



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF  
KIRKLEES  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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**April 2002**

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

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities* which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, in so far as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value. The previous inspection of the LEA took place in 1997.

2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and 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 all schools. The response rate was 69 per cent. Use was also made of the LEA's own self-evaluation.

3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to two primary, one secondary and one special school. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money. Evidence from other HMI visits to schools in the LEA was also considered, including that from a survey of support for Traveller pupils which was carried out at the same time as this inspection.

## COMMENTARY

4. In socio-economic terms, Kirklees is broadly average, though with a higher than average ethnic minority population. There are areas of poverty in the borough but there have been relative gains since the last inspection in overall prosperity. The council's regeneration programmes have played a part in this. They have also contributed to the beginnings of success in dealing with social exclusion. In particular, the LEA has worked effectively to combat racism. The borough did not see the scale of racial disturbances in 2001 that there were in neighbouring areas.

5. The pupils' attainment is also broadly average. Although the Key Stage 2 targets are not likely to be met, attainment is closer to the targets for 16-year-olds. However, it remains below the national level and, unlike with younger pupils, the gap has not closed. Attendance rates are similar to national ones. Exclusion figures are good overall and another indicator of the progress made in social inclusion.

6. The first inspection showed an authority that was well run and with considerable success in getting external money. Those judgements are still valid. The report also noted the paradox that pupils in this well-run LEA attained standards below average performance, except at the age of seven. Attainment has improved since then and this inspection has shown that the LEA has played its part in that progress. Boys' attainment has improved since the first inspection but the gap with girls' attainment remains. The recommendations of the first report have all been acted upon. In the crucial school improvement areas, providing data and guiding schools on its use, providing support and challenge to schools, and supporting language, literacy and attendance, there have been real gains. Attainment in secondary schools was an issue then. It still is, though there has been progress in the quality of provision the schools make.

7. The authority was strong at the time of the first inspection. It has improved further since then. It is now good, notwithstanding weaknesses in its implementation of Best Value. The progress made is, in large measure, because of a genuine and continuing pursuit of improvement which drives the planning and delivery of services.

8. The following functions and duties are exercised well; the remainder are satisfactory and the only poor one is making arrangements for Best Value;

- the provision of a strategy for school improvement, including education development planning;
- the provision of monitoring, challenge, intervention and support to schools;
- the deployment of support where it is needed most.;
- the use of performance data;
- support for curriculum information and communications technology;
- support for numeracy;
- support for ethnic minority pupils, including travellers;
- the leadership of school improvement services;
- the deployment of services for school improvement;
- the expertise of those services;
- the provision of a strategy for special educational needs;

- the support of school improvement to meet special educational needs; and
- asset management planning;
- combating racism;
- corporate planning;
- speedy, transparent and effective decision making;
- the leadership provided by officers and members; and
- collaboration with other bodies.

9. There are some important key features to the organisation which give us reason for confidence in its capacity for further progress. Not least is the trust and confidence which the schools have in it. In the survey, the schools rated nearly all of the authority's services more favourably than the average ratings given in all other LEAs. The first inspection revealed considerable strength in the strategic management of the LEA. Its priorities were well set. It consulted well and was committed then, as it is now, to evaluation and improvement. The strength of that commitment continues and the drive for improvement has brought further progress, along with a strengthening of the LEAs role in the community. The essence of that strength is in the work of members and officers which succeeds in binding together people, policy and planning to establish a clear sense of direction.

## **SECTION 1: THE LEA's STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Context**

10. The Metropolitan borough of Kirklees in West Yorkshire comprises the towns of Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Batley which are its major population centres, and the smaller towns and villages in the surrounding Pennine dales. In area it is the third largest metropolitan authority and its population is approximately 392,000. The school population, excluding nursery pupils is 61,349. This is a decline of pupils since the first inspection. The decline will continue for some time because it has occurred so far in the primary schools and has yet to work its way through into the secondary schools. The percentage of ethnic minority pupils in the schools is 22.2. This is above the national average of 12.1 per cent and has increased from 18 per cent at the time of the first inspection. The largest single group is of Pakistani background.

11. The pattern of school organisation is complex. In most of the borough, pupils transfer to secondary school at the age of 11. This accounts for about 85 per cent of the pupils but in some areas there are middle schools, with pupils transferring to high schools at the age of 13. In summary, there are 3 nursery schools, 76 primary schools, 27 infant schools, 27 first schools, 22 junior schools, and 7 middle schools. There are 15 secondary schools for 11-16-year-olds, 5 for 11 to 18-year-olds and 2 for 13 to 18-year-olds. One of the 11 to 18 schools is a grammar school. In addition there are eight special schools and a pupil referral unit. The secondary schools lose some pupils from the LEA's primary schools to neighbouring schools across the borders of Leeds and Wakefield.

12 In terms of socio-economic indicators, the borough is now, as it was at the time of the last inspection, similar to national averages. For example, 22.1 per cent of its primary school pupils are entitled to free school meals, compared to 19.7 per cent nationally. The equivalent figures for secondary schools are 19.1 per cent and 17.6 per cent respectively. However, the proportion of the LEAs pupils entitled to free school meals has declined slightly since 1997. Unemployment figures have also declined and at a rate faster than the national decline. In 1998, unemployment stood at 5.1 per cent, compared with the national 4.5 per cent. In 2001, the LEA's figure was 3.3 per cent, compared to the national 3.1 per cent. Although the borough remains in a broadly average position in terms of its prosperity and there are deprived areas, it has made some relative gains since the last inspection. The LEAs analysis of the proportion of its population living in areas of acute poverty shows Kirklees to be now the least deprived of the West Yorkshire metropolitan authorities.

13 Statements of special educational need are maintained for 3.4 per cent of primary aged pupils and 5.6 per cent of secondary aged pupils. These figures remain, as at the last inspection, higher than the national average.

### **Performance**

14. The 1997 report noted that inspection evidence showed that pupils enter school with levels of attainment below the national average. Since then the LEA has

introduced a baseline assessment scheme which shows that situation unchanged. Also, in the tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils continue to perform at levels similar to the national average. Over the period 1997 to 2001, however, Kirklees has improved at a rate faster than the national average. In the reading tests, the LEAs progress was from 76.7 per cent to 83.7 per cent, compared to the national change from 80.3 per cent to 84.4 per cent. Similarly in writing, the LEA moved from 76.2 per cent to 86.4 per cent compared to the national 80.4 per cent to 86.1 per cent. In mathematics, the LEA moved from 81.8 per cent to 91.4 per cent, compared to the national movement from 84.1 per cent to 91.2 per cent.

15. For older pupils the first inspection report noted that performance was below the national average. Since then, in many respects the gap has closed and attainment is now close to national figures. At the end of Key Stage 2 in English, in 2001, the LEAs pupils attained 73.0 per cent, at the required level, compared with 75 per cent. In mathematics in 2001, the LEAs 70.0 per cent compared with the national 70.7 per cent.

16. At the end of Key Stage 3, Kirklees performance in English also improved faster than the national rate. In 2001 it reached 64.2 per cent at the required level compared with the national 65.1 per cent. In mathematics in 2001 Kirklees had 64.8 per cent compared with the national 67.1 per cent. In both subjects, Kirklees performed better than similar areas.

17. In the GCSE, at the level of five or more passes at grades A\* to C, since the first inspection the LEA's progress has followed the national trend, but not, as in earlier key stages, exceeded it. In 2001, 44.8 per cent of Kirklees pupils attained this level, compared with 48.4 per cent nationally. The gap had begun to close.

18. Inspection evidence shows that the LEA's first and infants schools perform well. In their last inspections 86 per cent of them were good or very good, compared with 78 per cent nationally. The proportions of good or very good combined infant and junior schools, of middle schools and of secondary schools are close to the national ones.

19. Attendance is above national levels at 94.8 per cent in primary schools, and 92.1 per cent in secondary schools, compared with the respective national percentages of 94.3 and 91.4.

20. Exclusions are in line with national figures in primary schools, at 0.4 per 1000 pupils. In secondary schools exclusion rates at 1.7 per thousand are below the national figure which is 2.8. The figure for authorities similar to Kirklees is higher still at 3.2 per thousand.

