the secondary schools have long standing budget deficits, decisive action has been taken to improve the position. All five schools have agreed recovery plans and had met or exceeded their deficit reduction targets by the end of 2003-4. They are firmly on track to break even within two years. A sixth secondary school has recently gone into deficit and a recovery plan is being put in place. Few primary schools have budget deficits

but nearly half have surpluses of over 5%. The LEA challenges each school robustly and has satisfied itself that all but a small proportion of the unspent money is being saved for specific projects for the benefit of pupils, such as building works or equipment. Only 1.1% of the total budget was uncommitted. The LEA has good capacity to give appropriate advice and support to its schools.

Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value

10. This area was not inspected in 2000 and now is good. Fieldwork was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of performance management arrangements and Best Value reviews.

11. Since the last inspection, the council has introduced a performance management system for education which uses national and local performance indicators as well as service objectives and targets. Systematic monitoring arrangements involve members and allow an appropriate focus on areas of underperformance, and agreement of targets and recovery strategies. The system is now being extended to give all individuals in the education directorate targets relating to corporate objectives and good progress has been made.

12. The external auditor has judged the council's Best Value Performance Plan to be satisfactory. The topics selected for Best Value or policy review are well chosen. These include high risk areas such as the school and pupil support service, transport, and attainment at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Although much of the work is too recent for impact to be judged fully, there is clear evidence of benefits to schools and pupils resulting from the first round of reviews.

Leadership by elected members and advice given to them

13. The leadership of elected members is now very good. It has improved considerably since the last inspection, when it was poor. There have been many changes. A high proportion of new members joined the council at the 2002 elections. A new administration took over in May 2003. Elected members' leadership has improved in all aspects. An Executive and scrutiny model of governance is now in place, which makes for greater clarity in decision-making. The current group of members has set a very clear vision for educational improvement, which is fully supported by all three political parties. There is continuity in policy-making, which is a considerable achievement in a council with a minority administration and a history of changes of control. This has a positive impact on service delivery. For example, major decisions on sensitive areas such as school reorganisation are not reconsidered when the administration changes.

14. Senior officers have effective working relationships with elected members. The lead member for education meets regularly with the director of education to discuss performance and review progress in key policy areas. The Executive has a particularly strong role in budget monitoring and has taken decisive action to deal with problems, such as the potential for overspend on buildings maintenance and construction. Although there is a high level of delegation to officers, members positively challenge decisions, especially in key areas such as school improvement. Officers provide good quality advice which gives members the confidence to take unpopular decisions, such as restructuring special educational needs.

15. The scrutiny process is effective and well used. The topics chosen to date have been areas of under-performance or areas of major concern, such as raising attainment at Key Stage 4, and review of SEN provision. In these cases, the process of scrutiny has offered ideas by suggesting new approaches to problems or by providing reassurance to parents and the wider community. A particular strength has been its cross-cutting approach. For example, the debate on raising attainment covered the contribution of services outside education, such as housing and leisure.

Leadership by senior officers

16. Education is well led and reflects the strong strategic capability of the director. Leadership provided by the senior officers, including the chief executive is good. The ongoing challenge to all its schools is good. The quality and consistency of their very effective team work together with the work of the link advisers, subject consultants and service managers are impressive.

17. Procedures for communicating with schools have improved and the strategy for school improvement is clear. Elected members are happy with the information they receive and appreciate the radical developments taking place in key areas such as social inclusion and special educational needs. However, the implications of these strategies are not fully understood by all schools. Some headteachers, particularly of secondary schools are not sufficiently convinced of the underlying rationale for some of the strategy for special educational need

Strategic partnerships

18. Partnership work, already a strength at the time of the last inspection, is good. The council and the education department see partnership work as the cornerstone of their drive to raise aspirations and achievement across the city. Effective multi-agency work through the early years partnership, 13-19 strategy and family learning projects ensures that by combining resources and energy, from different organisations, there is a greater understanding and sharing of aims. Within the local authority, the traditional divisions between services are breaking down to facilitate joint planning, service delivery and pooling of resources. This has led to improved attendance, enhanced the achievement of looked after children, supported the development of extended schools and the establishment of the Children's Trust.

Support for Early Years

19. This area is very good. The early years team is highly regarded and there are strong, effective partnerships across the sectors. Training and support to encourage good provision are major priorities, and there is a carefully planned programme to maximise opportunities for children at risk of underachieving. Early years provision is a high priority for the council and this enables effective implementation of strategies.

20. There is termly monitoring to ensure that all settings have regard to the special educational needs code of practice and to high quality provision. Training in this area is extensive and supplemented by the Early Excellence Centre's Outreach Programme. An

outreach programme is also a feature of the children's information service and both their number of calls and satisfaction rates have considerably increased. Policy and procedures for the foundation stage entry profile as well as assessment and moderation are understood by schools and settings, and this is underpinned by a well-regarded training and support programme.

21. Over the last four years, the number of childcare places available in disadvantaged wards has increased. At the same time, there has been a significant reduction in the number of settings offering nursery education for three and four-year-olds that are judged weak. There is a comprehensive knowledge of best practice and this is shared with settings routinely and at special events. The LEA's partnership with the child minding association is clearly effective and produces well-targeted information and advice for providers.

