



Office for Standards  
in Education

**Torbay**

**Local Education Authority**

**Inspection Report**

**Date of Inspection: May 2004**

**Reporting Inspector: Christine Brown HMI**



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## **Basic information**

Name of LEA:	Torbay Local Education Authority
LEA number:	880
Address of LEA:	Oldway Mansion Paignton Devon TQ3 2TE
Reporting Inspector:	Christine Brown HMI
Date of Inspection:	May 2004



## Summary

### Introduction

Torbay is well known as the '*English Riviera*' and has a popular image as a pleasant tourist resort. This masks the problems which exist for many families in relation to poverty, poor housing and poor employment prospects. Torbay is average in terms of socio-economic factors, although it contains pockets of deprivation which are among the worst in the West Country. Seven of the 36 wards are in the top 20% of deprived wards in the country.

Since the previous inspection in 2001, standards of attainment in schools have risen at a rate in line with national improvements. Generally, they are at least in line with the national averages and the averages in similar local education authorities <sup>1</sup>(LEAs). Performance targets for the 2004 tests and examinations are challenging, and, based on current trends of improvement, are unlikely to be met. The proportion of pupils admitted to Torbay schools other than at the usual time of entry is higher than the proportion nationally or in similar LEAs. There are no schools with serious weaknesses or judged to require special measures.

There have been major changes within both the council and the learning and culture directorate since the previous inspection. A new Liberal Democrat administration took office in May 2003 and the council's constitution was revised. A cabinet, with decision-making responsibilities delegated to portfolio holders, was replaced by an executive that makes collective decisions. A new scheme of officer delegation was established and overview and scrutiny arrangements were strengthened. In addition, there has been an almost complete change of senior officers. At the time of this inspection, the new education leadership team had been fully operational for less than six months.

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<sup>1</sup> Torbay LEA's statistical neighbours are: Poole, Warrington, Bournemouth, Isle of Wight, Darlington, The Medway Towns, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, City of York and Stockton on Tees.

**Main findings**

**Summary:** Following the previous inspection, the performance of Torbay LEA quickly reached a plateau and in many respects its effectiveness declined significantly. The political administration has been in place for a year and the management team for just a few months, but there is already a common sense of purpose and a determination to succeed. Progress in the last 12 months has been rapid and most areas of weakness have been tackled with energy and vigour. However, there has been much to do in redressing a legacy of inadequate strategic planning. A climate of mutual respect between the LEA and schools is developing, but there is not yet a commonly agreed agenda, or a shared understanding with all headteachers, of schools' collective responsibilities for supporting vulnerable pupils and those most at risk of educational and social exclusion. The weaknesses in special educational needs (SEN) and aspects of social inclusion outweigh the strengths within school improvement, leadership and corporate commitment. Nevertheless, Torbay is a fast developing LEA and, given a commitment by all schools that matches that of officers and elected members, the prospects for improvement are encouraging.

<b>Areas of strength</b>	<b>Areas of weakness/for development</b>
<b>Corporate leadership of education</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership by senior officers</li> <li>• Review and scrutiny of progress</li> <li>• The framework for performance management</li> <li>• Budgetary control and the transparency of budget planning and school funding</li> <li>• Progress towards meeting the targets identified for early years education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared understanding of the council's vision and direction</li> <li>• Objectives that lack precision and which do not support effective monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>• Cross-divisional working across the learning and culture directorate</li> <li>• Support for 14-19 education</li> <li>• Involvement of governors in helping to shape the strategic direction of the authority</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy for education and its implementation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No schools with serious weaknesses or requiring special measures</li> <li>• Asset management planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategy for school improvement</li> <li>• Uneven challenge to target setting in schools</li> </ul>
<b>Support to improve education in schools</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of information management systems and financial services</li> <li>• Use of consultants and members of staff from schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for gifted and talented pupils in secondary schools</li> </ul>
<b>Support for special educational needs (SEN)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative procedures and the control of central budgets</li> <li>• Partnership working with health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of shared understanding about inclusion and unsatisfactory value for money</li> <li>• Quality of statements</li> <li>• Support for schools and the monitoring of pupils' progress</li> </ul>
<b>Support for social inclusion</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for attendance</li> <li>• Partnership working with a range of agencies and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of a coherent and integrated approach to social inclusion and combating racism</li> <li>• Provision for and reintegration of excluded pupils</li> </ul>



## Recommendations

### **Key recommendations**

**Corporate planning:** strengthen the coherence of corporate plans; ensure that schools and officers in the directorate understand the council's vision and direction and that the respective roles and collective responsibilities which will enable the organisation to meet its objectives are discussed and agreed; ensure that all plans have sharply focused and measurable targets and success criteria.

**Strategy for school improvement:** establish, through consultation with schools, clear and agreed implementation plans to guide school improvement.

**SEN strategy and value for money:** in dialogue with schools, parents and partner agencies, develop a shared concept of inclusion and detailed plans in order to achieve a substantial reduction in the unnecessary use of statements and separate provision; establish an overall budget strategy for SEN review, and procedures for monitoring pupils' progress.

**Strategy for social inclusion:** in consultation with users and partners, establish a clear and purposeful strategy and implementation plans for social inclusion that are based on a coherent and comprehensive audit of need and evaluation of current provision.

**Pupils educated other than at school:** introduce immediate measures to ensure that all excluded pupils receive full-time education in an appropriate setting from the 15th day of exclusion; in consultation with the admissions forum and mainstream schools, establish a protocol which ensures that most excluded pupils are reintegrated into an alternative school without significant delay.

**14-19 education:** work with relevant partners to develop a coherent 14-19 strategy and a sharply focused action plan; ensure that the strategy takes fuller account of the views and opinions of young people, and of the progress made by learners across the entire 14-19 range.

**Other recommendations:** In addition to the key recommendations, it is essential that the LEA implements the following to improve aspects of its work that also remain unsatisfactory.

### **Corporate leadership of education**

**Corporate planning:** ensure that information provided for councillors is clear and unambiguous and that elected members develop further skills in using data and information; establish regular and clear evaluations of the effectiveness of the implementation of service plans.

**Partnership working:** involve governors actively in helping to shape the strategic direction of the LEA.

### **Strategy for education and its implementation**

**Monitoring, challenge and intervention:** ensure that strategies for social inclusion and provision for pupils with SEN are monitored, resulting in appropriate support for and intervention in schools.

### **Support to improve education in schools**

**Gifted and talented pupils:** establish coherent strategy and implementation plans that include clear actions for supporting secondary schools.

### **Support for special educational needs**

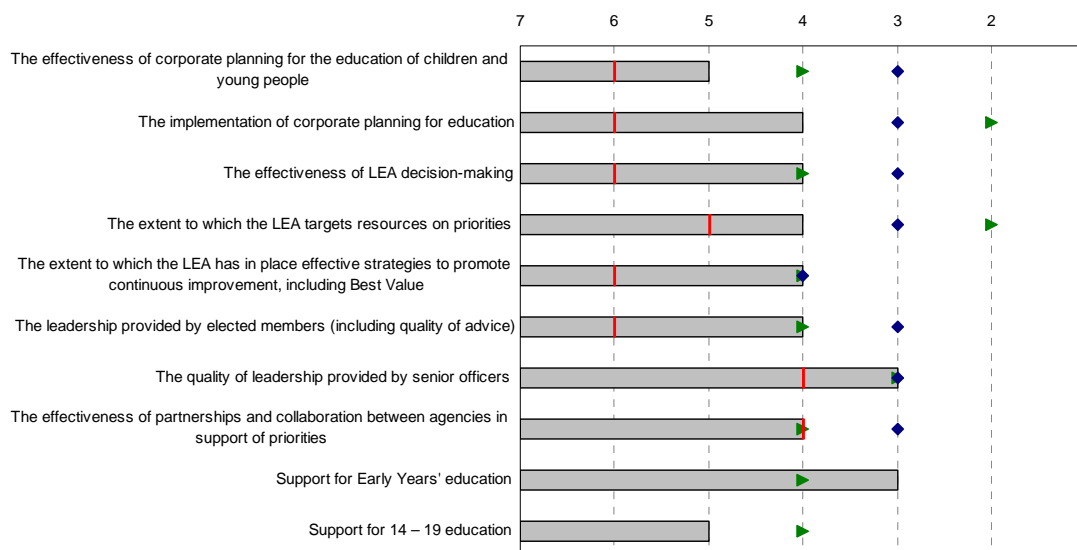
**SEN statutory obligations:** ensure that draft statements comply with requirements; that parents are supported in expressing unconstrained preferences about school placements for their child; that statements are updated appropriately in light of pupils' progress.

