



Office for Standards  
in Education

**Inspection report**  
**PETERBOROUGH**  
**Local Education Authority**

Date of inspection: January 2003

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## **Basic information about the LEA**

Name of LEA:	Peterborough Local Education Authority
Address of LEA:	Peterborough City Council Bayard Place Broadway Peterborough. PE1 1FB
Lead inspector:	Heather Richardson HMI
Date of inspection:	January 2003

## Introduction

1. This inspection of Peterborough local education authority (LEA) was carried out by Ofsted in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities (December 2001)*. The inspection focused on the effectiveness of the LEA's work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.

2. The inspection was based on a range of material, which included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, and data, some of which was provided by the LEA. That material also included school inspection information; HMI monitoring reports; audit reports; documentation from, and discussions with, LEA officers and members; focus groups of headteachers and teachers; staff in other departments at that local authority; and diocesan representatives. Other agencies and LEA partners participated in focus groups. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA (published in September 2001). A questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the work of the LEA, was circulated to all its schools, and its results were considered by the inspection team. The response rate to the questionnaire was 83 per cent.

3. For each inspected function of the LEA, an inspection team makes a judgement which is converted into a numerical grade. An inspection team may make up to 52 key inspection judgements. An inspection judgement is made against criteria for each inspected function of the LEA. These criteria (and the guidance notes on functions of an LEA that may be inspected by Ofsted) can be found on the Ofsted website. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are appended to this report, along with short explanations of what each numeric grade represents. Judgements on inspected functions of an LEA are made during the inspection of the LEA and indicate the effectiveness of the LEA's performance of individual functions at the time of the inspection. The numeric grades awarded by the inspection team complement the areas of the report which comment on the individual functions scrutinised on this inspection, and, as such, must be considered in the light of those comments.

4. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) profile for the education service. It is intended that the CPA for education will be updated annually so that the grades for this inspection will contribute to the next annual assessment.

5. The CPA for the education service takes account of the performance of several aspects of the local service, including pre-school and adult education. The CPA for education is composed of a number of inspection judgements, as well as other performance indicators, such as improvement trends at Key Stage 3. The assessment, published in December 2002, gives star ratings for each local authority for a range of local services, for example social services, benefits, environment etc, whereas this report focuses on the local authority's work to support school improvement.

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## Commentary

6. Peterborough is a growing city, with its population of 157,000 set to rise by over six per cent in the next five years. The age profile of the population is younger than the national average. Unemployment is low. Some wards are affluent, but three continue to be in the ten per cent most deprived nationally<sup>1</sup>. About 20 per cent of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage, but only the percentage of those of Pakistani heritage is above the national averages. Peterborough continues to be a designated area for refugees and asylum seekers, and about 300 are of school age. The attainment of Peterborough pupils is in line with national averages in mathematics and science, but generally below average in English at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Rates of improvement are above national trends, except at GCSE, which are below.

7. Peterborough's 2001 inspection came at a time when the LEA was beginning to emerge from difficult early years, characterised by high turnover of senior staff, poor planning and a lack of confidence from its schools. The inspection noted significant, albeit recent, improvement under the new director of education and, while weaknesses remained, judged the LEA satisfactory overall. An early re-inspection was recommended to ascertain the extent to which the improvements had become embedded and the remaining weaknesses addressed.

8. There have been significant changes within both the council and the education department since the previous inspection. The council has completed the modernisation of its structures and, since the most recent elections, a majority party has replaced shared political control. The education department has been merged with children's social services and the youth offending team to form the department for education and children under the leadership of the director of education and an expanded team of five assistant directors. This has been a good decision, and is improving the coherence and efficiency of the council's support for children.

9. All the LEA's areas of weakness identified in the previous report are now at least satisfactory and some are good. The aspects which were good at the time of the previous inspection have continued to be good, with one exception; the leadership of services to support school improvement. The LEA has, in its Education Development Plan (EDP), a better planning framework, in the context of more coherent corporate plans. The merged department affirms the LEA's commitment to bringing together its policies for school improvement and social inclusion. Three aspects of the LEA's work, while remaining satisfactory, are not as strong as at the time of the last inspection. They are the extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on greatest need, the effectiveness of its SEN strategy, and the quality of leadership of elected members.

There are particular strengths in:

- the leadership of senior officers;
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<sup>1</sup> Source: The Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions index of multiple deprivation 2000.

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- identification of and support for under-performing schools\*
  - support for standards in literacy\*;
  - support for standards in numeracy\*;
  - raising standards at Key Stage 3;
  - support for minority ethnic and Traveller children;
  - support for early years;
  - meeting its statutory obligations in respect of special educational needs (SEN);
  - provision for pupils who have no school place;
  - meeting its statutory obligations in respect of looked after children; and
  - support for human resources\*.

*Those marked \* were strengths at the time of the previous inspection and have not been re-inspected.*

The following weakness remains:

- support for gifted and talented pupils.

10. Peterborough has continued to improve at a time of significant transition because its senior officers, notably the director for education and children and the chief executive, have focused on what needed to be done. Much has been achieved in a short time. However, Peterborough is tackling a major agenda for change, for example, in its corporate and departmental restructuring and its secondary school review. The determination shown is commendable, but tangible evidence of progress is inevitably varied as time has been afforded to winning hearts and minds and developing structures.

11. Meeting this substantial agenda, in particular the outcomes of its secondary review, is dependent on the LEA's ability to plan strategically, resource its commitments, and monitor and evaluate progress. The LEA knows that good communication is essential to its ongoing work. It has experienced some staffing pressures and has, rightly, refused to make insecure appointments. These are about to be resolved. However, corporate changes have yet to prove beneficial and more remains to be done to strengthen the role of elected members.

12. Peterborough is now a highly satisfactory LEA, whose capacity to improve and act upon the recommendations of this report is also highly satisfactory. These judgements reflect the progress made since the last inspection. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment for education, published in December 2002, gave the education service two stars for current performance and three stars (the highest category) for its capacity to make further improvement. The sustained operation, over time, of the systems and structures now largely in place will be required before the overall effectiveness of the LEA can be judged to be good.



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## Section 1: The LEA's strategy for school improvement

### Context

13. Peterborough's socio-economic indicators have changed little since the last inspection in 2001. As then, the continued growth of the city is significant, with 500 new homes each year in the fourth new township developed since the 1960s. The current population of 157,000 is set to increase by over six per cent by 2006. The age profile of the population is younger than the national average. Most of Peterborough's population (88 per cent) live in the urban area. Some wards are comparatively affluent, but three wards continue to be in the ten per cent most deprived nationally. Unemployment in the city is low, about two per cent in October 2001.

