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**INSPECTION OF
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LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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AUDIT COMMISSION**

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INTRODUCTION

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

2. The inspection was in two stages. An initial review carried out in January 1998 established a picture of the LEA's context, the performance of its schools, its strategy and the management of services. The initial review was based on data, some of which has been provided by the LEA, on school inspection and audit reports, on documentation and on discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 105 schools.

3. The second stage of the inspection carried out in March 1998 involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 29 schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes where appropriate to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school and provides value for money. In addition to the standard themes the visits to different schools covered:

- the allocation and use of resources.
- the work of the Inspection and Advisory Service in pre- and post-OFSTED inspection support;
- provision for special educational needs; support to schools on attendance;
- support for improving behaviour;
- the work of the Music Service.

This report draws on material from the initial review, from the school survey and from the school visits, together with evidence relevant to the themes drawn from recent HMI visits to Manchester schools.

COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4. This Local Education Authority (LEA) serves one of England's great Victorian industrial cities. With its population of just under half a million, it is the sixth largest metropolitan authority outside London. Manchester's original industrial base has been in long decline, but the city remains an international centre for the media, arts and sport, and the centre of the city shows unmistakable, indeed spectacular, signs of the regeneration that is at the heart of the City Council's strategy. The benefits of that regeneration, however, have yet to be felt in areas of the city that are geographically close to, but in spirit remote from, the glamour and affluence of the centre.

5. Manchester City Council serves some of the poorest people in England, in a greater concentration than is true of almost every other major city. The LEA provided a wealth of statistics to demonstrate this point. Behind the statistics is the reality of the problems people, not least children, face: problems of poverty, inadequate nutrition, poor health and a lack of facilities for study at home. All these make it difficult to sustain high educational attainment, but also - if there is to be change - vital to do so. The City Council regards the raising of attainment as fundamental to its overall strategy and is adamant that economic disadvantage cannot be used as an excuse for poor educational provision. There is no mistaking the political will for change, and improvement, and that is a significant advantage for the LEA as it tackles a challenging agenda.

6. The LEA is beset with problems. Some are inherent in the nature of the city as described above. Others are the political and managerial responsibility of the LEA. Too many decisions have been put off for too long, so that problems have grown to a size that makes them increasingly difficult to tackle. It is enough to list the principal issues that currently face the education service in Manchester to illustrate the scale of the task that faces the LEA. They include:

- low attainment at all levels, despite improvements in recent years;
- high levels of exclusion;
- poor attendance;
- very high levels of surplus places, particularly in secondary schools;
- a very high (though reduced) level of school budget deficits;
- very poor performance in completion of statements of special educational needs;
- a pattern of support for special educational needs and behavioural support that is poorly matched to the needs of schools or children and leaves needs not effectively met;
- pupils who are not on the roll of any school, some of whom are excluded and have no school place.

7. The LEA wishes to tackle these problems and has strengths to draw upon. There is the clear determination of councillors not to tolerate continued drift. A number of headteachers spoke of a new spirit: one of readiness to embrace beneficial change and of greater openness. The LEA also has a number of services, like the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS), the Early Years and Play Division and the Language and Learning Support Service, which are well regarded by schools. The work of the IAS, in particular, was examined in detail during the inspection and found to be often effective. The LEA has retained some traditional strengths in music, drama, dance and physical

education. The music service was also examined in this inspection and found to be making very good progress. In addition, following a restructuring of the department which began in 1996, a number of recent appointments, including that of a Deputy Chief Education Officer with responsibility for school improvement, have brought new vigour and optimism to the service. Moreover, its liaison with other departments of the Council and other agencies is sound and productive.

8. There are also crucial weaknesses. Although statutory duties are generally met, there are fundamental exceptions in terms of pupils who are excluded and out of school and pupils with special educational needs. The schools generally welcome the LEA's move towards partnership, but the nature of the partnership intended remains ill-defined. The LEA also intends, consistently with government policy, to move towards a more interventionist stance where schools cause serious concern but it has not arrived at the shared understanding of relative roles with its schools that would enable it to influence them without undermining their autonomy; there has been insufficient discussion of this key tension. The schools, to some extent, share the responsibility for what has been, and remains, a failure of communication. On some issues consultation has been ineffective partly due to the schools' apparent reluctance to be consulted.

9. In June 1996, the LEA issued *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester* which sets out aspirations for the education service. It was welcomed by some schools as a move towards partnership. Others regard it as of little practical relevance. It is, as an analysis in this report shows, an inadequate document in itself and the planning that is predicated upon it lacks focus and in practice results in little action in schools. In particular, the service plan for 1997/98 falls well below the quality of planning expected in a public body. Moreover, the schools do not know in detail what it contains and make little connection between their priorities and those of the LEA. They are often unaware of the LEA's targets, their link to schools' targets, or the process that led to their formulation.

10. The LEA is aware of the imperfections of its planning. It would argue that its ability to think strategically had been severely constrained until a change of administration in the city in 1995, followed by the change in national government in 1997. The Chief Education Officer (CEO) argues that planning in the LEA was, for much of the last 15 years, greatly impeded by repeated legislative change, reductions in resources, and the policy of introducing grant-maintained schools, which rendered action on some issues much more difficult than it has subsequently become. However, the policies of the last 15 years did not apply solely to Manchester and do not, therefore, explain why in a number of aspects Manchester performs so poorly in relation to the principal issues that confront it.

11. There have been improvements. New service plans, produced during and after the inspection activity ended, are better with scope for evaluation. The budget deficits are being tackled although they remain at an unacceptable level. There have been improvements in the schools. Judged by national test and examination results levels of attainment have risen in most schools, more evenly in primary than in secondary schools. The overall rate of improvement is above the national rate but attainment remains low at all stages of compulsory education. Judged by the national programme of school inspections, the quality of teaching in Manchester schools is higher than the national average. Nevertheless, in a number of ways, the LEA is not carrying out its functions adequately or making the best use of resources:

there is a lack of a shared definition in the LEA's working relationship with its schools, centred particularly on the issue of the LEA's and the schools' responsibility for improvement:

the LEA does not delegate any of the funding for the Inspection and Advisory Service, intending instead to target its resources where the needs are greatest. The school visits showed, however, that the service in practice also responds to demand and that schools' expectations were excessive because they did not understand the costs involved. This is also true of some of the services which support pupils with special educational needs.

it has an inconsistent impact on schools:

the school visits showed that the LEA makes more contribution to the improvement of its primary schools than to its secondary schools. There are elements of the contribution it makes to schools where it is most needed which are effective; but others where it is ineffective.

it has been slow to devise convincing solutions to long-standing problems:

the LEA's planning of school places and the provision of learning support and behaviour support are major examples of arrangements which continue to be slow to meet the needs of the city's pupils. After 18 months of planning, proposals to remove surplus places, which are costing £2m per year, were reported to Committee in June 1998, with a proposed further three-year implementation programme. Changes to learning and behaviour support are at early stages, although both have been in the planning phase for over a year.

it is not protecting, or acting as advocate for, some of the most vulnerable children:

the LEA is not meeting its statutory obligation to provide education otherwise for pupils who have no school place. On a given date, there were 141 pupils permanently excluded from schools, for whom no alternative place had been found (despite surplus places in schools in both phases). The LEA was unable to say what, if any, educational provision was being made for 140 pupils. These young people are potentially at risk. In addition, too many pupils, too frequently, are not attending school.

it is not making the best use of its resources:

the analysis of the use the LEA makes of its resources shows waste, in terms of surplus places, and a slow response to the emerging problems of budget deficits. Some schools now face a spiral of decline.

12. The government envisages a new role for LEAs and is defining that role in legislation currently before parliament. LEAs will need to agree challenging targets for improvement with schools and to intervene if schools do not demonstrate the improvement sought. The LEA has no clear approach to the collection, analysis and use of performance data. Nor has it arrived at a secure and well-understood working relationship with schools, including a shared understanding of the triggers for, and purpose of, intervention. The LEA faces a major challenge, within the required timescale, to deliver the vision, the leadership or the detailed planning the government envisages as the minimum requirements to fulfil this role are not yet in place

13. The CEO describes *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester* as 'a fresh start'. That is what is needed. Manchester is a great international city, with ambitions. Its teachers and their pupils deserve first-class education services from their authority. As yet they do not receive them. The LEA needs to galvanise its commitment, not always evident in the past, to implementing necessary change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A *In order to achieve a better-defined and more productive working relationship with its schools, the LEA should:*

- (i) develop *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester* so that it sets out clearly the reciprocal responsibilities of the schools and LEA and defines the basis for LEA intervention in schools including those which fail to improve, in the light of the proposed new Code of Practice;
- (ii) encourage its schools to respond more readily to its efforts to consult and inform them.

B *in order to achieve better co-ordination and more effective implementation of its overall strategy, the LEA should:*

- (i) locate the responsibility for co-ordinating all the services that directly contribute to school improvement in one senior post;
- (ii) continue to improve the quality of its planning for school improvement.

C *in order to assist schools in raising attainment, the LEA should:*

- (i) ensure that the performance data it sends to schools is fully explained, does not duplicate the work of national bodies and includes an analysis of attainment by ethnicity;
- (ii) provide further and improved guidance and advice on the use of performance data in target-setting;
- (iii) ensure that the work of the Inspection and Advisory Service is more closely targeted to need and that it consistently challenges schools about difficult issues;
- (iv) design training on the National Literacy Strategy on the basis of a secure needs analysis and make clear the intended relationship between the National Literacy Strategy and other elements in the LEA's literacy strategy.

D *In order to meet its statutory responsibilities to provide education for pupils who have no school place:*

- (i) the LEA should examine why, given the large numbers of surplus places available, 141 excluded pupils currently have no school place and ensure that education otherwise than at school is provided for all pupils who have no school place. If this entails setting up a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), this should not be as a replacement for the current provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD).

E *In order to put in place co-ordinated services in support of improving pupils' behaviour and reducing the numbers of exclusions, the LEA should:*

- (i) produce a Behaviour Support Plan which ensures that prevention of difficult behaviour receives due emphasis and seeks to reduce the number of pupils who are excluded;
- (ii) decide, on the basis of an analysis of need, what range of intervention strategies are needed, put them in place and ensure that schools are aware of what support is available and how referrals should be made;
- (iii) ensure that particular institutions for pupils with special educational needs are not confronted by too great a range of needs. Pupils with statements for emotional and behavioural difficulties, for example, should not normally be placed in a Pupil Referral Unit.

F *In order to promote better attendance at school, the LEA should:*

- (i) further improve its guidance to schools and ensure that better use is made of attendance data in order to target support more effectively;
- (ii) systematically investigate, and bring to an end, the practice of some secondary schools of removing pupils with poor attendance from the school roll.

G *In order to provide better for the large range of special educational needs currently not effectively met, the LEA should:*

- (i) improve the speed and effectiveness of assessment procedures;
- (ii) decide on the range of special educational needs provision and services it wishes and can afford and move quickly toward that model;
- (iii) prepare proposals for a re-organisation of schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

H *In order to improve the transparency in the allocation of education resources, the LEA should:*

- (i) review the information it provides to schools and the way that it consults them as part of the budget-setting process;
- (ii) pursue benchmarking of the cost of central services in Manchester in comparison with other LEAs;
- (iii) use the improved quality of information on the comparative cost of individual central services as part of the Education Committee's decision-taking process.

I *In order to improve the use of existing resources, the LEA should:*

- (i) continue to work with schools to eliminate budget deficits;
- (ii) give a high priority to the swift implementation of the surplus places proposals and, following this, review its admission arrangements for secondary schools;
- (iii) review the current staff re-deployment policies to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible to allow necessary school re-organisation to be carried out effectively.

J *To promote value for money and choice for schools in the use of resources, the LEA should:*

- (i) develop a programme of further delegation or devolution to schools of the resources for a range of management, premises, curriculum support and training services, offering schools a choice as to whether they buy the services from the LEA or elsewhere;
- (ii) where services continue to be provided by the LEA, produce a simple service agreement specifying the level of services to be provided;
- (iii) carry out a detailed investigation with schools about ways to improve the quality of the property maintenance service.

K *In relation to the resources available to overcome educational disadvantage, the LEA should:*

- (i) develop a clear resource plan for the changes that it wishes to make over the next three to five years;
- (ii) review the formula for the allocation of resources to mainstream schools to overcome educational disadvantage;

SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

15. Manchester LEA serves a great Victorian industrial city. The traditional industrial base has long been in decline, but Manchester remains a centre of international importance in the arts, entertainment, sport and the media. It possesses the largest university population in the country, and the centre of the city is the location for a number of major architectural developments, some complete, others planned. Manchester is the sixth largest metropolitan district in England outside London.