### **Support for social inclusion**

**Promoting racial equality:** in close partnership with statutory agencies and minority ethnic representatives, establish a coherent plan to monitor and promote race equality.

## Section 1: Corporate leadership of education

### Summary table of judgements



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

### Corporate planning for education and its implementation

1. Much has been achieved since the previous inspection. Uncertainties surrounding professional leadership and political direction have been resolved. Education is now one of the council's key priorities and is seen as crucial in increasing the life chances for children and young people. Good progress has been made on most of the recommendations in the previous report. In particular, there are now clear systems that provide a secure framework within which officers and elected members can work, and rigorous performance management systems are developing.

2. Nevertheless, corporate planning remains unsatisfactory. Planning is developing satisfactorily, but plans have not yet reached the stage where they are coherent and well sequenced or where objectives are sufficiently embedded into business plans. A preliminary three-year budget plan is in place. Of necessity, corporate plans, including the draft community plan, have been developed at great speed. This process has not allowed the vision to be shared sufficiently with schools or officers. Objectives in the council's strategic plan for education are too imprecise to enable effective monitoring and evaluation, and links to key targets and performance indicators are not clear.

3. The learning and culture directorate is at an early stage in establishing a secure framework for aligning business, team, and individual plans with strategic plans, although some sound foundations for this have been laid. Divisions have tended to work independently of each other and have not shared information sufficiently or developed clear

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joint approaches to integrating the school improvement and social inclusion agendas. Although there are some obvious links with some corporate objectives, service plans vary in the extent and manner to which they make financial implications clear and include focused and measurable targets and success criteria. Statutory plans are of variable quality and are in various stages of development. Those for asset management and school organisation are sound. The Education Development Plan (EDP) is unsatisfactory and the new and improved behaviour support plan (BSP) has yet to be agreed. Procedures are satisfactory for monitoring the progress against activities in service plans, but the evaluation of service performance is not embedded firmly.

4. Progress is reviewed in a planned way. The council has purchased a performance reporting system to support regular and frequent reporting of performance information against national and locally agreed performance targets. Although this system is new, it is already having an impact in enabling the managing director and councillors to hold the education service to account for progress and performance. There has been some progress in improving service delivery; for example in the planning of school places, in adopting co-ordinated admissions schemes and in implementing child protection procedures. School improvement services have been overhauled to make them more sharply focused and targeted to need.

#### *Recommendations*

- Strengthen the coherence of corporate plans.
- Ensure that schools and officers in the directorate understand the council's vision and direction, and that the respective roles and collective responsibilities which will enable the organisation to meet its objectives are discussed and agreed.
- Ensure that all plans have sharply focused and measurable targets and success criteria.
- Establish regular and clear evaluations of the effectiveness of the implementation of service plans.

5. Following an in-depth review led by elected members, a decision has been taken to move towards integrated children's services by April 2005. This is an ambitious proposal that, in principle, has the support of schools and other partners, although it is early days in their understanding and acceptance of the implications of change. Intentions are clearly focused on improving the outcomes for the people who use the services. There is an explicit recognition that the way that people work together and share information is the key to reform. The efficacy of the approach has yet to be tested. The timescales that have been set are extremely tight and might not prove feasible, especially in light of the weaknesses identified in some of the services in special educational needs and social inclusion.

#### **Decision-making**

6. The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making have improved significantly and are now satisfactory. Lines of accountability are well defined and there is

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clear differentiation between policy-making and operational management. The executive takes decisions in an open way and there are publicly available written records of the decisions made. Briefings, seminars and the use of independent advice contribute to balanced and informed decision-making, and care is taken to ensure widespread and appropriate consultation. These thorough procedures are designed to ensure that elected members have a full grasp of the issues, but have inevitably led to slower progress on some key issues such as social inclusion. Elected members are increasingly prepared to take some difficult decisions. The scrutiny function has been strengthened and given greater status, and decisions are starting to be evaluated for their effect on improving quality.

### **Targeting of resources**

7. This aspect has improved and is satisfactory. Education is now a high priority in a more transparent process of budget-planning. The basis for charges to the education budget for services provided by the corporate centre has been clarified, in line with recommendations in the previous report.

8. A medium-term budget plan is in place and budgetary control in education is good. The budget-setting process is more closely linked to council priorities, and headteachers and governors are involved in the scrutiny of the proposals. However, the process does not yet include an in-depth challenge of historic patterns of spending.

9. An effective and comprehensive review of school funding was conducted by the overview and scrutiny committee in the summer/autumn 2003. This improved elected members' and others' understanding of budget issues and led to a review of the school funding formula and of LEA central spending. However, funding for key aspects of SEN has yet to be reviewed and aligned with the proposed new strategy.

10. Despite a tight financial settlement, and with a risk of capping in 2004-05, the council demonstrated its commitment to funding schools by putting additional monies above the Formula Spending Share into the schools budget in 2003-04 and 2004-05. These additional funds were directed towards Key Stage 2 pupils, statemented pupils in mainstream schools and social inclusion. The council has been successful in bidding for external revenue and capital funding but does not have the capacity to be pro-active in supporting schools' bids for additional funding.

11. The Schools Forum has been effective in scrutinising the LEA's centrally-held budgets and in overseeing a major revision of the school funding formula for 2004-05. This has greatly improved the transparency of the process and the schools' understanding of the rationale for decisions. The Forum has a headteacher subgroup which looks at budget issues in detail before referring these to the whole group. This speeds up the work of the group, but does not help develop the capacity of governor members.

12. The LEA provides good support to schools to enable them to manage their budgets. In 2002-03 no schools had significant deficits and the level of surplus balances was well below average. In 2003-04 the LEA worked effectively to help schools produce balanced budgets following the major changes to the funding formula for local government finance.

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**Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value**

13. This aspect is satisfactory. Councillors and officers are clearly committed to improvement. Some key appointments have strengthened corporate capacity and a good performance management framework is in place. In developing corporate commitment and planning, the LEA has come a long way since the previous inspection, but the improvements have been implemented only recently. The LEA's self-evaluation was overly optimistic about the progress that could be made in a short space of time to turn around weaknesses in key areas such as 14-19 education and strategic planning. The self-evaluation was substantially inaccurate in relation to special educational needs.

14. The council's improvement strategy is driven by the change management and improvement plan and its strategic plan, 'Transforming Torbay'. Business plans have a common format and are intended to link council priorities to plans at directorate and assistant director level. The newly-created directorate performance board provides a useful forum for lead members and officers to monitor their plans and associated budgets. A new council-wide information technology system provides clearer and more accurate information on performance indicators.

15. The managing director's quarterly appraisal of directors is proving a strong impetus for the monitoring of performance across the council. Almost all members of staff have now had individual appraisals. These, together with improved elected member and officer relationships, have led to increased morale as members of staff recognise how their work contributes to service improvement.

16. The majority of the Best Value reviews have been suspended to focus on the improvement plan for Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Past reviews, such as those of transport and of management support services for schools, have not kept to their initial deadlines, and when completed the outcomes have not been monitored consistently. Nevertheless, good use has been made of external experts and stakeholders on the challenge teams. Reviews have had a positive effect on the work of the advisory services, and on the support services for SEN.

**Leadership by elected members and advice given to them**

17. This aspect has improved and is now satisfactory. Elected members are committed to improving education services and are actively involved at a strategic level. The leader of the council provides clear direction. The respective roles and responsibilities of officers and elected members have been clarified and agreed, but are not yet shared sufficiently with schools. There is some way to go before relationships between the council and schools can be considered effective.

18. A number of councillors were newly elected in May 2003, which has meant a steep learning curve for many of them. A series of helpful briefings and seminars has been devised to support them. Most of those elected members closely involved with education are gaining steadily the skills and knowledge needed to be effective.

19. There are clear procedures for elected members to scrutinise policy, receive regular reports from officers and to monitor the work of education services and schools. Elected

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members are, however, sometimes overwhelmed by data, and have not yet developed the in-depth skills and abilities needed to use the information fully. Good use is made of co-opted parents and diocesan representatives to add an independent and external perspective to reviews and to support elected members in monitoring and challenging performance.

#### *Recommendation*

- Ensure that information provided for councillors is clear and unambiguous and that elected members develop further skills in using data and information.

#### **Leadership by senior officers**

20. Leadership by senior officers is highly satisfactory. The new leadership team for education has been fully operational for less than six months and it is too early for them to have demonstrated a sustained effect. Nevertheless, the new director of learning and culture provides a clear vision and purposeful leadership and management. Despite having been in post for less than a year, he has been instrumental in developing a climate of mutual respect and trust with schools and other stakeholders. Weaknesses have been tackled with vigour and resolve. Consultants have been deployed to support strategic development in underdeveloped areas such as SEN and 14-19 education. Senior officers within education are also ably supported by the council's new managing director, who brings a track record in implementing change and who has already made a positive difference to performance management.

