



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF
TOWER HAMLETS
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

June 2000

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

CONTENTS	PARAGRAPHS
-----------------	-------------------

INTRODUCTION	1 - 2
---------------------	-------

COMMENTARY	3 - 13
-------------------	--------

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context	14 - 16
Performance	17 - 19
Funding	20 - 21
Council Structure	22 - 23
The Education Development Plan	24 - 35

SECTION 2: PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THE FIRST INSPECTION

Recommendation A: Strategic Planning	36 - 38
Recommendation B: Professional Advice and Support	39 - 45
Recommendation C: Support for Literacy	46 - 50
Recommendation D: Special Educational Needs	51 - 59
Recommendation E: English as an Additional Language	60 - 63
Recommendation F: Attendance	64 - 67
Recommendation G: Provision of Services	68 - 73

SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF ASPECTS OF THE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN (EDP)

Support for Schools causing concern	74 - 80
Support for Numeracy	81 - 86
Support for Information and Communications Technology	87 - 91
Support for headteachers and senior managers	92 - 95
Support for Governors	96 - 98
The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry	99

SECTION 4: OTHER DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE FIRST INSPECTION

Performance management and Best Value	100
Excellence in Cities	101 - 109

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. This report details the findings of a short inspection conducted under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the progress made in responding to the findings and recommendations of the first inspection which took place in May 1998. The report also evaluates progress on devising and implementing aspects of the Education Development Plan, preparation for Best Value and the introduction of the Excellence in Cities initiative.

2. The inspection was conducted by a small team of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in conjunction with the Audit Commission. The inspection involved scrutinising documentation, interviewing elected members, the chief executive and senior officers. Discussions were held with representative groups of headteachers and governors. A questionnaire on LEA support was sent to all schools and replies were received from 71% of schools. Account was also taken of evidence from other divisions within OFSTED.

COMMENTARY

3. The first report on Tower Hamlets found some serious concerns but concluded by endorsing what it saw as a new optimism in the LEA and its schools. The optimism was due mainly to the appointment of a new director for education and the changes in management she was starting to bring about. This inspection finds that conclusion to be fully justified.

4. The LEA has achieved a great deal in the two years since the first inspection. Very good progress has been made in implementing the recommendations and addressing the other concerns in the first report. The LEA has also made good progress in implementing its education development plan (EDP), its preparation for Best Value and in introducing the Excellence in Cities initiative. Very significant progress has been made in increasing the level of delegated funding to schools and reducing the cost of centrally provided services. Although pupil test results remain below the national average, the gap has continued to narrow at each key stage. While progress has sometimes been too slow, for example at Key Stage 3, there have been some very significant achievements, for example in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2 and in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-G.

5. Much of the LEA's success in implementing the recommendations and improving its support to schools can be attributed to the high quality of leadership shown by the director and senior officers. Headteachers, governors and members all expressed their confidence in the management of the LEA. Key features of the LEA's leadership include:

- good strategic planning;
- effective consultation procedures with headteachers, governors and other stakeholders;
- a willingness to take tough decisions, based on sound evaluation;
- the development of effective working partnerships with schools;
- high expectations for the performance of schools and LEA services;
- the use of consultancy, advice and support from outside the LEA;
- the ability to anticipate and implement the national agenda.

6. There had been a conspicuous lack of strategic planning prior to the appointment of the new director. The strategic plan she introduced laid a sound basis on which to build an effective education development plan (EDP), supported by sound service plans. The first EDP was soundly based on a thorough audit of needs but contained too many overlapping actions and insufficient targeting of resources. The very recently revised EDP addresses these criticisms. Good progress has been made in implementing the EDP and there is evidence of it having a significant impact on development planning in schools.

7. The role of the radically restructured advisory service advisers in monitoring, challenging, intervening and supporting schools has been clarified and strongly conforms to the Code of Practice for LEA-school relationships. The school survey and meetings with headteachers and governors during the inspection revealed a

very positive response to these developments and considerable confidence in the management and expertise of the school development team.

8. The director and other senior officers have done much to improve the LEA's relationship with its schools. Headteachers and governors now feel a much greater sense of ownership of LEA strategies and policies. This has been achieved by involving them as equal partners in the discussions leading up to decisions being made on key issues. Relationships between the LEA and its schools are now strong. Centrally provided services have become much more customer focussed, leading to improvements in the quality of support provided. Where this has not taken place, the LEA has been prepared to take the difficult decision to stop providing a service itself and to quality assure external providers.

9. Education has been consistently well supported financially by the Council and is seen as its top priority. Schools are very well funded and their budgets have been protected from any cuts in recent years. Members are still defining their role under the new modernised council structure but they have been consistent in their support for the education priorities and there has not been undue political interference in the management of the LEA. Members have a good grasp of the issues facing schools in the borough and are prepared to take the advice of officers in making tough decisions to secure improvements.

10. The high cost of several services and the proportion of funds retained centrally were major concerns in the first inspection report. Since then, the LEA has effectively used Fair Funding and Best Value principles to reduce costs and put in place realistic plans to reduce them further in the next financial year. The level of delegation of the local schools' budget is set to increase from 79 per cent in 1999/2000 to 86 per cent in 2000/2001.

11. The LEA is well advanced in its preparation for Best Value and high standards have been introduced for the performance management of services. Every service has a Best Value Performance Plan which is aligned with corporate objectives. There has been a fundamental shift in thinking towards the LEA not being the sole provider of services and to only provide those services giving good value for money.

12. The LEA is involved in a large number of initiatives to support improvement. These are generally well managed and co-ordinated to support the EDP priorities. However, coping with the range of initiatives, together with increased delegation of support, places a considerable burden on school management, the implications of which have not always been sufficiently thought through. There is evidence of the effectiveness of many of these initiatives which have been in place some time. The LEA has been good at anticipating the national agenda, for example by the appointment of Key Stage 3 consultants for literacy and numeracy.

13. This, then, has been a success story for the LEA. In a relatively short space of time it has gone from having significant weaknesses to delivering all the functions inspected at least satisfactorily and often well. The task now facing the LEA is to build on this success by effectively implementing the very considerable amount of work still in progress. The LEA is well aware that much needs to be done to continue to narrow the gap between the performance of pupils in the borough and

that nationally, particularly at Key Stage 3. The findings of this inspection show that it has the determination and expertise to achieve this. The inspection also shows that, even in the most disadvantaged circumstances, the job of an LEA is achievable.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

14. There have been no significant changes in the socio-economic context of the LEA since the first inspection. Tower Hamlets remains one of the poorest areas in country with high levels of social deprivation. The rate of unemployment in the borough is double the London average, many residents live in poor housing and suffer from poor health. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in primary schools has declined slightly since 1997 but remains almost three times higher than the national average. In secondary schools, the proportion has remained unchanged since 1997 and is now almost four times the national average. There are few schools with less than 40 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language (54%, form 7) remains the highest of any LEA.