Support for 14-19 education

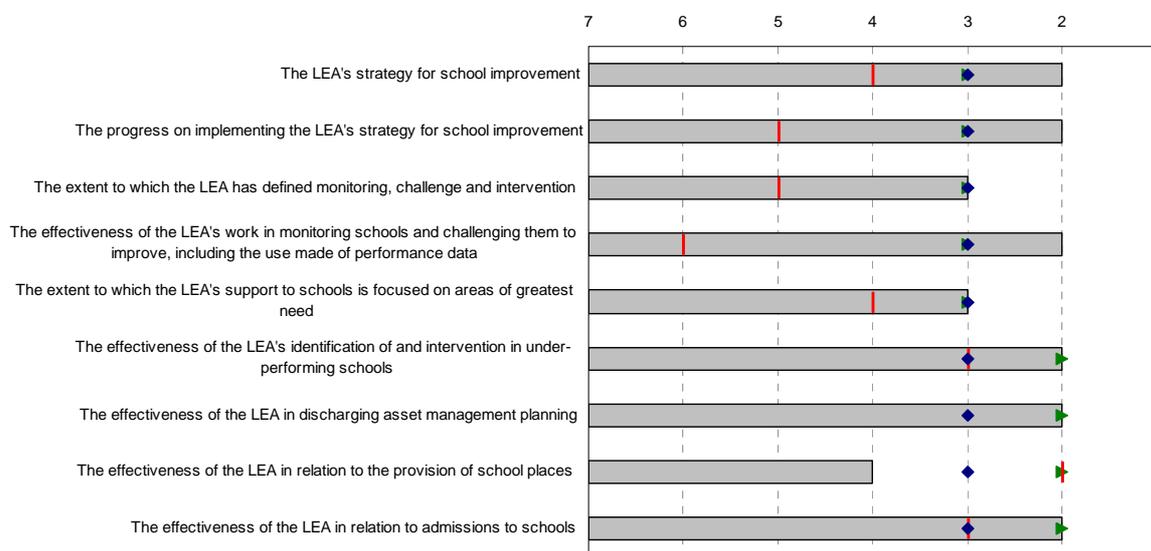
22. Support for 14-19 education is highly satisfactory. The draft 13-19 strategy provides a good foundation for developing post-16 education across the city and builds on the existing good provision for pre-16 education. The strategy though slow to develop initially, presents a clear vision and is securely based on strong partnerships between the LEA, the local Learning Skills Council (LLSC) and all local providers. It addresses well the weaknesses identified in the local area review published in 2003.

23. Attainment in the GCSE improved in 2003, with a significant rise in the percentage of students achieving five or more grades at A*-C. However, numbers achieving five or more or one A*-G did not show equivalent improvement. This reflected the lack of progress in a small number of schools. Already steps have been taken to address this issue, including the use of the leadership incentive grant to support collaborative work. There are many examples of innovative and creative partnerships and projects involving schools and colleges which are leading to more opportunities for learners on Level 1 and 2 courses. Schools and colleges are also piloting alternative strategies which will enhance literacy and numeracy skills and improve student access to education. The proportion of 16-year-old school leavers not involved in employment, education or training has reduced significantly. Advice and guidance to students is good; the establishment of the Connexions resource centres has been well-received. Young people are listened to and make a contribution to developments across the service. Personal advisers for vulnerable pupils in Key Stage 4 support transition to post-16. Some secondary school staff continue to provide support as students move to further education.

24. Data analysis is secure at Key Stage 4 and access to post-16 education is well-monitored by the schools and the LEA. However, while individual colleges keep records of attendance, retention and achievement post-16 and the Connexions service tracks those not in education and training, there is no central source for the data on the achievement and subsequent destinations of Portsmouth students once they have left school. As a result schools and the LEA cannot measure the impact of its strategies and initiatives.

Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation

Summary table of judgements



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The strategy for school improvement and its implementation

25. The good strategy for school improvement has established a clear direction for education that reflects national and local priorities. This is a significant improvement since the time of the last inspection when it was satisfactory. Recommendations from the last report and the action plan activities have been acted upon and good progress has been made. The capacity for further improvement is good.

26. As a result of an open and clear consultation process, schools understand the priorities in the Education Development Plan (EDP). Clear targets for school improvement are set, as well as activities designed to achieve them and success is measured by suitable criteria. The new education business plan integrates with other corporate plans as well as the education development plan. It clearly reflects the priorities of the education department and sets out the resources needed for implementation and the deadlines by when actions should be completed. There are close links between targets and actions to improve schools standards.

27. Implementation of the strategy is good and standards are rising. The clear priorities and good planning target resources and grant funding to schools effectively through individual and area-based initiatives. These are often in partnership with a range of agencies. Only in the area of planning for school places is there a weakness as the number of available primary places has grown. A quarter of Portsmouth primary schools now have more than 25% of places unfilled.

28. Targets set for attendance have been met in secondary and primary schools. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with national averages. The LEA targets were met. Targets are close to being met at Key Stage 4. Targets for standards in ICT at Key Stage 3 have been achieved. However, at Key Stages 2 and 3 progress during 2003 was slow, targets were not achieved and are unlikely to be met in 2004. Targets, based on prior attainment, are becoming more accurate as a result of more robust and helpful data supplied to the schools. The LEA advisers are more rigorous and challenging to their schools as a result of better performance data. This means the LEA knows how well each of its schools performs and where there is room for improvement. It has put in some useful remedies such as increasing the number of visits to each school and being more specific about what areas are for focus and review each term at these visits. Consequently, there is now more regular monitoring of performance targets, teaching, learning and school management.

29. Monitoring, challenge and intervention are highly satisfactory and the LEA has placed a priority on supporting the schools causing most concern. The experiences and methods learnt from the schools grouped in the Excellence Cluster have been used well to support schools in challenging circumstances. The number of schools causing concern continues to reduce and more schools have been identified through their school inspections as having good leadership and management.

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

30. Highly satisfactory, monitoring, challenge and intervention are well defined and procedures are in place to support vulnerable schools. The LEA has sharply focused its support to those schools causing concern and effective systems of support have resulted in the reduction of the number of schools in this category. Headteachers and governors have a good understanding of the principles of categorisation and the responsibilities of the LEA in supporting schools. The quality and range of the data available to schools have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The improved access to the data and the efficiency with which schools make use of it in the self-review process has helped them to develop their own self-evaluation and school improvement plans.

31. Link advisers are well regarded by schools. The challenge they offer is good and schools welcome the consistent focus on improving pupils' performance through better informed use of the performance data. This challenge will be strengthened by the broader support for all schools of the planned two additional annual visits dealing with leadership and management, and teaching and learning. Visits forms to schools are generally of good quality. Some are outstanding with strong evaluation and clear targets for improvement. Additional guidance and support for self-evaluation is available through the school self review package, which the LEA has updated to incorporate changes to the school inspection framework. The process of identification of, and intervention in, underperforming schools is now good and has improved since the last inspection. Three schools are identified as having serious weaknesses and one school is underachieving. There is currently no school requiring special measures.