21. Almost all other senior members of staff within the learning and culture directorate also have high expectations and the ability to succeed. They too have won much goodwill and support from schools and other partners, although it is recognised that much remains to be done to challenge schools and to consolidate confidence. Many middle managers have provided much needed stability during the various changes at senior officer level. However, several key members of staff have left their posts within the last year and this has left a lack of capacity in officers overseeing the implementation of plans, especially for SEN and social inclusion.

#### **Strategic partnerships**

22. Strategic partnerships are satisfactory. Partnerships continue to play an important part within the learning and culture directorate's operational arrangements and are becoming increasingly central to the council's work. Good progress has been made in developing the necessary strategic links between key agencies in readiness for the establishment of integrated children's services. This, however, is only the first step, and there are major challenges facing the agencies in establishing coherent planning and effective joint delivery of services.

23. The draft community plan for Torbay represents a positive step in developing shared aims and objectives, as well as establishing the contribution to improvement expected from each agency. The Local Strategic Partnership is developing the necessary links with other key partnerships, such as the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Until recently, however, the

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various groups have tended to operate in isolation without shared objectives, and there is much to do before the stated aims of the community plan are realised and all children and young people in Torbay are able to fulfil their potential. Most partner organisations are positive about working with the LEA. Well-developed links with the health service are contributing to improved service delivery within, for example, services for mental health and children with disabilities. Close partnership work with the police and schools has contributed to a reduction in truancy.

24. Partnership work is also developing between different services and departments within education and across the council. However, these are by no means as well established as the partnerships with external agencies and there is insufficient joint working, especially within the learning and culture directorate. Relationships with schools deteriorated significantly in the period following the previous inspection, but are now satisfactory. Headteachers are involved in a wide range of consultative and reference groups that influence development in the LEA. However, despite being consulted widely about proposed policy changes, governors are insufficiently involved in helping to shape policy and strategy. The Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG) collaborative has proved a good mechanism for increasing collaborative working between schools and the LEA and among schools. However, collaboration between schools and the LEA to support SEN and to further social inclusion is inadequate. Schools have yet to appreciate and understand fully the LEA's priorities and to agree the part that they need to play to bring about improvement.

*Recommendation*

- Involve governors actively in helping to shape the strategic direction of the LEA.

**Support for Early Years**

25. This aspect is highly satisfactory. Development in early years education is a council priority and is linked to a number of strategic planning documents such as the EDP. Strategic planning for the expansion of childcare, such as the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative, has ensured that new provision is targeted on the most disadvantaged areas. Officers and partners are clear about the strategy for early years and how it is being implemented. Communication has been inadequate, however, about the council's wider vision and the position of early years education in the strategies for community renewal and lifelong learning.

26. Secure systems are in place to monitor the quality of early years provision, inform planning and target support. Area co-ordinators provide good guidance and support for children with SEN. Most targets identified in the EYDCP plan have been met, and in some cases exceeded. All three- and four-year-olds, for example, have access to an education place. The LEA has produced a comprehensive Foundation Stage profile to assist in the assessment of children and aid their transition into the reception class.

27. Training, support and advice enable practitioners within the early years to extend their knowledge and share good practice. Clear information is provided for parents seeking childcare and education through the LEA's partnership with the neighbouring LEA.

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**Support for 14-19 education**

28. The LEA's support for 14-19 education is unsatisfactory. There has been a lack of pace in the development of a strategic plan. The recently-produced draft strategy and action plans for 14-19 development are a major step forward, but shortcomings remain. Insufficient prominence was given to gathering the views of local students and young people, although the opinions of a small sample of 14-19 year-olds were used to inform the draft strategy. Action plans are insufficiently focused on key priorities and do not identify in enough detail how the strategy will be implemented and resourced. The plans have yet to secure the commitment of key stakeholders, including secondary schools.

29. Achieving both joint provision across providers and a broader range and choice of relevant learning opportunities are prominent themes in the LEA's approach. There are already some collaborative arrangements that can be extended and developed. For instance, at post-16, a collaborative partnership between three schools and a local further education college aims to reduce the number of learners not participating in education and training beyond the age of 16. There is, however, no map of 14-19 provision to enable clear and informed decisions to be made about the quality and availability of courses.

30. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with the averages in similar LEAs and nationally. Rates of improvement are above average, despite a dip in performance in 2003. The gap of six percentage points between current performance and the LEA's 2004 target for pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C suggests that, at the current rate of improvement, the target is unlikely to be met. The average points score attained by schools for courses post-16 is above the national average, although this masks variations across individual schools. The staying-on rates at post-16 are in line with national averages, but there is a gap in knowledge about participation rates at 17, and no clear information about the proportions of young people who enrol on inappropriate programmes and subsequently leave. Access to data for tracking the progress of pupils up to the age of 16 is good. However, beyond the age of 16 the access to and use of data are very patchy.

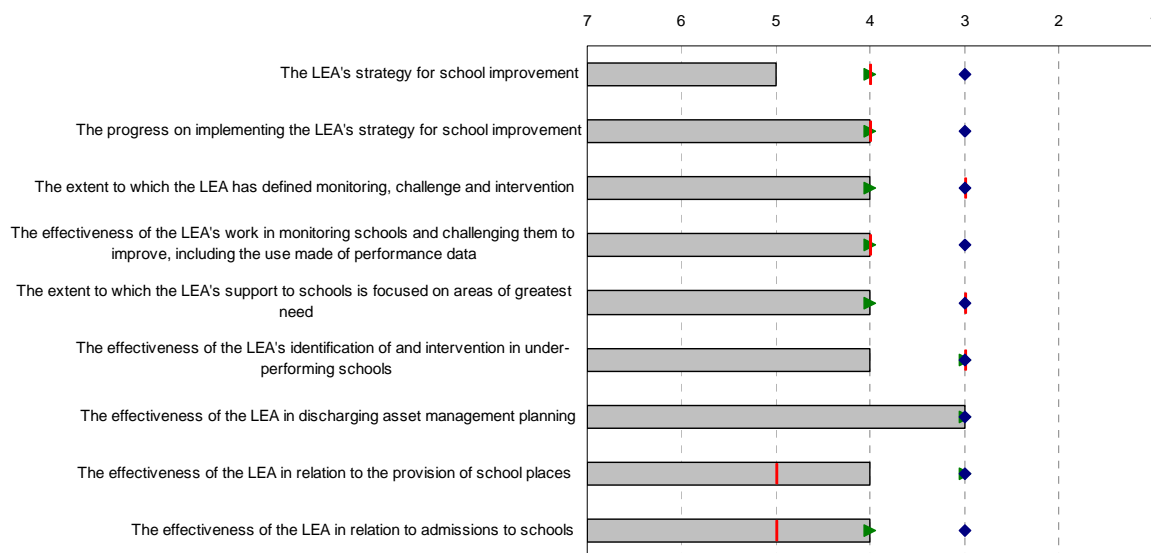
***Recommendations***

- Work with relevant partners to develop a coherent 14-19 strategy and a sharply focused action plan.
- Ensure that the strategy takes fuller account of the views and opinions of young people and of the progress made by learners across the entire 14-19 range.



## Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation

### Summary table of judgements



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

### The strategy for school improvement and its implementation

31. The strategy for school improvement is unsatisfactory. The priorities identified in the EDP lack coherence and the links to national priorities are confused. There is overlap between priorities. Activities are sometimes not well defined and success criteria are not always sharply focused on measurable outcomes. The inclusion of recruitment and retention as a local priority was not justified by the audit of need. There is insufficient clarity in the links with the strategies for meeting SEN and social inclusion.

32. In the main, the EDP was based on a thorough audit of need and developed in close consultation with schools. Despite this, the LEA has not yet gained the full support of its secondary schools for the strategy, even with the secondment of a secondary headteacher to manage the process. The allocation of resources to priorities is in line with needs.

33. The weaknesses are recognised by the new leadership team and the LEA has revised the activities in the EDP for 2004/05. These activities present a clearer structure for the school improvement strategy and, together with revised procedures for working with schools, provide a satisfactory basis for strategic focus and planned school improvement. The LEA is now consulting on the revised activities, and is, rightly, awaiting the outcomes of this before finalising the detailed activity plans and success criteria.