15. There has been a small increase since 1998 in the number of pupils on roll in secondary and nursery schools and a small decrease in the numbers in primary schools. Overall, the pupil population has increased by approximately one per cent. The proportion of pupils in mainstream schools with statements of educational need has increased from 2.3% to 2.7%.

16. Since the first inspection, three infant and junior schools have been amalgamated, one special school has been closed and one former grant maintained secondary school has become a community school.

Performance

17. At the time of the original inspection attainment was well below national averages at all stages of compulsory education. However, the rate of improvement between 1995 and 1997 was generally at or above the national rate. Data for 1998 and 1999 show a continuation of this trend with a steady narrowing of the gap between LEA and national averages at most key stages. The most substantial improvements have been in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2 and in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-G. The gap between LEA and national performance remains greatest at Key Stage 3 (see the table over).

TABLE

KS1 % of pupils achieving level 2 and above		1997		1998		1999	
		LEA	Nat difference	LEA	Nat difference	LEA	Nat difference
	Reading	67.1	-13.0	69.2	-10.9	72.9	-9.2
	Writing	70.1	-10.3	73.2	-8.3	77.4	-5.8
	Maths	78.9	-4.9	81.6	-3.3	84.7	-2.5
KS2 % of pupils achieving level 4 and above	English	46.7	-16.6	52.2	-12.6	57.1	-13.3
	Maths	50.7	-11.3	46.2	-12.4	62.5	-6.5
KS3 % of pupils achieving level 5 and above	English	30.9	-25.7	47.2	-18.0	46.6	-16.8
	Maths	34.5	-26.2	32.8	-27.1	39.3	-22.8
KS4	% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C	26.4	-16.9	28.4	-16.3	31.7	-14.6
	% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-G	79.6	-8.9	87.8	-2.0	89.7	-1.0
	Average points	28.3	-7.2	31.0	-5.8	33.4	-4.4

18. Data from OFSTED inspections show an improvement between the first cycle of inspections and the most recent inspections in the proportion of schools where the quality of education is judged to be good or very good, and a decline in the proportion of schools requiring much improvement. There has been an improvement in the average teaching grades observed in OFSTED inspections which have now moved closer to the national averages.

19. There has been a continued improvement in attendance in both primary and secondary schools. Attendance in primary schools has improved from 2.4% below the national average in 1997 to 1.5% below in 1999. In secondary schools, it has improved from 1.5% to 0.6% below the national average.

Funding

20. Tower Hamlets continues to be a very well funded authority and one that has the highest Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) per pupil for education in the country. It has made considerable progress since the last inspection in delegating funds to schools and reducing the costs of strategic management. Key features include:

- expenditure on education has remained at about the SSA over the last two years, at £3851 per pupil, the second highest Local Schools Budget (LSB) per pupil in the country in 1999/2000;
- 79 per cent of the Local School Budget delegated in 1999/2000, but clear and realistic plans to increase this to 86 per cent in 2000/2001;
- delegated funding per pupil in 1999/2000 of £3044, the third highest in the country, with an increase significantly greater than inflation planned for 2000/2001;
- an increase in the delegation of the provision for pupils with statements that will reduce the amount centrally held by £4.9 million from 3.5 per cent to 0.4 per cent of the LSB;
- a planned reduction in the costs of strategic management per pupil from £97 per pupil in 1999/2000 to £65 per pupil in 2000/2001, £10 per pupil lower than the Secretary of State's target for London authorities;
- continued high allocation and take up in 1999/2000 of Standards Fund of £175 per pupil, including £8.1m of Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG) - the highest in the country;
- a high allocation of Non-Standards Fund specific grant of £35 per pupil that is mainly Single Regeneration Budget (SRB).

21. The LEA allocation of funding for capital work, including its funding for New Deal for Schools, is modest, reflecting successful investment in earlier years. The Authority has however had approval for a Public Private Partnership for one school and a Private Finance Initiative for a repairs and maintenance bid for another 40

schools. This has been extended to include improvements in teaching areas and in the costs of energy and facilities management.

Council Structure

22. The political balance of the Council remains unchanged from the first inspection. The Council has adopted the modernisation agenda and established a cabinet style structure. The director of education is one of four corporate directors forming the corporate management team with the Chief Executive. There is a policy and implementation committee which takes decisions across a range of services, including education and an education and youth scrutiny panel.

23. The new structure has only recently been put in place and members are still developing their new roles. It is too early to evaluate the full effects of the changes on education but some benefits are already apparent. Decisions are starting to be made more rapidly and better co-ordinated across services. Members have a good understanding of the issues facing education and are supportive of the actions required to address them. They have been prepared to take tough decisions, based on the advice of officers, to secure improvements. Members have consistently supported education and have not interfered unduly in the management of the LEA.

The Education Development Plan

24. At the time of the original inspection the, then newly appointed, director of education had published a strategic plan which was implemented from April 1998. The strategic plan pre-empted the requirement to have an EDP and it had a broader remit than the EDP, encompassing lifelong learning, the restructuring of the LEA and improving management processes. It gave priority to raising attainment and achieving performance targets and provided the basis for the first EDP, published in February 1999.

25. The first draft of the EDP received approval by the DfEE for the full three-year period. This was subject to modifications being made by February 2000 to address: (i) the more precise targeting of activities; (ii) the removal of activities which should be funded through delegation to schools. The updated plan was available for this inspection.

26. There is a clear audit of evidence, well summarised and clearly presented. The analysis of performance and local needs is thorough and consistent with the findings of the first inspection. The plan reflects the local socio-economic characteristics and identifies low levels of fluency in English as a key area for development. The statutory targets agreed by the DfEE for 2002 include:

- 70% of pupils achieving level 4 or above at Key Stage 2 in English and 73% in mathematics (increased from 70% in the first EDP);
- 40% of pupils gaining 5 or more grade A*-C at GCSE.

27. These targets are challenging, particularly in relation to the GCSE target, but schools are on track to achieve them if the recent trend in improved performance is

continued. The LEA increased its Key Stage 2 target for mathematics in the light of recent progress. The LEA has also set its own targets across a range of indicators for each year up to 2002.