Asset management planning

32. This was not inspected in 2000. The limited fieldwork undertaken, confirms that the service is now good. The asset management process is clearly linked to the LEA's other major plans, such as school organisation. All schools have asset management plans and these are used sensibly to bring about school improvement. The process for prioritising work and allocating resources is transparent and fair.

Providing school places

33. This was good at the last inspection and is now satisfactory. There are weaknesses in the LEA's management of surplus places in the primary phase. Forecasting is highly accurate for both phases and is consistently within 1% of actual numbers. The management of school places is effective in the secondary sector. The LEA has planned flexibly to remove places where they are not needed and to create extra capacity in areas of high demand.

34. There has been a growing number of surplus places in the primary sector for several years and the LEA acted decisively to remove some 500 places between 2001 and 2003. However, the number of unfilled primary places has grown again since then. The main reasons are continuing falling rolls and a change in the national method of calculating school capacity, which resulted in 634 'new' places being created across the city in 2003/04. The LEA is committed to another phase of review starting in autumn 2004, but has not set detailed targets or timescales.

Recommendation

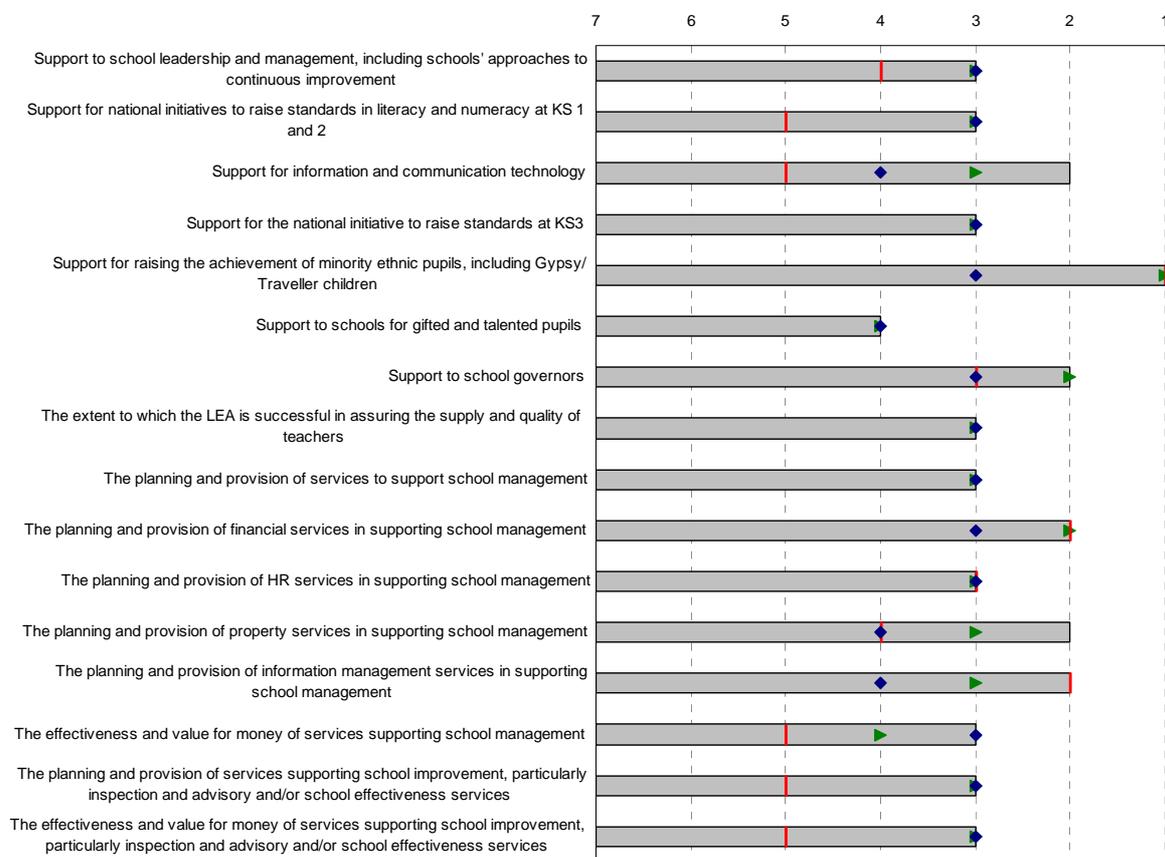
- Improve value for money by drawing up a clear medium term strategy to reduce surplus primary school places.

Admissions to schools

35. This was highly satisfactory in the last inspection and the service is now good. A coordinated admissions system for secondary schools introduced in 2004 was a year ahead of statutory requirements. All parents who have applied for a Portsmouth school are notified of the outcome on the same day and the waiting time for appeals has reduced.

Section 3: Support to improve education in schools

Summary table of judgements



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Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement

36. The LEA's support to improve education is highly satisfactory and has a good capacity to improve further. It has improved significantly since the last inspection. A high priority is being given to developing the self-evaluation skills of headteachers and their staff. Training and guidance for headteachers and governors on self-evaluation and the use of performance data is established and is valued by schools, though the involvement of governors in that process is undeveloped. Leadership and management are improving in schools and intervention strategies are used in good time. Strong leadership by senior officers and good appointments to middle-tier posts have helped to ensure that school improvement service plans are focused and coherent. Secure performance management processes guarantee that plans are acted upon and evaluated. All services to support school management and school improvement are at least satisfactory and many have improved considerably since the last inspection. Information provided to schools on the services available to them is good and schools understand and exercise the choices made available to them confidently.

37. The ideas generated by the Portsmouth Learning Community, a partnership between schools, the LEA and further and higher education have led to the introduction of a successful number of teaching and learning initiatives, including the focus on assessment for learning and on giving pupils a say in their education. Good practice shared between schools has led to good use of leading practitioners, of people seconded to support and of partnerships with further and higher education institutions.