34. The LEA has agreed challenging performance targets with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), but is unlikely to meet them. There is a significant and growing gap between the LEA's targets and those of its schools, particularly at Key Stage 2 where there is also too wide a variation in the performance of individual schools. Schools are provided with detailed performance data to support target setting. Too many schools, however, have set targets that lack ambition, and, in some of these cases, governors have been insufficiently challenged by link advisers.

35. Despite the weaknesses at the strategic level, actions and activities are being implemented satisfactorily. The rates of improvement in standards broadly match the progress made nationally. There are no schools in an Ofsted category of concern, and schools identified by the LEA as causing concern receive closely targeted support. The implementation of the strategy is monitored systematically and progress is reported to elected members. Failure to meet the deadlines for some planned activities has been identified and appropriate action taken. Satisfactory progress has been made against the recommendations in the previous inspection report.

*Recommendation*

- Establish, through consultation with schools, clear and agreed implementation plans to guide school improvement.

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

36. The LEA's procedures for these aspects of its work remain satisfactory, despite some deterioration in effectiveness following the previous inspection. Link advisers have not always been consistent in the way they followed published procedures, a weakness now being addressed rigorously by the new leadership team.

37. The revised approach to monitoring, challenge and intervention provides precise definitions of the responsibilities of all partners. There are clear triggers for intervention and schools are placed in one of four categories. Support is differentiated appropriately and according to needs. The LEA has consulted widely on the new procedures, but not all schools are completely conversant with them or yet accept fully the reasons for change.

38. Performance data and management information from a range of services are collected systematically and analysed thoroughly. Link advisers have a good knowledge of primary schools, but the LEA's full knowledge of its secondary schools is underdeveloped, owing to a lack of confidence in the previous leadership team. A revised monitoring process has been agreed with schools. This has the clear potential to support self-managing schools and the development of self-evaluation strategies, but is insufficiently differentiated to reflect the high performance of some schools. There is inadequate monitoring of the schools' provision for social inclusion and of the progress made by pupils with SEN.

39. Link advisers and consultants are deployed satisfactorily and good support is provided for schools wishing to acquire additional external advice. Mechanisms for the

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sharing of good practice are developing. In particular, within the secondary sector, the LEA has helped the LIG collaborative to target its resources effectively.

***Recommendation***

- Ensure that strategies for social inclusion and provision for pupils with SEN are monitored, resulting in appropriate support for and intervention in schools.

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

40. This aspect is satisfactory. The schools identified as requiring special measures or underachieving have received focused support, resulting in these schools being removed from categories of concern within the timescales expected. There is currently no school in serious weakness or requiring special measures. A school review group is starting to ensure that underperforming schools are identified promptly, and then provided with closely targeted and balanced support. This has not always been the case and, occasionally, the LEA has provided enhanced levels of support without evaluating sufficiently if the school has the capacity to manage or absorb it within the timescales proposed.

41. Those schools targeted for support are improving. The LEA is keen to ensure that the school is the leading partner in developing its improvement strategy, but has not always succeeded in achieving this. Nevertheless, in the majority of schools, support is well co-ordinated by link advisers who draw on a range of expertise within and beyond the authority. Effective use is made of local schools to share best practice, and there is a well-developed network of associate heads and primary consultant heads to support leadership and management.

42. Monitoring of the impact of intervention is becoming an increasingly rigorous process, and a consistent approach to improvement planning and reporting progress is developing. Elected members and senior officers receive regular updates on the progress of underperforming schools and are well aware of the challenges to be faced.

**Asset management planning**

43. Asset management planning is highly satisfactory. Plans are clear and updated regularly, and there are strong links with school place planning and admissions. The team, however, does not have sufficient capacity to work more pro-actively with schools, for example, in scrutinising development plans or supporting them in bidding for grants.

44. Information on school buildings is comprehensive and has recently been updated, although it is not yet combined on a single database. The authority has been successful in its plans and bids for capital funding and is well placed to implement its plans for improvement. In particular, since 2001, two new schools have been built with funding from Private Finance Initiatives, and the reorganisation of the special schools resulted in substantial rebuilding. There are feasible plans to improve secondary school buildings through the Building Schools for the Future initiative, and for reducing temporary classrooms in primary schools as part of

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the removal of surplus places. The reorganisation of the corporate property team has enabled the delivery of building projects to improve rapidly from a low base.

45. The LEA has an imaginative approach to developing jointly-funded bids and schools contribute funds to a high proportion of capital projects. An active property advisory group and good communication contribute strongly to schools' clear understanding of the priorities for investment. However, there are no governors on the advisory group and their involvement in shaping strategy is underdeveloped.

### **Providing school places**

46. The planning of school places has improved and is now satisfactory. A more strategic approach is being developed. The number of secondary school places is more in line with demand and the LEA has begun the process of reducing the surplus places in primary schools. The LEA has recognised that the expansion of special school places did not take sufficient account of the national move to inclusion.

47. There are now satisfactory links between school place planning, admissions, transport and asset management planning. Forecasting of pupil numbers has been accurate for the last three years. Some 600 additional places in secondary schools will be added by the end of 2005 and the LEA projects that there will be sufficient capacity to meet local demand.

48. The projected need for more primary places has not materialised. Lower birth rates and a change in the profile of families moving into the area have led to an increase in surplus places in primary schools since 2001. The LEA has a clear view of how to manage this issue, and officers are focussing appropriately on the removal of surplus places in the three planning areas where the problem is most acute. The first phase of the proposals in Brixham has been challenged and matters are currently with the adjudicator.

49. The school organisation plan (SOP) is a useful framework. The school organisation committee is properly constituted, but not all of its members understand fully and endorse the principles within the SOP.

### **Admissions to schools**

50. This function has improved and is now satisfactory.

51. Admission arrangements in Torbay remain highly complex, partly because of the large number of admission authorities. The LEA is working constructively with schools to streamline the arrangements. Plans are securely in place to co-ordinate arrangements for September 2005. All parents who live in Torbay, and who express a preference at primary transfer for a secondary school in the authority, are now offered a place. The numbers who receive their first preference school has increased from 66% to about 88%. The percentage of admission appeals has fallen dramatically since 2001/02.

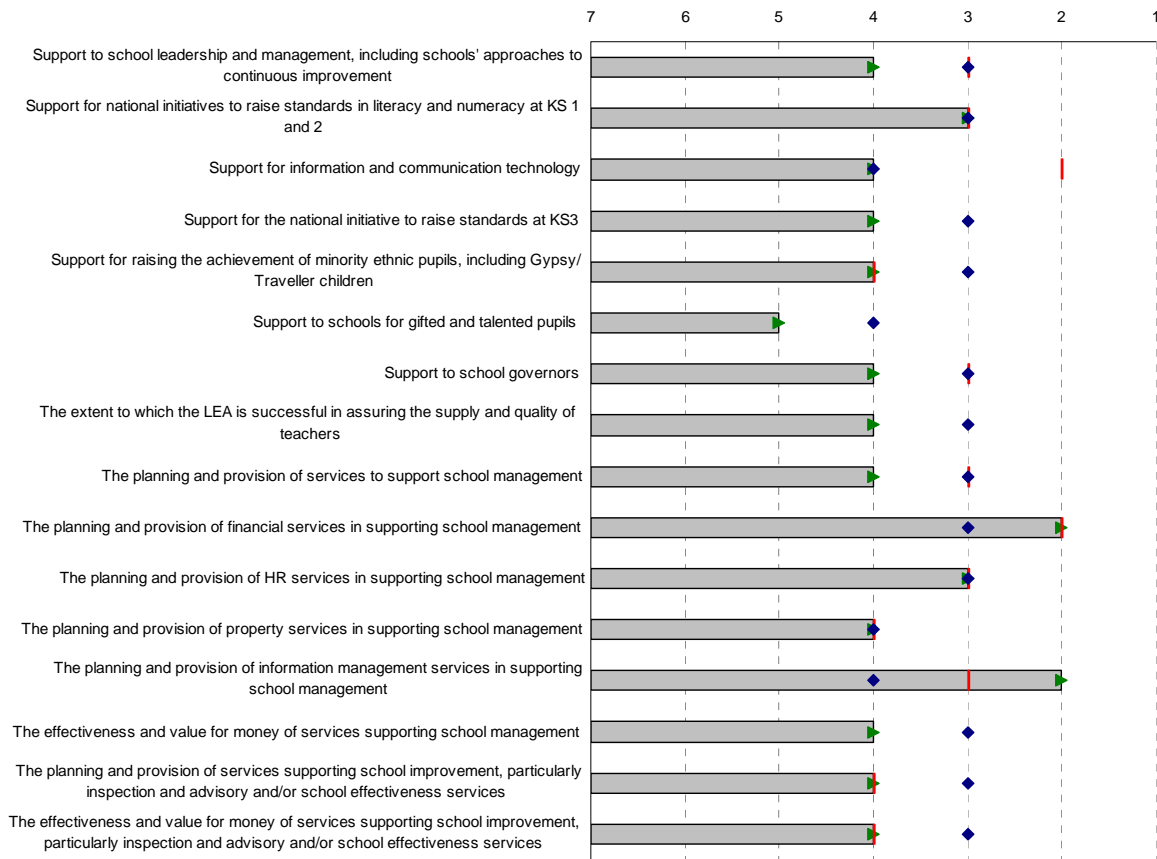
52. The criteria for over-subscription within many voluntary-aided and foundation schools remain complicated. Not all of these schools give sufficient priority to looked after children. Rightly, the LEA is challenging these schools.