28. The EDP priorities are:

1. raising standards of literacy;
2. raising standards of numeracy;
3. extending the use of ICT in teaching and learning;
4. improving teaching and learning across the whole curriculum;
5. strengthening leadership, management and governance;
6. building a more inclusive education service;
7. supporting schools causing concern.

29. The most recent version of the EDP marks a significant improvement over the first one. The LEA has used the opportunity not only to address the issues raised by DfEE, but also to reduce and simplify the activities underpinning some of the priorities. This is particularly the case with priority 4 where there was previously too wide a range of overlapping activities.

30. The priorities are clearly defined and supported by a coherent and consistent set of activities. Steps have been taken to focus the support more precisely on particular schools and groups of pupils. However, a number of the activities remain insufficiently differentiated and there is scope using the powerful data now available to the LEA to target resources even more closely to needs.

31. A comprehensive framework of monitoring and evaluation is in place. Monitoring progress in relation to the EDP objectives is integrated into the education directorate performance management process that accompanies the introduction to the strategic plan. This is facilitated by the inclusion of all EDP activities within the year 2 strategic plan for 1999-2000. The monitoring report, which has been presented to members, clearly describes progress against all EDP activities. It is also intended that an overview of progress towards the EDP targets is again produced for autumn 2000.

32. The EDP is closely linked to other plans. It is derived from year 1 of the strategic plan and contains the majority of the activity included in year 2. The post inspection action plan is strongly linked to the priorities of the EDP and reference is made to the action plan in the analysis of the sources of the priorities. The relationship between the various statutory plans and the EDP is also clearly established. The EDP contains references to the Excellence in Cities initiative but there is scope for developing this further by embedding its strands more firmly in the EDP priorities.

33. The development of the strategic plan involved extensive consultation with heads, school staff, governors and other stakeholders and laid the ground for subsequent consultation on the EDP. The results of the consultation are reflected in the EDP priorities. The school survey and meetings with headteachers and governors during the inspection revealed a high level of satisfaction with the consultation procedures.

34. The plan clearly identifies responsibilities in its implementation. The analysis of resources is clear and comprehensive and provides confirmation of the feasibility of delivery of the actions set out. Team plans align the activity of team members with EDP priorities and include a comprehensive allocation of resources to EDP action plans.

35. The EDP includes progressive annual targets from 1998 to 2002. In 1999, all these milestones were achieved, except for Key Stage 3 targets for maths and science. (Progress on implementing aspects of the EDP is evaluated in section 3 of the report.)

Recommendation

In order to improve strategic planning:

Extend the use of performance data to target resources more precisely on particular schools and groups of pupils.

SECTION 2: PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THE FIRST INSPECTION

Recommendation A: Strategic Planning

In order to implement its Strategic Plan the LEA should:

- i) ensure that those parts of the Strategic Plan which relate to schools are reflected clearly in the resource planning supporting the LEA's Education Development Plan**
- ii) publish separate service plans to underpin the delivery of the plan and details of how the plan will be monitored and evaluated**

36. The first inspection considered the strategic plan to be sound overall, and to fill the void left by the absence of any coherent strategic planning from 1994 to 1997. The aims of the plan were ambitious. It set challenging targets. It also sought to provide the foundation for a programme of reorganisation of structures and processes within the LEA, in line with the then emerging government agenda for education, and to reform the relationship between the LEA and its schools. The feasibility of such an ambitious programme, in the context of an absence of a track record of effective planning, was therefore a concern. Within the inspection commentary reference was made to the large number of activities in the strategic plan, the tightness of timescales and the need for it to be underpinned by service plans to provide operational detail and costings.

37. Considerable work has been undertaken to implement this recommendation. The process of developing the EDP essentially represents an extension of the process used in developing the strategic plan. The priorities in relation to school improvement were translated into the format required for the EDP and subjected to further consultation. The priorities within the strategic plan can therefore be readily associated with the EDP activities. The EDP also translates the priorities set out in the strategic plan into action plans that are each supported by a clear analysis of the resource implications of achieving the objectives. The resource allocation in the EDP is reflected in the education directorate budget statement and is appropriately analysed across the Fair Funding categories.

38. At the time of the first inspection there was little in the way of planning at a section or service level. However, work had commenced on the implementation of a coherent service planning process. From April 1999 all sections of the LEA prepared a service plan which included:

- strategic priorities and the relationship between these and the EDP and/or LEA plans;
- key objectives and activities;
- an analysis of maintenance and development activities;
- the allocation of resources and budgets to activities;
- success criteria;
- monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

In the autumn of 1999, service managers for almost all services agreed to adopt a common format for service plans which closely followed the format used in the EDP. In addition, in anticipation of the introduction of Best Value through the Council, each service produced a Best Value Performance Plan which identifies the scope for service improvement. The service plans are of good quality and represent a major step forward in strategic planning. Consideration should be given to establishing three year financial plans in line with the time scale of the EDP.

Substantial progress has been made on this recommendation, which has now been fully implemented.

Recommendation B: Professional Advice and Support

In order to ensure that schools have effective professional advice and support the LEA should:

- i) ensure that the operation of the reformed inspection and advisory service is based on intervention in schools only where this is necessary and funding should only be retained for this purpose;**
- ii) establish ways of monitoring school performance without unnecessary school visiting.**

39. The commentary in the first inspection stated that, 'the inspection and advisory service (IAS) is poorly regarded by schools. Its emphasis on monitoring has unnecessarily duplicated the national inspection arrangements and diverted resources, whilst the work of link inspectors has varied unacceptably in quality.' Elsewhere, that report comments on the lack of management expertise within the IAS, the variability in the quality of notes of visit and the failure to target support where it is most needed. At the time of the first inspection there were proposals for the restructuring of the IAS. The inspection generally endorsed the proposed changes but expressed two concerns. Firstly, the lack of clarity about schools' entitlement to centrally funded support. Secondly, the lack of expertise amongst link advisers to carry out effectively the role envisaged for them.

40. Considerable changes have taken place in the advisory service since the first inspection. The IAS has been replaced by a new service, the school development team (SDT). The number of advisers has been halved to 10.4 full time equivalent, giving one of the lowest ratios of advisers to schools in London. Only four of the former IAS staff remain in the new service which has been strengthened through the appointment of advisers with experience of senior management in schools. A new head of the learning and school development service was appointed in summer 1999 and is currently managing the SDT. External consultants are employed for specific tasks, including supporting the work of the SDT.