14. There are about 13,500 pupils of statutory school age in the primary schools, 11,000 in secondary schools and about 300 in special schools. The number of pupils in primary schools is falling, but more secondary places are needed overall, redistributed to match the growth of the city.

15. The proportion of the population from a minority ethnic heritage, at almost ten per cent, remains broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils in schools is now 20 per cent, but there is a significant variation across the wards and this variation is reflected in schools. The percentage of each minority ethnic group is in line with the national averages apart from pupils of Pakistani heritage, which is above average. There are approximately 2000 refugees and asylum seekers in Peterborough, of whom 300 are of school age. Peterborough continues to be a designated area for refugees and asylum seekers.

16. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is in line with the national average, but above that of similar LEAs. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is broadly in line with the national average.

17. There are places available for all four year-olds whose parents want one and about 98 per cent of four year-olds are in schools. At present, 75 per cent of three year-olds are in early years' provision.

18. Peterborough maintains one nursery, six infant, six junior, 47 primary, 13 secondary and five special schools. There is one pupil referral unit. Five of the infant or primary schools have attached nursery classes and all of the secondary schools provide post-16 education. Peterborough has 56 community schools, eight foundation schools, nine voluntary aided and six voluntary controlled schools. Since the time of the last inspection, two new schools have opened; a special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and a primary school with an emotional and behavioural difficulties unit.

19. Five schools have Beacon status and the nursery is an early excellence centre. There are three specialist schools, for sports, technology and languages. Three Sure Start projects have been established.

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**Performance**

20. Pupils' attainment on entry to primary schools, measured by the LEA's baseline assessment and by Ofsted inspection findings, is below the national average.

21. The pattern of attainment varies across subjects and key stages in 2002. At Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, performance in mathematics and science is stronger than in English. Standards are below the average of similar authorities with the exception of mathematics and science at Key Stage 2, where standards are in line with similar LEAs<sup>2</sup>. Attainment at GCSE is generally below the average found nationally and in similar LEAs.

22. The percentage of Key Stage 1 pupils gaining Level 2 and above in writing and mathematics was in line with that achieved nationally in 2002, whereas reading was below the national average. All were below the average of similar LEAs. Attainment at Level 3 is in line with that found nationally in reading, but is below the national averages in writing and mathematics.

23. By the end of Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 and above in mathematics and science is in line with that achieved nationally and in similar LEAs. It is below the national average and that of similar LEAs in English. Attainment at Level 5 and above is broadly in line with that found nationally and in similar LEAs.

24. The percentage of Key Stage 3 pupils gaining Level 5 and above in mathematics and science is in line with the national average, but is below average in English. Attainment in all subjects is below that in similar LEAs. The proportion gaining Level 6 and above is below the average found nationally and in similar LEAs, except in mathematics, which is in line with the national average.

25. In 2002, the average points score gained by pupils at GCSE level was in line with the national average. In all measures of performance at GCSE, including the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades, the averages are below those found nationally and in similar LEAs; the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-G grades is well below that in similar LEAs.

26. At Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, rates of improvement are above those found nationally and in similar LEAs, whereas at GCSE level the rates of improvement are lower.

27. Ofsted inspections show that the proportion of good or very good primary schools is below that found nationally and in similar LEAs. In secondary schools the proportion is broadly in line. At the beginning of the inspection there were two primary schools in special measures.

28. In 2000-2001, the proportion of pupils permanently excluded from school was in line with the national average for both primary and secondary schools. The proportion of

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<sup>2</sup> Peterborough's statistical neighbours are Telford and Wrekin, Swindon, Torbay, Northamptonshire, Isle of Wight, The Medway Towns, Poole, Suffolk, Gloucestershire, and City of Plymouth

exclusions from secondary schools was lower than that found in similar LEAs, but broadly comparable for primary schools.

29. Attendance in both primary and secondary schools in 2000-2001 was comparable with the national average, but was below that of similar LEAs. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average for both primary and secondary schools, but above that of similar LEAs.

## Funding

30. Education in Peterborough is well funded. The council continues to spend above the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for education with a budget of £84.6 million. The increase in SSA has been fully passed to education, mostly to the schools, but with some funding retained centrally. Spending on under fives is well above SSA, while primary spending is below. Similarly, the local schools budget is above average in all phases except primary.

31. In the money allocated to schools, the individual schools budget (ISB), all phases are above the average of statistical neighbours and unitary authorities.

	<b>Peterborough £ per pupil</b>	<b>Statistical neighbours £ per pupil</b>	<b>Unitary authorities £ per pupil</b>	<b>England £ per pupil</b>
<b>Primary ISB</b>	2169	2112	2153	2223
<b>Secondary ISB</b>	2851	2761	2832	2911

Source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002/2003.

32. The funding that the council retains to provide services is in line with unitary averages, above that of statistical neighbours and below the national average. Allocation of funding to strategic management, at £91 per pupil, is above that of statistical neighbours and in line with unitary averages. Total expenditure on special educational needs is well above that of statistical neighbours and other unitary authorities, while funding retained for access is in line.

	<b>Peterborough £ per pupil</b>	<b>Statistical neighbours £ per pupil</b>	<b>Unitary authorities £ per pupil</b>	<b>England £ per pupil</b>
<b>Strategic management</b>	91	85	93	101
<b>School improvement</b>	26	23	26	31
<b>Access</b>	121	126	124	131
<b>SEN</b>	163	145	151	160
<b>Total</b>	396	378	399	424

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*Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002/2003.*

33. Capital expenditure has increased substantially. The five-year programme covering 2001-2002 to 2005-2006 totals £57.9 million, split between funding expected from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (£37.6 million) and from other sources (£20.3 million).

34. The authority secures the full amount of Standards Fund Grant. Although the amount devolved to schools has reduced from 85 per cent in 2001-2002 to 81 per cent in 2002-2003, this is still well above comparator authorities (at 74 per cent).

35. The council has been successful in securing a range of external funding including: local public sector agreement, New Opportunities Fund, Healthy Living Partnership with Primary Care Trust, Sure Start (3 projects) and the Children's Fund.

### **Council structure**

36. The council has completed its modernisation processes since the last inspection. The new structure has been in place since September 2001, with revisions to committees in May 2002.

37. The executive body is a cabinet consisting of the leader and nine other members with portfolio responsibilities. One has responsibility for education, and another for children's services. Executive decisions can be made collectively by the cabinet, or delegated to individual cabinet members, a cabinet committee, or officers. The council has one overview and scrutiny committee which, in addition to its call-in function, receives quarterly performance management reports and monitors progress on post-inspection action plans. Its membership includes two co-opted diocesan representatives and two co-opted parent-governors. Four select committees were replaced by cross-service select panels in May 2002. One panel has responsibility for education and children and is consulted on major policy developments and proposals in education and children's services before they are taken to cabinet. Its membership includes two parent-governors, and arrangements for representation by professional associations are in hand. In addition, a working group receives and discusses inspection reports on schools and, more recently, other inspection reports relating to children's social services. In the council elections in May 2002, the Conservatives secured overall control with 30 seats. There are 18 Labour and nine minority party members.