### **Council structure**

21. No party has an overall majority, following the last local elections, which were in 2000. Twenty-nine of the members are Liberal Democrats, 26 are Labour, 14 are Conservatives and 3 are Greens. The members have not formed a coalition and the political administration is based on an arrangement for sharing power whereby all political parties are represented in the executive committee. That committee has



nine members, of whom one is responsible for “lifelong learning”, the portfolio which covers the work of the LEA. The officers’ executive management group parallels, at officer level, the structure of the executive committee. Policy formation is supplemented by an arrangement of core teams under which each portfolio holder is supported by members of other parties. These arrangements are not part of the formal decision making process but serve to extend policy making discussion beyond the narrow confines of the executive committee. Scrutiny is exercised by a single scrutiny committee which has 10 permanent sub-panels, one each of which is responsible respectively for education and for culture and leisure. These structures replace the committee structure which was in place at the time of the first inspection. In at least one respect they have been able to build on the previous structure, since members had formal scrutiny arrangements under that structure.

## Funding

22. Kirklees’ education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) per pupil for 2001/2002 is marginally below its statistical neighbours and the metropolitan district average but 5.7 per cent below the average for England. The council education SSA increase has been lower than the national average for the past two years, mainly as a result of the falling school population. The council has spent at the education SSA for the last five years. Kirklees has taken up all of its Standards Fund options.

23. The level of delegation for 2001/2002 is high at 88.5 per cent, compared with an average of 86.7 per cent in metropolitan district authorities. This is well above the target set by the Secretary of State of 85 per cent. Individual school budgets per pupil for 2001/2002 are below the metropolitan district average for secondary and in line for primary schools.

### Schools’ delegated budgets

£ per pupil	Primary pupil	£	per Secondary pupil	£	per
Kirklees	1933		2520		
Statistical Neighbours	1887		2610		
Metropolitan district	1936		2592		

Source: CIPFA education budget statistics 2001/2002

24. Centrally retained funding is £345 per pupil, which is significantly below both the metropolitan district average of £417 and the national average of £442. The LEA spends two per cent less on special needs in total than both similar authorities and the national average. It also spends a lower than average proportion of the special needs expenditure on pupils without statements.

25. At the time of the first inspection, the LEA was successful in attracting additional external funding; it has continued to be so. This has included the Single Regeneration Budget, Excellence Clusters, and SureStart. The LEA has secured formula capital allocations from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as a result of satisfactory progress on its asset management plan. The education capital

programme is over £15 million and the LEA is involved in two public private partnerships. The first one is worth £43 million and involves the upgrading, development and maintenance of 20 schools. Recent approval has been given for a second similar project to reorganise special school provision.

### **The strategy for school improvement**

26. The first inspection took place before LEAs were required to produce education development plans. This second inspection took place as the authority's first plan neared the end of its implementation and the second plan reached an advance stage of drafting, prior to its submission to the DfES. The first plan is a sound document. The evidence of its implementation and of its evaluation by the LEA, combined with the draft of the second plan, show that education development planning, as the primary vehicle for school improvement, is improving in the authority.

27. The first plan set out seven priorities. They are:

- Intervention to raise standards, which included support for underachieving pupils, raising standards of attainment, and supporting schools with exceptional needs.
- Support for improvement in key skills, which planned improvement in literacy, numeracy, and the use of information and communications technology.
- Support for a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Support for improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Support for improving social inclusion.
- Support for improving the quality of leadership and management which includes supporting the use of performance data for target setting, supporting governors, and supporting self-review.
- Improving structures and strategies for monitoring and evaluation.

28. The plan's strengths outweigh its weaknesses. The activities derive clearly from a systematic audit of need. Its costings are clearly set out. It carries the support of the schools who were consulted well on the composition of the plan which thus came to reflect their own developmental priorities. Its weakness was in not making enough use of performance data as criteria for judging implementation.

29. The LEA's evaluation of the plan's effectiveness has, in effect, dealt with much of this weakness by using performance data in its audit of the first plan even though that plan did not initially propose such an evaluation. In part, this has been made possible by the education department's improved collection and analysis of performance data. For example, it is able to demonstrate some success in raising the attainment of pupils from poor backgrounds by showing a narrowing of the gap in performance in Key Stages 1, 3 and 4 between schools with different levels of free school meal entitlement. The same analysis shows the LEA to have been less successful in narrowing the gap in Key Stage 2. It thus establishes a need for more activity in the second plan.

30. The audit presented for the second plan shows that the LEA has made good progress in most of the activities planned in the first plan. Some areas of weakness are also revealed. In particular these show the need to raise boys' attainment in some schools that have not so far been involved in the LEAs improvement

programme; to narrow the gap between pupils of different ethnic groups which increases among older pupils; to increase the speed of intervention in schools causing concern.

31. Until 2000 the LEA was making good progress with meeting its targets. It has been less successful in 2001. The LEA did not meet its targets for performance at the end of Key Stage 2. The target for English in 2001 was 75 per cent; that level was missed by two points. The target for mathematics was 71 per cent; that level was missed by one point. The LEA just failed to meet its target for five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* - C, gaining 44.8 per cent against its target of 46 per cent. It was, however, with 0.1 per cent of its target for 1 or more A\* - G passes. Although the 2002 targets for GCSE remain attainable, those for Key Stage 2 are unlikely to be met. Those for reducing unauthorised absence and exclusions in both primary and secondary schools are also unlikely to be met unless the rate of progress can be improved. However, despite the problem of reaching the targets, it is important to note that the LEA's rate of exclusion is better than both the national rates and the rates for similar authorities.

32. The detailed activity proposals for the new plan were not available at the time of this inspection but the draft showed very clearly how the new plan will fit together with the LEA's other plans, including the recent development of two excellence clusters.

33. Although the first inspection did not cover the matter of education development planning, it made a series of recommendations related to raising standards. Some related specifically to Key Stage 2, where attainment was then below the national average. Attainment at that level is now in line with the national average.

34. The inspection report recommended the better co-ordination and evaluation of initiatives to raise standards. The school contact officers' support for school management and the development of evaluative activity in the LEA have been directed to this work. The evaluation which is key to the development of the new Education Development Plan (EDP) shows initiatives being used to improve their effectiveness.

35. The report recommended further work to improve boys' attainment. The gap with national averages remains broadly similar overall in the LEA, though has narrowed a little in English at the ages of 11 and 14. However, the LEA's audit of the first development plan shows that progress has been made in those schools in which the LEA has provided support specifically targeted to the issue. There is a clear intention to improve in this matter.

36. The report also recommended more effective support for secondary schools. In so far as there is at least a reasonable prospect of the schools reaching their GCSE targets, the support provided has been positive. However, inspection evidence suggests a continuing weakness in the phase.

## The allocation of resources to priorities

37. The council does not have a documented financial strategy to show its overall spending priorities. However, recent executive papers confirm continuing all party support for an education budget set at the education SSA for next financial year. Overall spending is currently set at six per cent above the aggregated assessment for all of the borough's services.

2001/2002	Education	Personal social services	Highways	Other services	Total
<b>BUDGET</b>	183,598	75,237	16,038	79,652	<b>354,525</b>
<b>SSA</b>	183,567	67,225	15,361	67,637	<b>333,790</b>
<b>BUDGET as % of SSA</b>	100%	112%	104%	118%	<b>106%</b>

38 The LEA has met all government spending targets. Education budget priorities are clearly documented and shared with schools in an open and transparent consultation booklet each year. Details are provided not only on the emerging issues for the new financial year but also on all centrally retained budgets. The booklet "Budget Matters 2002/2003" is an example of good practice. It was distributed to schools in November 2001 and discussed at consultation meetings with schools in December 2001. It also includes a tear out sheet for individual responses. Although Kirklees consults in more detail and earlier than most LEAs, actual school budgets are not distributed to schools until the middle of March. That leaves schools with insufficient planning time.