16. The glamour of Manchester's city centre does not, however, extend into the residential area of which most of the city's 33 wards are composed. Twenty Manchester wards fall into the 10% of all wards in England and Wales classified as the most deprived. High earners who work in Manchester tend to live elsewhere, and the population of the city itself fell from 493,800 in 1976 to 430,830 in 1996. Overall, the proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals (47.4% in primary and 45.4% in secondary) is more than twice the national average. Many of Manchester's children belong to low income families, or to households which have suffered the effects of long-term unemployment; 40% of children in Manchester live in households with no earners. Relatively few families belong to higher social classes, and in most areas of the city, few adults have experience of higher education.

17. Many children, therefore, face problems which make high educational attainment, though not impossible, far from easy: problems such as poverty, poor nutrition, poor health, absence of facilities for study or lack of books at home and, sometimes, frequent changes of school as families move to alleviate economic pressure. In a context such as this, the maintenance of high educational expectations is difficult - but crucial, both for the pupils themselves, their parents/carers and teachers, and for the economic regeneration which is the City Council's aim.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PUPIL POPULATION

18. The school population in January 1997 was 69,975, of whom 46,364 attended 168 primary schools, 22,333 attended 28 secondary schools and 1,278 pupils attended 21 special schools. The number of children attending special schools is high both as a proportion of all pupils with statements of special educational needs and as a proportion of the whole school population. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is average. The graph shows that Manchester has a high percentage of its pupils in special schools in comparison with other metropolitan authorities, despite action to reduce the numbers in recent years.

19. The percentage of children under five in school-based provision is about average for a metropolitan area.

20. The proportion of pupils who belong to ethnic minorities (20.2%) is also about twice the national average. About a third of the 20.2% of pupils who belong to the ethnic minorities are of Pakistani heritage. There are also significant numbers of pupils of Black Caribbean, Black African, Indian, Bangladeshi and Chinese heritage and of Somali refugees. In addition, Manchester has a large Irish community and an increasing number of students who bring their families to Manchester for the duration of their studies. In all, some 77 languages other than English are spoken in Manchester.

THE ORGANISATION OF SCHOOLS

21. Manchester has seven nursery schools, and of the 168 infant, junior and primary schools 27 are aided (Church of England), 40 are Roman Catholic and there are two Jewish aided schools. There are two schools with fewer than 100 pupils on roll, and nine with over 500. The largest primary school has 646 pupils. The pupil/teacher ratio in primary schools in 1996/79 was 24.7, against a national figure of 23.0. In 1997 the percentage of classes of more than 30 at Key Stage 1 was 21.8% (national average 28.9%). The pattern of admissions to primary schools does not add significantly to the problem of surplus places. The city is a net 'exporter' of pupils, but only to the extent of 59 children in the primary phase (1996 figures). In the secondary phase, the net loss is much greater, at 2534 pupils.

22. Three of the 28 secondary schools are 11-18, the rest 11-16. Five schools are single sex, three girls, two boys. Ten schools are aided, of which one is a Jewish school, one Church of England and the rest Roman Catholic. The number of pupils in secondary schools ranged between 353 and 1429 in September 1996, with all but seven schools having spare places. Seven schools were below the size (600) at which the LEA believes it is possible to offer a viable curriculum. The pupil/teacher ratio in secondary schools in 1996/97 was 16.2, not significantly different from the national average.

23. Manchester maintains 21 special schools, including a hospital school and home tuition service based in four centres. Of the 21 special schools, six serve the needs of children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and four serve the needs of children with severe learning difficulties (SLD).

24. The remaining schools cater for physically disabled children, children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, communication difficulties and complex learning difficulties. Three schools and associated services specialise in children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, as does one residential school: these schools and services are currently under review. Some of the special schools also have an outreach function, notably the day schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and the two schools for hearing impaired and for visually impaired respectively. There is one special school assessment unit and three other assessment units based in mainstream schools or nurseries. A variety of resourced provision in mainstream primary and secondary schools serves the needs of pupils with a range of disabilities. Manchester also makes use of placements in independent special schools.

EDUCATION OTHERWISE THAN AT SCHOOL

25. The out-of-school population is approximately 1 % of the total school population. In December 1996 the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) estimated that the total number of pupils out of school, including exclusions, was 676. In April 1997 the total number of pupils with long-term absence was estimated at 500. This included persistent unauthorised non-attenders, pupils thought to have been removed from school rolls for non-attendance, others removed from school rolls by their parents but not enrolled elsewhere, pupils with long-term illness, pupils on authorised off-site education otherwise provision, traveller children, pupils on extended holidays and pupils who had moved away without informing the school or LEA.

26. The number of permanent exclusions is high, running at an average of 224 per year over the last three years, of which 36 per year are from the primary phase. During 1996/97 the LEA referred 13 cases to the Secretary of State for Orders of Direction to admit. There is no PRU, but the Adult Education Service, MANCAT and City College make provision for about 85 pupils at Year 10/11. The LEA also funds the Trinity House and Hideaway non-attenders projects and the Moss Side Youth College, which is a network of secondary schools, FE colleges, support services and voluntary agencies.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEA AND THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

27. The Council has 84 Labour and 15 Liberal Democrat members and is served by a Finance Committee and a Policy and Resources Committee and ten service committees, of which Education is one.

28. The Education Committee has 29 councillors and 13 advisory members, three of whom have voting rights, and three elected school governor representatives. The Committee meets every five weeks and has three sub-committees: Performance Monitoring, Appeals and a joint Children's Services Sub-Committee which also meet on a matching cycle. A Disciplinary Sub-Committee meets when required.

29. The Chief Education Officer (CEO) believes that the recent change in the leadership of the Council in 1996 enhanced corporate planning and that the change in the leadership of the Education Committee has had a significant impact on re-focusing the direction of the Education Department, changing the Department's ability to plan and think strategically.

30. Within the Education Department the Deputy CEO has oversight of the School Improvement Division. The Inspection and Advisory Service is jointly managed by a Senior Inspector and a Senior Adviser. There are six Heads of Division who have responsibilities for Support to Pupils, Support to Schools, Early Years and Play, Adult Education, Support Services and Leisure Services. A Policy Unit has recently been created, responsible directly to the CEO, to develop strategic planning, evaluation and regeneration policy.

SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS

The following summary refers to all maintained schools in Manchester. The data used in this section is illustrative. Further details on the performance of Manchester schools are contained in Appendix 1.

31. *Attainment on entry to the nursery, infant and primary schools inspected in Manchester was below or well below national expectations in most schools.*

Manchester's scheme for baseline assessment was accredited in October 1997. It is now being trialled in 112 schools and full data will start to be available from September 1998 when the scheme is introduced across the LEA. OFSTED inspectors judged that attainment on entry was low in 66% of schools. This is supported by the contextual data presented to the team by the LEA.

32. *Attainment remains low at all the stages of compulsory education. For example:*

- in 1997, Manchester ranked 110 out of 132 LEAs for the performance of its schools in the Key Stage 2 English tests and 108 in the mathematics tests.
- in 1997, Manchester ranked 127 out of 131 LEAs on the performance of its schools in GCSE at the 5+ A*~C indicator and 126 on the 5+ A*~G indicator.

33. *Levels of attainment have risen in most schools in both the primary and, more unevenly, in the secondary phase. In both phases, a significant proportion of schools is making little progress. For example:*

- the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 in the Key Stage 2 English tests rose between 1995-7 from 36.2% to 55.8%.
- the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 in the Key Stage 2 Mathematics tests rose between 1995-7 from 34.5% to 55.4%.
- the percentage of pupils gaining 5+A*~C at GCSE rose between 1994 and 1997 from 23.9% to 27.2%.
- the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ A--G at GCSE rose between 1994 and 1997 from 69.8% to 77.5%.
- eleven secondary schools have either declined or made no progress in 5+ A*~C GCSE attainment over the years 1994-97, but 17 secondary schools have increased their 5+ A*~C GCSE attainment. In nine secondary schools this was by at least 5% against a national increase of only 2%. Four secondary schools have increased by 10% or over during this period.

34. ***The overall rate of improvement in attainment is above the national rate, starting from a lower base than the national average. For example:***

- the percentage of pupils gaining level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 English tests rose by 19.6% between 1995 and 1997. It rose nationally by 14.7%.
- the percentage of pupils gaining level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 mathematics test rose by 20.9% between 1995 and 1997. It rose nationally by 17.1%.
- the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ A*~C at GCSE in Manchester rose by 3.3% between 1994 and 1997. It rose nationally by 2.6%.
- the percentage of pupils gaining 5+ A*~G at GCSE in Manchester rose by 7.7% between 1994 and 1997. It rose nationally by 1.5%.

35. ***OFS TED inspection data confirm that attainment is generally below national norms for all core subjects of the curriculum, except English at Key Stage 2.***

For quality of education and ethos, Manchester schools inspected are judged to be below, but only slightly below, the national figure. Quality of teaching is, on average, slightly higher than the national average. The efficiency of both primary and secondary schools inspected compares very unfavourably with schools nationally. To date, ten Manchester schools have been judged to require special measures: eight primary schools, one secondary school and one special school. Three secondary schools and five primary schools have serious weaknesses.

SECTION 3: LEA STRATEGY

ROLE AND PRIORITIES

36. The Council's overall aim is 'to continue to create a city of national and international significance where people choose to live and in which companies want to invest'. The Council's other corporate aims are to bring about equality of access and opportunity, to support 'sustainable communities', to ensure residents receive (not necessarily to provide) high quality services and to consult widely. These aims have relevance to the education service. They are widely understood, well expressed and attract positive support. The political will behind them is unmistakable, and the leadership now given by councillors is a clear strength. The education service in Manchester has many problems, some of its own making, but the Council appears to be prepared to take tough action to address them.

37. The aims are analysed into seven corporate objectives embodied in the *City Pride* document which includes the associated planning for reconstruction following the IRA bomb of June 1996. One aim specifically relates to educational standards: 'to improve educational attainment at all levels of the school system and to increase staying-on rates into further and higher education'.

38. The corporate objectives represent a logical development of the aims, and are widely understood to be interdependent - a clear and appropriate recognition of the fact that Manchester's problems cannot be tackled in isolation from each other. Raising educational attainment is regarded as central to the City's other ambitions and an important contributor to achieving the other objectives. How it is to be achieved is less clear.

39. The CEO argues that the LEA was more able to think and plan strategically after the advent of a new Council administration in late 1995. He cites, as further reason for inaction, 'the debilitating policies' of the Conservative government:

- planning paralysis caused by the introduction of grant-maintained status for schools which contributed significantly to the lack of action on problems on surplus places and school budget deficits;
- the lack of powers to take sufficient steps to prevent schools from failing;
- the reduction in resources available centrally to contribute to school improvement and meet need;
- the effects of market forces which have caused some innerarea schools disproportionate problems.

40. It remains to be explained why these issues have had so much more impact in Manchester than elsewhere in respect, for example, of secondary school surplus places and deficit budgets.

41. *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester*, published in June 1997, sets out the LEA's new aspirations. The CEO describes this document as a 'fresh start', and 'an opening statement that captures our shared goals and intentions that we must now deliver'. Its theme is 'success for all' in education and learning for the 21st century. The framework presents:

- a common mission - setting aims and objectives, planning and development, leading and managing improvement.
- a basis for learning - involving stakeholders, improving the physical environment, recognising and encouraging success, improving relationships and communication, targeting and increasing resources.
- an emphasis on learning - developing teaching and learning, developing staff, encouraging high aspirations and expectations, measuring performance and setting targets.

42. 'A basis for learning' and 'an emphasis on learning' are not distinct categories and the distinction is made no clearer in the detailed development of the vision. Key terms, such as 'partnership' and 'stakeholder' are ill-defined or undefined. The statement sets out worthwhile aspirations. The problem is that the aspirations are usually not translated into proposals for action, merely into further aspirations.

43. *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester* has, however, provided the framework for the range of working groups established by the Deputy CEO involving headteachers and service staff who are in the process of formulating plans around priorities agreed between the LEA and the schools. The next phase of development will aim to engage governors, external organisations and community groups.

Service Planning

44. The LEA produces a range of plans for specific purposes. The principal document which describes the LEA's strategy for implementing its vision is the service plan, which sets out what it is seeking, with the schools, to achieve. The service plan for 1997/98 is unclear in its overall rationale and in its details:

- it is not evident on what analysis of needs it is based;
- the notion of what constitutes a performance measure varies, because the plan confuses objectives of input, process and output, and few of the measures are quantified;
- there is an overall target for attainment represented in a four place rise up the national performance tables over the next two years, but it is, of course possible that a relative improvement such as this might be achieved without any absolute improvement; more specific targets for improvement in National Curriculum results, attendance and staying-on rates have been set over different periods;
- there are too many priorities: 57. set out in no obvious hierarchy;

- some of the 'actions' proposed are not actions, but desired outcomes, for example 'improve staying-on rate', or 'to secure income targets are met', and some are insufficiently specific to enable precise identification of what is meant;
- the plan does not spell out resource implications.
- The aspiration to more systematic planning, resource allocation and delivery is therefore very far from being delivered.