53. The work of the admissions forum is underdeveloped, and elected members and governors do not play a sufficiently active role in relation to it. The forum has not challenged those admission criteria and arrangements that do not serve the interests of local parents and pupils, especially vulnerable children. The arrangements to admit pupils who are hard to place are inadequate. It is currently difficult, for example, to integrate excluded pupils back into mainstream schools.

54. School transport costs are high because of the way the LEA has exercised its discretion, including in relation to the high number of pupils with statements of SEN. Elected members have recognised the need to review this and a revised policy will shortly go out for consultation.

### Section 3: Support to improve education in schools

#### Summary table of judgements



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

#### Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement

55. Support for school leadership and management is satisfactory. The LEA has provided headteachers and governors with useful advice and highly valued training on self-evaluation and the use of performance data. Imaginative approaches to training have been adopted, including the use of video conferencing. Innovative methods to support school self-evaluation in the form of an information and communication technology (ICT) based framework are being piloted in collaboration with a private company, although progress on this has been slower than planned.

56. The LEA has been successful in identifying weaknesses in leadership and management. Effective targeting of support has contributed strongly to improvement. Evidence from Ofsted inspections of schools indicates a good and improving picture of leadership and management, especially within primary schools.

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57. The LEA has well-developed knowledge of good practice within its primary schools and rapidly developing knowledge of good practice within subject departments in secondary schools. A wide range of strategies is employed to support the dissemination of best practice between schools, including subject networks, the use of advanced skills teachers and collaborative work between schools. The Key Stage 3 strategy team and the LIG collaborative are working hard to extend collaboration between secondary schools.

58. Elected members receive regular reports on school leadership issues. The visits of link advisers are designed well to support the process of self-evaluation, and to evaluate the impact of LEA support. Although sound overall, the quality of notes of visit is inconsistent. The most effective notes provide governors and headteachers with focused advice and precise judgements which evaluate the impact of previous actions.

59. Support for the procurement of services and application of the principles of Best Value is developing gradually. Satisfactory support is available to schools wishing to make their own arrangements for the purchase of services, and an annual fair is organised to publicise further sources of suitable provision. Mechanisms for monitoring how well schools apply the principles of Best Value are underdeveloped.

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

60. Support for ICT in the curriculum is satisfactory. The LEA has a clear strategy that takes account of local circumstances and national needs and that links well with corporate initiatives. Pupils' standards in ICT capability are monitored closely through scrutiny of inspection reports, during visits by link advisers and in the course of the work of advisory teachers. Support is targeted effectively at greatest need.

61. Sound progress has been maintained in developing the necessary infrastructure in schools, and for the sharing of good practice through, for example, the Torbay Grid for Learning and the Interactive Whiteboard Project. The LEA is on track to meet most of the national targets, including the provision of broadband connectivity ahead of the national deadline. Changes of staffing at senior levels within the team and some shortages of other advisory staff resulted in discontinuity of support for schools, especially in helping them assure the quality and consistency of teacher assessment and to monitor pupils' progress in ICT. The ICT team is now at full strength and quickly making up lost ground.

### **Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3**

62. This aspect is satisfactory. The initial implementation of the strategy was managed inappropriately and this limited its impact and damaged the credibility of the team. Although this situation has improved, the team has yet to gain the complete confidence of all headteachers.

63. Consultants are working diligently to develop a collaborative approach with schools. Useful partnership plans differentiate between the work of consultants and the responsibilities of the school, but inconsistent use of success criteria limits their value for evaluating the impact of work. From this financial year, funding has been targeted appropriately and more specifically at pupils at risk of underachieving, including an increased focus on raising the

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achievement of boys. Training for schools is focused suitably on developing whole-school approaches to raising attainment.

64. It is too early to see the sustained effect of the strategy. Evaluation of the impact of initiatives is underdeveloped and there is insufficient focus on the monitoring of the progress by those groups of pupils at risk of low attainment. Nevertheless, effective mechanisms for identifying and disseminating best practice are contributing to an improvement in the quality of teaching and the raising of attainment in some subjects; for example, schools which received intensive support in mathematics saw results in progress tests in 2003 rise faster than in other schools in the LEA.

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

65. The LEA's support for gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory. Within primary schools, officers have brokered and co-ordinated a range of relevant provision; for example in mathematics, creative writing, the humanities, sport and music. This has been well received. Within secondary schools, however, engagement has been insufficient and poorly received by schools. The LEA recognises this weakness and plans to offer extension activities and workshops for Key Stage 3 pupils.

66. General advice is given to all schools to help them identify gifted and talented pupils. All secondary schools and all but two primary schools have policy statements in support of their work. The LEA knows, in very broad terms, the strengths and weaknesses in most schools' provision for gifted and talented pupils, through looking at policies, analysing performance data and asking schools to identify pupils and submit registers. However, monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of support and provision are undeveloped. There are no secure means through which the progress of pupils is tracked, including on transfer from primary to secondary schools. The work of the associate adviser for gifted and talented pupils is not yet integrated effectively with that of other staff supporting the improvement of schools.

#### ***Recommendation***

- Establish a coherent strategy and implementation plans for gifted and talented pupils that include appropriate actions for supporting secondary schools.

### **The supply and quality of teachers**

67. Support for schools in securing an adequate supply and quality of teachers is satisfactory. Torbay does not have a severe shortage of teachers. Recruitment processes work well: unfilled vacancies are low; and the proportion of permanent teachers leaving posts during and at the end of the school year is lower than average. To date it has been difficult for the LEA to justify the inclusion of staff recruitment, development and retention as a priority within the EDP. However, the focus for 2004/05 on workforce remodelling provides an appropriate new direction for actions and activities.

68. The LEA has yet to develop an overarching and coherent strategy for continuous professional learning and development, although work has started on a suitable framework



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for this. A range of in-service courses is planned on the basis of identified needs, local priorities and national developments. The LEA actively and successfully promotes the national leadership programmes. Clear guidance and support are available for schools on the induction of newly-qualified teachers and the LEA has satisfactory procedures for supporting new headteachers.

### **Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management**

69. The effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management are satisfactory. The LEA has a good knowledge both of schools' needs and of the local market for management support services. Sound use is made of Best Value principles to review services. The brochure of traded services provides sufficient information for schools to make timely and informed choices, although there is variability across services in the range and flexibility of packages available for purchase. Not all services include explicit and measurable standards for service delivery. No undue pressure is put on schools to purchase from the LEA, although most do for the majority of services. Some work has been done to support schools in becoming competent procurers and purchasers of services, although the LEA recognises further work is required in this area. Work is currently taking place with neighbouring authorities to identify and assure the quality of possible alternative providers and to introduce sharper competition.

70. Surveys of schools' views and discussions with headteachers and other school staff provide ongoing feedback about the performance of services. There are high levels of satisfaction for services offered by the LEA, especially financial, payroll and human resources services. The quality of technical support for ICT has been variable and less than satisfactory in the past. However, the quality of support for administrative ICT and the speed of the provider's response have improved significantly. Recent surveys indicate a return to high levels of customer satisfaction.

71. The quality of information management services has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Information management and other administrative needs are well integrated into the LEA's overall ICT strategy. Systems are efficient and comprehensive, although more work is required to ensure that they are integrated fully. A coherent strategy underpins electronic communication with schools and the transfer of performance and financial data is quick and accurate. The Torbay Grid for Learning provides school and public access to a good range of electronic information, including administrative, curriculum and policy documents.

### **Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement**

72. The provision and effectiveness of the services remain satisfactory. Primary schools generally rate highly the work of the school improvement team and partnership work with secondary schools is starting to develop. Costs are comparable with similar LEAs and the school improvement service provides satisfactory value for money.