38. The officer structure consists of a chief executive and six directors of service, one of whom is the director for education and children. There has been a major restructuring since the last inspection, with the merger of education, children's social services, the youth offending team and children's play to form the department for education and children in October 2001. The senior management team of this new department has been extended to comprise the director and five assistant directors.

### **The LEA's strategy for school improvement**

39. The LEA's strategy for school improvement, previously unsatisfactory with several important weaknesses, is now highly satisfactory. This represents good progress. The plans, comprising the Education Development Plan, an excellence in clusters initiative and a local

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public service agreement, are well targeted to local need. The Education Development Plan is well structured and addresses the recommendations from the previous report, although activities are not clearly costed and some timescales are imprecise. For the most part, a thorough audit has resulted in well-articulated priorities, with well-matched activities, except those for the recruitment and retention of teachers, which are less well supported by audit. Success criteria are mostly suitably linked to measurable educational outcomes, links with other plans are clear and procedures for monitoring and evaluation are well considered. For some priorities, evaluation of progress is of very high quality, but this varies. Schools are satisfied with, and support, priorities and activities. The strategy advances corporate objectives for social inclusion, particularly in strengthening the focus on under-achieving groups and the performance of schools in geographical areas. Actions are beginning to reflect an integrated service for education and children.

40. Progress in implementing the strategy for school improvement remains satisfactory. Although very recent, the excellence in clusters initiative is working well. Results have improved, but in 2002, only the targets for mathematics at Key Stage 3 and the average point score at Key Stage 4 have been met. Unless there is an accelerated rate of progress, dependent on the LEA's ability to challenge and support schools where attainment levels are still too low, the authority will only meet its 2004 targets for Key Stage 2 at the higher levels. Although a good start has been made in implementing the Key Stage 3 strategy, enhanced Key Stage 3 targets as part of the local public service agreement are unlikely to be achieved. Only the EDP target for science is likely to be met unless significant gaps in the performance of boys and girls in some schools is addressed. At Key Stage 4, targets remain attainable, but too many secondary schools are performing below those in similar circumstances nationally. The planned review of secondary provision, albeit at a very early stage, has the potential to effect fundamental improvement.

### **The allocation of resources to priorities**

41. The LEA's approach to allocating resources to priorities was previously satisfactory. The inspection report included recommendations on costing strategic plans and keeping schools informed about changes to the funding formula. Schools now receive very clear and timely information on their individual budgets, supported by a concise explanation of component factors. However, despite improvements, strategic plans do not provide detailed costings for all activities. The targeting of resources to priorities continues to be satisfactory and, given the implementation of the improved corporate and departmental budget-making structures, there is good capacity for further improvement.

#### ***Recommendation***

#### **In order to improve the allocation of resources to priorities:**

- fully cost all strategic and service plans at activity level, matching the resources needed against those available, and identifying how gaps can be addressed.

42. Education remains a key priority in the council's budget, reflecting its commitment to raising standards and social inclusion, despite increasing pressures on adult social services. Education is funded above SSA and increases are passported to the service. Some is retained

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centrally to fund growth, but the authority meets all DfES delegation targets and funds schools well above the levels of similar neighbours.

43. In order to strengthen and co-ordinate the support and services for children, the council merged the education and children's social services departments in 2001. Key to this decision was ensuring that resources were used more efficiently in meeting children's needs. Some progress has been made in targeting joint resources, with more collaborative planning and costing of strategic priorities continuing to develop.

44. The council's sound procedures for budget building are implemented rigorously in the department for education and children, and officers are well supported by good quality financial information and analysis. Budget proposals are soundly challenged at all stages. This has resulted in current service pressures being met and future pressures built into the three-year budget programme. Changes to the funding methodology for local authorities have benefited Peterborough, which has received the maximum eight per cent increase in grant. Members are committed to meeting all DfES requirements in funding schools, but the LEA's substantial agenda for raising standards and promoting inclusion continue to create funding demands.

45. Budget control within the LEA is strong. Budget holders are clear about their responsibilities and the education budgets are not overspent. However, the resources needed by education to deliver services and corporate responsibilities are not fully identified. The authority has a broad range of agreed core services to schools which it intends to review in line with its commitment to promoting school autonomy and working within the Code of Practice on LEA-school relations. Central recharges are high and not always supported by appropriate service level agreements. Education cannot, at present, identify fully the quantity, quality and costs of the services which it requires to deliver its programmes. This information is crucial if the council decides to proceed with proposals to procure a strategic partnership for central services.

#### *Recommendation*

#### **In order to improve strategic and financial planning:**

- accurately determine the level, quality, quantity and costs of central services needed to support education activities, particularly in view of the proposed strategic partnership.

46. Capital resources are used in line with priorities identified in both the corporate and education asset management plans. Risk assessment and option appraisals ensure that different funding streams are deployed efficiently in support of priorities. The council is implementing its special schools review, which has been fully costed, and has embarked on a major review of secondary education, in support of raising standards and social inclusion. In support of this review, it has recently submitted an expression of interest in securing a £75 million private finance initiative programme and also an academy. However, detailed, fully costed project plans aligned to realistic timescales are not yet fully in place.

47. The LEA's consultation with schools on the school funding formulae is good and the formulae are transparent. Working groups of officers, headteachers and external consultants

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undertook detailed comparisons and schools were consulted at all stages, informing the process and clearly influencing the outcomes. There is also an agreed strategy for funding all years within each key stage at the same level and to the level of other unitary authorities. Schools recognise that the authority has made efforts to ensure that they are consulted effectively and acknowledge that not all of them engage sufficiently in the process.

48. Schools receive useful guidance on grant bidding. The creation of a post to co-ordinate bidding is intended to promote more effective use of external resources.

49. There is a high level of surplus balances (11 per cent) at primary level, but plans are in place to halve this by the end of 2003. Schools are encouraged to adopt prudent approaches to reducing surpluses, but there is only limited evidence of challenge. Two secondary schools have deficits over five per cent, but have agreed recovery plans.

### **Structures to ensure continuous improvement, including Best Value**

50. At the time of the last inspection, the council's approach to securing continuous improvement was satisfactory. It had completed its Best Value review of a range of central services and was starting to pursue a public-private partnership for management services for the city.