45. Improvements in planning have been made recently. A new service plan is being presented to meetings of headteachers this June and, in preparing for this inspection, the LEA drew up a document in which it set out the problems it faced and its strategy for addressing them. The document, *The Priorities for Manchester LEA and its Schools*, describes the action taken so far and indicates the areas for further action. The document contains part one of the service plan for 1998/99. It sets out priorities under three categories:

- raising levels of educational achievement and school improvement;
- improving the quality of educational services;
- making the most effective use of resources.

These priorities were arrived at through consultation. The new strategy for school improvement, as set out in this document, is to pursue those three main priorities through the implementation of *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester*, continuing the partnership with schools by providing both challenge and support; the monitoring and evaluation of services; a review of school places; and the implementation of the corporate objectives of the Council.

46. This is a strategy to which all services are expected to contribute. In practice, their contribution is not at this stage being effectively co-ordinated, partly because the role of the Deputy CEO is too narrowly focused on the School Improvement Division which does not include services in respect of special educational needs, behaviour and attendance and partly because these key services are undergoing re-organisation. It is therefore difficult to integrate the support which consists of intervention with particular pupils with that which focuses on advice and guidance to schools. The full effect of services, for example, those relating to behaviour and special educational needs, is not realised.

47. Weaknesses in planning affect the LEA's ability to evaluate effectiveness and efficiency. As the LEA acknowledges, it is not well placed to evaluate the success or the cost-effectiveness of its overall strategy, because it rarely sets out precise targets known to schools and it imperfectly aligns budget allocations to priorities.

48. At the operational level considerable attention is nevertheless given to evaluation. The key body in this respect is the Performance Monitoring Sub-Committee. The subcommittee receives regular reports from key services, such as the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS), although, while these reports are clear and detailed, they are largely narrative, rather than evaluative. Apart from District Audit evaluations, value for money studies are carried out by the Council's Internal Audit Section, or externally commissioned, for example, from institutions of higher education. Such reports inform

the sub-committee that intended processes have been carried out and about the constraints there may have been on efficiency. However, there is no comprehensive basis to evaluate the effectiveness of particular services or processes in relation to improvement in schools.

The Schools' Response to the LEA Strategy

49. All the headteachers in the schools visited - though none of the teachers who were asked - were aware of *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester*. They preferred any vision to none at all, and most were pleased with a declaration in favour of partnership between the schools and the LEA. Almost all saw that a great deal of work needed to be done both to give further definition to what is meant by partnership and to implement in practice the aspirations set out in *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester*.

50. There was clearly a problem of communication with schools in relation to the specific targets for pupil attainment and attendance in the service plan for 1997/98, since almost all of the schools visited claimed to have no knowledge of these. The LEA did not specifically consult with schools about these targets at the time, regarding the plan as an internal document. During the time of the inspection the LEA did consult schools about its latest plan and priorities. However, few of the schools visited were distinctly aware of these priorities or the specific targets related to them. These are to be discussed with headteachers at meetings this June.

51. The problem of communication with schools about the LEA's targets therefore, remains. In other respects, consultation, both generic, through, for example the CEO's area meetings, and specific, such as the reviews of special educational needs services for behaviour and learning support, tends to elicit only a modest response from schools.

FUNDING

52. A fundamental task for an LEA is to decide how to allocate its resources in relation to its priorities. Where the vision of the LEA is unclear, the priorities uncertain and the needs great as in Manchester, the task becomes very difficult.

53. The Council has to decide whether to spend up to or above the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), the government's assessment of what the LEA needs to spend. Because Manchester serves a disadvantaged population with many needs, the SSA is higher than for other metropolitan LEAs. Like most other LEAs, Manchester spends slightly above it.

54. The LEA next decides what proportion of the education budget should be delegated to schools in the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB) and by what formula. In both 1997/98 and 1998/99, around 70% of the total education budget was in the ASB. This leaves around £55 million of net revenue expenditure outside schools' budgets. The extent of delegation in Manchester appears to be in line with other metropolitan authorities. The LEA has been successful in attracting additional capital and income from sources such as the Social Regeneration Budget.

55. Appendix 2 provides comparisons of some areas of central expenditure in Manchester with other metropolitan authorities. Among the points highlighted are:

- a comparatively high level of resources is provided for education, care and play for children under five;
- Manchester has retained a high priority for lifelong learning through its own expenditure and attracting external resources for adult, community and youth services;
- in 1996/97, Manchester had the second highest delegated spending for secondary pupils among metropolitan authorities but was among the lowest for primary pupils. For 1998/99, there has been an increase in the share of resources for Key Stage 2;
- expenditure on premature retirement costs is very high, around £4.3 million in 1997/98.

56. Having decided what to delegate to schools and in what proportions, the LEA has then a responsibility to use the finances it retains to best effect, employing them against clear principles and targeting them to need. The national accounting system for education expenditure is not transparent, and is reflected in the budget-planning process in Manchester, which lacks clarity in the presentation of information about what is retained centrally and in the alignment of funding with priorities in relation to schools. In a context of overall reductions over the past few years the tendency has been to roll patterns of expenditure forward rather than to subject them to rigorous review and realignment.

57. One example is expenditure on provision to meet special educational needs, considered later in the report. Expenditure on management services to schools is another example. The LEA provides a wide range of these services. The schools visited in the inspection were concerned to be aware of, understand and be involved in decisions about allocation of education resources to these services. The analysis in Appendix 2 identifies the LEA net central expenditure on these services. In Manchester, the net cost of these management services for schools is around £136,000 for an average size primary school and around £436,000 for an average size secondary school.

58. Because, in relation to these and other sorts of provision, schools are not clear on what basis resources are allocated and are generally unaware of the true cost of the services they consume, they are not in a position to make judgements about the value for money obtained. Greater transparency in the provision of financial information would go some way to rectifying the position. Further delegation would arguably be even more effective in encouraging schools to seek value for money. At the very least, schools' entitlement to service needs to be clearer than it is at present. Of the £10,866,000 additional funds for Manchester's education service this year, approximately 70% will be delegated to schools and 30% will be spent centrally.

59. Greater transparency can help to improve the accountability and value for money of these services. This can help to focus a number of debates about future services, for example:

- the amount of resources necessary for the LEA central monitoring and intervention role for school improvement and the balance with school improvement resources which can be delegated or devolved to give schools a choice on how they are spent;
- the value for money of the LEA information technology support services; whether some of these services could be provided better by schools themselves or bought from other organisations;
- the analysis by schools of the value for money that they obtain from central building and grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts in comparison with purchasing the services from external contractors.

School Budget Deficits

60. Above all the LEA has a responsibility to ensure that resources are used well and not wasted. It shares this responsibility with schools. For example, governing bodies must ensure that school budgets balance. In Manchester, a large number have failed to do so. In part, and in some schools, budget deficits accumulated because the LEA had not taken action to reduce surplus school places (which cost some £2 million per year). Caught in the trap of needing to reduce a deficit while also facing inexorably declining resources, often due to falling pupil numbers, some schools face a declining spiral from which it may be difficult for them to emerge.

61. In 1996/97, over half of Manchester schools had a deficit budget. The overall cumulative deficit budget of £6.2 million was substantially greater than any other LEA. Only two other authorities in England had cumulative deficits and both of these were substantially less than in Manchester.

62. A District Audit report showed that cumulative school budgets were in surplus during 1993/94, but that a net deficit first arose in 1994/95. It then increased to £4.4 million in 1995/96 and to a peak of £6.2 million in 1996/97. The deficit has decrease substantially during 1997/98 with the current estimate being a cumulative deficit of £3.2 million at the end of the financial year, which is still an unacceptably high figure.

63. The Local Management of Schools (LMS), scheme makes it clear that schools have a responsibility to balance their budget. Since 1997, the LMS scheme has required governors to prepare and implement action plans to eliminate deficits within a maximum of three years. In individual schools, a number of factors, in different combinations caused problems: falling rolls substantially reducing the pupil led resources coming into the school; a failure to take the necessary hard decision at school level on reduction of staffing resources to balance the budget; temporary problems of loss pupils during building programmes; and the long-term sickness problems not covered by insurance arrangements.

64. The LEA's financial monitoring systems highlighted problems which were occurring during 1994 and 1995. There is evidence that individual education officers were working with some schools to help them tackle the issues, but at this stage these individual actions were not part of a sustained initiative to tackle the problems.

65. The CEO believes that the climate within the Council at that stage was not helpful in the task of balancing schools budgets: for example, the ten Chair of Education Committee was a member of a governing body of a school which had one of the highest deficit budgets in the City and the CEO believes that this set a precedent for other schools.

66. However, it appears that officers reacted late to the crisis. Although the CEO informed senior Council colleagues of the issue in February 1995, the first report did not

go to committee until June 1996, two years after it was clear that a problem was emerging. At this stage the Education Committee agreed a strategy for reducing deficits - a strategy which started to bring down the overall figure only after it reached £6.2 million in 1996/97.

67. The District Audit report of December 1997, which has been agreed with the LEA, stated that 'Manchester's school deficit problem is a partly cultural phenomenon'. A 'perception that school deficits were tolerated encouraged school governors to believe that a deficit budget was therefore acceptable' and there was a 'lack of political will to tackle the surplus places issue in Manchester - partly due to possible threat of grant maintained opt outs'. It judged that 'LEA systems for identifying and dealing with schools in deficit have tended to be reactive rather than proactive'.

68. On the positive side, some of the schools affected are recovering from the problems through a variety of means, such as: in one case an innovative transfer of assets subsequently used as loan security; action to reduce staffing levels; or by an increase in pupil numbers as a result of improvement in the school and its reputation. However, even for the schools which are recovering from budget deficit problems, the difficulties have produced a brake on their ability to improve their performance and have had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of children. Funding for staffing resources, IT and support for special educational needs has been restricted while these schools have recovered from their budget deficits.

69. For other schools the combination of problems is much harder to recover from. Some now face a spiral of decline as pupil numbers have stayed lower than hoped, and continuing deficits have made it hard to fund staffing, learning resources and support for special educational needs. Some secondary schools have needed to take on an increasing number of pupils excluded from other schools.

70. Corrective action at an early stage would clearly have been substantially less painful than later action after the debts had accumulated. In some of the schools visited debt problems need never have occurred if the schools had been encouraged to maintain realistic staffing levels. The shift from the previous culture of acceptance to sudden emergency action caused a considerable degree of resentment in schools, particularly when it was linked to removal of delegation. Corrective action as a result has needed to be more severe than it need have been with an impact on the resources available for the current generation of pupils.

71. The LEA is now taking more robust action to resolve budget deficits. Schools are now under pressure to take the necessary action to balance their budgets within a threeyear period. In the visits they described positive assistance provided by LEA officers to help them to take the necessary action to reduce expenditure, and LEA personnel and finance officers have clearly invested a considerable amount of time in recent months in the process.

SCHOOL PLACES AND ADMISSIONS

72. Manchester has a substantial problem with surplus places in both the primary and secondary sectors. A report to the Education Committee in September 1997 identifies surplus places in May 1997, as in the primary sector, 5,365 (11 %) out of a total of 47,124 places; and in the secondary sector 6,466 (23%) out of a total of 28,699 places - a level higher than any other metropolitan authority. The report indicates that around £2 million of the education budget is tied up each year in these surplus places. This is despite the fact that between 1993 and 1996 the Council has removed 3800 secondary places by reorganising nine secondary schools on to single sites, involving a capital investment of some £35 million.

73. In the LEA's view the main reason for not taking more action to reduce the surplus places was the prospect that schools threatened with closure would have pursued GM status. The LEA refers to its own experience and that of other LEAs, which were thwarted in their attempts to remove surplus places by this response.

74. In recent years, there has been an increasing polarisation in the popularity or unpopularity of Manchester secondary schools, which has been accentuated by the surplus places and budget deficit problems. The LEA's admission arrangements seek to maintain a link between a secondary school and feeder primary schools, but, because of the outcomes of parental preferences this does not ensure an even distribution of intake numbers. The arrangements need to be reviewed, for example in the case of secondary schools which have been concentrated on a single site and have thus become more distant from some of their nominal feeder primary schools and disconnected from them by parental preferences for other schools.