38. The significant number of innovative and creative strategies, introduced across the LEA, all with a clear focus on improving learning, teaching, leadership and management has had an impact on standards even though these remain below the national average. The audit of schools' needs is secure and interventions are well-planned and targeted. Officers have recognised the need to monitor more sharply the impact of individual initiatives in schools so they can evaluate more accurately the quality of their support. Schools and governors receive good feedback on their progress through officers' notes of visit and the school self-review process. Elected members are well-informed on standards, quality, leadership and governance in schools.

Recommendation

- Monitor the impact of initiatives on the performance of all groups of pupils in order to evaluate more accurately the quality of the LEA support to schools to raise standards.

Support for the national initiatives at Key Stages 1 and 2

39. At the time of the last inspection, support for numeracy was highly satisfactory and support for literacy was unsatisfactory. Support for both is now highly satisfactory. The new teams are now well-established and work closely together within an emerging and well-led primary strategy. The strategy embraces the wide variety of school improvement initiatives and developments designed to raise achievement in primary schools.

40. Standards in literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 1 build well on the achievements at the Foundation Stage and are in line with those nationally. However, although standards at Key Stage 2 are improving broadly in line with the national rate, they are below those nationally and fall short of LEA targets. Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is less than that in similar local authorities. The LEA has undertaken a detailed evaluation of factors contributing to underachievement and, as a result, is working on the development of pupils' writing skills at the start of Key Stage 2.

41. The LEA monitors the achievement and progress in its schools well and intervenes effectively, using a wide range of intervention programmes, including the primary leadership and intensive support programmes. Advisers' support and training is of a high quality and appreciated by schools. School networks are well-established and, together with leading practitioners, provide training, advice and support to those schools which do not receive additional support.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

42. Support for this area is good. This is good progress since the last inspection, when it was unsatisfactory. There is a clear strategy which links ICT use across both services for schools and curriculum support. Standards at Key Stage 3 are close to the national average and have made a faster improvement than standards in any other key stage. Through the work of the Key Stage 3 initiative, assessment procedures are developing using the information gained from the portfolios containing samples of pupils' work. The capacity for further improvement is good.

43. A number of good initiatives have driven the development of ICT use in the curriculum. These are: the support for the training and development of interactive whiteboards; focused training and support to the schools causing most concern to the authority, particularly where ICT was identified as weak and the use of an advanced skills teacher and ICT advisers who support both primary and secondary provision through their pyramid group organisations. The development of good teaching has benefited from the involvement of the authority in a programme of training for primary teachers based at the University of Portsmouth. The LEA has done a lot of work over the last two years to bring schools in line with the national performance picture. One of the strongest features supporting this drive is the high quality technical expertise and support that schools receive.

Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3

44. Support to improve pupils' attainment and progress in Key Stage 3 is highly satisfactory. It is informed and driven by the national strategy and is very responsive to the particular needs of the schools. Standards are rising steadily. However, they are still below national standards and the ambitious targets are not yet achieved. Targets in ICT have been met, however in other areas standards are still below national average and the ambitious targets are not yet achieved.

45. Schools feel both supported and challenged by high quality Key Stage 3 advisers. The increasingly effective use of data ensures that the progress of groups and individuals is now more securely monitored and that targets are suitably challenging. Agreements with schools define levels of support and provide good indicators against which to measure improvement. The officers know their schools well and give support according to need. Targeted adviser support and challenge, for example in English, has led to impressive improvements in some schools and the Key Stage 3 team is now beginning to look at other creative ways of working in schools. There are already signs of an impact on teaching and learning. Good practice is shared through the Portsmouth Learning Community and the work of leading departments and specialist schools. There is effective partnership work between teams including the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, pupils' services and the educational psychology service. Although there are some good examples of Key Stage 2 to 3 transition projects, these developments are not established consistently.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

46. Support for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. Support to schools in meeting the needs of gifted and talented students is a priority in the EDP but progress has been slow.

There are plans to collect relevant data and identify the actions to be taken in order to improve provision.

47. All schools have a coordinator for gifted and talented pupils and receive advice, support and training. The strengths of the support include summer schools for gifted and talented pupils and the Challenge week. The collaboration with the Excellence Cluster has improved provision and enables all schools to benefit from networks which support the wide sharing of good practice in the numerous activities for gifted and talented pupils including the work of the Children's University. This is in addition to the activities offered by the music service and the cross-authority focus on the improvement of teaching and learning for all, which is part of the inclusion agenda. Schools are able to demonstrate evidence of improvement in teaching and learning as a result of specific initiatives, for example assessment for learning.

48. Nevertheless, there is little evidence to demonstrate that these strategies have secured a significant increase in standards for more able pupils. There are no agreed criteria for the identification of gifted and talented pupils and no central register. Strategies to monitor their progress are in place but not embedded. Criteria to evaluate provision for gifted and talented pupils are included in the school self-review materials and although links with all the other strategies and initiatives are described they are not yet explicit enough to secure the necessary improvements in standards for more able pupils.

Recommendation

- Set up a central register and agree with schools the criteria for the identification of gifted and talented pupils.

Support for school governors

49. Support to governors is good. Most primary schools and a few secondary buy the service and the LEA scrutinises the costs of the service it provides in comparison with neighbouring authorities. Governors have a strong influence and involvement in driving educational policy in the city. The governor database currently in the process of being established will be centralised and support for governor recruitment is good. The governor support service has the capacity to respond at short notice to needs in specific schools. The quality of training is good and includes accredited training for clerks. The provision of 'on-site' training is developing well and information in the form of newsletters, briefing and training materials are of a high quality. Link advisers work well with the support service to monitor minutes of meetings and to respond to queries. Governors receive copies of the notes of all visits to schools. They understand the process and systems for school categorisation. Many chairs of governors attend the annual target-setting meeting. Although the expanding school self-review process has identified leadership and management as the focus for the summer term meeting, the support for governing bodies in reviewing their practices and effectiveness is not clear.