39 Financial control within the education department is effective. Service plans are linked well to revenue budgets at a summary level and supplemented by detailed four-weekly budgetary monitoring and control. School balances for both primary and secondary are low overall at five per cent and three per cent respectively. However, it is unsatisfactory that 20 per cent of secondary schools have deficits. The LEA has secure recovery plans in place and a good system to monitor their progress. The school funding formula has not had a major review since 1996 but there has been some work recently to simplify it.

## Structure for achieving improvement and Best Value

40. The education department has a strong and effective approach to improvement but its approach to the implementation of Best Value is unsatisfactory. Weak corporate leadership and lack of project management of Best Value in both education and corporate departments has resulted in unsatisfactory progress. Too few officers understand the requirements of the work. Only one education Best Value review has been completed; others in the Best Value programme relating to education have either been delayed or not started. The council, in July 2001 produced a very open and honest position statement of what needed to be done to improve the corporate leadership and direction of the work. At the time of the inspection there was little evidence of this position statement having had an effect on

completed Best Value reviews. There are plans to reorganise the corporate support team. Within the education department, there is service scrutiny which is clearly leading to improvement. This work is a longstanding strength of the authority but it is separate from Best Value which, in practice, is seen as a corporate process bolted, rather than a fundamental part of management.

41. The Best Value Performance Plan for 2001/2002 received a qualified approval from the district auditor because the authority did not distribute a summary of the plan to all households, on the grounds that the leader of the council was a parliamentary candidate at the time. The audit report also included a number of recommendations including the integration of Best Value into the day-to-day work of the council and the implementation of a stronger performance management framework. The executive committee's minutes show that officers presented a written report to cabinet inaccurately describing the auditor's findings as an unqualified opinion. However, officers say this was corrected orally at the meeting. Members' involvement in Best Value reviews has been inconsistent and they have not been involved early enough in the challenge process. The LEA has a developing performance management framework that includes corporate objectives, performance indicators and action plans.

### **Recommendations**

#### **In order to improve the LEA's strategy for school improvement:**

- improve schools' financial planning by preparing and distributing their final budgets earlier; and
- improve the implementation of Best Value in the education service by introducing project management, informing and training the department's officers about the work, and by increasing members' involvement in it.

## **SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Summary**

42. The LEA has improved since the first report and is effective in carrying out its school improvement functions. The cost of the service is above average but its impact is good and it therefore provides satisfactory value for money.

43. At the time of the first inspection, the extent to which the LEA had defined monitoring, challenge and intervention and shared those understandings with schools was satisfactory, but with some weaknesses. The main strengths of the provision were in the information provided for schools and in consultation with them. The support for primary schools was good and that for secondary schools was satisfactory. There were also weaknesses: the lack of clarity in the role of the school contact officers; insufficient expertise and knowledge to advise on management; and in guidance for schools on the use of performance data. There has been progress since the first inspection. The LEA's management support services are, overall, satisfactory and enable schools' managers to pursue the priority of raising attainment. The progress made by the LEA's schools in raising the attainment of their pupils is well supported by the authority's exercise of its school improvement functions. The provision has the strengths which were evident in the first inspection, and most weaknesses have been successfully tackled.

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

44. The authority has responded well to recommendations in the last report. In conjunction with schools they have clarified the monitoring, challenge and support roles of the school contact officers. Clear protocols, monitoring systems and training for officers have improved and ensured greater consistency in support for schools. This function of the LEA is now good.

45. The LEA monitors schools' performance effectively and is able to intervene, challenge and target support well. School performance data, OFSTED school inspection reports, notes of visit, financial and other data are analysed annually by a monitoring group. This analysis enables the LEA to allocate support to schools effectively and in relation to their needs.

46. Schools understand the differentiated support they receive and the various types of intervention they can expect. Evidence from interviews and school visits shows that schools are confident and autonomous aided by school self-evaluation courses and good use of performance data. School contact officers use data effectively for target setting, for school development planning and to focus support. Notes of visit are evaluative and include recommendations that are followed up on the next visit. They are shared with headteachers and relevant specialists and monitored by the service. Headteachers value the role of the school contact officer in school development. Schools surveyed rated the LEA's knowledge and understanding of schools and ability to challenge and support more highly than in other LEAs. Inspection evidence substantiates this.

47. The LEA has responded well to the last report's recommendation to improve the dissemination of good practice by establishing subject and leadership networks. This arrangement is well co-ordinated with some common items included on agendas for meetings. Minutes are taken, circulated, and monitored by the service. This allows common messages and good practice to be shared as well as providing a mechanism for feedback to the service. Leading literacy and numeracy teachers share their practice when visiting teachers. The LEA has devised a successful scheme whereby heads of department from effective schools work with departments in schools in challenging circumstances. The education department publishes useful guidance, advice and teaching materials for schools.

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

48. The wide knowledge which the contact officers have of their schools through their monitoring work, combined with the analysis of it by the service as a whole facilitates the effectiveness of the work. This is good.

49. The last report highlighted strengths in the provision of data but weaknesses in the provision of guidance for its use. That weakness has been dealt with. The use made of data by the education department and in the schools is crucial to the service's success in challenging the schools to improve.

50. Since the first report, the LEA has continued its development of electronic systems and approaches to the collection, analysis and use of data. The management information unit has expanded to cope with the demand. A comprehensive range of data is provided for schools. This complements national data. Local benchmarked and comparative data enable schools to compare their performance with similar schools. Benchmarking financial and personnel data are provided. The already well established baseline assessment scheme is being replaced by a better one. The breakdown of results by attainment, gender and ethnic group at an individual pupil level assists planning. Progress can be tracked and targets set for pupils termly. Schools appreciate and use this level of detail for targeting specific groups of pupils for focused support. This was evident in the interviews with headteachers and the school survey.

51. The LEA has established effective mechanisms for the review and improvement of services. The education development plan review found that training and guidance on use of data for senior managers in primary and secondary schools complemented by a school self review course have enabled good use of data at this level. Special schools are making sound use of 'P' scales to measure attainment. In primary schools teachers use data for target setting and planning has improved. The LEA has found weaknesses in secondary schools' use of data. This was confirmed during the inspection. Secondary heads of department interviewed reported that data from primary schools often arrived too late for them to use for grouping pupils and planning. They were also sceptical about the validity of data. The LEA has begun to tackle these issues through training for heads of department and a new electronic common transfer form to be introduced from May 2002.

52. Good use of data has assisted the raising of standards in the authority year on year. OFSTED school inspection reports for schools show the use of data is a

strength. School contact officers visit schools annually to discuss standards and agree targets. The schools are well prepared for the analysis and use of data. They are able to interpret data confidently and engage in challenging debates about target setting and action planning. Targets set are increasingly more realistic as data for individual pupils is used and the data is available to predict future performance substantiates this.

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

53. The effectiveness of LEA's identification of and intervention in under-performing schools is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. This is an improvement on the last report that found provision satisfactory, strengths outweighing weaknesses.

54. Few schools require special measures or have been identified with serious weaknesses. All schools judged to be in these categories in the last year were known to the LEA and support was already in place, although it had yet to be fully effective. Those visited by HMI since March 2000 were found to be making satisfactory progress. HMI have revisited a school identified by OFSTED as underachieving and found significant improvements. No school has slipped from serious weaknesses to special measures in the last two years. The majority of schools are removed from special measures in less than two years. The LEA aspires to having no schools with serious weaknesses and no schools performing at lower levels than similar schools. The elected members give high priority to schools causing concern and monitor their progress regularly.

55. The LEA has improved systems for identifying, intervening in and monitoring the progress of schools causing concern. Five categories of concern are used to identify schools; the last two of them are for schools having serious weaknesses or needing special measures. Systems for identifying schools causing concern are known to schools and used effectively. However, in the past the LEA did not always intervene quickly enough in the case of weak management. Recently appointed seconded and newly appointed experienced headteachers are making a good impact on schools. The LEA has intervened where necessary and made good use of its legal powers to appoint additional governors and remove delegated budgets. It has issued one formal warning.