75. The principles of a review of surplus places were agreed by committee eighteen months ago. The LEA has now established a target to reduce surplus places to 5%-8% by 2001. Proposals to close five primary schools are currently subject to consultation. A report was submitted to the Education Committee in May 1998 during the reporting stage of this inspection, making detailed proposals for school re-organisation.

76. Proposals need to be extensive to achieve the desired result, and the magnitude of the task of implementing the action which will be necessary, including the need to persuade members, governors, parents and staff about decisions, many of which may well be unpopular, should not be underestimated.

77. A particular issue is whether the current staff re-deployment procedures are sufficiently flexible to allow an extensive re-organization to be carried out effectively. The current processes have already had an impact at times on the ability of schools to reduce budget deficits and it is unrealistic to expect continuing schools to absorb all current staff. In addition, the LEA will need to take into account the financial implication of premature retirement costs. Appendix 2 shows that previous generosity in early retirement policies

Provision for Pupils Out of School

78. Current provision for pupils out of school is seriously deficient. On average, schools surveyed by the Audit Commission questionnaire rated services for excluded pupils as poor to very poor; this aspect received a lower rating than in any other LEA surveyed so far. In March 1998 there were 142 pupils who had been permanently excluded from school and not been placed elsewhere, 122 from the secondary phase and 20 from primary. The majority of the pupils should have been in Year 10 or ii: No primary pupil had been out of school for longer than four months, but 31 secondary pupils had been out of school for over one year; five of these had been out for between two and three years, and one pupil had not been on a school roll for three years. The LEA states that in the case of the latter six pupils, as with many others, it is pursuing an alternative placement for them. The LEA was not able to tell inspectors what educational provision is being made for 140 of the 142 pupils and did not have overall data about these pupils readily available when it was first sought by HMI. These young people are currently potentially at risk.

LEA STRATEGY ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

79. There have been many developments in the LEA's provision for special educational needs in recent years. Much of the special school sector has recently been re-organised; for example in both the MLD and SLD sectors the schools have moved to a primary/secondary age split and some surplus places have been removed through school closures. More changes are planned within schools and services. Both the EBD and MLD schools will be reviewed.

80. While individual initiatives are undoubtedly desirable, there is no agreed model of the overall pattern of provision towards which the LEA is striving, individual initiatives have no clear goal, existing partners in the strategy (particularly special schools) have no clear view of their future and possible contributions, and there is no possibility of measuring progress towards an agreed outcome. The agreement of such a model would face the LEA with a difficult period of negotiation with stakeholders with differing ambitions and viewpoints, but its achievement would solve many problems.

Provision for Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

81. 81. There is an important current example. In spring 1997 the LEA, in association with the Social Services Department, launched a joint review of provision for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties which was given additional impetus by the closure of the residential school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties at Bollin Cross. The proposal consulted upon was wide ranging and fundamental. It proposed the amalgamation of two large groups of staff - the Education Welfare Service and the Manchester Teaching Service - from two different departments; the closure of one school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the re-designation of the two remaining ones to secondary age and to include PRUs and the establishment of three primary units. A new post of Strategy and Commissioning Manager has been established.

82. The proposal was approved by the Education Committee in March 1997, circulated to schools in May 1997, and presented for consultation to three open meetings in June, July and September 1997. The document sets out a 'development plan over three years during which period a change from the present pattern of school and service provision to that proposed would be implemented'. The committee report gives ten incremental steps to be achieved by January 1998, concluding with the full implementation of the proposals for the new service and the submission of formal proposals to the Secretary of State for changes to the EBD schools.

83. One year on from the proposal the only progress made on the ten incremental steps is the establishment of the post and the appointment of the Strategy and Commissioning Manager and the transfer of the Manchester Teaching Service from the Social Services Department to the LEA's budget. This is because, in the light of responses to consultation, the proposal has radically changed as set out below:

DATE	SCHOOL/OUTREACH SERVICE	FIELD SERVICE
April 1997 - status then and now	3 x EBD school/services age 7-16 Meade Hill, Peacock, Southern Cross	Education Welfare Service (EWS) Manchester Teacher Service (MTS)
Proposal summer/autumn 1997	2 x EBD school/services, age 11-16 including 2 x Pupil Referral Units Close Peacock 3 x 8 place mainstream primary school resourced provision	Combine EWS/MTS into Integrated Support Service
Proposal March 1998	3 x Pupil Referral Units age 11-16 1 x Pupil Referral Unit primary No EBD schools. No mainstream primary resourced provision —	Combine EWS/MTS into Behaviour Support Service

84. The LEA now proposes to close all three EBD schools and effectively replace these with four PRUs leaving the only EBD provision at the one remaining residential school. This despite the original proposal's statement referring to the 'bureaucratic legal framework within which free-standing PRUs are allowed to operate' and a previous commitment in a bid for Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) funding, that 'the authority does not maintain, nor does it have plans to establish PRUs'. In the new proposal, the LEA now believes that 'a move away from "special school" provision towards PRUs gives both more flexibility in the way children's educational needs are met and more management control'.

85. This proposal implies that current pupils designated as having emotional and behavioural difficulties which require provision at a day special school would be placed in PRUs, which are not designated for such a purpose, or in independent schools.

86. Further, the financial planning is questionable. In the costing of the original proposal, the report did not specify the cost (provisionally £230,496) of the proposed resourced primary school provision. In the new proposal, the planned place cost for a child with EBD of £9,604 has

reduced to a planned place cost in a PRU of £6,000, with a consequent effect on the pupil/teacher ratios of the proposed new institutions.

87. It is understandable for an LEA to change its view over time, and change its view in response to consultation. However, what this development calls into question is the LEA's capacity for planning and implementation in this area, especially as schools visited had no knowledge of the new proposal for the fieldwork service or the report recommending committee approval for consultation on closing the EBD schools/services. If the latest proposal were to be implemented, Manchester LEA would have no EBD day school provision (all converted to PRUs) and no discrete Education Welfare Service dealing with school attendance.

Provision for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties

88. The issue is not just one of vision, but of the management of change.

89. The centrally managed services for pupils with special educational needs are undergoing re-organisation. Traditionally, the focus of provision had been on pupils with statements, but the LEA is proposing to move towards broader-based provision, serving a wider range of need in order to meet the needs of schools for support for children at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice. This is especially true of MLD special schools provision, which is not currently felt to offer good value for money and where there is a thrust towards a more inclusive approach and a shift away from special school provision.

90. The number of pupils in MLD primary special schools is reducing. In the 1997/98 financial year three of the four MLD primary schools were funded for 100 places despite numbers dropping to around 65 pupils. As a result the LEA was subsidising one school by £175,000 more than the pupil formula would justify. In these three schools, planned places have now been reduced to 80 for the year 1998/99. A continuing drop in the number of pupils means that unless a re-organisation takes place, the LEA will continue to need to subsidise the schools by increasing amounts or they will become financially unviable. Continuing the subsidy would be at the expense of resources to meet special needs either in mainstream schools or through support services.

91. The plan is progressively to further reduce the numbers of planned places for primary pupils in MLD schools ultimately and to close all but one of the schools. The needs of pupils with MLD at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice and with statements of special educational needs would then be met in mainstream schools by a peripatetic Learning Support Service, serving clusters of six to eight schools.

92. It is not clear that this scheme is affordable. Certainly, consideration of the costs of the full implementation of the scheme across all primary schools in the city has not featured prominently in reports to date. It may well amount to £2 million, and is intended to be funded by reduction in the special school provision. However, funding released in that fashion could well fall short or take years to accrue. What happens during the transitional period is uncertain and has the potential for inequity during an extensive period of planned school closures, as children in the pilot areas will benefit from a level of support not available to others. There is no detailed plan, as yet, for a managed reduction in the pupil rolls and staffing of the MLD schools. It is also uncertain that the

LEA will be able to recruit the necessary highly skilled and able staff to the scheme of how the LEA's management responsibility for a very large peripatetic force will effectively be discharged by headteachers in the cluster schools.

93. Staff and governors in primary MLD special schools are very much aware of the uncertainty of their position. The LEA will need to produce the convincing plans it has signalled for a re-organisation of special school provision in the near future, in order to resolve these issues.

Special Educational Needs Administration

94. There is also a problem of administration.

95. In 1995/96 the Audit Commission reported on LEAs' performance in issuing statements of special educational needs within the prescribed time limit. Manchester issued no statements within the limit. A year later, it had improved slightly. Five percent of statements met the deadline. Schools remain very critical of this level of performance. The LEA believes that the introduction of a computerised system for the administration of statements will bring about further and swifter improvements. Performance of this function continues to be poor and the LEA is not providing the amount or quality of resources it needs to improve.

96. Sometimes, when statements are issued, pupils are placed on a waiting list for provision. Moreover, statements are not amended as pupils' needs change. Therefore, the appropriate provision to meet the pupils' needs is not safeguarded. The LEA has, on a number of occasions, been subject to challenge by parents through the Ombudsman, the Special Educational Needs Tribunal or the courts. The organisation of annual reviews of statements is delegated to schools, and not effectively checked by the LEA.

Mainstream School Funding

97. Finally, there are important questions about the clarity of the funding provided to meet special educational needs in mainstream schools.

98. The visits to schools made in the inspection indicated that few are able clearly to identify the element within their budget which is intended to fund support for special educational needs. The LMS scheme allocated £5.95 million in 1997/98 as "anti-poverty" funding. Schools are not clear about what these resources are intended to be used for. They do not account, even in the most general way, for their spending on SEN, and governors do not fulfil their duty of reporting to parents on this expenditure. In contrast, accountability is very precise for the 'barrier free' and integrated SLD provision so that governors would be able to report effectively. Surplus places and deficit budgets in many schools have added to the lack of clarity as schools have used much of this resource as part of their general attempts to escape from deficit positions. The surplus places review, combined with changes in SEN provision, mean that it is now appropriate for the proportion and distribution of this funding to be reviewed.

99. The funding devolved to schools is enhanced by further sums from the LEA's contingency fund for pupils not supported by any service. Even so, and despite spending being double the indicative amount, some pupils at Stages 4 and 5 of the Code of Practice (with statements or in the process of assessment) do not have their needs met.

LIAISON WITH OTHER SERVICES AND AGENCIES

100. The steps taken by the LEA to ensure effective cooperation with other local authority departments in the provision of services to schools and pupils are sound. There is extensive and good quality liaison with the Social Services Department, particularly over looked-after children, but also over issues such as child protection, early years provision, special educational needs and drug abuse. The two departments have also co-operated in implementing the recommendations of the National Children's Bureau report *Championing Children*. In the example of a pilot project visited in the inspection, a primary school was used as a focus for services to families, providing them with a 'one-stop shop', but at the same time receiving from them suggestions, in an effort to achieve greater responsiveness.

101. The Early Years and Play Division of the LEA has developed extensive contacts with other Council services, parents and private providers as part of its planning role and monitoring of service provision. Consultation has taken place through the Early Years Development Partnership launched in September 1997 and the preparation of the Early Years Development Plan. Early years forums are currently being developed which will link into a city-wide forum and the Children's Services Sub-Committee.

102. The LEA also forms productive partnerships with other agencies. There are a number of working links between the LEA and the Manchester Health Authority and the Mancunian Health Trust within the framework of the Children's Services Plan. The Health Authority has been involved in the LEA's review of provision for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and the LEA has contributed to the Health Authority review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health provision.

103. Collaboration between the LEA and the local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) has led to their involvement in many local regeneration projects, often funded by the Single Regeneration Budget. These projects target disadvantaged localities (such as Moss Side, or Cheetham and Broughton) or particular groups of the population. Their educational aspects normally concern improving pupils' basic skills and attendance, and their approaches include, for instance, developing mentoring, homework clubs and anti-bullying strategies. The LEA is also an active contributor to the local Careers Service Partnership.

104. There is appropriate consultation between the diocesan authorities and the LEA on issues such as early years provision, the review of school places and admissions arrangements. The dioceses contribute to the strategic development of the LEA through their representation on the Education Committee and are involved with the LEA when particular issues arise, such as a school requiring special measures after an inspection.

105. The LEA fulfils its duties to establish and maintain a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and Agreed Syllabus Conference. The Conference comprised a large number of representatives and took a considerable time to produce and agree a syllabus. As a result, the syllabus commands a high degree of support from the many faiths in the community.

STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

106. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet the majority of its statutory duties in relation to schools and pupils and in exercising its functions to ensure that schools are aware of and comply with their responsibilities. The exceptions, which are serious and fundamental, include failure:

- to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education for some pupils who are excluded from school;
- to monitor the progress of some pupils who are out of school by reason of exclusion or otherwise;
- to make an assessment of some pupils who are identified as having special educational needs;
- and, in relation to the need to have regard to the Code of Practice on special educational needs, to complete 95% of assessments within the prescribed timescale.