51. The LEA's procedures continue to be satisfactory and are being revised to take account of recommendations arising from external inspection reports. In order to focus on delivering its priorities and improvement agenda, the council has sensibly decided to link all its statutory and strategic plans into a corporate strategy, supported by a clear framework for service planning, performance management and accountability for securing Best Value and continuous improvement. Service planning and budget planning are rightly being more closely aligned. The council is now clear that it must not only focus on its priorities, but also be very clear what it can afford to do, what requires appropriate partnership arrangements and what are realistic timetables and performance measures.

52. The external auditor has agreed the most recent Best Value Performance Plan with no qualifications. In line with the development of the corporate strategy, the Best Value review programme is to be revised to address cross-cutting priorities, including improving standards in schools and promoting social inclusion. The council has made significant progress in moving from its previous commitment to be a provider authority to seeking alternative approaches to service delivery, in line with Best Value principles and processes. Departmental reporting mechanisms and timetables are clear.

53. The changes to corporate services and the financial planning cycle are being effectively embedded into education. The review of the Best Value programme will take account of how to incorporate services to support school improvement and social inclusion and maximise the opportunities presented by the merged department for education and children's services.

## **Section 2: Support for school improvement**

### **Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's support for school improvement**

54. The LEA carries out all but one of its school improvement functions competently and some are performed well. In some functions, this represents significant progress from the previous inspection, and reflects the commitment of the LEA and its officers to improvement. The relationship between school improvement and social inclusion is understood and the merger to form the department for education and children is making this more explicit to schools. As yet, the implications of the merger have not been fully realised in practice, but for some groups of pupils, it has already improved provision and contributed to higher attainment. Schools' strong anxieties that the merger would distract the LEA from its focus on school improvement have not been borne out. The LEA, properly, continues to focus its attention on raising attainment, and, as a consequence, is prepared to tackle difficult issues, such as its secondary school review.

55. For the most part, the LEA's support for school improvement is based on sound principles and operated by highly competent professionals. The LEA has done much to address weaknesses and build confidence. In areas of strength, such as support for literacy, numeracy, Key Stage 3 and support for minority ethnic and Traveller children, this is improving pupils' attainment. However, overall standards are not yet consistently in line with the national average, particularly at GCSE and, while most rates of improvement are above those found nationally, GCSE rates remain disappointing. Furthermore, school improvement services are not adequately costed, thereby limiting judgements of value for money, and there is a lack of transparency in the LEA's monitoring and support of its schools. The LEA now enjoys good relationships with its schools and it is an opportune time to reconsider the purchasing arrangements to promote greater school autonomy.

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

56. The previous inspection found procedures for monitoring, challenge and intervention to be highly satisfactory, with clear criteria for monitoring and intervention. This remains the case.

57. The LEA's procedures were agreed after full consultation and accord with the principles of intervention in inverse proportion to success. The criteria for allocating schools to levels to determine the degree of monitoring are clear. Schools know their entitlement to the minimum number of advisors' visits and, on the whole, receive them. Schools causing serious concern are accurately identified, and intervention is appropriate. The LEA also has three categories for schools with lesser concerns, but schools in these groups are unclear as to their category and their extra entitlement. The relationship with most schools is now strong and both the LEA and its schools should benefit from greater transparency over the categorisation of schools.

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**The focusing of LEA support on areas of greatest need**

58. The LEA's ability to focus its support on areas of greatest need, previously highly satisfactory, is now satisfactory. This is because the flexible use of procedures by schools and advisers results in some schools receiving support over and above their entitlement, for which there is little accountability. However, levels of delegation are sufficient to enable the purchasing of support in addition to that provided by the LEA, and schools are confident in approaching other providers.

59. The LEA makes good use of its improved performance data to identify schools in need of additional support. In particular, the work of strategy consultants is targeted very specifically from an analysis of these data, and schools participating in initiatives are selected following a rigorous evaluation of need. However, while the LEA is diligent in ensuring support is targeted according to need, practice does not follow the principles set, as schools are currently able to access additional support from the LEA on request. Hence the distinction between categories of support is obscured. Furthermore, schools receive the additional support as part of the LEA's core provision and have little knowledge of indirect costs. This means that schools are not in a position to determine value for money from services and the LEA cannot guarantee allocations of time to priorities. The blurring of the distinction between monitoring and support, and associated adviser time, has been used to improve relationships between the LEA and its schools following difficulties in its early years, but is no longer appropriate.

***Recommendation*****In order to improve the transparency of monitoring, challenge and intervention:**

- implement more rigorously the number of support days specified for schools in each of the categories in the framework for monitoring the performance of schools.

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

60. At the time of the previous inspection, the effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve was satisfactory. It is now highly satisfactory. In particular, good progress has been made in improving the quality of data.

61. Monitoring is carried out through a suitably differentiated programme, based on a thorough analysis of very high quality data. Previously good for primary schools, and poor for the secondary sector, data are now equally good for both phases and this enables the LEA to identify the progress of different pupil groups, including minority ethnic groups and looked after children. Significantly, extensive and well-received training for headteachers and advisers enables both to use data as a basis for discussion of targets. Data are provided in good time for these discussions and schools are now very conversant with the use of data as a tool for self-evaluation. Data are also collected from services across the education and children's department as a basis for an annual review of each school, which informs the categorisation of schools.

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62. The LEA is more effective in challenging primary schools than secondary and special schools. Whereas primary schools consider that they are challenged rigorously on their targets, this is not generally the experience of secondary and special schools. These schools also report a lack of debate about the curriculum and its related assessment. The LEA has identified the need to raise standards in secondary schools, but has not yet been successful in using existing mechanisms to challenge practice. This is partly because it has not had sufficient staff with the relevant expertise to command schools' respect, as well as having to convince some schools that this is its proper role. The LEA has, however, recognised the need to increase its capacity to support secondary schools and it is pursuing the crucial agenda of raising standards through its secondary school review and its leadership of the Key Stage 3 strategy.

#### *Recommendation*

#### **In order to improve monitoring and challenge in secondary schools:**

- modify existing agreements with schools to strengthen the procedures for challenging secondary schools, and ensure that the LEA has the capacity to carry them out.

All monitoring visits result in a written report, usually indicating agreements on future action. Reports are sent to headteachers and chairs of governing bodies, inviting their response. The use of the response system varies, but where it works well, it is contributing to the challenge that schools receive and is particularly valued by primary schools.

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

63. At the time of the last inspection, the LEA's work with under-performing schools was good. No fieldwork was carried out in this inspection, but there is sufficient evidence from other inspection fieldwork of continuing good support. Since the last inspection, no school has been designated as having serious weakness, or deemed to be in need of special measures and two schools have been removed from these categories.