56. Schools and the LEA have a clear understanding of responsibilities in relation to school improvement. In interviews and school visits during the inspection, headteachers had a clear idea of the actions the school needed to take and what support they could expect from the LEA. School contact officers' support for post inspection action plans is generally good. The LEA's support plans are evaluative and clear. Schools have accessed targeted school improvement funding well, submitting action plans that have been approved by the LEA. Funding has been released and there are plans to evaluate its use.

57. Support for leadership and management in these schools is good. The headteachers feel supported in challenging circumstances to tackle a range of issues including finance and personnel. Even so, improvement in some primary and many secondary schools is held back by staffing difficulties. There is good co-



ordination and sequencing of support to maximise impact. Literacy and numeracy support has had a good impact on teaching and helped raise standards. The LEA is thorough in monitoring progress and giving feedback to schools. Notes of visit are evaluative and give clear recommendations for action. Headteachers and governing bodies receive regular reports. However, the inspection showed some evidence that governing bodies sometimes do not receive information about officers' concerns about schools early enough.

### **Support for literacy**

58. The provision of support for literacy was assessed as satisfactory in the first inspection. Attainment has improved since then at a rate faster than the national rate. The recommendations of the first report have been acted upon and the draft EDP shows perceptive evaluation of the work to date, together with plans for its further improvement. No detailed fieldwork was done in this area for which the LEAs support remains sound.

### **Support for numeracy**

59. Support for numeracy is good. At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 standards have risen at a faster rate than nationally and the gap with national averages is closing. In 2001, 70 per cent of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 attained Level 4 exceeding the original target of 67 per cent but less than the revised target of 71 per cent. The revised target for 2002 of 80 per cent is unlikely to be met. However, the proposed target for 2004 of 81 per cent is both challenging and realistic.

60. The national numeracy strategy has been introduced effectively in primary schools. Training for all schools has been received well. Schools needing additional support have been identified well and there are good links between the numeracy consultants and the school contact officers. There have been significant improvements in standards in many schools receiving additional support, particularly in Key Stage 2. Effective use of data has helped raise standards in most schools. For example, the detailed analysis of pupils' errors in tests has been used to help plan teaching. The school survey, school inspection reports and interviews during the inspection confirm this. Moreover, the LEA has audited the current education development plan and identified planning for progression as the next area for action.

61. There are good arrangements for disseminating good practice that are having a positive impact on teaching. The leading mathematics teacher scheme has enabled primary teachers to observe good practice and this has increased teachers' confidence. Networks of subject leaders provide for sharing good practice and raising concerns. Consultants provided valuable teaching ideas to stimulate pupils. A mathematics festival helped promote greater interest in learning mathematics.

62. The LEA has an excellent team of officers and consultants who have made a good impact on raising standards. Between them they have an extensive range of management, teaching and research expertise and a good knowledge of mathematics. The team has a very good rapport with teachers and is able to establish good working relationships. Through a good analysis of school data they are able to target support and pitch the level of their work well. Attention is given to

raising the attainment of boys and pupils from ethnic minority groups. Appropriate links are made with the literacy, ethnic minority and early years teams. They are able to demonstrate good teaching of mathematics and work alongside teachers as they gain confidence.

### **Support for information and communication technology (ICT)**

63. This support was not covered in the first inspection. It is effective. School inspections show that 95 per cent of schools have made satisfactory or better progress since their last inspection. Eighty-five per cent of teachers have completed New Opportunities Fund training in advance of the April 2003 target date and all but four schools have registered for training prior to the March 2002 deadline. At the end of Key Stage 3, in 2001, 71 per cent of pupils attained Level 5 or above, in excess of the national average. At the end of Key Stage 4, 25 per cent of pupils attained an accredited information technology pass. Targets for computer to pupil ratios in both the primary and secondary phases are in line to be met by August 2002. Schools' views substantiated this positive picture.

64. The LEA uses its knowledge of the schools well to plan effectively and provide well-matched support. The education department's evaluations show National Grid for Learning finance and New Opportunities funding have been used well. Training and in-school support is well directed at improving assessment and improving teachers' skills.

65. Improving teachers' capability is a rightly identified major priority which has led to raised standards. Support for the work is managed very well but there is much still to do to ensure all teachers are proficient in the use of the new technology but much good work has already been done. Officers have received training that has helped them to gain new skills and realise the potential of new technologies for teaching, curriculum planning and management. Headteachers have benefited from training in the use of electronic data for monitoring pupil attainment and target setting. ICT subject leaders have gained confidence in curriculum planning and there are good opportunities for sharing good practice through subject leader networks and the LEA web site. The subject leaders are now planning ICT into the wider curriculum. A Beacon school shares its expertise with others.

66. Support for administration and curriculum is provided by a traded service bought back by nearly all schools. An award bearing body has accredited the training provision. A wide range of courses is offered covering all aspects of ICT at different levels. Portfolios of pupils' work have been collated to show levels of attainment. Advice and information are readily available through a helpline and email response service. There is an excellent range of expertise among officers, consultants, seconded teachers and support staff. Teachers and headteachers interviewed during the inspection confirmed this view.

67. Electronic communication is being speeded up. All schools are connected to the Internet. Nearly 20 per cent of schools now have broadband connections. The LEA is making increasing use of its web-site and many schools have created their own sites.

68. The LEAs support for information technology in school administration is satisfactory. Areas of weakness in the strategy for the work and inefficient email communication have both recently been improved. There is now a strategy in place to purchase and replace central database systems although this does not yet fully show how all of the systems will be connected. The strategy has been late to develop as a result of the previous lack of co-ordination between the authority's central information technology section and the education department.

69. Schools rated electronic communication between the department and the schools as poor. A new email system is currently being implemented to replace the existing system, which lacks capacity and reliability. Support for administration software is bought back by all but four schools. It provides both curriculum and administration systems in schools. This support is good and the schools are confident they will be able to complete the annual electronic census of pupils by the end of January. The LEA has provided good training and help line support during the last six months to ensure the smooth running of the process.

70. The council's website provides information on central services such as admissions and free school meals. Responses received to inquiries made by email to the contact details displayed on the website were prompt.

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

71. Support for schools to raise standards in Key Stage 3 was not covered in the first inspection. Its strengths outweigh its weaknesses, and standards have risen.

72. The LEA has good mechanisms for monitoring standards in Key Stage 3, as in the other key stages. This year good use was made of Key Stage 2 data to set Key Stage 3 targets. This has led to raised expectations for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3.

73. The LEA has prepared schools well for the Key Stage 3 strategy. The school contact officers have been briefed well and are monitoring schools' action plans. The LEA responds well to emerging issues and acts promptly. For instance, the LEA's response to early indications that senior managers in some schools were not wholeheartedly backing the strategy was to strengthen the monitoring done by school contact officers and to establish leadership networks.

74. Implementation of the strategy has begun well. Consultants with relevant expertise in literacy and numeracy have been appointed, inducted and have attended regional training. Information and communications technology consultants are being recruited. Most key teachers have attended training but accessing supply cover was a problem for some. Data for gender, ethnicity and socio-economic factors are analysed and used for planning. All schools have held training days for literacy across the curriculum training days and similar training for numeracy is planned for this term. Subject teachers from across the curriculum are beginning to attend literacy and numeracy courses. Work with intensive schools has begun well with departments undertaking self-evaluation prior to negotiating a programme of support. Summer schools have been successful in aiding pupils at Level 3 to catch up and bridging units were used in mathematics to help primary to secondary

transfer. Teachers interviewed confirmed this positive start. In some schools, difficulties in recruiting teachers, particularly in mathematics, are inhibiting the implementation of the strategy.

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

75. The first inspection report dealt with support for ethnic minority pupils in the context of language development and recommended that the LEA should improve its collection and analysis of performance data in terms of ethnicity. This analysis is now a strong part of the LEA's work. The school survey, discussions with headteachers and visits to schools showed that the support for ethnic minority pupils, including Travellers, is now good.

76. Since that inspection, the LEA and the schools have forged a strong partnership which ascribes a very high priority to improving the attainment of children from ethnic minority heritages. That partnership stresses the autonomy of schools by delegating a high proportion of the relevant government grant to the schools and developing policy through a strategy group composed of representatives from all phases of schooling and including the teachers' associations. The work is based on a strong corporate commitment and the support is now good, though there remains some way to go to close the gaps between the levels of attainment of different ethnic groups.