The supply and quality of teachers

50. This is highly satisfactory and improving. Since 2001, the number of teacher vacancies has declined. The range of recruitment initiatives, including the primary initial teacher

training programme, the graduate registered teacher programme and the training school have led successfully to the training and employment of local teachers. Better education and corporate recruitment literature as well as a range of housing initiatives support this drive. However, although these strategies have had an undeniable impact, secondary schools continue to have difficulty in recruiting mathematics and science teachers and in some, many staff in these departments are recently qualified. This affects standards in some of the most challenging schools. The patterns of teacher vacancies are analysed and used accurately to measure the impact on teaching and learning. The continuing professional development strategy provides support for teachers at various stages of career development through the effective use of local and national programmes, partnerships and funding streams. This has led to a significant number of promotions to senior management posts. Support for newly qualified teachers is good and includes guidance for transition to their second year. The number of advanced skills teachers has increased. There is induction for headteachers, including the provision of a headteacher mentor. The recent secondment of a serving headteacher to lead this development has strengthened the process.

The planning, effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management

51. This is highly satisfactory. Services offered are on an individual basis at different levels and in response to local circumstances. The LEA makes details available to schools in a timely fashion to enable them to make decisions on what to buy back. These include service level agreements and clear client and contractor responsibilities. An annual 'provider fair' for all schools supplements the usefully written information. The authority has supported those schools moving to an external provider ensuring a smooth transition

52. The working group, involving headteacher and governor representatives, co-ordinates arrangements and reviews services through customer surveys and questionnaires. The use of Best Value reviews to improve service delivery is good. For example, a Best Value review has been used to help develop personnel services following expressions of concern, and this has resulted in improved school satisfaction. Further reviews for finance services and ICT services are planned for the near future. Costs are lower than statistical neighbours. Customer satisfaction data is collected in various forms allowing a degree of monitoring to be undertaken, but the LEA has not developed a range of indicators for the services which could both be reported to the council and to service users to help raise performance. The recent difficulties over the introduction of a new school finance system have been overcome. Generally, the LEA has secured high buy back rates for its support services but has also acknowledged that more needs to be done to develop performance management systems.

53. **Property services** are good. Capital projects are completed on time, well managed and with minimum disruption to the schools. Schools are fully involved in the development of major projects. There are good arrangements for responding to emergencies and these have proved effective. A Best Value review of this function across the council showed some improvement was needed. This has been implemented through a new, integrated asset management service which resolves problems as they are identified. This acts on a recommendation in the last report about procedures for accountability and the school survey shows that schools' satisfaction has risen. Some schools have elected to move to the private

sector to get a better service and the council has co-operated to ensure a smooth transition for these schools. The authority has a good capacity to improve this function further.

54. The **information management** service is good. Links between the corporately provided ICT support for school management and the advisory service ICT curriculum support are effective and schools can operate well-integrated systems. Schools have been appropriately advised in respect of the purchase of hardware and software, at the best price.

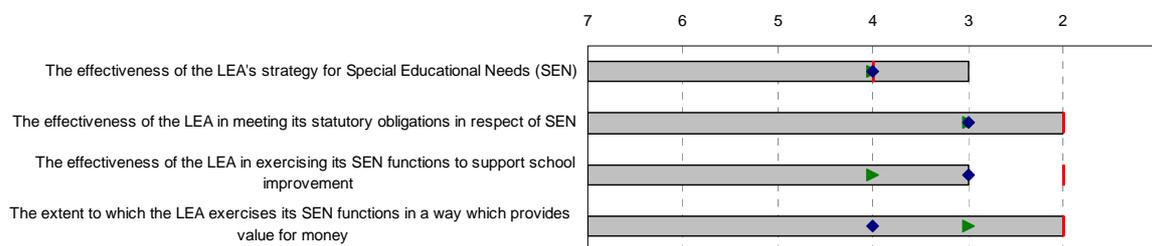
Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement

55. These functions are highly satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection when they were unsatisfactory. The senior leadership of the service is effective with a good understanding of the connections and relationships between the different services and teams. The revised management and organisational structure reflects this. Leadership of individual initiatives is still at least satisfactory, the majority is highly satisfactory or good. There is a shared understanding of how together, officers can make a difference to schools. Priorities for improvement are clear and procedures for the monitoring of developments have been established. Service plans have improved and staff have appropriate expertise and are well-deployed. Effective use is made of leading professionals and teachers seconded from schools. School improvement personnel receive support and training. Performance management procedures are secure although the LEA recognises that the monitoring of outcomes is not yet consistent at team level.

56. The impact of school improvement service on standards has led to a faster than national rate of improvement at all key stages though many challenging targets have not been met. A number of the new structures and systems are still untested and have therefore not had time to demonstrate impact. The service has increased its capacity to improve further by the appointment of additional officers and by the creative use of a range of senior management secondments from schools. It is now well placed to carry out its functions in supporting and challenging schools. Comparative costs of school improvement services are less than those in similar LEAs and the service provides highly satisfactory value for money.

Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)

Summary table of judgements



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

The strategy for SEN

57. The LEA's strategy for SEN is highly satisfactory and the capacity to fulfil this vision is good. Its strength lies in being part of an integral approach to promoting wider social inclusion, but a weakness remains in not ensuring that all stakeholders understand what is going to happen during the next steps of implementation.

58. The strategy, published in 2001 after wide consultation, covers early intervention, removing barriers to learning, raising attainment and working in partnership. There have been some significant achievements since 2001. These include much improved outcomes for vulnerable children, expanding Portage provision and securing area special educational needs co-ordinators for all early years settings. In addition, inclusion indicators have been developed as part of school self-review materials. The use of 'p' scales to make better assessments of pupils' progress in mainstream schools has been introduced. There is much more flexible Key Stage 4 provision. The LEA has been able to develop practice in relation to 26 identified groups of vulnerable children reporting progress on an annual cycle. Reports from these focus groups feed into the LEA's overall budget setting process and provide a mechanism for developing practice on a systematic, annual basis. This highly participative process is good but despite this, some schools are not convinced that this process will work and moreover think the wider social inclusion strategy will have a negative impact on other pupils in their schools.