64. Schools identified by the LEA as under-performing receive well-targeted support, and support for those causing concern is well planned and monitored. In particular, a partnership between a Beacon school and a secondary school in challenging circumstances is proving very successful. The progress of under-performing schools is subject to careful scrutiny by officers and members.

#### **Support for literacy and numeracy**

65. In the 2001 inspection, support for literacy and numeracy were strengths. No detailed fieldwork was done in these areas in the current inspection, but there is ample evidence of continuing good support. Pupils have made above average progress, and rates of improvement at Key Stages 1 and 2 have been above national and similar authorities' trends. Both strategies are effectively managed, monitoring and evaluation are thorough, and high quality support is well targeted and valued by schools; those receiving intensive support have generally exceeded gains made in other schools.

66. At Key Stage 1, results in English and mathematics have improved, particularly in spelling, as a consequence of the LEA's emphasis. At Key Stage 2, English results have remained relatively static since 2000. This disguises an improvement in writing as a result of the LEA's drive to raise standards, but sits alongside a worrying fall in reading results. In mathematics, results at Level 4 and above, and for pupils reaching higher grades, have continued to improve.

67. In 2002, Key Stage 2 English results were five percentage points below the LEA's target of 77 per cent, and results in mathematics fell short of the 75 per cent target by three percentage points. The performance of individual schools has been thoroughly analysed, and actions to address these shortfalls are in hand.

### **Support for information and communication technology**

68. There has been good progress in the LEA's support for information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection. Previously poor, support for schools is now highly satisfactory. The LEA has addressed both recommendations in the previous report. It is now implementing an ICT strategy for curriculum and management, and there is good support for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. New posts have been created which, together with the Key Stage 3 strategy consultant, have secured good capacity for further improvement.

69. The strategy for curriculum ICT is detailed clearly in the Education Development Plan. Based on a thorough analysis of need, it provides a good basis for operational plans. Appropriate activities are identified to improve teacher knowledge, raise attainment in ICT and increase the effective use of ICT for communication between the LEA and its schools. Targets for the provision of hardware and connectivity in schools are clear.

70. The LEA has a good knowledge of ICT in its schools. Recent reports from Ofsted school inspections show an improvement in pupils' progress and learning in ICT, with standards now at least in line with national expectations. Advisers have begun to include targets for ICT in their discussions in all schools. Criteria for identifying schools for intensive support are clear, and appropriate guidance provided to teachers for moderating their judgements of pupils' work.

71. The LEA has established an excellence in ICT action team to promote development work between schools and to disseminate best practice. It is well conceived, effectively managed by teachers and headteachers and is beginning to show some useful outcomes, for example, providing models of practice for schools' assessment procedures.

72. Schools' involvement in the New Opportunities Fund training has been closely monitored and all schools are due to complete their training within the timescale. Arrangements for technical support are satisfactory. Curricular advice for primary schools is good, but less specialist support has been available for secondary and special schools. Good liaison work is being established between primary and secondary schools. The school improvement service has monitored the impact of advice and New Opportunities Fund training on curricular practice, identifying improved teacher confidence and competence.

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**Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3**

73. The LEA's support for raising standards at Key Stage 3 is good. The strategy is comprehensive, and meets the requirements of the local public service agreement. The strategy is well managed and monitored. Implementation plans are good, and the LEA's thorough evaluation has identified improved teaching and increased pupils' motivation.

74. Consultants are expert and command significant respect. An excellent analysis of schools' needs has resulted in clear criteria for the allocation of their time in schools. This includes work in high performing subject areas, enabling leading departments to be established. Attainment data is increasingly well used for pupil-level target setting and to identify and support underachieving groups. Consultants provide good advice on appropriate teaching strategies tailored to the needs of individual pupils. The secondary school improvement adviser tackles any concerns over the implementation of the strategy promptly. Core training has been very well received and consultants have observed subsequent improvements in classroom practice. Attendance has been monitored closely, and appropriate follow-up sessions provided.

75. Liaison between the Key Stage 2 and the Key Stage 3 initiatives is good. Key Stage 3 consultants make regular visits to primary schools, and hold cross-phase meetings. This has resulted in better use of Key Stage 2 data by secondary schools when planning for individual pupils.

76. Cross-curricular links are strong. For example, links between the literacy consultant and the consultant for English as an additional language ensure the appropriateness of the Key Stage 3 literacy strand for pupils learning English as an additional language; links across subjects are developing through the foundation subjects strand.

77. In 2002, Key Stage 3 results showed very little increase over 2001 figures, except in mathematics, where there was a two percentage point improvement. Nevertheless, given continued strong staffing, the LEA has good capacity for further improvement.

**Support for minority ethnic groups, including Travellers**

78. The LEA has greatly emphasised the provision of support for minority ethnic and Traveller pupils. Previously unsatisfactory, it is now good. This represents good progress and the LEA has good capacity for further improvement. Recommendations in the inspection report, to improve the quality of data and develop guidance materials, have been met. The appointment of an adviser, who combines this work with responsibility for literacy, has proved successful. There has been an appropriate emphasis on integration and support for pupils in mainstream settings. Funding has been delegated and schools are becoming increasingly confident in meeting their responsibilities. Advisers have established clear arrangements for monitoring provision in schools.

79. The LEA retains appropriate levels of funding for a rapid response team. This provides good support for pupils who are newly arrived in schools where experience of supporting English as an additional language is limited. Resources, including those to promote the local public service agreement targets, are well targeted. There is a good range of courses for teachers, which are followed up to assess changes in practice.

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80. The city council has appropriate policies for equal opportunities and combating racism. The council conforms to the Commission for Racial Equality standards and the education and children's services department is represented on the corporate group. The LEA's clear strategic plan for minority ethnic and Traveller pupils is included within the EDP, and schools recognise that support has improved. The next stage of the strategy is based on a good evaluation of work already undertaken to raise the attainment of pupils of minority ethnic and Traveller heritage.

81. The quality of data has improved greatly since the last inspection and it is now used well to identify under-performing pupils and schools. The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups is rising faster than other pupils in the LEA at average levels of attainment, but is still lagging behind at the higher levels. Good strategies are in place to support these pupils; collaboration with the national strategies ensures that materials are adapted for pupils with English as an additional language, and attendance data are also analysed. Recent Ofsted inspections of primary and secondary schools have indicated that provision is good overall.

82. Provision for Traveller children is well focused on schools most affected by levels of transience, using clear criteria. The LEA is successful in contacting highly mobile families soon after they arrive. There has been considerable success in raising the age at which Traveller pupils now leave school, partly through the allocation of additional education welfare officer time. Good strategies encourage engagement, including the loan of a laptop computer for a pupil taking public examinations, and sensitive encouragement for pupils to return to learning after the age of compulsory education.