77. The ethnic minority achievement team is based in the LEA's community education service and has very strong links with the school effectiveness service. There is a clear policy and an impressive range of practice related to support for English as an additional language and other aspects of support. There is also a detailed range of statistical information from baseline to the educational performance and destinations of schools leavers, all analysed according to ethnic minority grouping over the last three years. There is also impressively detailed information about other aspects such as exclusions and the special educational needs of these children. Targets are set effectively after detailed audit. Pupils' performance in all key stages is carefully monitored and the service has detailed knowledge of the performance of individual schools to underpin the statistics for the LEA as a whole and to help the schools set their own targets. The quality of the guidance given by the LEA to schools is good. The main guidance document won a Commission for Racial Equality award for best practice in education just over a year ago.

78. Support for Traveller pupils is located within the ethnic minority achievement service and involves a consortium arrangement with a neighbouring authority. The service was established in 1999. Despite the short period of its existence it has achieved success in securing access to school for pupils on unauthorised encampments and building good links with schools and Traveller families. It has also provided training for teachers and developed a stock of culturally specific resources to support schools. The rapid progress made by this small service is in consequence of carefully balanced priorities and strategies for targeting time and resources coupled with purposeful leadership and support from the education department's senior managers. The weakness of the service is that it does not yet track and record the attainment of Traveller pupils. The service is aware that this matter needs attention and, overall, it is well placed to build on its effective start.

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

79. Provision is satisfactory. This area was not covered in the first inspection but the LEA has been concerned to provide support for such pupils since about that time.

80. The LEA produced and issued last year, draft policy guidance to schools on gifted and talented pupils. It has established a strategy group of teachers and officers which is currently in process of refining results of consultations and preparing substantive guidance. The plan is to use the excellence clusters as a test bed for developing ideas and practices which will be extended to all schools. A launch event for the LEA policy and strategy will follow completion of the consultation process and has been timetabled for summer term 2002.

81. There have been two summer schools for gifted and talented pupils in primary schools organised as part of the work of the LEA's "University of the First Age", and more are planned for this summer. They provided effective support for the development of materials and activities for gifted and talented pupils. The work has also involved links with other LEAs and study visits to look at provision abroad. Using the excellence clusters, the LEA is promoting training for subject leaders to provide model approaches for gifted and talented pupils in all areas of the curriculum.

82. There is also work to improve the LEA's performance data. Existing statistics relate only to the higher performance levels at the ends of key stages. The work is intended to produce a statistical base which will form a key appendix to the policy and strategy to be published this summer. Overall, strengths outweigh weaknesses.

## **Support for governors**

83. Support for governors was assessed in the first inspection as satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. This continues to be the case. This is supported by the views expressed by schools in the school survey. No fieldwork was done in this area.

## **Support for school management**

84. Support for management in the first inspection was judged satisfactory and the LEAs view is that it has continued to be so. No detailed fieldwork was done in the area. The LEA's audit of the education development plan showed strong features in the work. Furthermore, in the school survey, schools rated the support very highly.

85. However, this inspection's coverage of Best Value arrangements revealed a weakness. The schools have been provided with very limited guidance on how to implement Best Value principles. Although the schools are required to submit to the education department, along with their budget plans, a statement about their implementation of Best Value, too few of them actually do so and the LEA does not check whether they have done so.

## **Support for under fives**

86. This area of work was not covered in the first inspection, and the LEA suggested its coverage in this inspection because much development work, both in extending provision and in order to improve quality has taken place since the first inspection. That development has been able to build on an integrated approach to early years work, the LEA having worked with the private and voluntary sectors since 1993, considerably before the requirement to establish an Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. This body of development has been broadly successful and the strengths of the support clearly outweigh its weaknesses.

87. The borough now has 73 per cent of its three-year-olds in early years places and places for all four-year-olds whose families want to take them up. The demand for places for three-year-olds currently exceeds supply but the target for numbers of places has been exceeded this year and the partnership is therefore on track to reach its target of provision for all by 2004. There is, however, some unevenness of the amount of provision in different areas of the borough and the location of that provision is currently being reviewed in order to produce a better distribution. In the development of early years provision, the LEA has successfully used single regeneration budget money to develop an early years excellence centre which integrates nursery provision and support for families with adult education provision.

88. These successes notwithstanding, the support for early years has some way to go in improving the quality of provision. The LEA's analysis of OFSTED inspection in the school year 2000/2001 shows foundation stage work to be a strength in 45 per cent of the schools but an issue for action in a further 36 per cent. The LEA intends to address this in the next education development plan. The early years service has already begun to deal with the problem with its consultancy work and the guidance it has published, "Quality for Young Children in Kirklees". That document is good. It is accessible, to the point, well written and useable. A particular strength is its guidance to early years providers to assess their own work to establish where improvement is necessary. Discussion with headteachers and school visits showed that the guidance is effective in securing improvement. The LEA's own analysis of its schools causing concern also shows that, where extra support has been put into the early years, it has led to improvement. The early years service has the potential to deal with the remaining weaknesses in provision.

## **School management support services**

89. Management support services are satisfactory overall. Information on services is provided, in a good consistent corporate style, well in advance of the start of the financial year. However the information does not include the price of the vast majority of services to be provided. The LEA has adapted an annual simple buy back arrangement for most services to schools where the price charged for the service is the same as the amount delegated to individual schools. It is not satisfactory that headteachers are asked to sign up for traded services before knowing the actual price of the service. The actual price is not available until detailed budgets are distributed to schools in the middle of March.

90. The provision of **financial and personnel support** was previously assessed as satisfactory. Schools' views are that indicated financial services are above satisfactory and that payroll and internal audit are good, as are all elements of personnel services. The LEA's own view is that both services are satisfactory. Overall there are few areas of major weakness.

91. **Property Services** to schools are also satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. The service is provided to schools by a central department under a service level agreement which is similar to an insurance. All except four schools buy into the service by returning their delegated budget to pay for the service. Schools rated the service as generally satisfactory in both the school survey and in discussion. The advice given to schools links well to the asset management plan and officers rightly attend service monitoring groups to clarify issues raised by headteachers. The service manages the work carried out under the maintenance contract work on behalf of the LEA in a way which is satisfactory overall.

92. **Grounds Maintenance** is satisfactory with clear strengths in the detailed analysis of customer satisfaction surveys recently introduced. Local performance indicators on cost per hectare for 2000/2001 show the service to be around 12 per cent below the average for statistical neighbours. Schools rated the service as slightly above satisfactory.

93. **Catering and cleaning** are subject to a Best Value review which started in November 2000 and, unsatisfactorily, had not been completed at the time of the inspection.

### **Support for the recruitment and retention of teachers**

94. Until this last year, Kirklees has experienced little difficulty with the recruitment and retention of teachers and even now its problems, though increasing are not nearly as serious as those in many other parts of the country. During the autumn term of 2001, 170 teaching posts were advertised. All of them were filled, though some only on a temporary basis. The LEA has recently appointed a strategy manager for this part of its work but has been active in the area for some time previously. That activity has helped the schools avoid serious problems until now.

95. In 1999 the LEA established a project to recruit ethnic minority teachers. The object of the project was to make the ethnicity of the authority's teachers resemble the ethnic make up of the community more closely. The project has had some success in recruitment, but the proportion of minority ethnic teachers remains at 2.5 per cent because of mobility in the teaching force. The education department works actively to recruit newly qualified teachers and to retain them through its programme of support, together with its wider programme of continuous professional development. It also operates a scheme of voluntary collaboration between the schools' governing bodies to find vacancies in Kirklees schools for teachers whose posts become redundant in other schools in the authority.

96. Nevertheless, pressures are building. Schools are finding it more difficult to get supply teachers, as the available pool of such staff is recruited to full-time posts.

The most serious difficulties are in schools causing concern. The education department has set up a team of seconded support teachers but, nevertheless, headteachers of such schools, with whom discussions were held, reported on the problem and, in two of the schools causing concern which were visited, recruitment difficulties were harming the schools' efforts to raise standards.