41. Each adviser is assigned to an average of 12 schools, organised into geographical areas. The entitlement of centrally funded link adviser time has been reduced to one full day equivalent visit per term for each school with additional days provided for the schools with the greatest needs. Schools are categorised according to their level of needs. In the term before the inspection, over 50% of advisers' time was spent in schools causing concern. Link advisers now have a clear agenda for

their visits to schools with a much greater emphasis on providing challenge and support. The service has moved away from work which duplicates OFSTED inspections to a system of intervention in inverse proportion to success.

42. Both the schools survey and discussions with headteachers during the inspection revealed greatly increased confidence in the management of the SDT and the expertise of LEA advisers since the first inspection. Headteachers feel that the credibility of the service has been improved by the appointment of advisers with senior management experience. Headteachers are also clear about the role of advisers, the number of visits which are being funded centrally and the purpose of these visits. Headteachers and governors expressed a willingness to buy in extra adviser time but there is currently no service level agreement (SLA) with the SDT to allow for this. Written reports following visits are generally prompt, clearly written and evaluative. However, reports are not written to a common format and are not always copied to chairs of governing bodies.

43. Quality assurance mechanisms to monitor the work of advisers are in place and these are being refined further with the help of an external consultant. Time is set aside for the training and development of advisers.

44. The first inspection report commented favourably on the quality of data provided by the LEA. The report also found that the data was not always used effectively by the LEA to identify under-performance and to target support where it was most needed.

45. Further improvements have been made in the quality of the data since the first inspection, including the use of individual value added pupil performance. The presentation of the data has also been improved. The head of the policy, research and statistics team (PRST) meets with the SDT regularly, and has helped advisers develop skills in analysing data and using it to challenge school performance and set targets. Further developments are planned for summer 2000 with the introduction of a new statistical package, and joint training for SDT and PRST staff in its use. These improvements in the quality and use of data have been key in developing the link advisers' ability to monitor school performance without unnecessary school visiting.

Good progress has been made in implementing both parts of this recommendation.

Recommendations

In order to improve professional support:

- (i) introduce a SLA to allow schools to purchase extra time from the SDT;
- (ii) standardise written reporting to schools following visits by advisers, and ensure that reports are automatically copied to chairs of governors.

Recommendation C: Support for Literacy

In order that progress is urgently made in raising standards of literacy the LEA should:

Co-ordinate and develop the newly established language and literacy support service to provide greater coherence and improved management in this area.

46. At the time of the first inspection the proportion of Tower Hamlets pupils achieving level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 English tests was 16.6% below the national average. Reading standards, in particular, were very low. Although some schools were achieving very much better results than others, the quality of teaching of reading in many schools was unsatisfactory or poor. There was also wide variation in the performance of different ethnic groups. The various services that supported literacy were not always effectively managed and were not being co-ordinated.

47. The response of the LEA over the last two years has been robust and very positive. Priority one in the EDP brings together the various initiatives supporting literacy into a coherent strategy from pre-Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3. Language and literacy support has been reorganised under a single integrated management structure and service planning has been much improved. The service has recognised the differing needs of monolingual and bilingual pupils and has put appropriate strategies and systems in place to meet these. Priority has been given to the development of phonics. Staff supporting bilingual pupils have been given extensive training to ensure that pupils gain full benefit from the literacy hour. The LEA has been successful in increasingly tailoring support to meet the needs of individual schools and strategies have been put in place for disseminating good practice.

48. In secondary schools, the SRB-funded 'Skillswork' Key Stage 3 project has begun to help teachers to support reading and writing across the curriculum. Good support for literacy developments has also been provided by the local Education Business Partnership. A Key Stage 3 literacy co-ordinator was appointed well ahead of the national initiative to improve standards of literacy in secondary schools.

49. The performance of pupils in national tests at key stages 1 and 2 remains substantially below the national average but results have continued to improve since 1997 and the gap between the LEA and national averages has narrowed, particularly at Key Stage 1 (see table at paragraph 17). There are four schools in the national sample of schools being monitored by OFSTED to evaluate the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). Overall, the schools are making satisfactory to good progress and there is evidence of improved teaching in three of the schools. LEA support for implementing the NLS is reported as being good. This finding was confirmed by the school survey and meetings with headteachers during the inspection. Headteachers also reported better and more effective co-ordination of the services supporting literacy under the new management structure.

50. The LEA has published a very useful language and literacy policy. Two of the schools represented during the inspection have made extensive use of it in re-writing

their literacy policies but there is scope for giving it more publicity in the LEA and making the links with other initiatives more explicit.

The specific recommendation has been fully implemented and substantial progress has been made on improving the quality of support for literacy.

Recommendation D: Special Educational Needs

In order to improve the support for pupils with special educational needs, the LEA should:

- i) bring to a speedy conclusion its review of special educational needs and update its policy;**
- ii) develop a strategy which efficiently matches needs and provision, curtailing the growth in expenditure and the number of statements.**

51. The previous inspection revealed significant shortcomings in the LEA's planning and strategy for SEN. The LEA lacked a sense of direction and clear priorities. The LEA's SEN policy was both out of date and having little impact on its strategy or practice. The report highlighted the high cost of support for SEN and inadequate criteria for statutory assessment. Inertia in its response to the SEN Code of Practice was another feature of wider concern, requiring a comprehensive and robust response from the LEA.

52. The LEA has implemented the first recommendation. Following extensive consultation and discussion with a wide group of stakeholders, a new policy, *'Towards inclusive education in schools: policy and strategy'*, was agreed and circulated in January 1999. This innovative document encapsulates the principles of inclusion identified in the DfEE Green Paper on special educational needs (1998) and sets a clear agenda for the future through its detailed action plan. The creation of a head of inclusive education post and the formation of an inclusive education steering group, comprising LEA officers, head teachers, parent and other agency representatives, has ensured that the interests of stakeholders and the LEA are maintained throughout the dissemination process. It has been particularly important to make sure that all concerned recognise that the initiative is designed to raise standards for all pupils through making the best use of the funding available and is not seen as a cost cutting exercise.

53. The stakeholders interviewed during the inspection presented clear evidence of a significant attitudinal change in many schools in regard to the responsibility for supporting pupils' special needs. Crucially, there is an acceptance that the responsibility is firmly based in schools and not with the LEA, as was previously the case. Most headteachers have a clear understanding of their school's role in the implementation of the inclusion initiative.

54. Headteachers are represented on the SEN pre-assessment panel but have not yet been included in the final panel which makes decisions about provision for pupils with statements.