SECTION 4: THE MANAGEMENT OF LEA SERVICES

107. This section of the report considers the management of a selection of services, agreed with the LEA, with a bearing on school improvement. The work of the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS), the Manchester Music Service and services for special educational needs was studied in some detail in the school visits, and it is on the work of those services that comment is concentrated. Other services, such as the Language and Learning Service, Early Years and Play Division, Adult Education Service and Youth Service are well-regarded, but were not inspected in detail.

108. The services inspected make valid attempts to analyse the needs of the schools. They do good work. They do not, however, meet the full range of needs, particularly in relation to special educational needs and behaviour support. Resources are not always directed to where the need is greatest, rather than the demand loudest. The lack of defined thresholds for engagement with schools, and the schools' ignorance of the true cost of services, creates dissatisfaction because expectations are unrealistic. Evidence from the schools visited is that the quality of the service is too frequently dependent upon the individual concerned, rather than upon clearly defined responsibilities and service-wide quality assurance. Even more fundamentally, the LEA has not - despite *A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester* - defined its working relationship with schools. That omission hinders in particular the work of the IAS, since it is not clear where the LEA's and the schools' respective responsibilities for improvement lie.

INSPECTION, ADVICE AND CURRICULUM SUPPORT

Inspection and advisory service

109. The two main inspection and advisory services (IAS) are part of the School Improvement Division, headed by the Deputy CEO, along with the Music service, the Dance Centre and the Training Unit. A Senior Inspector and the Senior Adviser manage the services and undertake a considerable and increasing amount of joint working. The services currently comprise, in addition to the two senior posts, 11 education inspectors, 13 advisers and 10 associate advisers. Posts within the services cover the National Curriculum subjects and whole-school aspects. There are some shortages, the most notable of which are the absence of advisers of English and special educational needs. As a matter of policy, the inspection service only recruits staff with senior management experience, while advisers are recruited from heads of department or co-ordinator roles in schools.

110. The inspection service is concerned mainly with support before and after inspection, with monitoring of provision and with supporting the management and leadership of schools. The advisory service focuses on curriculum support and advice and has the lead responsibility for training. However, inspectors have programmed time for development work and training, and a minor element of advisers' work is inspection.

111. Council and LEA aims and policies have a clear influence on the service priority-setting. The current service priorities are appropriate and cover literacy, numeracy, performance

partnership, under-achievement by boys, effective teaching, support for schools with serious weaknesses or in special measures and leadership and management.

112. The service makes use of a range of data to assess needs. The analysis of this information is thorough, for example in the identification of subject differences. A notable weakness is the absence of any data about the comparative performance of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

113. Detailed service plans show how the priorities are to be pursued, and these are then reflected in the work plans of individual members of staff. These individual work plans ensure that service priorities are mostly translated into action, though they do not always ensure that schools with weaknesses receive the support they need. The conflicting demands on the IAS present difficulties in the deployment of staff from the two wings of the service which have not yet been resolved.

114. The LEA has not resolved the tension between its desire to target support where the need is greatest and schools' feeling that they have an entitlement to a particular amount of resource. Each primary and special school is allocated two days and each secondary three days from the inspection service for visits. Schools which subscribe to the advisory service, at a cost of 17% of their GEST (now Standards Fund) allocation, access courses free of charge; they also receive five hours annually from the service (in addition to the five hours which all schools receive) and an additional hour for every £50 they spend over £400. They also have access to help, advice and networks. In addition to meeting the requirements of this programme, the IAS provides pre- and post-OFSTED support. Without a clear definition of the LEA's and schools' roles in school improvement, it is difficult for the services to determine the amount of resource being deployed in pursuit of the LEA's role and what is being deployed in response to schools' demands for support. With the increasing number of schools requiring special measures and identified as having serious weaknesses, the services are operating in a climate of conflicting and unreasonable expectations. They are doing their best to operate in these circumstances, but the result is predictable: they are trying to do too much.

115. The inspection service has made particular use of the OFSTED *Framework for the Inspection of Schools* to improve headteachers' and teachers' understanding of quality and school improvement. An integral part of this strategy was the pre-OFSTED work that the service did in schools. This was designed to build upon the other development work being undertaken so that its focus could be school improvement and not 'getting through the inspection'. As a direct result, schools with weaknesses were identified by the LEA, and support given to help them improve. The schools have therefore received, and greatly valued, a high level of support, often of good quality, from the IAS pre-OFSTED.

116. Nevertheless, too much time has been spent on pre-OFSTED work with schools, and the IAS is seeking to redress the balance. This is appropriate. All schools receive some support post-OFSTED, but on the evidence of those visited, the value varies greatly, and some needs go unmet. Schools value the help they receive with the format of their plans, and some have received critical comments from their education inspector which have focused them more clearly on defining outcomes and strategies for monitoring the plan. Most had received helpful advice about how to act upon key issues,

which has led to improvements. There are five instances, however, where support has been requested but not forthcoming for specific subject help, for example English, mathematics, special educational needs and IT, or assistance with monitoring quality.

117. The education inspector attached to each school plays a crucial role in the relationship between the IAS and schools. In almost all cases the education inspector is held in high regard by the school, and this is an important factor in the overall high rating that the services receive from headteachers in the survey. However, there are four instances where the education inspector role has lacked incisiveness and failed to provide the challenge necessary to move a school forward. These have included failure to notice or bring to a school's attention significant issues such as falling standards or rising exclusions.

118. Most schools consider that they get good value from their entitlements with the IAS and, where they are subscribers, from their service level agreement with the Advisory Service. Although the service agreement specifies the amount of support available, this is considered by schools to be flexible. Some ask for, and receive, support beyond this level. Some schools also receive above their entitlement from the Inspection Service. This is a result, in both instances, of the services responding to levels of need, but it is not always the case that needs are met. As described above, HMI found examples of needs which were going unmet. There are two issues here which the LEA has not yet fully resolved. The first is the identification of needs, which the IAS is addressing with some success, through the use of a range of data. The second, which is further from resolution, is the identification of the resource the LEA requires to fulfil its school improvement functions, and how to ensure that schools can access, and exercise choice over the use of, the school improvement resources currently held centrally on their behalf.

119. The IAS maintains detailed notes of visits to schools. Termly visits by education inspectors are based on aide-memoires and proformas to aid retrieval of information. One visit each year is used to review schools' examination or National Curriculum performance and to identify future action. The inspection service also inspects and reports upon any schools about which it has concerns. HMI had sight of a number of these notes and reports. Some were excellent, others too bland and overall too inconsistent.

120. The IAS rates as one of Manchester's strengths. For many schools they are in effect the face of the authority, and usually a welcomed one. The services are, however, under pressure resulting from the lack of clarity in the LEA's working relationship with its schools. There is a need to identify what resources are required for the service to undertake the role required of it by the LEA, which would include intervention in inverse proportion to success. This process should also identify the resources available for schools to use in support of their improvement priorities and lead to consultation with them about the most effective way to use it, or delegation of the funding, so that they buy what they wish.

Manchester Music Service

121. Three of the aims of the Manchester Music Service:

- i. to offer skills tuition through instrumental practice to as many pupils as possible in Manchester schools;
- ii. to offer an in-service training programme to enable primary teachers to meet the statutory requirements of music as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum;
- iii. to achieve all its objectives within an overall policy of open access and equal opportunity;

were the focus of this inspection.

122. Documentation and audio-recordings prepared by the Music Service were studied, a meeting was held at the Music Service, and visits were made to five primary schools and one secondary school. There was a discussion with senior management in each school, and 16 sessions taught by Music Service staff, or primary teachers who have received training from Music Service staff, were inspected.

123. The quality of teaching in each of the 16 sessions was sound or better. More than half of the primary class teaching was good, and almost all the instrumental teaching was very good or excellent. This is markedly better than the national averages for primary class music teaching and instrumental teaching. The quality of the teaching contributes to the main purpose of the Education Department, which is to raise levels of achievement in Manchester.

124. Instrumental teaching is allocated to schools according to a formula of half an hour per week for every 100 pupils in Key Stage 1, and for every 50 pupils in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. Almost all schools take up their allocation. Schools select the instruments on which they receive teaching, and flexibility in the staffing of the Music Service allows these needs to be met. Schools may purchase additional instrumental time at a fixed rate. Many do so. For example, one of the schools visited offers weekly lessons on a string or wind instrument to all pupils in Year 3 or above. Another provides African drumming for whole classes of pupils.

125. The combination of good teaching, competitive pricing and a wide choice of instruments contributes to the popularity of instrumental lessons in Manchester. In 1996-97, 8200 pupils in Manchester schools received weekly instrumental lessons, a proportion of 12%, which is roughly twice the national average and increasing. The Service's policy of open access and equal opportunity is reflected in the way that schools choose to distribute the teaching that they have been allocated or have purchased. They often provide teaching on a broad range of instruments, avoiding cultural stereotyping such as the offer of only steel pans in a school with a large proportion of black pupils. There were very few incidences of selection for instrumental teaching in the schools visited: the pupils who take instrumental lessons have made informed choices that this is what they wish to do. None of the schools visited pass charges for instrumental teaching to parents: this gives equality of opportunity to pupils who are economically disadvantaged,

and increases access as teaching groups may be expanded beyond the maximum of four that is allowed for charged teaching. The Music Service helps schools to consider, and where appropriate improve, the equality of opportunity that they provide for boys and girls by giving them the results of its annual survey of instrumental uptake by gender across the LEA.

126. In-service training in primary schools is based on curriculum materials prepared by the Music Service. Schools typically purchase a 'package' that entitles them to an agreed amount of whole-school training and support in schools. In 1996-97 the primary advisory team provided support to 400 teachers, and so its work touched roughly 12000 children, which is a good rate of access. The quality of the class music teaching seen is a reflection of the quality of the curriculum support that was provided. The distinctive qualities of the better class music teaching include its emphasis on learning of high quality, and the ability of the teachers to judge when to adjust their lesson plans to include direct teaching of skills that some pupils found difficult.

127. The Manchester Music Service has made very good progress with achieving the aims that were the focus of this inspection.

SERVICES TO PUPILS

Support for Special Educational Needs

128. The centrally managed services include the Integration Support Service which serves the needs of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties in mainstream schools; the Specific Learning Difficulties Teaching Service, which supports children with relevant statements in mainstream schools; and the Educational Psychology Service. The services for children with sensory impairments are accommodated at two specialist schools where the headteachers of the schools are the heads of service. Specific elements of support for pupils with special educational needs were identified as a theme for this inspection and are covered in Section 5.

129. As indicated earlier, the centrally managed services are undergoing re-organisation and more changes are planned.

Education Welfare Service

130. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) comprises 37 Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) and a small number of administrative staff. Working mainly through three district teams, its principal functions are to promote high levels of pupil attendance and welfare by working with schools, pupils and families, and to ensure that child protection guidance is provided for schools. In addition, it has responsibility for matters concerning juvenile employment. The framework within which the Service operates has recently been reviewed and a re-organisation is forthcoming which will cause it to work more closely with provision for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and with the Social Services Department. The effectiveness of the service is analysed in Section 5.

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

131. The LEA provides a full range of financial, personnel and property maintenance services to support the efficient running of schools. A high level of dissatisfaction with both the buildings and grounds maintenance services was recorded, both in the questionnaire sent to schools and in the school visits. Concern was expressed with the quality of work carried out by the City Works department:

- unsatisfactory periods between repairs and action, often following a number of reminders;
- unsatisfactory standards of workmanship;
- invoices substantially exceeding original estimates without explanation.

132. It is important that the LEA address these concerns in order both to improve the environment in which pupils learn and to avoid waste of time on the part of headteachers following up avoidable complaints.

133. Financial and personnel services have faced difficult problems in relation to budget deficits, but have given effective support, not least to schools in which budget delegation was withdrawn and those where reductions in staffing were needed. Some of the school visits focused on the problems that the linked issues of surplus places and budget deficits have caused.

SECTION 5: LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN STANDARDS, QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT

OVERALL IMPROVEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS VISITED

134. Because the LEA has many individuals and some services which support schools well but lacks a coherent strategy effectively planned and implemented, the support it offers to schools is, on the evidence of the schools visited, variable. Sometimes its impact is considerable. More often, it is insufficient to promote the improvement that is needed.

135. The LEA's overall contribution to improvement was judged unsatisfactory in six of the nine secondary schools visited. Partly as a result, four of the nine schools were improving too slowly (or not at all) from a low base. Two, on the other hand, were improving rapidly in most areas, including overall attainment, while three were making modest but valuable progress in particular subjects or in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Common weaknesses in the support included too great an emphasis on pre-OFSTED support, to the detriment of support to action planning, limited availability of special educational needs and behaviour support services and gaps in the IAS.