### **The effectiveness of services to support school improvement**

97. The school effectiveness service delivers the school improvement services which support schools in management, teaching and curriculum. The leadership and management of the service are effective. The strategy of the service is a good one and clearly set out in the EDP. The strategy is based on the government's code of practice for relationships between schools and LEAs. Both the strategy and its implementation demonstrate the LEA's response to the needs for improvement specified in the first inspection.

98. The service comprises eight well co-ordinated teams that support schools to improve standards and increase social inclusion. Schools value and make good use of the wide range of expertise available in the service. The only shortage is in secondary management expertise but this has recently been addressed by the appointment of a former secondary headteacher to the team. This overall strength has been achieved at the same time as keeping costs in control. The additional income that funds this large service is earned when schools buy back services and from trading outside of the authority.

99. The work of the service is well monitored. There is effective professional development and annual appraisal within the service itself. A set of competencies is being developed that can be used for self-assessment and improvement. These evaluative procedures provide a strong base from which the service can work towards the introduction of a performance management system compatible with the corporate one. Given the evident improvement in the schools and the contribution the service makes to that improvement, the service provides satisfactory value for money.



## **Recommendations**

### **In order to make school improvement more effective:**

- improve schools' implementation of Best Value by providing them with further guidance on the matter and ensuring that they submit a statement, setting out how they are meeting Best Value principles;
- improve the quality of early years education by increasing the support for schools with identified weaknesses in the foundation stage;
- improve school's financial management and choice of services by determining the actual price of services on offer to schools earlier and informing schools of the price at least one month before the start of the financial year; and
- work with schools causing concern to aid their recruitment and retention of teachers.

## **SECTION 3: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION**

### **Summary**

100. The LEA has a well developed understanding of all aspects of special educational needs, not least inclusion. It has shared that understanding with all its educational partners and has articulated the process of change in a way and at a speed which has secured both consensus and commitment. A very high proportion of pupils with statements are in mainstream provision. There are sound systems for meeting statutory obligations, improving provision and raising standards. Overall, the work is highly satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection.

### **Strategy**

101. Although the earlier report expressed some judgements about the LEAs' provision, none bear directly on the strategy itself. The LEA's strategy for special educational needs is good. There is a clear policy which defines pupils' entitlement and fully reflects national as well as local policy directions. The associated strategy has been subject to detailed and lengthy consultation with all interests, and at a deliberate pace which has secured and retained consensus. The elements of the strategy are clearly delineated. They include: the promotion of inclusion in mainstream of pupils with statements of special educational needs; a reorganisation of special schools (reducing them from eight to five) to secure greater fitness of provision for curricular purpose and as enhanced centres of expertise for outreach; a review of the more than 20 resource provision facilities; and development of earlier intervention. The last of these will lead to a reduction in the number of pupils requiring statements and involves the phased introduction of 'New Approaches'. This is a scheme to ensure that there is greater focus of resource to needs within mainstream provision, without recourse to the formal assessment process.

102. The school survey and discussions with headteachers and others rate the quality of planning better than satisfactory and, in the case of the secondary schools, at a level which places the LEA in the top quarter nationally. The LEA has increased the percentage of pupils with statements in mainstream schools and the latest available validated information indicates that 73 per cent of pupils with statements are now in mainstream schools. This is significantly ahead of the national average.

103. The strategy is being implemented well and to a clear timescale. There has been good training for teachers and governors. Members have been involved in the process and have provided effective leadership, for example in the consultation which resulted in the LEA's proposal for the special school reorganisation which is currently within the statutory processes. Overall the strategy is based on a clear audit of needs and is sufficiently flexible to take account of changes, such as the rapid recent development of specific resource provision in mainstream schools for children with autistic spectrum disorders.

### **Statutory obligations**

104. The previous inspection assessed the LEA's arrangements for meeting its special needs statutory duties as satisfactory. The handling of these matters has

further improved and there are elements of good practice. The schools' survey showed some variation in schools' views of the work but on the whole found it satisfactory.

105. OFSTED's statistics from 2000 show the percentage of statements at the primary level were 3.4 per cent compared with the national average of 2.7 per cent and at secondary, 5.6 per cent compared with 4 per cent. However, over the last two years, since the introduction of "New Approaches", the numbers of new statements has decreased by 23 per cent and at the same time the number of discontinued statements is significantly ahead of statistical neighbours and national averages. The percentage of statemented pupils is declining. Moreover, the introduction of "New Approaches" is having a clear impact on the quality of education provided for pupils with special needs, contributing to improvements in levels of attainment. The quality of statements and of their maintenance are good.

106. The speed of their processing has improved significantly over the last three years. The percentage of statements completed with permitted exceptions within 18 weeks was 81 per cent last year and the figure is continuing to improve. This year the percentage of statements completed within 18 weeks not allowing for exceptions was 73.5 per cent which is about 20 per cent above the national average. Registration of appeals from parents to the special needs tribunal is at a lower figure than the national mean and there is a highly effective parent partnership organisation. Examination of pupils' files confirmed the sensitivity and responsiveness of the LEA in handling parents' legitimate concerns.

### **Improvement and value for money**

107. The previous inspection report had no observations on the value for money for special educational needs secured by the LEA but it judged special needs support as unsatisfactory, mainly because of schools' concerns about a shortage of educational psychological support. Inspection of the Best Value review of this service now, shows that it has improved. It is also clear that other aspects of provision such as sensory and behaviour support services are sufficient in quantity, very responsive to individual and school needs, and are rightly seen as a strength of the LEA. They provide support in schools, which contributes significantly to the capacity of teachers to meet a wide range of special needs.

108. Support provided by the LEA for special needs co-ordinators is rated in the survey at a level which puts this LEA's practice in the top quarter nationally for both primary and secondary schools. Additionally, headteachers and co-ordinators welcomed the LEA's latest plan which is disseminating special schools' expertise in the use of P scales into mainstream schools as a key contribution to school improvement for young people whose attainments and progress have not in the past been reliably recorded. The development within the strategy for inclusion of special schools as centres of excellence for outreach also rightly attracts considerable support from those consulted. The LEA's policy reflects a commitment to early intervention and practice indicates the development of key links with the early years service to promote early intervention. This supplements arrangements with voluntary organisations as well as the LEA's own development of its portage and portex services.

109. The LEA spends in total about two per cent less on special educational needs than similar authorities and the national average but more than both on pupils with statements. Support for pupils without statements increased significantly in the last year but is still well below both similar authorities and the national average. The development of New Approaches has begun and the delegation of funds for all statements in primary and secondary schools has now been completed. These developments contribute to the implementation of the LEAs strategy. This inspection produced no evidence that schools are encountering significant difficulties in handling these responsibilities. LEA budgetary control of expenditure on special needs is generally good. In general, provision made by the LEA is effective and pupils with special needs perform satisfactorily. Costs are less than average and value for money is strongly satisfactory.

## **SECTION 4: PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

### **Summary**

110. The LEA has made significant progress in tackling social inclusion. Provision overall is good. The previous inspection did not judge support for social inclusion. Since then, both the present educational development plan and its draft replacement place a strong emphasis on the needs of underachieving and vulnerable groups. The LEA works effectively with pupils in public care and with those excluded from school. Support to improve behaviour is good and that to improve attendance is satisfactory. Work on tackling racism is also good and is enhanced by clear direction and effective policies from the corporate centre which bear on all aspects of equality of opportunity. Relationships with local ethnic minority communities are well articulated and fruitful.

111. Work on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is also well advanced and continuing with special schools working increasingly as centres of excellence and as strong points for the development of outreach.

112. There are strong effective local partnerships focusing on the needs of pupils and young people generally. There are also good examples of collaboration with other LEAs to promote good practice. The LEA also makes good use of a variety of funding sources, such as the Standards Fund and the Single Regeneration Budget, to focus on particular needs in specific areas to promote the inclusion of people such as isolated mothers, refugees and asylum seekers and young children. The LEA monitors achievement regularly, has identified areas that need improvement and has clear and coherent plans for addressing them.