55. While preparing the ground for substantial change, the LEA was unable to manage the growth in statements effectively in 1998/99. With very limited management information systems, the LEA did not forecast accurately the level of statement support it would require in the 1997/98 financial year and consequently the outturn position was £300k more than planned. During and since that time, the LEA, in consultation with schools, has put in place a very wide range of measures to control costs. The LEA has based its strategy on encouraging mainstream schools to meet a much wider range of learning needs. At the same time, the LEA has reviewed its use of out of borough provision and started to link this to the development of its special schools. It also made a key change by adjusting the focus of the educational psychology service so that 15 per cent of its time is now spent on early intervention and prevention. With the same aim in mind, it has aligned its early years provision so that its portage service, day nurseries, nursery schools, and special schools work more effectively together.

56. There is evidence of a growing understanding in schools about the LEA's commitment to providing resources for pupils at earlier stages of the Code of Practice and the need to eliminate indiscriminate requests for statements as a means of securing resources. The LEA's proposal to group levels of special need into bands as a means of allocating resources is sound practice. It has issued clear and comprehensive guidelines to schools on the effective use of resources for SEN. It is making effective use of management information and performance data to support its policies in schools. The LEA has also made the costs of SEN provision transparent and promoted good practice on inclusion through innovative pilot projects. It has plans to delegate £4.5 million of funding for SEN teaching and learning support assistants to mainstream schools in 2000/2001, while retaining only a small core of provision for low incidence and more complex SEN. These arrangements are appropriate and well thought through. It has quite rightly begun to align its statutory assessment criteria with other access criteria in order to target resources according to the level and complexity of needs.

57. The LEA's overall investment in SEN is now in line with its incidence of need. District Audit have reported that the proportion of pupils with statements, currently 2.7 per cent, is not high in relation to the socio-economic circumstances of the borough. Its financial strategy has been to re-focus resources so that these are more closely aligned to the incidence of needs in schools. This sensible approach is being supported by research into the relationship between additional needs and underachievement in the borough.

58. There is growing evidence that the measures the LEA has taken are beginning to have a positive impact. Ninety per cent of statutory assessments are now reaching the draft statement stage by eighteen weeks, a significant improvement from the forty three per cent achieved in 1997/98. The number of new statements issued has reached a plateau at about 300 a year. There has been a reduction in special school rolls of 6 per cent between January 1999 and January 2000 and a further reduction of 4.5 per cent is estimated for 2000/2001. The LEA's special school ISB per pupil at £12,703, although still high, is now significantly less than the figure for inner London boroughs of £17,029 and closer to the national average of £9596 in 1999/2000. The cost of out-borough provision, taken as an average of the total pupil population, is now £46. This figure is moving closer to the national

average of £39 and is again significantly less than the inner London average of £63. There has also been a marked improvement in the achievement of pupils on SEN registers in 1999, at Key Stage 2 and at GCSE.

59. The weight of evidence indicates that the LEA has made good progress since the first inspection in matching resources more closely with needs. However, in order for progress to be maintained, the LEA should ensure that its financial planning for inclusion takes account of the resource implications of changing patterns of need in both mainstream and special schools as well as the effects of reducing out of borough provision. It also needs to take some difficult decisions about both the recycling of resources in mainstream schools, and about the future role and need for special schools.

The LEA has fully implemented the first part of the recommendation and has made good progress on the second part.

Recommendation

In order to improve financial planning for SEN:

Planning for inclusion should take account of the resource implications of changing patterns of need in both mainstream and special schools, as well as the effects of reducing out of borough provision.

Recommendation E: English as an Additional Language

In order to improve support for pupils for whom English is an additional language the LEA should:

- i) ensure that targets are set and met, where there are identified weaknesses in Section 11 support;**
- ii) ensure that Section 11 staff are deployed where most needed rather than where they traditionally been located.**

60. The previous report found low attainment of bilingual pupils despite the high level of resource provision. Co-ordination and monitoring of support for pupils were inadequate and support frequently did not match pupil needs. There was a lack of effective collaboration between Section 11 funded work and literacy initiatives in half of the schools visited and there was a lack of co-ordination of the support for the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and English as an additional language (EAL). In many cases the then Section 11 support staff lacked appropriate expertise and their contribution to improving literacy was further hampered by their role not being clearly defined.

61. Since the previous inspection, the LEA has put in place many changes intended specifically to raise standards of literacy and fluency in English of bilingual

pupils. The Language Support Team has been incorporated into the new Literacy Services Team. Appropriate targets for attainment of different ethnic groups are included in the latest plan for the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG). Agreed criteria and procedures for assessing the support needs of schools and pupils have been put in place.

62. Changes from Section 11 arrangements to those under EMTAG presented the LEA with an important catalyst for change. It grasped the opportunity with vigour and has managed the changes effectively and with sensitivity. New arrangements are in place for the delegation of funding and accountability of schools, including a re-focusing of the roles and responsibilities of the central team and the transfer of teaching staff to schools. Resources are now targeted to support schools and pupils with the greatest need. Training has been provided to acquaint staff with the new roles and responsibilities of schools and the central team. Processes and procedures are in place for agreeing targets for fluency in English with schools, monitoring progress and evaluating effectiveness. The need for earlier intervention to address underachievement has also been acted upon.

63. Bilingual support staff have been trained to play a full role in the literacy hour. Language co-ordinators have been encouraged to take on the monitoring of attainment of bilingual pupils and support for this and other work is much improved. A programme of training is in place to ensure the dissemination of best practice in supporting bilingual pupils. The progress of cohorts of pupils and the quality of provision in schools are both being monitored and evaluated by the central team. Exemplar materials and training have been provided to help with accuracy and consistency in the assessment of fluency. Patterns in attainment of pupils from different ethnic groups have been identified. A useful pilot project, involving two schools and focusing on raising achievement of Afro-Caribbean pupils, has also been established.

Good progress has been made in implementing both parts of this recommendation.

Recommendation F: Attendance

To support improvements in attendance the LEA should:

- i) define more clearly the criteria for deployment of Education Social Workers to schools;**
- ii) make procedures consistent and regularly evaluate the work of the Education Social Work service;**
- iii) clarify the operation of the Attendance Panel and the Out of School Panel to identify a consistent approach to considering referrals for poor school attendance**
- iv) continue, as a matter of urgency, to reduce the extent and impact of pupils taking extended holidays in term time.**

64. The previous report found attendance rates in both primary and secondary schools were improving but remained below national averages, the difference being

most marked in primary schools. There was also wide variation between attendance rates of different schools. Relationships between the Education Social Work Service (ESWS) and schools were generally good, but staff deployment and criteria and procedures for referring pupils lacked clarity and costs were well above the national average. Most schools had clear policies on attendance, but implementation of these varied. ESWS support was more effective in secondary schools.