136. The LEA's support was slightly more effective in the primary schools visited. There was also more evidence of improvement in those schools. In only three out of sixteen were standards static or declining, whereas in nine schools, standards, not least in the core subjects, were rising quickly. Four particularly well-managed schools were improving rapidly: effective planning and monitoring of teaching were leading to enhanced attainment. More of this was due to the schools, and particularly to the headteachers, than to the LEA. There was only one instance in which an effective headteacher received well-considered, challenging support from an education inspector, integrated with effective advisory support. In seven of the 16 schools the LEA's support was judged less than satisfactory. The main element lacking was, too often, challenge. Indeed, some of the headteachers themselves expressed the wish that LEA inspectors would be more challenging, even at the cost of being less reassuring. It was the least well-led schools which received the least effective support.

137. The four special schools visited followed the same pattern of inconsistent improvement and inconsistent support, but in a more extreme way. One school was improving very strongly, and very effective support from the IAS had established in the school the ability to manage its own improvement. Staff in another school expressed some dismay following a series of variable proposals by the LEA affecting its future. The other two were making satisfactory progress, with some evidence of a rise in standards. Again, except in one school, the LEA had provided insufficient challenge after the inspection. Having received positive reports, assisted by the pre-inspection advice, the schools were allowed to coast.

SUPPORT IN THE USE OF PERFORMANCE DATA FOR TARGET SETTING

138. The LEA is currently discussing with schools how they might set appropriate targets for future improvement on the basis of performance data.

139. The LEA provides an analysis of GCSE results by subject and gender. The analysis is detailed, but unaccompanied by text and largely without material useful for benchmarking. The secondary schools make some use of this data, but its obvious limitations constrain that use. No analysis by ethnicity is provided - a major omission in a multi-cultural city.

140. Almost all the primary schools visited had received school profiles containing end of key stage and other performance data. The profiles are potentially of use for target setting, but they are a recent development, the nature and purpose of which are only now becoming clear, though not yet to all schools. In several schools, the planned discussion with the education inspector had not taken place. In two, it had not led to greater understanding.

141. Most of the schools visited were making progress in their understanding of the use of data and the LEA had contributed to that progress in about half of them. All the secondary schools were establishing baseline assessment in Year 7, usually employing cognitive abilities tests funded by the LEA, though a few were devising their own approaches without reference to LEA advice. Primary schools, too, had begun to analyse end of key stage data in order to identify weaknesses and plan for improvement, often successfully. Schools' education inspectors, as well as training provided by the LEA, usually contributed significantly to this process, though in two schools there were obvious weaknesses which had not been pointed out.

142. The schools visited had little knowledge of the targets set by the LEA for improvements in attainment, attendance and the rate of exclusions, or of how those targets were arrived at. The understanding of the process of target-setting was generally weak. At best, some secondary schools made careful use of data to identify and then work closely with pupils at risk of under-achieving. At the other extreme, some primary schools simply set themselves to do a little better than last year, with little analysis of performance and no clear strategy for raising it. For the most part, the schools visited did not understand what was required of them - and it was clear from written evidence and discussions with the headteachers that those charged with explaining the process also did not always understand it. The LEA has not formed a clear view of what it means to set targets which are 'realistic but challenging', nor is there a widespread understanding of how school targets will contribute to the targets set for the whole LEA.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS REQUIRING SPECIAL MEASURES OR WITH SERIOUS WEAKNESSES

143. To date, ten Manchester schools have been identified as requiring special measures (eight primary, one secondary and one special); three secondary schools and five primary schools have serious weaknesses. The inspection service has identified, through its own monitoring and inspection procedures and pre-OFSTED support, a further eight schools (six primary and two secondary) with serious weaknesses.

144. The LEA fulfils its statutory duties in respect of schools identified by OFSTED inspections as requiring special measures. It comments upon the schools' action plans and produces its own statements of action. The LEA has used the additional powers it gains in these circumstances when it has deemed it appropriate to do so.

Correspondence from the DfEE and OFSTED shows that the LEA's intended actions in support of schools have been well matched to their needs. The LEA has closed three schools requiring special measures and proposed the closure of two more. It has one school that has been in special measures for two years.

145. Education inspectors provide support to schools in the production of their action plans. The inspection service has produced a format for these plans which includes a separate evaluation plan. Schools make use of these, and their plans, when submitted to OFSTED, have been judged to be detailed and clear and to form a sound or good basis for action. Education inspectors monitor the progress of schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses, and provide reports to headteachers, governing bodies and the Performance Monitoring Sub-Committee.

146. Additional support is provided to schools requiring special measures and those identified, either by OFSTED or the LEA's own inspection service, as having serious weaknesses. In the latter case, such support has included in one case a formal warning that the school is not making sufficient progress. There is an expectation that schools in receipt of post-OFSTED Standards Fund grants will make use of these to pay for additional IAS support. However, a school's ability to pay does not determine or limit the support required. Any support over and above that which the school can pay for is provided at no charge by the IAS and included in the LEA's action to support the school.

147. HMI visited three schools judged by OFSTED to have serious weaknesses and two identified as falling into that category by the LEA. Two other schools which had serious weaknesses but have now made satisfactory improvement were also visited. In one school despite satisfactory progress overall, there continues to be a poor level of attendance which despite the LEA's work has not been resolved. The other school has received good, practical support and guidance from a range of inspectors and advisers. This has helped the school to improve.

148. Of the five other schools, two have made satisfactory overall improvement. The effectiveness of the overall LEA contribution to improvement is generally unsatisfactory in all five. The IAS has made effective contributions in all of the schools. This includes support to subjects through visits to the school, courses or co-ordinator meetings. In one school effective support has been given which has enabled the senior managers to implement a system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. In another, the Inspection Service had made significant contributions through helping the school to review and improve its policy and practice for managing behaviour. It had also provided extensive support to the headteacher in addressing weak teaching. There were also weaknesses in the support to these schools. In three of the schools, whilst the quality of the support received was good, it was judged to be too little or overstretched; help required in English was not available in two schools because of the lack of an adviser in that subject. Two schools required more help than they were receiving to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and identify serious issues. One school was not able to make effective use of the resources made available to it, resulting in lack of support in crucial areas.

149. Schools with serious weaknesses need support from a range of services in addition to the IAS. Three of the schools were receiving good support from the Education Welfare Service to help them tackle low attendance, and one school was

helped effectively by support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The absence of additional support to improve attendance was a weakness in one school. Four of the schools required more help with provision to meet the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs.

150. The School Improvement Team in OFSTED monitors the progress of schools requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses. Reports it has produced confirm that the LEA contributes support to these groups of schools and has taken imaginative steps, such as the secondment of staff from a weak school to another for professional development.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN BEHAVIOUR

151. In the document *The Priorities for Manchester LEA and its Schools*, the LEA has set itself a target of reducing exclusions by 50%, but it has specified no deadline so there is no knowing if and when it will be achieved and, if it has informed the schools, those visited were not aware of it. Nor has it a viable strategy for meeting the target. The only actions specified over the next year are monitoring of exclusions by gender and ethnicity, the checking by education inspectors of the implementation of schools' behaviour policies, and spreading the practices employed by the three secondary schools which are part of a GEST (Standards Fund) project. However, these actions are inadequate in view of the 141 permanently excluded pupils who have no school place; the combined rate of fixed term and permanent exclusions in Manchester schools, running at almost ten a day in 1996/97 and twice the national average; the fact that one secondary school has made 782 fixed-term exclusions in three years; and the fact that two of the three schools in the project are not meeting their targets, and in one the number of exclusions increased.

152. The LEA has not created the working relationship with its secondary schools in particular that is needed to make its target for reducing exclusion feasible. Secondary schools are reluctant to admit pupils excluded by other schools. The LEA has therefore, sometimes had to direct them to, in order that pupils and parents rights are maintained, and has sought directions from the Secretary of State to do so on thirteen occasions. It is often low-performing schools with surplus places who find themselves thus directed, thereby compounding their problems. It is a serious dilemma, and not only for Manchester, but it is worse here, partly because of gaps in services that might work for prevention and partly because of the absence of alternative provision when pupils are excluded.

153. In the secondary schools visited the extremes of LEA support to schools on improving behaviour and reducing exclusions were seen. In one school, the LEA has successfully bid for additional external funds and supported a specific in-school project targeted at reducing the number of excluded pupils. It is a success. Targets for reducing the number of excluded pupils have been met, it has had a knock-on effect on improving the behaviour of other pupils, and has been supported effectively by the LEA.

154. In another, not dissimilar, school, the number of fixed-term exclusions is increasing and the number of permanent exclusions is stubbornly static. Despite comments in the inspection report, improving behaviour does not feature in the current action plan. The

inspection report, improving behaviour does not feature in the current action plan. The management of the school is not aware of its own trends and monitoring is a weakness. There is no school target for reducing exclusions, no knowledge of the LEA target and no discussion of strategic measures to reduce exclusions with LEA staff.

155. The support in schools for improving pupil behaviour is provided by the LEA's three district-based services and is effective in improving pupils' behaviour. The schools' view is that services are stretched and that they would like more. However, as the level of service is decided by the provider and the cost of the service (including the school element) of £1.2 million is not widely known, schools are not in a position to make an informed judgement about the value for money the service provides or whether there are alternative options. The service also provides valuable training, both formal and informal, for teachers and other staff in mainstream schools.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN ATTENDANCE

156. Schools generally have sound procedures for registering pupils' attendance at school and for seeking parental explanations of absence. Where these procedures were found faulty during a school inspection they have been corrected. Most schools use their own resources to pursue non-attenders in the early stages of absence; in some cases schools resource special administrative arrangements in an effort to make this watertight. EWOs normally take responsibility for investigating the absence of pupils who have not responded to the school's actions. The coverage of the EWS, reduced after recent budget cuts, has sometimes been patchy, with some schools left without much needed support. The present pattern of provision appears improved, though most schools visited felt they needed more EWO time. EWOs visit schools regularly, scrutinise registers frequently, liaise with headteachers and pastoral staff, and visit pupils' homes. They also join case conferences, and participate in school initiatives which have a community dimension. Overall, however, EWOs do not have time to engage in preventative work, rather they are trying to deal with absence after it has happened, and they do this well, especially where they have a good knowledge of the local community.

157. Alongside the EWS, the LEA provides a range of longer-term support for schools through the advice and involvement of the IAS, mainly funded through specific grants, or sometimes through the Education and Training Partnership or other external agencies. This has enabled schools to try to make their provision more attractive to young people who might otherwise be tempted to absenteeism.

158. Most schools are good at identifying patterns of absence by individual pupils, or by classes or year groups. This has enabled some to begin preventative work with groups of pupils whose attendance shows early signs of causing concern. However, they do not undertake a more sophisticated analysis, searching for patterns in the attendance of boys and girls, different ethnic groups, and different social groups, in order to identify problems as they emerge and counter them effectively. The LEA needs to equip itself to provide detailed advice and training on the interrogation and use of attendance data.

159. Many schools are very worried about their low attendance rates, which can affect schools which are highly successful in other respects, as well as schools which

have a range of serious weaknesses. Some have set targets for improvement, but the range of actions they propose to undertake indicates the complexity of the problems and the difficulty of arriving at a consensus about a solution. One school, for instance, intends mainly to persevere with its present work with families in difficulties, another intends to improve all its relevant registration and follow-up procedures, whilst a third school hopes that a governor will take a stronger role in monitoring attendance. Some schools have articulated their intentions in action plans or development plans, but they sometimes fail to set out precise plans that can lead to later evaluation.

160. Overall, attendance has improved significantly in only a few of the schools studied in detail, generally because of their analytical approach and the success with which they have been able to embed a range of whole-school measures. However, the problems facing some schools are so great that they have to run fast simply in order to stand still, and improvement will not come easily in these circumstances. The LEA contributes significantly to some schools' improvement, but often at great expense in terms of EWOs' time or the use of IAS time. Future improvement may depend on the LEA developing a better-informed overview of attendance issues, enabling it to give stronger guidance to schools, whilst maintaining the good relationship that usually exists between school and EWO and if possible creating more flexibility in the use of EWO time. Two working parties, led at a very senior level, have recently been established to produce a framework for action; this has, so far, led to a useful audit of current work.

161. The Education Welfare Service is still going through a period of clarifying its procedures and this has caused it to produce guidance to schools on particular issues, but not yet to issue overall central guidance on how attendance can be improved. The EWS is now working towards producing such guidance.