73. The recent change in leadership has resulted in an effective strategic review of the school improvement service. A soundly focused business development plan identifies strengths, weaknesses and priorities for development. The more sharply focused activities in

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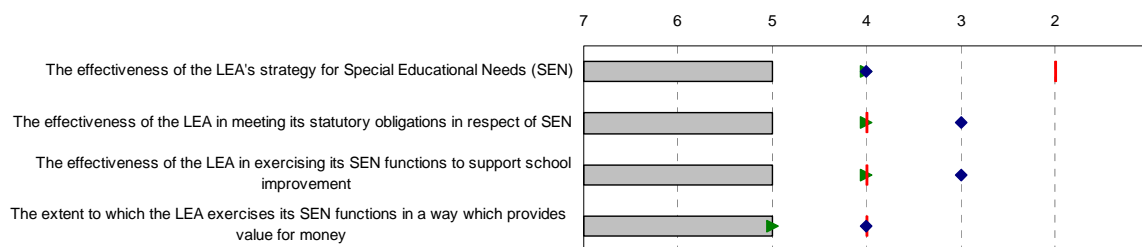
the EDP have the potential to provide a coherent structure for targeting the work of the service. The LEA monitors the work of the service and the views of schools are sought. However, the rigour of the process is underdeveloped. Although sound overall, there are some inconsistencies in the work of link advisers.

74. Advisers and consultants are deployed satisfactorily. Support for schools is kept under review and the service has thought creatively about ways of responding to new and emerging priorities. There are well-developed procedures for the brokering of support from outside the LEA and for making productive use of staff in schools. The use of an external consultant to manage both the Key Stage 3 strategy and the LIG collaborative has also brought benefits by extending the breadth of expertise available.

75. Performance review is developing well. Individuals have clear targets that are linked to corporate priorities and planned opportunities for staff development. However, planned opportunities for the professional development of the whole team are underdeveloped. The LEA has planned for the introduction of the national standards for school improvement professionals to ensure that the development of the team continues to meet changing demands.

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

### Summary table of judgements



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

### The strategy for SEN

76. The strategy for SEN is unsatisfactory and has not developed to reflect changing pressures and national expectations. Quality assurance processes are underdeveloped. Torbay has a very high and increasing number of pupils with statements of SEN, and an above average proportion of children whose needs are being met at School Action Plus. It also has 1.6% of its pupils in special schools, compared to only 1.1% nationally. Since the previous inspection, there has not been effective strategic oversight of SEN. Good work by individuals in the LEA has not been co-ordinated sufficiently or guided to secure progress. Partnerships with other agencies are very well developed at an operational level, but there has been limited coherent work to build on this to determine joint strategic objectives. Schools have not been engaged successfully in a consideration of how they could meet more needs in mainstream settings without statements.

77. The new senior management team recognises weaknesses and has taken positive actions to secure improvement. An external consultant was employed in autumn 2003 to manage a review of SEN strategy and provision. The LEA issued a consultation paper along with a draft revised BSP in May 2004. The proposed strategy represents positive action. It identifies accurately the major issues and challenges for Torbay in responding to the national strategy for SEN and indicates a commitment to increased inclusion and more efficient provision. However, the planning for implementation is not yet developed sufficiently and the next steps are unclear. The approach does not yet have the widespread support of schools and insufficient attention has been given to building their support for this changed approach. There is no shared understanding about what increased inclusion would mean, or about future roles and responsibilities of mainstream and special schools.

78. New criteria for making statutory assessments have been issued for consultation and these provide a long overdue update to the earlier ones issued in 1999. However, they are not based on a consensus about the level of need which should result in statutory assessment. In the absence of a shared conception of inclusion, they do not provide a convincing basis for reducing the number of statements.

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**Recommendation**

- In dialogue with schools, parents, and partner agencies, develop a shared concept of inclusion and detailed plans in order to achieve a substantial reduction in the unnecessary use of statements and separate provision.

**Statutory obligations**

79. The LEA does not take satisfactory steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN. Despite acting on the recommendation from the previous inspection, insufficient account has been taken of the revised Code of Practice and the performance of this function has deteriorated significantly.

80. All draft statements of SEN are issued within the required time limits because of extremely efficient administrative procedures and very effective liaison with health professionals. Nevertheless, the statements produced are not of good quality and are not valued by schools. Objectives are mostly too vague to guide target setting adequately or to allow effective review. Contrary to the Code of Practice, proposed statements routinely indicate the LEA's intentions as to type of placement.

81. There are effective arrangements to support parents, but the documentation they receive is unnecessarily complex. Placements outside of the LEA are monitored routinely. The LEA ensures that annual reviews occur as required, but does not monitor them sufficiently for effectiveness or outcome. The descriptions of needs and objectives have remained largely unchanged for many years and the progress of pupils is inadequately monitored.

**Recommendations**

- Ensure that draft statements comply with requirements and that parents are supported in expressing unconstrained preferences about placement.
- Improve the system for annual reviews to ensure that statements are updated appropriately in the light of pupils' progress.

**SEN functions to support school improvement**

82. Support for school improvement in relation to SEN has deteriorated and is now unsatisfactory. Linkages between the SEN and school improvement services are limited. The process for review of schools now includes an SEN dimension, but scrutiny of schools' SEN provision is at a very early stage and systems to support and challenge schools do not adequately address SEN. There is insufficient challenge to the unsatisfactory support for pupils with learning or behaviour difficulties. Good practice examples have not been identified and disseminated. The education psychology service (EPS) was expanded following a Best Value review of SEN support services, but it is still rather preoccupied with statutory assessment and inconsistently effective in its wider role of promoting good policy and practice in schools. Special educational needs co-ordinators have access to the efficient team dealing with statutory assessment and reviews, but overall are not supported adequately.

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83. There are encouraging signs of improvement. Changes to support services for pupils with sensory impairment have led to improvements, and services for SEN now meet schools' needs for these pupils. The SEN Code of Practice is being implemented in schools, and individual education plans are supporting pupil achievement. Mechanisms are in place to monitor the progress of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils, although these are not yet effective.

### **Value for money**

84. Value for money is unsatisfactory. The overall costs of SEN provision are lower than those in similar authorities, but there is considerable variation between aspects of this expenditure. The use of statements is very high; levels of inclusion are low; and monitoring of effectiveness is inadequate.

85. Day-to-day monitoring and management of central SEN budgets are good, but there is no clear budget strategy linked to the consultation on the SEN policy. Following a Best Value review, some progress has been made on brokering services to support pupils with sensory and physical impairment and these developments are viewed positively by schools. The LEA has also been successful in lowering costs by reducing the numbers of pupils with SEN educated outside the authority. Resources to support pupils with SEN are allocated to schools through the funding formula, which has been amended to provide more appropriate support for intervention at lower levels of need. However, the number of statements has risen significantly (up by 16% over the last two years).

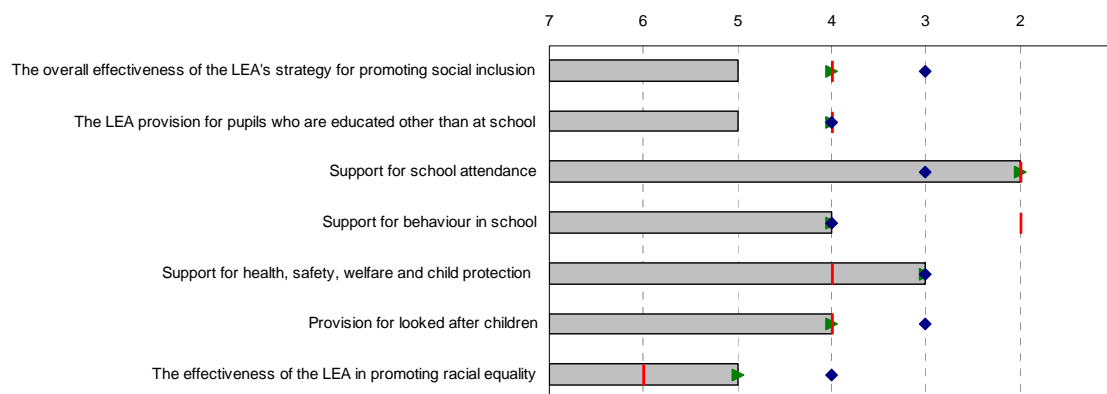
86. Despite the recommendation of the previous inspection, no significant attention has been given to the monitoring of delegated funding for SEN or evaluation of its effects on pupils' progress. The LEA has done very little benchmarking and is not able to judge value for money in terms of pupil outcomes.

### ***Recommendation***

- Establish an overall budget strategy for the SEN review and procedures for monitoring pupils' progress.