59. The strategy also proposed a reduction in the number of special schools. This was designed to reduce the number of special school places; increase the number of pupils with statements of SEN in mainstream schools and increase the capacity of the special schools to provide out-reach support for pupils with SEN in mainstream provision. These proposals which proved to be highly contentious were approved in 2003 and the LEA is already placing a significantly higher percentage of children with statements of SEN in mainstream schools.

60. There is a strong commitment from elected members, parents and most school staff to the overall strategic policy on inclusion and its continued implementation as recommended

in the last inspection. There is very effective partnership work with other statutory bodies and with voluntary agencies. Examples include the cross-agency staffing of the primary behaviour support team; contracting out of 'parent partnership' to MENCAP and joint funding from Social Services, Health and Education for a small number of pupils with very demanding needs.

61. There are strong links between the school improvement and pupil support services which have led to targeted action to raise the attainment of low achieving pupils. The LEA participates fully in the regional partnership for SEN. The strategy for inclusion is supported by a commitment to early intervention and school autonomy through the placement of high levels of delegated funding into mainstream schools. In this way pupils with high incidence needs can have those needs met without the necessity for a statement. The LEA has a clear disability access plan.

Recommendation

- Ensure schools are convinced of and committed to the strategy for SEN within a social inclusion policy for all schools.

Statutory obligations

62. The LEA's fulfilment of its statutory obligations in SEN is good. Guidance for parents about the procedures to support them if they have a child with SEN is clear and produced in the main minority ethnic languages as well as English.

63. The LEA has criteria for deciding whether to initiate a statutory assessment, and for deciding whether to make a statement of SEN. A panel made up of officers and head teachers makes decisions against these criteria. The parent partnership service is contracted out to MENCAP. These arrangements are working well and have, for example, supported parents in challenging the LEA. Mediation and dispute resolution procedures have been established through the regional partnership, and their availability advertised but this facility has not yet been taken up. The proportion of cases taken to the SEN tribunal is in line with other similar authorities. The LEA has good links with other agencies and there is a financial pooling arrangement with social services and health for the most difficult cases.

64. LEA data shows that, since 2003, over 90% of statutory assessments (excluding exceptions) are completed within 18 weeks. This reported performance is good. The LEA monitors annual reviews well and has both discontinued statements and modified the provision named on a statement in the light of those reviews. Officers monitor pupils' attendance, concentrating on pupils moving between key stages. The LEA has good capacity to make further improvements.

SEN functions to support school improvement

65. This is highly satisfactory. There are clear criteria for monitoring the progress of pupils who are low achieving and an inclusions officer works with schools to review and improve the teaching strategies for vulnerable groups. The LEA uses a checklist to help evaluate the work schools do in supporting children with SEN. It has recently issued a new

school self review framework but this does not contain sufficient support for schools in their own evaluation of provision for SEN.

66. Effective links between the school improvement and pupil support services ensure a strong focus on raising achievement. Tight monitoring of results means that intervention is targeted on identified schools in a co-ordinated way between these services. The LEA data base tracks the progress of individual pupils and the information is used to put in place programmes for identified underachieving pupils. This individual tracking of low achievers is good. The LEA ensures that high quality information is made available to receiving schools as pupils move from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and thus has effectively dealt with the recommendation in the last inspection that transition arrangements be improved. The LEA runs a very effective training programme aimed at the identified needs of schools. This is well regarded and valued by schools as is the support the LEA offers for 'self-help' groups. The LEA actively promotes the SEN code of practice and arranges effective training for its introduction.

67. Special schools have been consulted on their changing role and there is a strong commitment to the notion of more inclusive practice and outreach work. The LEA actively monitors the way in which pupils with SEN progress and is quick to identify areas where this could be improved. Primary behaviour support is good and the LEA is consulting on ways to improve support for behaviour in the secondary phase.

Recommendation

- Improve the support for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, by developing further materials to help schools evaluate their own provision.

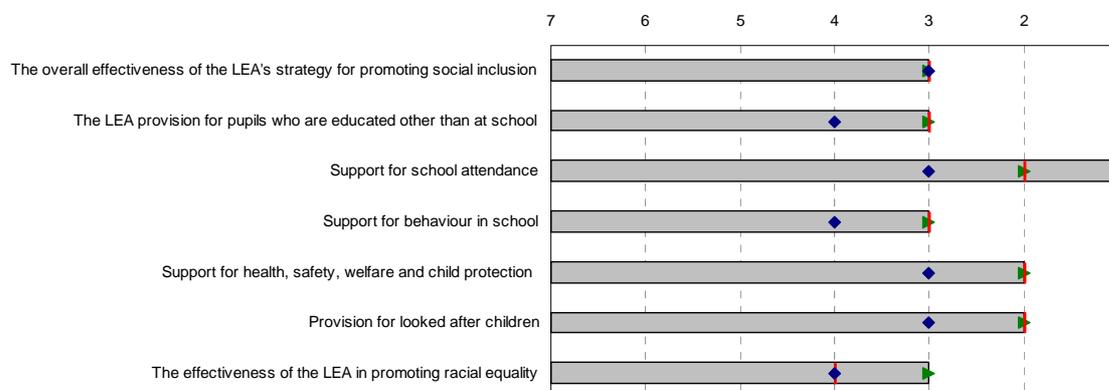
Value for money

68. Value for money remains good. There is tight monitoring of SEN budgets at LEA level, and for each school. The funds delegated to schools are determined through an audit of needs although the LEA is, rightly, reviewing this system to simplify it. Where there is any significant budget deficit or surplus in schools, support is given to ensure that there is a coherent action plan in place. Schools are very clear about the funds delegated to them for SEN and this information is routinely shared with SEN co-ordinators. Monitoring reports are made to elected members.