65. The LEA has made an effective response to the recommendations made in the first inspection report. A clear formula for the allocation of ESWS time has been agreed with schools. The ESWS has been restructured and monitoring of the service is much improved. The work of the panels has been clarified and significant steps have been taken to reduce extended holidays in term-time.

66. There has been a continued improvement in attendance in both primary and secondary schools. Attendance in primary schools has improved from 2.4% below the national average in 1997 to 1.6% below in 1999. In secondary schools, it has improved from 1.5% to 0.5% below the national average. There has also been a reduction in the number of unauthorised absences. The LEA has set a challenging target of improving attendance by one per cent each year until 2002. However, considerable disparities remain between schools, and not all schools have effective strategies in place for improving attendance.

67. The restructuring of the ESWS is expected to save £60,000 per annum. A new service delivery agreement has been consulted upon and is now in place. Changes have appropriately enabled the ESWS to move towards a broader more strategic role, with priority being given to helping schools to develop their own capability for managing attendance issues. Arrangements for deployment of staff are now much clearer, resulting in a sensible redistribution of resources to primary schools. The service has improved its efficiency and quality and reduced its costs by working towards Best Value. It is also now better poised to contribute to inter-agency working. Useful guidance has been produced for schools on the workings of the attendance panels. A range of appropriate strategies have been developed aimed at deterring extended holidays in term time, contributing to an overall 10% reduction.

Good progress has been made on implementing all aspects of this recommendation.

Recommendations

In order to improve attendance:

- i) disseminate more widely the outcomes of the secondary schools attendance project and ensure all schools have effective strategies in place to improve attendance;
- ii) identify and publish the success rate for referrals to the attendance panel.

Recommendation G: Provision of Services

In order to provide schools with efficient services that meet their needs, the LEA should:

- i) as a matter of urgency require heads of all services to produce, in consultation with headteachers and governing bodies, detailed service specifications which includes service objectives, costs and charges, and performance measures;**
- ii) audit and reduce the expenditure of high cost services.**

68. Two years ago there was widespread dissatisfaction in schools about the structure and delivery of central support services and about the LEA's mechanism for communicating with schools about service performance. The overall costs of central support services were high, amounting to £170 per pupil, and there was a general concern about the lack of transparency of the cost of service activities.

69. Since that time the LEA has shown strong leadership in changing the attitudes and focus of those involved in providing services to schools. Comprehensive and detailed service specifications have been produced and these have been tailored to meet the needs in schools. LEA services now have a much stronger determination to support schools in raising educational standards. The LEA's lines of communication with schools are now secure and support the focus on continual improvement. Headteachers now believe that the quality of their partnership with the LEA enables them to contribute to the shaping of services to match their pattern of needs. Schools also know the full costs of services, and are well placed to make value for money judgements.

70. Where a service has been found short of the capacity to meet its standards, the LEA has taken the necessary steps to quality assure external providers. This has happened in the case of personnel services where poor and costly provision has led the LEA to seek external providers capable of delivering services to acceptable standards.

71. The LEA has also taken some tough decisions that have led to a reduction in the costs of many services and the lowering of the costs of strategic management to £65 per pupil in 2000/2001. An overall reduction of £1.2 million in central costs has been achieved through a range of measures including: renegotiating levels and costs of services; reducing expenditure on posts in central support services by £400k; freezing vacancies; introducing more efficient and effective working methods; and reducing the use of consultants. Schools will receive the £400k saving from central posts.

72. The costs of financial services, now located within the education department, insurance, home-to-school transport and the education welfare service have all been reduced. Support services to schools are to be subject to a Best Value review in the first year of the Council's five year programme. The Council also has a public service strategy that is aimed at improving the quality of its communication and service delivery through the better use of ICT. This is also expected to yield savings.

73. The LEA's progress in auditing and reducing costs is impressive and its future programme for Best Value, Fair Funding and its Public Services Strategy all indicate that it has a clear intention to continue to improve services to its communities and to further reduce costs.

Both parts of this recommendation have been fully implemented and good progress has been made on improving the quality of services provided to schools.

SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF ASPECTS OF THE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN (EDP)

Schools causing concern

74. At the time of the first inspection, five schools were subject to special measures. Currently, one secondary school and six primary schools are subject to special measures. At the time of the inspection, none had been in special measures for more than 18 months. Monitoring visits by HMI show that all but one of the schools are making satisfactory or good progress towards being removed from special measures.

75. Twelve primary schools, one secondary school and one special school have been identified as having serious weaknesses in OFSTED inspection reports. These include seven schools identified since the first inspection.

76. The first inspection found that the LEA met its statutory duties in relation to schools in special measures. There was no written policy for supporting these schools but procedures were generally well understood. However, support for schools with serious weaknesses was less effective. The lack of help with drawing up post-inspection action plans in these schools was a particular weakness.

77. The LEA now has a clear written policy in place for supporting schools in special measures and other schools causing concern. Two key groups were established in autumn 1999 to strengthen support for schools causing concern: targeted intervention groups and the strategic management group. These groups focus and co-ordinate support for individual schools and at a strategic LEA level.

78. Monitoring visits by OFSTED reveal the LEA as being effective in its support for all but one of the schools in special measures. LEA support for strategic planning was a strength in most of these schools. The weaknesses in support include aspects of governing body involvement and financial intervention.

79. Monitoring visits to seven schools with serious weaknesses reveal that they are generally making sound progress. Discussions with headteachers of schools with serious weaknesses during this inspection revealed general satisfaction with the current quantity and quality of LEA support and they could cite examples of effective LEA intervention. They felt that, in the past, LEA support had not always been sufficiently rapid or robust enough. They also felt that the LEA's recent policy on schools causing concern helpfully clarifies the level of support they could expect and the mutual responsibilities of the LEA, headteachers and governing bodies.

80. The number of schools in special measures and those with serious weaknesses is a major concern to the LEA and it has set itself challenging targets to reduce it. The evidence shows that the LEA has improved its mechanisms for identifying schools in difficulty, and has improved the quality of its support. Most of the schools causing concern are making reasonable progress, but in many this remains fragile and sustaining improvement presents a very considerable challenge for them and the LEA.