## Section 5: Support for social inclusion

### Summary table of judgements



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

### The strategy for social inclusion

87. Despite some good examples of collaborative working and some operational strength in important areas, the overall performance of the LEA in this key function is unsatisfactory. There is a corporate commitment to social inclusion, but no coherent or shared approach to the range of issues involved.

88. At the highest level of planning, the draft community plan and the council's strategic plan include references to inclusion in social care and education, including particular concern about the high numbers of pupils who are not educated in mainstream schools. There is, however, little evidence of systematic prioritisation or of a coherent approach to neighbourhood renewal. Social inclusion is a theme within the EDP, and there is a priority specifically for inclusion. It has not, however, been given the necessary clear and urgent focus based on systematic audit and higher-level vision. Consultation with young people and the minority ethnic population has been inadequate.

89. Schools in the LEA generally perform well at Key Stages 2 and 4 compared with schools with similar levels of social deprivation elsewhere in the country. However, there is no positive consensus about social inclusion among Torbay schools, and the LEA does not monitor effectively their performance in promoting inclusion. This means that schools are not clear about their responsibilities and they are not challenged or always supported in a consistent way. The recently issued review of SEN and the draft BSP show that the LEA is now ready to acknowledge entrenched problems and to respond to them with some challenging principles. This is encouraging. Relationships with partners in the Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE) and the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) are very productive. Nevertheless, some of these agencies and other partners report that the LEA is unresponsive and insufficiently committed in relation to racial

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equality. This mixed picture reflects the way that a lack of strategic management and vision is undermining the commitment and hard work of individual officers. A Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has been formed in anticipation of moves towards integrated services, but this has not yet audited provision or prioritised action. There remain significant gaps in support and provision, with the result that some vulnerable young people are being poorly served.

*Recommendation*

- In consultation with users and partners, establish a clear and purposeful strategy and implementation plans for social inclusion that are based on a coherent and comprehensive audit of need and evaluation of current provision.

**Provision for pupils educated other than at school**

90. There are several strengths in the provision for pupils educated other than at school, but overall it is unsatisfactory because the LEA does not provide adequately for a significant proportion of excluded pupils.

91. At the time of the previous inspection, provision was satisfactory, but the strategy for delivering improved provision for excluded pupils relied on achieving a reduction in exclusions. In fact, the rate of permanent exclusions doubled over two years, and the LEA has not succeeded in meeting the expectation that excluded pupils should receive full-time provision. A few pupils, including looked after children and pupils with severe and complex SEN, receive inadequate individual tuition while waiting for a place in the pupil referral unit (PRU) or at the further education college.

92. There are thorough and efficient procedures to track pupils who are out of school. A range of provision for such pupils has been developed, particularly at Key Stage 4, including good use of partnerships with other providers. Most pupils within the PRU achieve accredited qualifications and they are well linked into the Connexions service. However, the timetables of PRU classes indicate that pupils receive only between 20 and 22½ hours tuition per week. The unit costs of the PRU are high, partly because it makes use of a variety of rented and short-term premises that are not well suited to their purpose. The PRU management panel appropriately includes representatives from mainstream schools and partner agencies. Nevertheless, overall levels of reintegration of excluded pupils into mainstream provision are low. There are encouraging signs of progress in reintegration programmes for Key Stage 3, but the admissions forum has not yet given sufficient attention to this issue.

93. The LEA has clear procedures for the education of young mothers and those pupils who cannot attend school because of illness. Arrangements for monitoring the welfare and education of children educated at home by their parents are well resourced and effective.

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**Recommendations**

- Introduce immediate measures to ensure that all excluded pupils receive full-time education in an appropriate setting from the 15th day of exclusion.
- In consultation with the admissions forum and mainstream schools, establish a protocol which ensures that most excluded pupils are reintegrated into an alternative school without significant delay.

**Support for behaviour**

94. Support for behaviour is satisfactory, although it has deteriorated from the time of the previous inspection when it was good. The LEA's response remains insufficiently strategic.

95. Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from primary and secondary schools increased significantly from 2001 to 2003. Despite some notable decreases in the current academic year, exclusion rates are much higher than would be expected from an analysis of pupils' needs. The council has recently endorsed appropriately challenging principles and priorities for a new BSP intended to cover the period 2004–07. The action plans have over-ambitious timescales and success criteria.

96. Advice and support from the EPS and the behaviour support team are valued highly by schools. Work within the Key Stage 3 strategy is beginning to make a very positive contribution. Support to schools is targeted to needs, and deployed flexibly. Liaison between services is generally sound and links to the LEA's school review process and the school improvement strategy are developing. These factors provide some encouragement that issues of behaviour and exclusion can be addressed satisfactorily. However, schools will need wholeheartedly to accept and to demonstrate their more inclusive role, as set out in the BSP and in the associated review of SEN if the fundamental changes required are to be achieved.

**Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection**

97. During this inspection, fieldwork was carried out to follow through procedures for child protection, but not for health and safety. There have been significant improvements in child protection and the overall support for this function is now highly satisfactory. The LEA meets its statutory responsibilities and Ofsted school inspections show that schools make at the least satisfactory provision.

98. All schools have a designated and trained child protection teacher and there are sound plans to ensure the delivery of refresher training. There is an effective monitoring system that includes scrutiny of referrals, with appropriate follow-up to improve understanding of issues and compliance with procedures. Close working in the ACPC and operationally between the education welfare service, police and social services has assisted development and helped schools understand referral thresholds. The linkage between LEA services working with schools is not yet sufficiently systematic and co-ordinated to enable effective monitoring of schools' internal procedures.



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**Provision for looked after children**

99. This aspect of the LEA's work remains satisfactory. There are effective links between education and social services at an operational level. New targets and action plans developed within the 'Quality Protects' framework show potential for significant improvement.

100. Although Torbay has a high number of looked after children, and additional children who are placed in the area by other councils, schools are well informed about the pupils. Personal education plans are routinely monitored and the LEA is beginning to seek to improve their quality. A high proportion of children come into care during secondary schooling. The LEA has appropriately prioritised support for these young people in Key Stage 4, where outcomes are now highly satisfactory. The attainment and progress of looked after children are well monitored, and better links to post-16 provision are developing to increase the low proportion of young people leaving care who are in education, employment or training. Despite effective tracking, a few looked after children excluded from school have spent unacceptably long periods without a permanent school place or adequate alternative provision.

101. Input from a part-time advisory teacher has helped provide effective support to designated teachers in schools and to foster carers. Guidance and training are helping elected members to understand and implement their responsibilities as corporate parents, but schools have not all embraced their key role in supporting these children and young people.

**Promoting racial equality**

102. The LEA has endorsed the principle that the promotion of race equality is part of the education agenda and has taken some steps in this area since the previous inspection. Nevertheless, its work in combating racism is unsatisfactory and is recognised as such by the LEA in its self-evaluation.

103. The council has a formal race equality plan and recently adopted a policy which expresses commitment to promoting equality and reducing discrimination. The subsequent action plan deals mainly with the council's role as an employer. The education department has an earlier separate policy. Its action plan was issued in January 2004 and substantially amended in April 2004 following an equalities conference. Earlier actions have not all been taken and the revised plan does not provide a coherent approach to improvement.

104. The LEA is at an early stage in monitoring the ethnic composition of the education workforce and governing bodies. A snapshot view of attainment by pupils from minority ethnic groups has not led to thorough analysis or any planned action. Schools, however, have been invited to conduct a self-assessment of their equalities policies and procedures for promoting racial equality. An analysis of results has revealed a wide variation in practice, and it is intended to include some follow-up visits to schools by link advisers to discuss results and identify issues.

105. The LEA has introduced a system for schools to report racist incidents, but there is no system for 'nil' returns. The reports received are included in the school review system, but no action at LEA level has resulted. The council has not given a high enough priority to

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joint working to share information about and respond to racist incidents. There is insufficient effective consultation and joint work with partner agencies and representatives of the minority ethnic population. Relationships with the SACRE are good, and this led to a productive exhibition on the Jewish way of life.

***Recommendation***

- Establish a coherent plan to monitor and promote race equality in close partnership with statutory agencies and minority ethnic representatives.