69. The LEA delegates at a high level for pupils with SEN (but without a statement) and this reflects the LEA's commitment to both inclusion and delegation. Overall costs compare well with statistical neighbours. The LEA has used the regional SEN partnership effectively to scrutinise, and control, costs at independent special schools. Recent Ofsted inspections show that pupils with SEN make good or very good progress in over 90% of schools inspected. The majority of the LEA's special schools were good when last inspected. The LEA has a good capacity to improve this function further.

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

70. The LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion is highly satisfactory and there is a high commitment to it both from elected members and senior officers. The ambitious and very broadly based programme of development work is, very effectively, mapping the needs of different groups of vulnerable children. The principles underpinning this work are very good and reflect both the council's community plan and corporate priorities.

71. The LEA uses good quality data that draws on a wide range of performance measures to identify groups of pupils at risk and then acts to address those issues. The deployment of attendance assistants has improved attendance in some schools. The ethnic minority achievement service has targeted identified groups of Bangladeshi heritage pupils leading to a significant improvement in their attainment. Underperformance in schools is challenged and referrals to support services are monitored effectively to identify trends and patterns.

72. There is a reduction in exclusions, and the good quality primary behaviour support is valued by schools. Support for behaviour in secondary schools though satisfactory requires improvement; the LEA has no secondary behaviour support service. The two pupil referral units operate effectively. They provide part-time and temporary placements and outreach support for re-integration. The high level of delegation for pupils without statements of special need allows schools to deal with the pupils' identified needs. The LEA has enabled the provision of alternative curricula in Key Stage 4 and offers short intensive programmes for GCSE examinations which some pupils would not otherwise have attempted.

73. Effective partnerships are a key feature of the LEA's work in this area. These operate both between education services, notably the school improvement and pupil services,

and between agencies such as health and social services. The authority has a good capacity to improve this function further.

Support for attendance

74. Support for attendance is very good and the recommendation in the last report has been met. A Best Value review in March 2003 led to the introduction of the new, more sophisticated data systems, a greater clarity of roles and specific targeting of vulnerable groups. There is a good plan to support attendance, using a phased approach to intervention that is understood by schools. A significant feature is the quality of the new data collection and analysis systems. These provide excellent summary information that allows the tight targeting of vulnerable groups and this information is discussed with schools and with elected members.

75. Education welfare officer support time is shared well among schools according to need. The training and support programme which includes school governors is effective. The service, centrally managed, works well with other education services and agencies. Individual officers are based in secondary schools and this secures a number of benefits including direct contact with parents in the school setting.

76. The education welfare service has developed a number of specific initiatives, particularly for primary schools, such as role play workshops and these have had a positive impact. Good guidance on improving attendance is made available to all schools. Good use is made of the full range of legal powers and monthly truancy sweeps are conducted. The LEA rigorously monitors child employment and those engaged in public performances. As a consequence of these measures, attendance in both phases of education is rising. The costs of attendance support are broadly inline with other similar authorities and it offers good value for money.

Support for behaviour

77. Support for behaviour remains highly satisfactory. The last report made two recommendations about developing a long term behaviour strategy and continuing to reduce exclusion rates. Both have been dealt with.

78. The highly satisfactory behaviour support plan was based on an analysis of need; it contained practical measures to improve behaviour and set clear targets. These have now been incorporated into other plans within a broader inclusion strategy developed in consultation with a wide range of agencies including schools. All support for permanently excluded pupils has been brought under a single management responsibility. While exclusions were historically relatively high, they have declined: permanent exclusions have dropped.

79. The LEA analyses exclusion data effectively and reports to both schools and elected members. Vulnerable groups are identified separately and targeted specifically. The LEA has issued good guidance on the procedures and processes for handling exclusions and appeal arrangements.

80. The multi-agency primary behaviour support team works effectively with other services, notably the education psychology service. Support for behaviour in secondary schools is less well developed, although the LEA is consulting on how this might be developed.

Recommendation

- Improve behaviour support in secondary schools.

Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection

81. The LEA's work in this area is good. Since the last inspection the area child protection committee guidelines have been re-issued and are under review again. There is good LEA guidance to schools that is based on, and supplements, these area guidelines. The LEA maintains a register of designated persons in schools, together with their training records which show nearly all are appropriately trained with steps in place to secure 100% coverage. It participates fully in the area committee and meets all its statutory duties in this area.

82. The LEA has worked with schools to establish a good understanding of the thresholds for referral to social services. Ofsted school inspection evidence shows that the percentage of schools that are good or very good in respect of child protection is significantly greater than in other similar authorities and this is a strength of the LEA.

83. The LEA maintains a health and safety manual and schools benefit from regular safety inspections by the council. There is good capacity to improve this function further.

Provision for looked after children

84. This remains good. Challenging targets are set for these children's academic attainment and attendance, and, broadly, the LEA is on track to achieve them. There is weekly monitoring of, for example, attendance and plans are set up for young people at risk of underachieving or those absent from school.

85. Data on looked after children is exchanged between education and social services and these systems are now working well. This is an improvement on the past situation where education did not know of all children passing into the care of the authority. The council is developing new information systems which will make data sharing more reliable. Data is available on children educated in other locations and on those who live in other authorities and are educated in that LEA's schools.

86. Regular reports are made to elected members enabling them to develop a good overview of the progress of children for whom they are corporate parents and there is a strong commitment to fulfilling that role effectively from both members and officers.

87. A sub-group of officers from social services and education monitors, for example, the use of personal education plans and currently, all looked after children have the protection of such a plan. The LEA has a highly satisfactory capacity to improve this function further.

Promoting racial equality

88. The LEA has made sound progress since the last inspection and current performance is highly satisfactory. Minority ethnic heritage pupils' attainment is increasing in line with other pupils.

89. Race equality issues work effectively across the authority. Data systems allow the performance of minority ethnic heritage pupils to be identified and reported to senior officers and elected members. All schools return details of any racial incidents and these are analysed on a regular basis. There is an established protocol for responding to the information. Training on race equality issues has been available since 2000, but take up among school governors has been low. The LEA's training for governors is to be increased. In 2003 the LEA, in line with the council, corporately committed to achieving level two of the equality standard for local government by March 2005.