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

113. The provision of school places was judged satisfactory in the first inspection. No detailed fieldwork was done in this area where the performance indicators are in line with the national average. Schools' views, and the LEAs own view, indicate that it is still satisfactory.

### **Admissions**

114. Admission arrangements are sound. The LEA operates a single preference admissions system linked to priority admission areas, which has worked well for a number of years. Appeals lodged at both primary and secondary stage are low. Approximately half of the appeals are rejected, which is in line with the national average. The LEA is currently consulting on introducing a multiple preference system in response to pending legislation and recent admission judgements.

115. There is a school-based admission and transfer system. The LEA admissions team is involved in only about 15 per cent of admissions and transfers within their remit as admissions authority. Although this arrangement has worked well, the LEA has acknowledged the need to move to a centrally administered system to improve co-ordination and produce relevant management information and statistics.

Currently statistics on the percentage of parents who receive a place for their child in a school of their first choice do not exist. Investment has rightly been approved in 2002/2003 for the purchase of a computer-based admissions system to replace the existing predominately paper-based ones.

116. Admissions booklets are comprehensive and informative including helpful suggested questions for parents to consider asking prospective schools. Useful information on school transport, school meals and special educational needs provision is included but the admissions booklets are not produced in community languages. Both primary and secondary booklets contain 15 full pages of advertisements ranging from luxury cars to pet food which contribute towards the cost of producing the booklet.

### **Asset management planning**

117. This is good. The plan is very comprehensive and links well to all other LEA plans including the school organisation plan and the education development plan. The main strength of the plan is schools' commitment and input from schools. This has been driven by the plan's strategy group which is an effective partnership between schools, diocesan representatives, LEA officers and other stakeholders. Schools trust the LEA to set priorities for schools to benefit from the various funding sources available. Schools are given a high priority in the council's capital programme and the asset management plan has recently received approval from the DfES.

118. The LEA has a substantial backlog of repairs. It is in excess of £70 million and, when expressed as an amount per pupil, it is 50 per cent above the national average. The arrangements for Public Private Partnership are directed to the solution of this problem and involve the upgrading, development and maintenance of 20 of the schools where conditions are worst. The building work to be carried out under the partnership started in the summer of 2001 and is phased to take place over a 30 month period. It is estimated that the backlog per pupil will be reduced to less than the national average when the work on the 20 schools is completed. The backlog will be reduced further as the LEA is entering a second partnership project involving the reorganisation of the special school provision.

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

119. Education otherwise than at school was not covered in the first inspection. Support for its provision is now satisfactory. The LEA has clear policies and practices for monitoring the education and welfare of pupils educated at home. Apart from these, and pupils permanently excluded from school, all pupils remain on their own school roll whilst involved in alternative provision. There are sound arrangements for home and hospital teaching for children out of school because of illness and they include monitoring pupils' progress and attainment. As a result of effective relationships with health services and good links with schools, the amount of education is well pitched in relation to the pupils' ability to benefit. There is a steadily decreasing number of pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mothers and very nearly all of them successfully complete their education up to statutory school leaving age.

120. With the significant reduction in permanent exclusions, the LEA has been able to move from arrangements based on a substantial element of home tuition towards full-time provision integrated with, and based upon, the already high standards of the pupil referral unit. The LEA has plans to extend the provision for both primary age pupils and pupils in Key Stage 3. Taken with existing full-time provision for pupils in Key Stage 4, this will secure full-time education from April 2002 for all pupils excluded for more than 15 days.

121. The progress and attendance of permanently excluded pupils in alternative provision are carefully monitored and, particularly in Key Stages 1, 2, and 3, reintegration into mainstream provision and/or specialist full-time provision takes place. The mean time taken for pupils to return to mainstream or move into specialist provision is just under a term. But increasingly there is greater focus on avoiding the need for permanent exclusion in the first place. The newly established exclusions and reintegration service is already making a direct impact by tracking pupils to ensure they do not become lost to education and, by early intervention and managed transfer, significantly reducing the levels of secondary permanent exclusions. The work between this aspect of the service and the development of learning support units in the Excellence Clusters is increasingly well managed. Referral systems are generally satisfactory. Overall, costs are planned and carefully monitored. Although alternative provision for excluded pupils was rated less than satisfactory in the school survey, recent improvement has occurred. Provision is satisfactory and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

### **Attendance**

122. No field work was done on this function which was satisfactory at the time of the first inspection and which has further improved as a result of better data collection and analysis. The school survey showed attendance rated better than satisfactory in both primary and secondary schools and the rating in the former puts the LEA in the top quarter of LEAs surveyed. The indicators show that improvement is being sustained and that, despite the failure to meet the 2001 target, there are few significant weaknesses.

### **Behaviour support**

123. In the first inspection, support for improving the behaviour of pupils was rated generally satisfactory. It has improved and has now only one significant weakness. The school survey put the LEA in the top quarter nationally. In the same survey LEA advice on exclusions was rated just below good by the schools, and this too places the LEA in the top quarter. School inspection judgements on behaviour reinforce this positive picture. However, despite good policy and the low numbers of exclusions in national terms, the LEA failed to meet its target last year. The new behaviour support plan is based on clear evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of its predecessor as well as a detailed audit of need. It presents a wide range of strategies to meet needs of pupils and includes good systems for monitoring progress and outcomes. The behaviour support services are highly effective in helping schools develop policies and practice for behaviour moderation and management and in a large number of effective individual involvements with schools.

Support, guidance and advice are effective and highly regarded by all those with whom this issue was discussed during the inspection. The work of learning support units and learning mentors is well integrated with behaviour support strategies. Delegated funding and access to additional resources are alike based on clear criteria. Links with social services, health and police are close and effective at both strategic and operational levels.

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

124. The previous inspection judged health and safety provision to be good but did not assess welfare or child protection. Since then, health and safety is now provided by a central department which has sustained progress from an already good base. Provision for welfare and child protection is satisfactory with few significant weaknesses. The school survey showed the LEAs health and safety work in the top quarter of all LEAs surveyed. The rating for child protection whilst not at the same level was better than satisfactory.

125. In relation to health and safety, the LEA takes all necessary steps to meet its statutory obligations. There is good guidance for schools and meticulous monitoring of accidents and incidents. Elected members play a strong part in the arrangements. Reporting is systematic and evaluation regular. There is an active and effective network of medical and welfare support for schools which ensures that the routine aspects of school health are systematically addressed. Liaison with the health service is never less than satisfactory. The database for child protection includes an up-to-date list of designated teachers for all schools in the LEA. All have had some training and there is currently a push to complete training on the new framework. In the school survey, liaison with social services department was rated unsatisfactory by both primary and secondary schools. Discussions during the course of the inspection focused in particular on the slowness of response on referrals but indicated that liaison was much better once children are on the register.

### **Children in public care**

126. The previous inspection did not cover this area of LEA activity. Support for these children is sound. It is based on effective inter-departmental collaboration. Senior elected members, including the leader of the council, take a direct and effective interest in the care and education of children in public care. They exercise their responsibility as corporate parents with good judgement.

127. About 80 per cent of children in public care have personal educational plans and the remainder will be completed by spring 2002. All pupils in public care have individual targets set by class teachers and schools. Currently the only cohort target is that required by government in relation to school leavers, but the support service for these children is working closely with the school effectiveness service to set targets for cohorts at each key stage based on prior attainment and other evidence. Data collected and analysed so far indicate that performance at school leaving age in 2001 was eight per cent below the national target and that performance at the end of Key Stage 3 was markedly lower than that of other pupils in Kirklees; on the other hand performance at the ends of Key Stages 1 and 2 was better than national figures.



128. Plans define a clear and coherent strategy for promoting the educational achievement of these children. The introduction of personal education plans across the LEA is significantly improving schools' knowledge of pupils' prior experience and attainment and is consequentially improving their capacity to secure further improvement.