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

83. Support provided by the authority for work with gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory. It is interwoven in the EDP, within the priorities concerned with raising standards of attainment and improving the quality of teaching. However, there is no clear coherent LEA-wide strategy, and the LEA is only now auditing what schools are doing for these pupils. In their responses to the school survey, almost half the primary schools and more than half of secondary schools rated the support as poor or very poor.

84. Insufficient time has been available for strategic leadership, given the other substantial responsibilities of the post-holder. While provision for gifted and talented pupils is expected to feature in school improvement officers' visits to schools, practice varies and there is no clear guideline for this aspect of work. Limited support has been provided to the schools in the excellence cluster partnership, and what has been achieved so far is due more to the enthusiasm and commitment of the school co-ordinators than to direct LEA action. After two unsuccessful attempts, a temporary appointment of a gifted and talented co-ordinator to work with these schools took effect from the beginning of this term.

85. What has been done for the majority of schools in the LEA owes much to the Beacon schools, which have made this a main element of their outreach contribution. With the help of the LEA, they have devised strategies to support all schools, including an annual conference, support for the co-ordinators' network, contributions to the professional development programme, and additional curriculum provision for older pupils. Enrichment

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days for both primary and secondary pupils have been organised, although transport costs restricted access. Beacon schools and the specialist sports college have organised some master classes. Well-attended summer schools have also been organised by the Beacon and other schools, but with limited LEA support, and little was done to monitor them systematically. Some schools have benefited from participation in a teachers international study visit to promote work with gifted and talented pupils.

86. A draft policy statement and an action plan have been prepared very recently and consultation on the former is about to begin. The pupil targets identified are insufficiently challenging, especially at Key Stages 2 and 3, and GCSE targets are not identified sufficiently clearly for reliable monitoring.

*Recommendation*

**In order to improve support for gifted and talented pupils:**

- set out clearly the LEA's intended action, how it is to be resourced, and how it is to complement and extend the work of the Beacon schools and the excellence cluster.

**Support for school management**

87. There has been little change since the last inspection, and support for school leadership and management remains satisfactory. The LEA provides a range of support, but does not yet have a coherent strategy for the development of senior or middle managers. Findings from Ofsted inspections of schools show the quality of leadership and management remaining as broadly average.

*Recommendation*

**In order to improve the quality of leadership and management of schools:**

- produce a coherent strategy for leadership and management development, including support for middle managers.

88. Intervention in under-performing schools remains good. These schools continue to receive well-targeted management support and make satisfactory progress. There is an extensive programme of middle management development available for schools in the excellence cluster, as well as for those facing challenging circumstances.

89. The LEA has promoted suitable training on developing procedures for school self-evaluation. This has been widely taken up, as has training on the analysis of data. Effective support for the dissemination of good practice is provided through 'excellence in Peterborough' action teams networking within and across school leadership teams on a range of school improvement activities. Although recently established, teams are already sharing the outcomes of their work.

90. Support for continuing professional development is less satisfactory than at the time of the last inspection as schools are unclear about what the LEA offers as brokered support

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for curriculum and management. However, there is a useful programme of training opportunities, links with the National College for School Leadership, and some brokered provision. Schools are encouraged to look elsewhere for the provision of services beyond the core to which, appropriately, the LEA restricts itself.

91. Network meetings and mentoring arrangements for new headteachers are welcomed, but support for newly appointed headteachers is unsatisfactory as the stated entitlement is not always planned or delivered, leaving some to seek out their own mentor. Advisers challenge schools' own identification of needs and are able to advise schools on relevant professional development opportunities, but the extent to which this happens is too variable. It is weak in secondary schools.

#### *Recommendation*

#### **In order to provide appropriate support for newly appointed headteachers:**

- clarify and publish the criteria for support and establish procedures to ensure the support is provided, monitored and evaluated.

#### **Support for governors**

92. Support to governors, previously satisfactory, is now highly satisfactory. Services are well co-ordinated and evaluated and a governor reference group is active in shaping policy and practice. Consultation, communication, and the provision of advice and information have improved. Priorities for the continuing development of the service are well targeted and hence the capacity for further improvement is good.

93. A comprehensive and well-targeted programme of centrally run courses for governors and clerks, supplemented by training and development sessions for whole governing bodies, has proved successful. This has been provided through sensible collaboration with a neighbouring authority. The number of schools subscribing to the LEA's services has increased.

94. A systematic scrutiny of all schools is resulting in a comprehensive picture of governors' effectiveness. Training and support for weak governing bodies, targeted through the LEA's framework for monitoring the performance of schools, from a thorough analysis of schools' inspection reports, and from good liaison with school improvement advisers, has resulted in improvements. Nevertheless, while the LEA is aware of variation in the effectiveness of governing bodies, this is not sufficiently addressed by school improvement advisers during routine visits to schools.

95. A well thought-out and largely successful governor recruitment strategy has resulted in a low level of governor vacancies, and enabled the appointment of additional governors to schools in special measures. Vacancy levels are regularly monitored, with follow-up action when levels are high, but minority ethnic communities remain under-represented.

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### The effectiveness of services to support school management

96. Management services were satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection with only ICT for administration and grounds maintenance having weaknesses. Most weaknesses have been addressed and overall provision remains satisfactory, with good capacity for further improvement. The report identified where the LEA's support for schools in procuring services could be strengthened, and included recommendations relating to brokering services and developing an ICT strategy; there has been some progress in both areas.

97. The LEA's self-evaluation and the results of the schools survey indicate that **financial services, human resources, property services, catering and cleaning** continue to be at least satisfactory. No fieldwork was undertaken in these areas.

98. At the time of the previous inspection, the council had completed a Best Value review of **corporate services**, which resulted in the decision to secure a strategic partnership for future provision. The council is now in the final stages of the procurement process. The council rightly recognises that the outcome of this process will have some implications for schools' procurement of management services and has facilitated meetings between the bidders and schools. It has also responded positively to concerns raised by schools and will not, as a result, include schools' finance support services in the contract.

99. Currently, only one service is brokered. The LEA has consulted further with schools on brokering other services, but received little support from them to extend this. Nevertheless, an officer has been appointed who now operates appropriate financial and performance quality checks of all providers seeking to be listed by the LEA. There are sensible plans to improve the quality and consistency of information about services, particularly on pricing and quality standards. The LEA has taken steps to enable schools to become more effective purchasers of services, but schools indicate satisfaction with the current balance of services provided by the authority and those that are traded.