162. The EWS employs a range of means to enforce attendance, including occasional use of Education Supervision Orders (of which there were five last year) and, as a last resort, prosecutions of parents (125 last year). The service has rightly become increasingly concerned in recent years about the number of pupils of statutory age who are not registered on any school roll. The LEA has asked headteachers not to remove pupils from the school register unless authorised to do so by the EWO, who will only provide authorisation if a pupil has joined another school or if searches have demonstrated that the pupil has moved home and cannot be found. EWOs are sometimes unable, despite their best efforts, to locate pupils who have moved, but additionally some Year 11 pupils are still de-registered by schools without authorisation.

163. It is impossible to ascertain exactly how many pupils have been removed from school rolls across the city, but school registers investigated during the inspection showed that pupils had left the school or been removed from the roll, with no known destination school. The LEA does not have an effective means of gaining and recording such information centrally. It is very important that it continues with its plans to establish a central electronic database as soon as possible. The removal of non-attending pupils from the roll affects the data on attendance presented on the school in the DEE performance tables and can give a false impression of its rate of examination success. Much more seriously, it can put these pupils at risk.

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

164. The quality of the LEA's support for schools' planning for improvement in provision for special educational needs varies too widely, as the LEA has no overall system for monitoring schools' performance in this respect. Training for staff is made available on request, so that schools which are not aware of their weaknesses fail to advance. This is particularly evident with respect to the outcomes of some OFSTED reports, where clearly identified weaknesses in special educational needs provision have brought no response from the LEA. Support to schools prior to OFSTED inspections produced improvements, notably to administrative procedures. The lack of an adviser for special educational needs is recognised by the LEA as a gap to be filled; the appointment of an adviser will be welcomed by both mainstream and special schools.

165. Provision for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools has many weaknesses. The LEA does not for the most part monitor the extent to which schools have regard for the Code of Practice. Partly as a result, practice is too variable. For example, although, following training recently provided by the Education Psychology Service, some school co-ordinators for special educational needs have formulated greatly improved individual education plans, many more continue to use a poorly constructed LEA proforma which does not support them in setting clear objectives and reviewing progress against these objectives.

166. As indicated earlier, few schools are able clearly to identify the element within their budget which is intended to fund support for special educational needs.

167. The LEA cannot meet the high level of demand for advice or face-to-face support for pupils at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice for special educational needs. The Education Psychology Service and services for EBD and SpLD (dyslexia) are overstretched. The demands are frequently unrealistic, owing in part to a lack of clear guidance to schools on the extent of their responsibilities, compounded by inadequate definitions of what threshold of need attracts what level of support.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN LITERACY

168. Manchester is one of the authorities participating in the National Literacy Project (NLP). Thirty-seven schools, in most of which standards of literacy were relatively low at the inception of the project, are currently involved. Awareness of aspects of the project, such as the literacy hour, is, as the school visits showed, much more widely disseminated across both primary and secondary schools in the city. Training has been provided for English co-ordinators in all primary schools, for a range of other staff and for school governors.

169. Raising standards of literacy is an important objective for the LEA. It has set a demanding target of 80% of pupils achieving level 4 in the Key Stage 2 English tests by 2002. The Deputy CEO, working closely with the Manchester Literacy Campaign Working Group (which includes headteachers and officers) and the Family Literacy Steering Group, has overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategy. That illustrates the importance of the strategy but, in the absence of an English adviser, locates management responsibility at too high a level to facilitate detailed oversight.

From April 1998, the first Literacy Consultant will take up the role as adviser for English and will take over day-to-day management of all literacy projects and staff.

170. HMI made visits specifically to four primary schools, two secondary schools and one special school to judge the effectiveness of the LEA's literacy work in detail. Evidence was, however, also collected in a range of other schools, so that what follows is based on judgements made in 13 primary schools, five secondary schools and two special schools. Specialist visits outside this inspection had been made by the OFSTED primary team. The evidence from these was drawn upon.

171. The specialist HMI visiting had revealed a number of weaknesses and uncertainties in the LEA's management of the NLP, not least a number of important gaps in staffing. There is now a great deal more in place, or shortly to be put in place. The LEA now has a literacy centre with full-time staff in post, it has delivered a training programme and it has set clear targets for the actions that need to be taken in the next few months and longer-term. Nevertheless, to date the impact of the LEA's strategy has been patchy.

172. There was evidence in the schools visited in this inspection of greater attention given to literacy and of modest improvement. All but one of the primary schools and the secondary schools visited had progressed at least at a satisfactory rate since their OFSTED inspection. The special school visited specifically to evaluate literacy had not improved, though another had. One primary school had achieved a quite startling rise in attainment over two years, one secondary school had made major strides in its planning for literacy across the curriculum in Key Stage 3 and in liaison with Key Stage 2, and another had achieved not only improvements in planning, but also a rise in attainment.

173. Particularly in the primary schools visited, there was a sense of considerable change in the air, some apprehension, but, much more markedly, also considerable excitement. The improvements seen to date, however, understandably in schools outside the NLP, are more related to aspects of planning and provision than attainment. In primary schools, the emphasis on systematic planning for literacy was typically giving rise to more rigorously focused teaching and planning, clarifying objectives, improving the selection and use of resources and raising previously unconsidered issues, such as the management of group work. These improvements were sometimes related to effective early years advice, based on the 'desirable outcomes'. In secondary schools, cross-curricular planning for literacy was becoming established, though to varying extents, and more systematic attention was being given to writing, through the use of writing frameworks, not only in English, and to the development of academic vocabulary.

174. It was not so clear that the LEA had as yet made a leading contribution to these developments. The effectiveness of the LEA's contribution was rated better than satisfactory in only three primary schools and one secondary school. Two of the three schools (one a primary, one a secondary school) which had made most progress had received least support from the LEA. That is not a criticism. It may well be that the LEA chose not to interfere in schools improving on their own initiative. There is, however, an argument for an LEA to visit, and learn, when things are going right. In four out of 12 primary schools, two out of four secondary schools and in the special school, the

contribution of the LEA had been unsatisfactory. Generally speaking, where the LEA's contribution was useful, the initiative had come from the school, though there was one outstanding example of the LEA, through the education inspector, providing co-ordinated support for a well-managed secondary school vigorously following up issues raised in its OFSTED report.

175. The main reason for the relatively limited nature of the LEA's contribution was the absence of appropriate expertise at a sufficiently high level in the LEA. The LEA's attempts to appoint an English adviser were unsuccessful until recently, and this has had a considerable impact. There was evidence of a need to interpret and explain the National Literacy Strategy for teachers who are aware of it and anxious not to be left behind. Teachers in the early years felt more in need of help since for them the National Literacy Strategy involves the largest shift in teaching methodology.

176. The LEA has not yet arrived at a coherent, fully articulated overall framework within which the National Literacy Strategy can be accommodated. It is not clear what the relationship of the LEA's other programmes - Kickstart (a reading recovery programme for pupils in Key Stage 1), Early Start (which aims to involve parents in early literacy development), Fresh Start (Kickstart for older pupils), the family literacy project and the parent education programmes - to the National Literacy Strategy should be, nor how the various approaches used are deployed to meet needs. The LEA has no overview of what schools not in the NLP are doing, and is uncertain of the extent to which schools have implemented elements of the NLP on their own initiative. That will make the design of future training difficult.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN NUMERACY

177. The LEA is not one of those involved in the National Numeracy Project (NNP). Nevertheless, it has set a target of 75% of pupils at level 4 in the Key Stage 2 SATs by 2002 and has the outline of a numeracy strategy in place, preparing for implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy in September 1999. Understandably, preparations are less far advanced than for literacy and what follows does not distinguish between the LEA's support specifically for numeracy and the curriculum support for mathematics.

178. To date, some work has taken place with schools to familiarise them with the NNP Framework for Teaching and to secure greater emphasis on mental mathematics and learning through real-life contexts. Documentation has been circulated to co-ordinators and advice has been given to individual schools which have requested it. The LEA is aware that there is a need to raise awareness, first across the IAS, then in the schools. Its short-term planning provides for this.

179. HMI visited five primary and one special school specifically to look at numeracy, but also made judgements in a range of other schools. What follows is based on evidence from 13 primary schools, four secondary schools and two special schools. Paradoxically, the message is that, though the LEA has done little to promote the effective teaching of numeracy by comparison with literacy, it may be achieving as much.

180. Eight of the primary schools and three secondary schools had improved at least at a satisfactory rate since their OFSTED inspection, as had one of the special schools.

The improvements made were usually in the schools' understanding of the mathematics curriculum, teachers' subject knowledge, planning, documentation and teaching, rather than in attainment, though there were three primary schools in which attainment in mathematics had risen appreciably and one (the same school which markedly raised its English results) in which it had risen very quickly.

181. The contribution of the LEA to improvement had been negligible in the secondary or special schools, but not so in the primary schools. In five primary schools, the LEA's contribution was judged to be good, and satisfactory in two others. In one school - a school which needed to be challenged - it had been nil. In the schools visited, the key to LEA effectiveness was integration of support, usually at the school's initiative, following OFSTED inspection. Where inspection reports had identified numeracy or aspects of mathematics as a key issue, the education inspector had, in three schools, worked very well with the school to advise on planning, evaluate the teaching and identify training and guidance available elsewhere in the LEA. That training included a 10-day course for mathematics co-ordinators presented by a consortium of LEAs. This was valued everywhere. One school had sent all five of its Key Stage 2 staff on it: an expensive strategy, but one beginning to bear fruit in that school. The meetings for mathematics co-ordinators were also generally well regarded, as was the guidance provided by the adviser, whose current secondment was regretted by the schools.

182. However, work on OFSTED key issues, though vital, is not the only way in which attached education inspectors can assist schools. There is, first of all, the text of OFSTED reports to be considered, as well as the key issues. Two reports, one secondary, one primary, contained significant criticisms of standards in numeracy. While these did not emerge as key issues, there was nevertheless action to take. In neither case had the inspector attempted to persuade the school to do so. Performance data indicates that in another primary school, standards in mathematics were falling. In one more they were much lower in Key Stage 2 (where numeracy was so poor that it impeded progress in other areas of the curriculum) than in Key Stage 1. Neither the schools nor the attached education inspector had raised the issue.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

183. The quality of teaching in Manchester schools is higher than the national average measured by OFSTED inspection reports. Eleven of the schools visited were judged to have made improvements in their teaching. Three of the schools so judged were secondary schools. In none of the secondary schools had teaching declined since the OFSTED inspection, though there had been some decline in three primary schools. The overall degree of movement - in either direction - was modest in both phases and in the special schools. No school had declined dramatically, nor had any made a dramatic overall advance. One primary school had made significant improvements in the teaching of the core subjects, and one secondary school had greatly improved the teaching of technology. Elsewhere, the picture was one of small, but worthwhile, improvement, for example in schemes of work, lesson planning or the monitoring of teaching.

184. The effectiveness of the LEA's contribution also varied, usually within narrow limits. It was wholly ineffective in one secondary school and of little use in two others, as well

as in four primary schools. The LEA's contribution was, however, judged to have been good in five primary schools, three secondary schools and one special school.

185. In general, where improvement had been brought about, it had usually been as a result of action taken by staff and led by the head. Sometimes that action had been supported by the LEA, often well. Sometimes, however, a more challenging approach should have been forthcoming, for example, three primary schools had not addressed important weaknesses identified in their OFSTED report. In these instances, the post-inspection support given largely by the education inspector had not been effective in directing the school's attention to the fundamental issues.

186. On the other hand, the better managed schools usually, though not invariably, were able to find sufficient support within the LEA to effect improvement. A number of heads of faculty and department in the secondary schools argued that aspects of pre-OFSTED support had sharpened up their teaching, but they were not usually able to be more specific. Although schools do not generally have means to measure the impact of courses, many use their experience to judge the value of those on offer and make use of providers other than the LEA. Schools' perception of the quality of LEA subject-related training varied greatly, according to the subject, though there was general agreement that in music, dance, PE and drama training was of high quality.

187. Observable effects were harder to detect, partly because schools themselves made little effort formally to evaluate provision. The clearest effects were observed in relation to the 10-day designated courses provided for primary subject co-ordinators. Support to newly-qualified teachers was felt by some schools to be helpful, but its usefulness is less than it could be since the courses provided are not followed up by the LEA. Co-ordinators' and heads of department meetings provide useful updating in some subjects, for example in relation to the NLP in English. Except in PE and the arts there is little consensus among schools about the quality of training, guidance materials and information provided for particular subjects. The evidence suggests that the support is most effective and deemed to be of highest quality when it is closely associated with an action plan overseen by the headteacher, supported by the education inspector. This was the pattern in two secondary schools, and two primary schools. Where necessary, in those schools, that support was accompanied by clear comment by the inspector on weak teaching or by support from personnel in tackling the issue of competence. However, this readiness to comment sharply where necessary was not universal.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOLS

Support for Senior Management

188. About half of the schools visited had good features in their management at the time of their OFSTED inspection. These generally effective schools had made further improvements. The less well-managed schools had improved less, but only one school had not improved at all. Improvements were seen in: management structures, planning procedures, monitoring processes or the introduction of major curriculum changes.