Support for Numeracy

81. The first inspection found that LEA support for numeracy in primary schools was generally good but that little support in secondary schools was either given or sought. The LEA participated in the National Numeracy Project in 1996/7 but did not have its own numeracy policy. The inspection also identified a need for better continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Although attainment in mathematics was improving, the gap between performance in the LEA and that nationally had not narrowed significantly except at Key Stage 1.

82. The LEA's strategy for numeracy is clearly set out in its EDP. This brings together the National Numeracy Strategy and other initiatives supporting numeracy. The strategy addresses the issue of continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. A Key Stage 3 numeracy consultant has been appointed ahead of the national strategy.

83. Primary schools in the school survey rated the support for numeracy as good. Secondary schools rated it higher than any other LEA included in the survey. A number of written statements commented favourably upon the high quality of support in numeracy. The work of the head of the numeracy service is highly regarded by headteachers.

84. The gap between performance by pupils in the LEA and nationally in numeracy has continued to narrow at Key Stage 1 to just 2.5% below. There has also been a significant narrowing of the gap at Key Stage 2 from 12.4% in 1998 to 6.5% in 1999. The improvement, albeit starting from a relatively low base, was the biggest of any LEA. There has been a slight narrowing of the gap with national performance at Key Stage 3 but it still remains 22.8% below the national figure.

85. Evidence from visits to four schools shows that the schools are generally making good progress in implementing the NNS and that the work of the LEA is effective. The support provided by consultants was at its most effective where they were able to give demonstration lessons that were preceded and followed up with detailed discussions with teachers.

86. The LEA is making good progress in implementing this EDP priority. It is well aware that the major challenge is to secure the improvements which have taken place at Key Stage 2 and to raise standards at Key Stage 3.

Support for Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

87. The previous report found LEA support for ICT to be high cost compared to other LEAs nationally, but in line with other inner London boroughs. Recent LEA data confirms that overall pupil attainment levels in ICT are low and that there is wide variation between schools.

88. Since the last report, the LEA has been successful in combining funding from various sources to encourage further ICT development, with the focus on raising standards. Priority in the use of National Grid for Learning (NGfL) funds has been on raising ICT provision in all schools to a basic entitlement level and, in particular, to

upgrading school software. SRB and NGfL funding has been used to provide useful curriculum support to primary schools. The LEA has suggested a training provider to support schools in their use of the New Opportunities Fund. A service level agreement is in place through which schools can purchase technical support. Further development of ICT is also included in Excellence in Cities and in other cross-borough projects.

89. Mechanisms have been put in place to improve support to schools and to monitor progress. The schools' IT group has been broadened to provide advice to the LEA on both administrative and curriculum ICT issues. The LEA has developed a useful ICT handbook, together with good advice on how schools can audit their own ICT provision. Almost all schools will have had an internet connection installed by March 2000. The LEA has set up its own ICT website and this is already proving useful in disseminating material on assessment, recording and reporting of ICT capability and supporting schools' medium term curriculum planning. The LEA has encouraged schools to adopt the new QCA schemes of work and training to support these has been well received. Two schools (one in special measures and one with serious weaknesses) are piloting the material. The head of service has provided good support for secondary schools developing Key Stage 3 schemes of work. Useful support is also now being provided through regular network meetings for ICT co-ordinators in schools.

90. The LEA is developing useful systems to support school self-review and the tracking of pupil attainment. A new package purchased by the LEA is helping schools track pupil attendance. Electronic links with individual schools have been improved and should soon improve further through the setting up of a secure intranet link to allow transmission of confidential data.

91. Historically, ICT has been underdeveloped in many Tower Hamlets schools. The LEA's present analysis of need is sound but much still needs to be done to help schools make up lost ground. There has been some recent progress in standards of attainment, especially at Key Stages 2 and 3, but there is considerable scope for further improvement. The need to develop the confidence and competence of teachers is paramount. More could also be done to evaluate the impact of training. The LEA is now seeking to develop a more holistic approach to ICT. This is both appropriate and timely.

Support to headteachers and senior managers

92. The first inspection found that the LEA provided limited support to headteachers and senior managers, and it had little impact in secondary schools and those where management was weak.

93. The LEA has made considerable progress in improving its support to headteachers and senior managers. During 1999 the LEA, in partnership with headteachers and deputies, and partly resourced by the National Association of Headteachers, devised a programme of continuing professional support and development. Designed to complement the national framework, this programme takes forward local initiatives in support of leadership and management. The

increased senior management expertise of the SDT, compared to the previous advisory and inspection service, has been crucially important in improving the credibility and effectiveness of the service. Intervention and support have also been targeted on those schools where there are identified weaknesses in the management. Advisers are also making more effective use of the powerful data available to them to support headteachers.

94. The EDP gives emphasis to developing school self-evaluation. Part of this has included developing the skills of headteachers and senior managers in using performance data. During the past year, this work has been usefully extended to include middle managers. The LEA is also using the OFSTED training as a basis to support school self-evaluation and seventy per cent of schools have so far committed themselves to attending the course in the spring term.

95. Schools are frequently involved in a large number of initiatives to support school improvement. These are well co-ordinated centrally by the LEA through the EDP. However, the implications for management in schools, which are also facing greatly increased delegation of services, have not always been sufficiently thought through. There is scope for the LEA to provide more support to help schools manage these developments.

Support for Governors

96. The first inspection found that support for Governors varied and was satisfactory or better in only about half of the schools visited. Support was not always targeted effectively at governing bodies which were failing to meet their statutory duties or were otherwise experiencing difficulties. Only 45 per cent of all governing bodies bought back training under the service level agreement. The LEA did not monitor the ethnic composition of governing bodies or have rigorous systems in place to evaluate the effectiveness of LEA support.

97. A new appointment has recently been made to manage the governor support service. A strategic plan identifying the priorities for the service and relating them to those in the EDP has been put in place. Monitoring of the ethnic composition of governing bodies has begun. Systems are being put in place to identify the strengths and weaknesses of governing bodies, using OFSTED inspection data and other evidence. There is regular communication with governing bodies through the director's bulletin and a clear structure for consulting governors on key issues. Governors are now involved in the appointment of senior officers. The head of governor services has good links with SDT advisers and the Education Business Partnership. Governor services are closely involved with the support for schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses where there are concerns about the effectiveness of the governing body. The LEA has used its powers to appoint additional governors in schools in special measures. Steps are being taken to improve governor recruitment and widen the representation of the local community. The LEA provides useful guidance to schools in developing governor handbooks.