100. An annual quality survey of schools enables officers to target follow-up action on poorly rated services. A model form of service level agreement for LEA services was developed, but is not used consistently. Standards and quality assurance measures for many services are descriptive rather than precise and measurable and some services do not have clear pricing mechanisms. The LEA has plans to address these weaknesses.

101. **ICT in school administration** was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. It is now satisfactory, although the LEA still does not have a clearly articulated strategy for administration ICT that has agreed priorities and is understood by schools. The LEA has invested substantially in ICT for the development of an education management information system. There are clear protocols for ensuring that schools are only asked to provide data once and that these data are the core of the departmental information management system. There is a monthly schedule of data transfers from schools to the LEA to enable both systems to have accurate and up-to-date data. This is generally efficient and good progress has been made on the common basic data set.



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*Recommendation***In order to address the recommendations of the previous inspection report:**

- finalise the ICT strategy and the supporting action plan for implementation, including resource implications.

102. Electronic communication between schools and the LEA is effective and well managed. Increasingly e-mail is used rather than paper communication. The LEA has sensibly put processes in place to ensure that schools are not overwhelmed with e-mail. Recent progress in establishing the 'learning city' website has resulted in a site which is easily accessible to schools and the public and which provides an increasing range of information. Although in its early stages, there is also an intranet, with protected access for schools and LEA officers.

103. The LEA has developed an effective electronic information system (PIES), which enables it to work with the range of hardware and software found in schools. The authority has negotiated a support package for primary schools. However, secondary schools have chosen a different supplier and arrange their own support as the corporate team, reasonably, is not able to support a range of systems.

104. Education ICT services are well resourced and commission developments from corporate ICT through a generic service level agreement. Corporate ICT is included in the proposed strategic partnership.

105. **Grounds maintenance** was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The criticisms made have been addressed and the service is now satisfactory. Currently, the service is purchased by only 20 schools. These schools now negotiate individual contracts specified to meet their site and use requirements. The contracts include clear standards and specifications and true costs. There are clear procedures for dealing with any complaints, which have reduced substantially. The annual quality survey reflects this progress. Support in procuring alternative providers is available through the services to schools officer.

**The LEA's work in assuring the supply and quality of teachers**

106. The LEA's work in assuring the supply and quality of teachers is satisfactory, as is its capacity to improve.

107. The percentage of teacher vacancies is below the national average, but the percentage of teachers leaving is above average. The percentage of newly qualified teachers in Peterborough, and those retained for a second year, is in line with the national average. The number of in-service training courses provided is below average, but cancellation rates are low.

108. The LEA knows its current teacher vacancies and gathers information informally, but it does not have a database or a systematic analysis of its teaching and support staff to identify where and when shortages might occur in future. Hence, whilst there are several valid recruitment activities in place, there is no coherent strategy to ensure activities are well matched to need. Moreover, the outcomes and timescales of the activities outlined in the EDP

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are too imprecise to measure progress. The recruitment strategy manager has been successful, however, in raising the profile of teaching in Peterborough through well-targeted materials, and a graduate teacher programme is contributing about 20 teachers per year. As yet, there is little alignment between the recruitment of teachers and corporate recruitment, although a housing scheme for key workers is being planned.

109. The LEA has a satisfactory programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and there are sound procedures for assuring the quality of their progress. There are regular courses for middle managers and the LEA promotes National Professional Qualification for Headship for aspiring headteachers. The relationship between professional development, recruitment and retention at each stage of a teacher's career is not well understood and hence there is no strategic approach. Similarly, training for classroom teachers does not yet extend to supply teachers to secure the link with school improvement. The LEA sensibly limits the range of courses it provides directly, mainly in support of the national strategies. Support for other curriculum areas is insufficiently clear, including the LEA's role in assuring the quality of any external providers.

110. The LEA has continued to make effective use of expertise available locally through specialist and Beacon schools and through advanced skills teachers. Appropriate plans are in hand to extend the use of advanced skills teachers to primary schools.

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

111. At the time of the previous inspection, the effectiveness of services was satisfactory, and leadership of services was good. The LEA's own evaluation is that these continue to be at least satisfactory and fieldwork was only carried out in respect of the standard of expertise of staff to support school improvement. However, in the course of inspecting this, and other aspects of the LEA's support, the effectiveness of the leadership of services was examined. This is now satisfactory rather than good, as procedures have not kept pace with national requirements, and aspects of performance management have lapsed. Performance varies, for example in the quality of evaluation provided for the range of activities for which the school improvement service is responsible, and in the quality of the records on supporting schools causing concern.

112. The standard of expertise of the staff to support school improvement was previously highly satisfactory and, despite some considerable turnover of staff, remains so. Advisers are appropriately qualified, but there is insufficient capacity to support secondary schools. The LEA recognises this. An extensive external programme of professional development has been provided for the team of advisers, most of whom are relatively new in post. Their expertise has developed quickly, and recent training has included events where advisers themselves take the lead in developing their colleagues. The leadership skills of the members of the team are considerable and advisers were responsible for maintaining expertise, and appropriately identifying their own development needs during the vacancy for a senior advisor. Consultants are expert and well regarded.

113. The evaluation of the work of the school improvement service does not meet the high standards found in the evaluation of many of the EDP activities. Although services costs are comparable with similar services in other LEAs, and generally have some impact when

supporting schools to raise standards, Best Value principles are not fully incorporated into management practices.

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## Section 3: Special educational needs

### Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's special educational needs provision

114. All aspects of special educational needs provision are now satisfactory, and the LEA's fulfilment of its statutory obligations is good. The special educational needs policy rightly emphasises the importance of inclusive provision in mainstream schools, wherever possible, for children with special needs. In conjunction with the outcomes of the special schools review, there is now a clear picture of the LEA's priorities and intentions for the immediate future. Spending on special needs is higher than in most similar LEAs, and the proportion of the special needs budget delegated to schools is also high. Support services are generally effective and valued by schools. However, the LEA does not have a full and costed plan for the implementation of its strategy, and is not yet able to evaluate the impact of its provision on the attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs.

### The LEA's strategy for special educational needs

115. At the time of the last inspection, the LEA's strategy for SEN was highly satisfactory. Although important steps have been taken in the intervening period, it is now satisfactory. The reason for this is the lack of a comprehensive strategic plan through which the intentions of the SEN policy are to be achieved.

#### *Recommendation*

**In order to strengthen the management of SEN provision:**

- prepare a strategic plan for the implementation of the SEN policy that sets out clearly how the aims of the policy are to be achieved, states the anticipated costs, and defines clear success criteria.