189. The LEA supported these developments partly through effective personnel advice (especially valuable where issues of staff competence arose), advice on budget management (especially in the case of schools with deficits - see below), advice on IT, but mainly through the work of the IAS. At its best, the LEA has provided challenging advice, followed up with active help in implementation. Such support has been beneficial in two-thirds of the schools and very effective in almost half. Where it has been less effective, it has been because the LEA has not been able to provide clear guidance to senior managers on possible future developments or the LEA is not able to provide the support that the schools need on a particular issue. Senior managers in two secondary schools, both with many problems, were placed under considerable pressure when regularly pressed by the LEA to admit disruptive pupils excluded by other schools, without additional support.

190. Good schools or schools with effective headteachers made effective use of LEA support. Others, including those identified by the LEA or OFSTED as having serious weaknesses, and sometimes offered higher levels of support as befitted their levels of need, were not always able to make effective use of this offer. Other schools visited had needs of which they were not aware, and which the LEA had not drawn to their attention. On the whole, then, the support is most effective in the good schools, where it is least needed.

191. All schools were positive about at least some aspects of the professional development programme for headteachers and other managers that the IAS provides. Heads of department and co-ordinator meetings are considered useful for disseminating information about local and national initiatives and updates on inspection issues. Some participants, however, find that they lack focus and structure. Conferences for headteachers are held to be worthwhile, and the range of subjects and speakers is appreciated. Many primary schools had teachers who had been on 10- or 20-day designated courses which they found very valuable.

192. The high level of support schools received prior to OFSTED was helpful generally in enabling staff to understand the process of inspection and to prepare for it, and specifically to help weak departments or parts of the school. In twelve schools the support was perceived mainly as helping them through OFSTED rather than as part of a wider strategy aimed at school improvement. Four schools, however, did see their pre-OFSTED support as a contribution to their understanding of improvement. There was evidence in eight schools of changes arising from the support. The most common of these were improvements to policies and other documentation. In one instance there had been a continuing influence on the headteachers' ability to identify quality in provision.

193. After the OFSTED inspection nearly all schools use a format for drawing up their action plan which has been designed by the IAS, and they benefit from discussion of their plan with the attached education inspector. This planning system has many good features, and usually ensures that schools cover the key issues raised in the report. A common weakness, however, is where schools do not set sufficiently clear criteria for judging the impact of the improvements they set out to implement. The school's education inspector normally visits regularly after the inspection to discuss progress, but these visits do not include systematic monitoring to evaluate the impact of changes. In at least one case more rigorous evaluation of progress would have been beneficial

instead of allowing a school to coast, but in another case the LEA did take action and re-inspected the school a year after its OFSTED visit.

194. The relationship between the schools' post-inspection action plans and their later or longer-term development plans varies from institution to institution. In at least two cases the IAS has been helpful in encouraging the school to dovetail its action plan into longer-term planning and has thereby helped the schools to manage their own development. In some other instances schools would benefit from more advice about such planning.

Support for Governors

195. Inspection reports on the schools visited identified common strengths and weaknesses. Governing bodies generally had sound structures and procedures, but were weak in their capacity to plan and monitor (inter alia) the budget. The LEA has been able to assist them in this respect, and a few governing bodies are taking a more strategic role, mainly in response to advice from education inspectors about action planning.

196. With a few exceptions, attendance at governing body meetings is good, but few governors can spare the time to attend training, and attendance at LEA briefing meetings is poor. A number of chairs of governors indicated that, as volunteers, many governors had a limited amount of time to devote to their role, and prioritised school-specific meetings over training and briefing sessions. In the schools visited, governors were evenly divided in their positive and negative views of the timing and location of governor training sessions and their usefulness. No systematic audit of their training needs is conducted.

197. Training for governors is provided by the Governor Training Unit of the Adult Education Service. It is separate from governor support, which is provided by the Governors' Liaison Officer who offers a 'one-stop shop' for enquiries, directing them where appropriate. This limited, but efficient, service is much appreciated by governors.

198. Governing bodies, with the LEA's help, have on the whole responded positively to issues raised in inspection reports, and have tackled some (notably budget deficits) with energy and success. On this issue, they have received detailed advice from LEA officers. However, some governing bodies do not fulfil their statutory duties in relation to reporting to parents, financial management and headteacher appraisal. It is not clear that the LEA knows this: it provides no clerking service, its database is not up to date, and a few schools felt that the LEA did not know them well. Many voluntary aided schools turned more readily to the diocese for advice. However, with only one exception, all schools were pleased with the advice and support given by the LEA when they made senior appointments.

APPENDIX 1: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS

1. Attainment at age 7 KSI tests/tasks

	Year	% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above					
		Teacher Assessment			Tasks/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	70.5	79.3	-8.8			
	1997	74.5	80.4	-5.9			
English (reading)	1996	69.9	78.6	-8.7	68.4	78.0	-9.6
	1997	73.7	80.1	-6.4	72.7	80.1	-7.4
English (writing)	1996	67.0	76.6	-9.7	70.2	79.7	-9.6
	1997	70.8	77.5	-6.7	72.7	80.4	-7.7
Mathematics	1996	76.3	82.2	-5.9	75.9	82.1	-6.1
	1997	80.2	84.2	-3.9	78.9	83.7	-4.8
Science	1996	78.9	84.1	-5.2			
	1997	82.3	85.5	-3.3			

Source: DfEE

2. Attainment at age 11 Key Stage 2 tests/tasks

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 4 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	52.9	60.1	-7.2	46.6	57.1	-10.5
	1997	56.8	63.4	-6.6	55.8	63.2	-7.5
Mathematics	1996	52.9	59.9	-7.0	43.8	53.9	-10.0
	1997	57.6	64.1	-6.5	55.4	62.0	-6.6
Science	1996	56.3	65.1	-8.8	50.3	62.0	-11.7
	1997	62.0	69.5	-7.5	60.5	68.8	-8.3

Source :DfEE

3. Attainment at age 14 Key Stage 3 tests/tasks

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 4 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	38.7	60.3	-20.6	39.4	56.6	-17.2
	1997	40.2	60.2	-20.0	38.7	56.6	-17.9
Mathematics	1996	40.7	61.5	-20.8	37.2	56.7	-19.6
	1997	43.9	64.0	-20.1	39.8	60.7	-20.9
Science	1996	39.3	59.7	-20.3	36.6	56.4	-19.9
	1997	39.6	62.2	-22.6	37.5	60.8	-23.3

Source :DfEE

4. Attainment at age 16 GCSE results in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
1 A*-G	1995	83.2	93.5	-10.3
	1996	86.1	93.9	-7.9
	1997	87.9	94.0	-6.1
5 A*-C	1995	23.2	41.2	-18.0
	1996	27.9	42.6	-14.7
	1997	27.2	43.3	16.1
5 A*-G	1995	72.7	87.5	-14.7
	1996	76.5	88.1	-11.6
	1997	77.5	88.5	-11.0

Pupils aged 15 at the beginning of the school year and on the roll in January of that year Source: DfEE
1997 data include GNVQ equivalents

5. Attainment at age 18 A level results Average point score per pupil

Number entered	Year	LEA	National	Difference
2 or more	1995	18.2	15.9	2.3
	1996	23.4	16.8	6.6
	1997	20.1	17.1	2.9
Less than 2	1995	2.9	2.7	0.2
	1996	4.7	2.7	2.0
	1997	2.2	2.7	0.5

Source:DfEE

6. Vocational qualifications of 16 to 18 year olds in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries	1995	40.0	80.2	-40.2
Pass entries (Advanced)	1996	75.0	92.2	-4.3
	1997	50.0	67.8	-25.4
Pass entries (Intermediate)	1996	53.4	78.9	-15.7
	1997	20.0	77.1	-48.9

Source: DfEE

The percentage of students who were in the final year of a course leading to approved vocational qualifications who achieved them on the basis of the work done in that year.

7. Attendance

Percentage of pupil sessions	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Attendance in primary schools	1996	91.0	93.4	-2.4
	1997	91.2	93.9	-2.7
Attendance in secondary schools	1996	84.0	90.5	-6.4
	1997	84.2	90.9	-6.6

Source: DfEE

APPENDIX 2: THE SCHOOL SURVEY

A survey was carried out in December 1997 of the views of headteachers in a sample of Manchester primary, secondary and special schools. This survey form has been used by the Audit Commission so far in a total of 16 LEAs.

The survey was sent to 105 schools and there was a 76% response rate:

Type of school	Number sent to	Number of responses
Nursery	7	7
Primary	60	41
Secondary	28	22
Special	10	10

The table presents a summary of the responses to the survey questions as:

- an average ranking on the scale 1 = very good; 2 = good; 3 = adequate; 4 = poor; 5 = very poor
- the ranking of responses in Manchester schools in comparison with schools in the other 15 LEAs where surveys were carried out.

A more detailed analysis of the results from the survey has been presented to the LEA.

Question	Mean score	Comparison with other 15 LEAs (1st= best)
LEA strategy		
How do you rate the communication to your school of your LEA's key priorities?	2.37	8th
How do you rate the quality of your LEA's actions to achieve its priorities?	3.01	15th
Relationship with the LEA		
How do you rate the quality of your relationship with the LEA in the following areas?		
a. The LEA's willingness to listen to your views	2.84	14th

Question	Mean Score	Comparison with other 15 LEAs (1st = best)
b. Its involvement of you in forming its policies and strategies	2.99	10 th
c. Its reflection of your views in strategies and budget setting	3.39	14 th
d. The clarity of the LMS formula and budget allocation	2.71	10 th
e. The openness of the LEA about its budget making process	3.00	14 th
f. Formal communication channels between the LEA and headteachers	2.72	15 th
g. Contact outside these formal liaison channels	2.93	15 th
h. The speed of response by the LEA to your concerns	3.21	16 th
i. The LEA's ability to keep its promises and commitments	3.14	14 th
j. Your confidence that the LEA is on your side/will treat you fairly	2.89	11 th
Finance		
Are you satisfied with the LMS scheme? (%=yes)	29.5%	
What do you think of the current level of delegation between the LEA and schools?		
a. More should be delegated	26.9%	
b. About right currently	60.3%	
c. Less should be delegated	5.1 %	
Information provided by your LEA		
How do you rate the quality of your LEA's services in the following areas?		
a. Guidance and information on legislation, circulars and educational initiatives	2.45	10th
b. Provision of financial management data	2.39	10th
c. Guidance in its use	2.64	9th
d. Provision of comparative performance data	2.88	13th

Question	Mean Score	Comparison with other 15 LEA (1st = best)
e. Guidance in its interpretation	3.12	13th
f. Help in using comparative data for target-setting	3.23	11th
Children in need of additional support		
How do you rate the quality of your LEA's services in the following areas?		
a. Educational Psychology	3.94	15th
b. Administration of statements	4.05	16th
c. Education welfare	3.14	13th
d. Support for pupils with behavioural problems	4.20	16th
e. Services for excluded pupils	4.26	16th
f. Other learning support	3.83	16th
Inspection and advice		
How do you rate the value of your LEA's services in the following areas?		
a. Pre OFSTED/HMCI inspections	1.76	1st
b. During OFSTED/HMCI	2.02	1st
c. Post OFSTED/HMCI	2.05	2nd
d. The LEA's own inspection/review process	2.43	2nd
e. Curriculum support	2.59	6th
f. Quality of teaching	2.79	10th
g. Training	2.55	5th
h. Support to senior management	2.67	7th
i. Literacy and numeracy	2.83	12th
j. Support for school evaluation	2.86	7th
k. School development planning	2.74	8th
l. Target setting	3.02	7th

Question	Mean Score	Comparison with other 15 LEAs(1st= best)
Knowing you		
How well do you think your LEA knows your school?	2.59	6th
How well do you think your LEA understands your school?	2.92	7th
Other support services		
a. Finance	2.53	14th
b. Payroll	2.43	10th
c. Personnel	2.36	14th
d. Legal	2.02	4th
e. Support to the Governing Body	2.51	10th
f. Governor training	2.37	7th
g. IT support	3.24	16th
h. Building Maintenance	4.11	16th
i. Grounds Maintenance	3.73	16th
j. Cleaning	2.92	9th
k. Home to school transport	3.20	15th
l. School meals	2.61	3rd

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