98. A meeting with a group of chairs of governors during the inspection revealed a high level of satisfaction with consultation and communication procedures and the

quality of training, including training for new governors. The general feeling was that these areas had improved since the last inspection and the beneficial impact of the new head of service was already being felt. There were differing views on the effectiveness of the clerking service and what the governing body should expect to receive from purchasing the service. Chairs of governors also felt there was scope for making more use of the expertise which exists amongst governors in the borough for the purposes of training and providing support.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry

99. As part of a major Council initiative, the LEA has made an appropriate response to the report of the Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson report, February 1999) through producing an action plan which also part of priority 6 in the EDP. The action plan includes: consulting with schools and issuing revised guidance for dealing with racist incidents; monitoring of returns from schools reporting racial incidents and action taken; training for teachers and support staff; promotion and dissemination of good practice in dealing with racism including links with anti-bullying, behaviour management and citizenship; producing guidance on the celebration of cultural diversity through the curriculum; the development of an information pack and website on resources available locally and nationally. The Council has identified as a particular priority the need to increase minority ethnic representation in the education workforce to better reflect the local community. It is supporting this with training and development programmes. It is also encouraging governor representation to be more reflective of the local community. The implementation of the action plan involves liaison across services and has been funded through a Corporate initiative to the extent of £400k. The LEA has set quantifiable success criteria for the plan.

SECTION 4: OTHER DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE FIRST INSPECTION

Performance Management and Best Value

100. The education directorate has introduced high standards for the planning and the performance management of services. It has also prepared well for Best Value in the department, including training for service managers. Every service has a Best Value Performance Plan and each is aligned with key corporate plans. Individual performance plans reflect service objectives and are reviewed every six months, supported by meetings every three weeks. Service managers have adopted the principles of Best Value, placing a high value on the benchmarking of service costs and of performance with other services and organisations in the public and private sector. This represents a significant shift that is based on an understanding that the LEA will no longer be the sole provider of services from April 2000.

Excellence in Cities

101. The LEA has been granted about £4 million for the first two years of the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative. The bulk of this funding is destined for schools, with only about four per cent allocated to management. The initiative is aimed mostly at secondary schools. The LEA has planned for all strands of the initiative: support for gifted and talented pupils; learning mentors; learning support units (LSUs); a city learning centre (CLC); specialist and beacon schools; and two small Education Action Zones (EAZs). These areas provide a good match with the broad intentions of the authority, especially in tackling under-achievement and social exclusion, with an emphasis on Key Stage 3.

102. A partnership group, comprising all of the secondary headteachers, as well as senior officers and LEA co-ordinators, has undertaken the planning. This has proved very effective. The headteachers have taken clear ownership of the initiative, while the LEA has facilitated the group and smoothed its progress, for example by liaising with DfEE and other partners. The heads have taken some difficult group decisions about the allocation of resources and have worked hard to ensure that the initiative is absorbed into current ways of working in school.

103. The LEA has rightly aimed to embed the EiC strands in the priorities of the revised EDP and avoided the temptation to see the initiatives as bolt-on extras. Some references to EiC are appropriately made in the EDP, but opportunities to embed the strands further have been missed. For example, there are no cross-references under literacy for low attaining groups or improving pupils' attitudes, learning, motivation and aspirations. Reference is made to EiC under the reduction of exclusions in priority 6, but not under activities to meet a wide range of learning needs, improving attendance or working with groups at risk of social exclusion.

104. The LEA has made good progress in establishing the initiative. In the relatively short time that the gifted and talented, learning mentors and LSU strands have been in operation, there have been marked developments in provision, although it is too early to discern any impact of these. Schools have appointed full time learning mentors and identified those pupils with whom these will work, mainly

those at risk of under-achievement, poor attendance and exclusion, and especially, where pupils present a combination of these.

105. LSUs are located in all but one of the secondary schools and most of these are now operational. Their nature varies according to the needs identified by staff, but schools have developed clear and appropriate criteria for referral and for the re-integration of pupils into mainstream classes. The LSUs and learning mentors are intended to make a contribution to schools' preventative work in avoiding exclusions, in setting up early warning systems, and in raising the attainment of targeted pupils. The management in schools of both the learning mentor and LSU strands needs to consider ways of integrating the work more fully into existing structures for learning support.

106. For the gifted and talented strand, schools are divided into three clusters with co-ordinators at the school, cluster and LEA levels. Schools have identified pupils to be targeted, using a suitably broad set of criteria for the top five to ten per cent of each year group. A start has been made on the extensive programme of revision to departmental schemes of work that is necessary to move the strand forward. This work will require a major change of culture for many teachers. The difficulty is recognised and is being addressed with considerable vigour. The Tower Hamlets summer university enhances work in this area, as does a range of events organised by LEA partners in further and higher education.

107. Plans for the CLC, are in hand and appropriate. The first phase of this strand, which is centred on the Millennium Dome and involves four other London boroughs, has been subject to extensive delays, due to causes outside the control of the LEA. There are clear plans for the CLC to make an important contribution to other strands, especially for gifted and talented pupils. There are also plans for two small EAZs of five schools each, one of which is at an advanced stage.

108. The authority has two Beacon schools and submissions have been made for two more. Plans for the use of these schools are less clear and Beacon schools are not yet integral to the LEA's strategy of extending support by using external consultants and the expertise already available in the borough's schools.

109. The co-ordinators and SDT advisers have made a good start to monitoring provision. Each EiC strand now has a small team of secondary heads acting as a management group to oversee developments and this makes good use of their expertise and commitment to the work.

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

(A) In order to improve strategic planning:

extend the use of performance data to target resources more precisely on particular schools and groups of pupils.

(B) In order to improve professional support:

- (i) introduce a SLA to allow schools to purchase extra time from the SDT;
- (ii) standardise written reporting to schools following visits by advisers, and ensure that reports are automatically copied to chairs of governors.

(C) In order to improve financial planning for SEN:

planning for inclusion should take account of the resource implications of changing patterns of need in both mainstream and special schools, as well as the effects of reducing out of borough provision.

(D) In order to improve attendance:

- (i) disseminate more widely the outcomes of the secondary schools attendance project and ensure all schools have effective strategies in place to improve attendance;
- (ii) identify and publish the success rate for referrals to the attendance panel.

© Crown copyright 2000

**Office for Standards in Education
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE**

Tel: 0207 421 6800

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

A further copy of this report can be obtained from the Local Education Authority concerned:

Tower Hamlets LEA
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London
E14 2BG

A copy of the report can also be obtained on the OFSTED website: www.ofsted.gov.uk