Appendix A

Record of Judgement Recording Statements

Name of LEA :	Portsmouth Local Education Authority
LEA number:	851
Reporting Inspector:	Linda Kelsey HMI
Date of Inspection:	May 2004

No	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	Fieldwork*
Context of the LEA			
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	4	
Overall judgements			
0.1	The progress made by the LEA overall	2	
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	2	
Section 1: Corporate strategy and LEA leadership			
1.1	The effectiveness of corporate planning for the education of children and young people	1	
1.2	The implementation of corporate planning for education	2	
1.3	The effectiveness of LEA decision-making	2	NF
1.4	The extent to which the LEA targets resources on priorities	2	
1.5	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value	2	
1.6	The leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice)	1	
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	2	
1.9	Support for Early Years education	1	
1.10	Support for 14 – 19 education	3	
Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation			
2.1	The LEA's strategy for school improvement	2	
2.2	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement	2	
2.3	The performance of schools	4	
2.4	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge and intervention	3	
2.5	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	2	
2.6	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	3	NF
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	2	
2.9	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	4	
2.10	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	2	
Section 3: Support to school leadership and management, including schools' efforts to support continuous improvement			
3.1	Support to school leadership and management, including support for schools' approaches to continuous improvement	3	
3.2	Support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at KS 1 and 2	3	

3.3	Support for information and communication technology	2	
3.4	Support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3	3	
3.5	Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/ Traveller children	1	NF
3.6	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	4	
3.7	Support for school governors	2	
3.8	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	3	
3.9	The planning and provision of services to support school management	3	
3.9a	The planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management	2	NF
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	2	
3.9d	The planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management	2	
3.10	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school management	3	
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	3	
4.2	The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	2	

4.3	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	3	
4.4	The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money	2	
Section 5: Support for social inclusion			
5.1	The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion	3	
5.2	The LEA provision for pupils who have no school place	3	NF
5.3	Support for school attendance	1	
5.4	Support for behaviour in schools	3	
5.5	Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection	2	
5.6	Provision for looked after children	2	
5.7	The effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality	3	

**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 Portsmouth 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 2000;
- the overall effectiveness of the LEA and its capacity to improve further;
- the LEA's performance in major aspects of its work;
- recommendations on areas for improvement.

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

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

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

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the effectiveness of decision-making;• the extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need;• support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils including Gypsy/Traveller children;• the planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management;• the planning and provision of human resource services in supporting school management; |
|---|

-
- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the LEA provision for pupils who have no school place. |
|--|

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

Portsmouth LEA, a unitary authority since 1997 is one of the most densely populated district authorities outside London. The total population has not changed significantly since the last inspection and is approximately 190,000 people. Unemployment is at its lowest. 17% of the workforce is dependent on jobs with the Royal Navy.

Portsmouth has 73 schools, two are nursery schools, 53 primary, 10 secondary (11-16), 6 special schools and 4 PRUs. The school population is falling including children under school age. The numbers of pupils, 20% of primary pupils, 15% of secondary pupils and 38% of pupils in special schools, eligible for free school meals are in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils identified as requiring a statement of special educational need is in line with that of similar authorities. A greater percentage of pupils with special educational needs are placed in mainstream schools than is the case nationally. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is in line with the national average.

The minority ethnic profile of the city, while remaining in line with national averages, has changed with the sharp increase in the number of families from refugee and asylum seeking backgrounds. There are currently no Traveller pupils in the city.

The performance of schools

When taking into account the good progress made in pupil's performance since the last inspection, the performance of schools is satisfactory, which represents good progress since the last inspection when it was poor.

Over the last four years, attainment has been improving at all key stages faster than the national rate. Standards at Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with those nationally, and in mathematics has been above average for the last two years. Standards at Key Stage 2 are well below average for English, below average for mathematics, and in line for science.

At Key Stage 3, standards have risen steadily though results remain just below national figures. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results are below average although on provisional figures for 2003 there has been some improvement. Progress at post-16 is satisfactory when compared with statistical neighbour authorities and national averages.

The LEA has failed to meet its targets in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The gap between results and targets is particularly significant in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2. On

the basis of current rates of improvement, some targets are unlikely to be met in 2004 and also in 2005.

Boys' attainment is a concern from Key Stage 2 onwards although there is some evidence of faster progress for them at Key Stage 3, particularly in science. There is some underachievement among more able boys in English from Key Stage 1 onwards. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, though relatively small in number, make good progress overall. By the end of Key Stage 4 they perform well compared with their peers. For pupils leaving public care in 2002, those gaining five or more A*-C grades is in line with national averages,

Data from school Section 10 inspections indicate over half of primary schools and half of secondary schools are either good or very good. There are currently no schools requiring special measures but three schools, two primary and one secondary, with serious weaknesses. One school judged as underachieving since the last inspection has been removed from the category. The percentage of school causing local concern has dropped. Significantly no new schools have entered these categories since the last inspection.

Attendance in primary schools is in line with national averages, but is below the national average in secondary schools. Rates of permanent exclusions are below national averages for primary schools and in line with national averages for secondary schools.

Funding data for the LEA

SCHOOLS BUDGET	Portsmouth	Statistical neighbours average	Unitary Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Individual schools budget	2,721	2,600	2,613	2,708
Standards fund delegated	70	61	58	61
Education for under fives	119	91	98	96
Strategic management	22	35	28	29
Special educational needs	82	86	109	120
Grants	43	55	41	53
Access	58	61	55	55
Capital expenditure from revenue	19	18	20	24
TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET	3,135	3,008	3,024	3,145
Schools formula spending share	3,031	2,817	2,808	2,904

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04

LEA BUDGET	Portsmouth	Statistical neighbours average	Unitary Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Strategic management	138	100	86	95
Specific Grants	23	10	19	16
Special educational needs	36	26	32	32
School improvement	25	32	33	36
Access	92	95	128	133
Capital expenditure from revenue	0	4	2	2
Youth and Community	56	63	70	74
TOTAL LEA BUDGET	369	331	370	388

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04

Note:**All figures are net**

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

Notes