129. The work of the team is well planned and managed. It is well integrated and has effective links with both departments as well as parents and carers. Plans are carefully costed and monitored and the LEA takes appropriate steps to ensure value for money. The absence of a joint database has not in practice been a significant weakness. However, there is no doubt that, in the absence of one the work is unduly reliant on individual goodwill in a team which is effective but under great pressure.

### **Support for combating racism.**

130. The first inspection report made no judgement on the subject. Current provision is good. The school survey showed the support for ethnic minority pupils and equal opportunities legislation in schools in the top quarter of LEAs. Work during the inspection confirmed the position.

131. The leadership provided by the LEA to schools in tackling all forms of racism is exemplary and is reinforced by a strong corporate commitment and systems. There are clear equality targets and partnership work with other LEAs including Ealing, Sheffield, Salford and Liverpool, has been effective in confronting institutional racism. The LEAs black teacher strategy and its work with black governor networks are contributing effectively to the same ends.

132. Racial harassment guidance had been issued to schools as early as 1996 and the LEA acted promptly on the recommendations of the report of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, using its acceptance of the recommendations as a springboard for securing significant improvement in existing procedures. The targets set as a result of this process are monitored regularly. They are supported by high quality and effective training secured from a wide range of providers. The procedures for monitoring racial incidents, promoting harmony and celebrating the achievement of all communities are well-established and effective.

133. Discussions with schools and individuals during the inspection showed the quality of leadership and the effective role models provided by workers from ethnic minorities at all levels of the service including parental support workers, teachers, headteachers, inspectors and administrators. There are effective links between educational activities, and the corporate centre and local ethnic minority communities are not only consulted but play key roles in reviewing and developing policy. The provision is integral to the work of the entire education service and it contributes significantly to school improvement and in raising the standards and expectations of children from ethnic minority heritages.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve the promotion of social inclusion:**

Improve the support for children in public care by introducing a computerised joint database providing appropriate detail of all children in public care and affording ready access to their support workers.

## **SECTION 5: CORPORATE ISSUES**

### **Introduction**

134. The first inspection revealed considerable strength in the strategic management of the LEA. It selected its priorities well; it consulted well and it operated in a culture of evaluation and improvement. That the first inspection took place is evidence of that culture. It followed on an independent consultants' review of the LEA and was conducted on the invitation of the LEA during the trial period of OFSTED's LEA inspections and as part of members' and officers' commitment to evaluation. The strength of that commitment continues and the drive for improvement has brought further progress at the same time as there has been a strengthening of the LEAs role in the community. That strength is based on the work by both members and officers which succeeds in bringing those who work in the education service together in the work they do to deliver policies formed in the clear vision of the borough's overall sense of direction.

### **Corporate planning**

135. The education policy of Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council and the provision of the services that deliver it are strengthened by strong central leadership which is itself built upon a wider base in the community. That base is the "Kirklees Partnership". The partnership is a forum for collaboration between the council and other public and voluntary bodies providing services to the local community. The partnership has formulated a vision and strategy. At a very general level it specifies key areas which, in the Best Value Performance Plan and in the council departments' individual service plans are the subject of programmes of action. The vision and strategy statement is being developed into a formal community strategy which will thus be the product of a community collaboration and not simply of the council alone.

136. Within the present vision and strategy, the area of, "supporting and encouraging individuals in their personal development" is, in education, developed into aims to: encourage learning throughout life; encourage and support the achievements and involvement of young people and to reduce social exclusion. The second of these is the one which bears most directly on schooling and is further developed into annual objectives in the Best Value Performance Plan, and into the education department's own performance plan which in turn integrates the operational level of the LEAs planning into a coherent strategy. Corporate planning in the LEA is highly coherent and, as a result, the work of the education department is driven strategically.

### **Decision making**

137. A clear and effective process of decision making, at a corporate level and within the education department enables the LEA to turn these plans into action. The arrangement of the executive committee of members, supported by the executive management group of officers, works effectively and the financial decision making

process, by which each department must submit a budget plan for the council's approval, enables effective delegation of financial decision making. A further strength of the planning and implementation of the work of the education department is that as much as decision making as possible is delegated to operational levels within a strong strategic framework.

### **Leadership of officers and elected members**

138. These corporate and education department arrangements enable members and officers to provide the education service with sustained and effective leadership which ensures strategy and policy are translated into action. The work of members has continued to be strategically driven during this present period of power sharing, for example in developing policy for special educational needs. Members are also well advised by officers both through the regular meetings between them and through written reports. A particularly good example is a report by the council's chief executive on the development of management and strategy in the authority which sets out its development proposals, under each heading, with specific advice for members on the part they should play in the development process.

139. The education department's arrangements for evaluating its work are also effective even though the development and implementation of Best Value has been weak. This is evident particularly in the evaluation of the education development plan. That work is part of a wider system of evaluation which includes reports to members annually on the education department's performance and on the performance of the schools. The whole process involves the evaluation of the operational service plans within the department and a system of staff appraisal.

### **Partnership**

140. The education service collaborates effectively with the council's social services department and with other agencies, for example, the health authorities and the diocese. In this work it is able to build on the strong corporate context produced by the Kirklees Partnership. It also collaborates with other LEAs, within the region and beyond, in order to develop policy and improve provision on special needs and issues of ethnicity. Within Kirklees, it uses standing working parties and groups for purposes of consultation, planning and evaluation. The groups cover such matters as information and communications technology, the role of the school contact officers, minority ethnic achievement and school improvement strategy. Their membership varies according to the topic in hand but characteristically they are convened and serviced by officers of the education department and their membership consists of representatives from the schools together with representatives of external bodies and of the teachers' unions as appropriate. During the inspection, members of the educational community and representatives of external bodies all expressed their confidence in these collaborative arrangements and the contribution they make to LEA strategy and to the improvement of LEA services.

141. The system of groups has evolved over time and the LEA has recognised that it has become unwieldy. It therefore seconded a headteacher for a term to review the structures in order to propose rationalisations and so improve efficiency. The

resulting report has just been completed. It makes useful suggestions and their implementation is now being decided upon. This work illustrates the LEAs readiness to keep all aspects of its work under review, as part of the process of continuous improvement.

## **APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **In order to improve the LEA's strategy for school improvement:**

- improve schools' financial planning by preparing and distributing their final budgets earlier; and.
- improve the implementation of Best Value in the education service by introducing project management, informing and training the department's officers about the work, and by increasing members' involvement in it.

### **In order to make school improvement more effective:**

- improve schools' implementation of Best Value by providing them with further guidance on the matter and ensuring that they submit a statement, setting out how they are meeting Best Value principles.
- improve the quality of early years education by increasing the support for schools with identified weaknesses in the foundation stage.
- improve school's financial management and choice of services by determining the actual price of services on offer to schools earlier and informing schools of the price at least one month before the start of the financial year.
- work with schools causing concern to aid their recruitment and retention of teachers.

### **In order to improve the promotion of social inclusion:**

- improve the support for children in public care by introducing a computerised joint database providing appropriate detail of all children in public care and affording ready access to their support workers.

## APPENDIX 2

### BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

1. The Best Value review was designed to build on a study of the educational psychology service carried out during 1998/1999 in response to the first LEA inspection. The main issue was to respond to the increasing and continuing demands of schools for more psychological support. The review lacks strategic direction and the documentation suggests the corporate guidance which was intended to provide a framework for the review was not properly used. There was not enough fundamental challenge to the existing service and the possibility of collaboration with neighbouring authorities was not explored. Cost comparisons in the review are weak and benchmarking data was not used rigorously enough.
2. In the survey, primary schools rated the psychological service less than satisfactory and secondary schools rated it as so weak that it was in the bottom quarter of all the authorities surveyed. However, by the time of the inspection, discussion with headteachers and visits to schools showed the quantity of support to be broadly satisfactory and its quality to be good. On a practical level, the improvement plan produced following the review has started to improve service delivery. There is a move away from responses to individual crises to resource-based assessment and to more targeted preventative activity. Useful documentation has recently been distributed to schools to clarify the deployment of psychologists' time and so to manage schools' expectations.
3. Despite the weakness of the Best Value review, the educational psychology service has improved so that it is now satisfactory and the **action plan promises further improvement.**

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