## Appendix A

### Record of Judgement Recording Statements

Name of LEA :	Torbay Local Education Authority
LEA number:	880
Reporting Inspector:	Christine Brown HMI
Date of Inspection:	May 2004

No	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	Fieldwork*
<b>Context of the LEA</b>			
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	4	
<b>Overall judgements</b>			
0.1	The progress made by the LEA overall	4	
0.2	Overall effectiveness of the LEA	5	
0.3	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	4	
<b>Section 1: Corporate strategy and LEA leadership</b>			
1.1	The effectiveness of corporate planning for the education of children and young people	5	
1.2	The implementation of corporate planning for education	4	
1.3	The effectiveness of LEA decision-making	4	
1.4	The extent to which the LEA targets resources on priorities	4	
1.5	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value	4	
1.6	The leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice)	4	
1.7	The quality of leadership provided by senior officers	3	

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

3.3	Support for information and communication technology	4	
3.4	Support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3	4	
3.5	Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/ Traveller children	4	NF
3.6	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	5	
3.7	Support for school governors	4	NF
3.8	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	4	
3.9	The planning and provision of services to support school management	4	
3.9a	The planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management	2	NF
3.9b	The planning and provision of HR services in supporting school management	3	NF
3.9c	The planning and provision of property services in supporting school management	4	NF
3.9d	The planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management	2	
3.10	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school management	4	
3.11	The planning and provision of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	4	
3.12	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	4	
<b>Section 4: Support for special educational needs</b>			
4.1	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs	5	
4.2	The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	5	

4.3	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	5	
4.4	The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money	5	
<b>Section 5: Support for social inclusion</b>			
5.1	The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion	5	
5.2	The LEA provision for pupils who have no school place	5	
5.3	Support for school attendance	2	NF
5.4	Support for behaviour in schools	4	
5.5	Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection	3	
5.6	Provision for looked after children	4	
5.7	The effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality	5	

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

***JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 7-point scale:***

Grade 1: Very good; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Highly satisfactory; Grade 4: Satisfactory;  
Grade 5: Unsatisfactory; Grade 6: Poor; Grade 7: Very poor

[**Note:** in the case of JRS 1: socio-economic context of the LEA and JRS 2.3: performance of schools, grades relate to comparisons against national averages: Grades 1-2: Well above; Grade 3: Above; Grade 4: In line; Grade 5: Below; Grades 6-7: Well below]

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## Appendix B

### Context of the inspection

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

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

- the progress the LEA has made since the time of its previous inspection in September 2001;
- the overall effectiveness of the LEA and its capacity to improve further;
- the LEA's performance in major aspects of its work;
- recommendations on areas for improvement.

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

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

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

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the performance of schools;</li><li>• support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 1 and 2;</li><li>• support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/Traveller children;</li><li>• support for school governors;</li><li>• the planning and provision of services to support school management – financial; human resource; and property;</li><li>• support for school attendance;</li></ul> |
|---|

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- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• support for health and safety.</li></ul> |
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Inspection judgements are made against criteria that can be found on the Ofsted website. For each inspected function of the LEA an inspection team agrees a numerical grade. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are to be found in Appendix A. These numerical grades must be considered in the light of the full report. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment profile for the education service.

### **Context of the LEA**

Torbay is a major tourist centre based primarily around the three towns of Brixham, Paignton and Torquay, and situated on the south coast of Devon. The area is heavily dependent on service industries which employ 82% of the population, and which are associated largely with low pay rates, seasonal and casual work. Brixham retains a significant fishing fleet.

Torbay gives an outward appearance of affluence, although there are pockets of severe deprivation. In December 2003, 7 of the council's 36 wards were in the top 20% of deprived wards in the country. In addition, the area has the highest unemployment in the south west, with average earnings below regional and national levels and 13% of the population receiving income support.

There are currently around 18,000 pupils. A significant number of pupils from outside of the LEA attend secondary schools in Torbay. These are mainly pupils who gain places at the three selective secondary schools or the local voluntary-aided secondary school. There is also a loss of pupils to schools in Devon. The proportion of pupils admitted to Torbay schools other than at the usual time of entry is higher than the proportion nationally or for similar LEAs.

The percentage of the school population from minority ethnic heritage groups is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in maintained primary (17.9%) and secondary schools (13.9%) is in line with national averages. The percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN in primary schools (4%) is well above the national average (2.7%). In secondary schools the percentage (4.7%) is above the national average (4.2%). Despite a decline in the figures over the last two years, Torbay has a significantly above average proportion of children and young people pupils who are looked after. An increasing number of these are placed with independent foster carers by other authorities. Many of these pupils have exceptionally demanding educational needs.

Educational provision is available in a variety of settings for all three- and four-year-olds whose parents seek it. Within the relatively small number of 44 schools there is much diversity of provision. Of the 33 primary schools 15 have nursery classes, 9 are aided (Roman Catholic and Church of England), and 2 have foundation status. Of the 8 secondary schools, 2 are 11-16 community colleges one of which is a foundation school. The other secondary schools comprise: an 11-18 community college; an 11-18 aided joint Roman Catholic/Church of England school; an 11-18 foundation school with part selection; a selective co-educational foundation grammar school; a selective girls' foundation grammar school and a selective boys' foundation grammar school. There are also 3 special schools



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and 1 pupil referral unit.

### **The performance of schools**

Pupils' attainment is satisfactory, and standards are generally at least in line with national averages and averages in similar LEAs.

According to information from Ofsted school inspections, on entry to school, Torbay children have a lower attainment profile than the national baseline. In primary schools, attainment in the 2003 tests and tasks at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with similar LEAs and the national averages. Over the last five years, the rate of improvement at Key Stage 1 has been above the national trend and the trends in similar LEAs. At Key Stage 2, the rates of improvement have varied between subjects, but have never been below the national trends and the trends for similar LEAs. In English and mathematics, the rate of improvement is broadly in line with the national trend and, for mathematics, well above the trend in similar LEAs. In science, the rate of improvement has been above the trend nationally and for similar LEAs. The progress of pupils at Key Stage 2 is above the national average.

At Key Stage 3, attainment in English, mathematics and science, for pupils achieving level five and above, is in line with the national averages and the averages in similar LEAs. For pupils achieving Level 6 and above, or Level 7 and above, attainment in all three subjects is broadly above national averages and the averages in similar LEAs. Over the last five years the rate of improvement has varied according to different subjects. The rate of improvement is well below the national average and the average in similar LEAs in English, is below the averages in science and is in line with the averages in mathematics. The progress made by pupils at Key Stage 3 is well above the national average.

Attainment at Key Stage 4 is broadly above the national averages and in line with the averages in similar LEAs for both the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE grades at levels A\*-C and for the proportion attaining one or more GCSE grades at A\*-G. The rates of improvement are in line with those nationally and in similar LEAs, although performance dipped in 2003, reversing the previous four-year upward trend. The progress made by pupils at Key Stage 4 is in line with the national average. In 2003 the performance of post-16 pupils in Torbay schools was above that nationally and in similar LEAs.

The LEA did not meet its 2002 performance targets. At Key Stage 2, however, school aggregated targets were almost met in mathematics and exceeded in English. In 2003, at Key Stage 3, schools exceeded their aggregated targets for English and mathematics, and were very close in science. Targets for 2004 are challenging, and, based on current trends of improvement, are unlikely to be met.

In their most recent Ofsted school inspections, proportionately more Torbay primary schools were judged to be at least good than in both similar LEAs and nationally, although there were proportionally fewer schools graded very good than both nationally or compared with similar LEAs. The equivalent figures for secondary schools indicate that Torbay is in line with schools in similar LEAs and nationally. There are no schools with serious weaknesses or judged to require special measures.

Attendance rates in both secondary and primary schools are in line with the national averages. Unauthorised absence is in line with the national average for primary schools, but is above the national average for secondary schools. In 2000, permanent exclusions from both primary and secondary schools were in line with national averages. Permanent exclusions increased significantly over the academic year 2002/03, but are on the decline in this academic year.

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**Funding data for the LEA**

SCHOOLS BUDGET	Torbay	Statistical neighbours average	Unitary Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
<b>Individual schools budget</b>	<b>2,564</b>	<b>2,527</b>	<b>2,613</b>	<b>2,708</b>
Standards fund delegated	53	53	58	61
Education for under fives	71	97	98	96
Strategic management	43	26	28	29
Special educational needs	76	120	109	120
Grants	31	32	41	53
Access	60	51	55	55
Capital expenditure from revenue	26	16	20	24
<b>TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET</b>	<b>2,924</b>	<b>2,921</b>	<b>3,024</b>	<b>3,145</b>
<b>Schools formula spending share</b>	<b>2,592</b>	<b>2,670</b>	<b>2,808</b>	<b>2,904</b>

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04

LEA BUDGET	Torbay	Statistical neighbours average	Unitary Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Strategic management	93	74	86	95
Specific Grants	0	12	19	16
Special educational needs	28	28	32	32
School improvement	38	34	33	36
Access	136	115	128	133
Capital expenditure from revenue	1	1	2	2
Youth and Community	33	60	70	74
<b>TOTAL LEA BUDGET</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>388</b>

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04

*Note:*

*All figures are net*

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

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**Notes**