116. The SEN policy statement is a clear and concise declaration of the LEA's principles for the education and support of children with special needs. These link well with corporate policies and contribute to the overall inclusion agenda of the council. The policy statement sets out suitable aims and provides guidelines for an inclusive approach to SEN that is in line with government guidelines. It was subject to widespread and detailed consultation and has been given prominence subsequently. Elected members have been closely involved in its preparation and in presenting it publicly. Schools' reviews of their policies, in the light of the LEA's policy, have been monitored. The LEA has completed a special schools review to rationalise provision and resources and changes, involving the closure of two special schools and the opening of a new one in 2004, have been agreed.

117. An action plan outlines intended activities through which some of the main aims of the policy statement are to be achieved. Although it is possible to identify a link between the activities proposed in the plan and some of the aims of the policy, the resource implications are too imprecise and some success criteria are expressed in ways that make them difficult to use as reliable indicators of progress.

118. Like many LEAs, Peterborough has an increase in children with special needs who are on the autistic spectrum. A new post has recently been established through the Standards Fund, and training is being provided for early years' teachers who wish to specialise in this work, and also for parents. Through effective partnership work with early years' settings and the health authority, the LEA is strengthening the communication lines through which it obtains early notification of needs.

### **Statutory obligations**

119. This was highly satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Improvements have been made since then and the LEA's fulfilment of its statutory obligations is now good. Suitable measures have been introduced to achieve greater consistency in the early stages of identifying needs. The proportion of statements completed in less than 18 weeks, high at the time of the last inspection, is now even higher and well above the national average. The quality of statement writing is variable. Of the sample seen during the inspection, all clearly identified the additional support to be provided, but some were insufficiently specific to provide suitable guidance to teachers preparing an individual education plan, or to allow reliable monitoring of the provision made.

120. Reviews are well managed, and every effort is made to involve parents in the process, and clear information about their rights to appeal is provided. Parent partnership arrangements are of a very high standard and this has contributed to the sharp reduction in the number of appeals against statements since the last inspection. Of the few tribunals that have been held the LEA has been supported in more than half.

121. The LEA works effectively with other statutory and voluntary bodies to support children with SEN. It has recently introduced processes to monitor its compliance with statutory obligations at regular intervals. Training and support for teachers and governors is provided, including advice and help to private settings. All private settings have a designated special educational needs co-ordinator.

122. The LEA has reacted quickly to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Schools have been notified of their obligations, and advised and helped in preparing an accessibility policy, including asset management help where there are significant implications for building structure.

### **School improvement**

123. The effectiveness of services in exercising their SEN functions to support school improvement was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. It was not identified as an issue for this inspection as the performance indicators and the LEA's self evaluation showed that the picture remained satisfactory. During the inspection, documentation and interviews indicated that a number of developments have taken place, such as the support for schools in reviewing and updating their SEN policies, improvements to individual education plans and the production of a good quality SEN handbook. School improvement advisers routinely discuss the setting of targets for pupils with special needs. There are now support networks for special educational needs co-ordinators, convened by educational psychologists, and good quality training has been provided on the changes to the Code of Practice and on the

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implications for schools of the Disability Discrimination Act. Improvements in the pupil database have been made since the last inspection, to provide the authority with detailed information about the attainment and progress of pupils with special needs.

### **Value for money**

124. The last inspection found that special educational needs provision represented unsatisfactory value for money. There continue to be weaknesses, but some improvements have been made and value for money is now satisfactory. Nevertheless, expenditure is higher than the average for similar LEAs.

125. A recent review of the SEN elements within the funding formula has been well managed, and the special schools review has included a detailed study of financial implications. The respective roles of schools and the LEA for SEN provision are clearly identified, and a higher proportion of the SEN budget is delegated to schools than in most LEAs. A system for monitoring the use of this delegated funding has recently been introduced, and is well designed for use by schools as part of their self-evaluation. The process has been through an extended trial period, and subsequently modified. While it has the potential to relate outcomes to costs, it is not, as yet, sufficiently integrated into the system for the LEA to be able to demonstrate the relationship between expenditure and pupil progress and attainment.

#### *Recommendation*

**In order to demonstrate the value for money of funding delegated to schools for special educational needs:**

- ensure that the system for monitoring the use of delegated funding is firmly established and that data about the attainment and progress of SEN pupils is developed.

126. The LEA has reduced the number of out-of-city placements of children in special schools. It is a member of a regional consortium working to monitor the quality and value of independent providers, with a view to greater efficiency. Steps are also being taken to limit the number of statements so that a higher proportion of available funding can be directed to pupils rather than administrative costs.

127. Systems for monitoring the SEN budget are sound. Those for strategic budget planning are less so. This is because strategic planning is not based on a sufficiently thorough audit of need, and thus the financial element of planning is currently under developed.

#### *Recommendation*

**In order to improve the basis for strategic planning of SEN provision:**

- Establish an efficient means through which to conduct systematic audits of children with special needs.

## Section 4: Promoting social inclusion

### The strategy to promote social inclusion

128. Principles of equality and social inclusion now underpin corporate priorities as a consequence of very strong advocacy from the chief executive and senior officers. The draft corporate strategy action plan supports the enactment of these principles across the council, and their endorsement by the local strategic partnership will permeate the community strategy. The education and children's department is an increasingly strong contributor to the corporate inclusion agenda; significantly, the comprehensive inclusion statement recently developed by the department is to be used as a model across the council.

129. The LEA's strategy to promote social inclusion, previously unsatisfactory, is now satisfactory. The last report noted the positive commitment of the council to reducing social exclusion, and sound progress on various strands of its policy. Insufficient overall coherence of strands at corporate level and within education was being addressed, but much remained to be done. Much has been achieved in a short time. However, given the complexity of LEA activity, considerable improvements in policies and procedures, which promise well, are, understandably, not yet fully evident in practice.

130. Increasingly effective working within the inclusion team, across the council and with other agencies, is leading to greater coherence in services and projects. An inter-agency strategic partnership for children's services is well established, communications with schools have improved, and links with school improvement advisers considerably strengthened. While some initiatives are very recent, others are beginning to make a difference to pupils, while improving schools' capacity to prevent exclusion; for example, in the excellence in clusters initiative. Data are beginning to be used to identify pupils at risk of exclusion and to track the attainment, progress, and attendance of some vulnerable groups. The 'pupils at risk panel' has worked well as a referral mechanism for secondary schools, resulting in a reduction in the number of excluded pupils.

131. The work of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership in increasing the availability of childcare places, activities funded through Sure Start and the Children's Fund, and the work of the early excellence centre, are significant in reducing disadvantage. Similarly, within the EDP, the focus on schools in disadvantaged areas, and actions to improve provision for vulnerable groups, especially minority ethnic and Traveller children, pupils without a school place and looked after children, is benefiting pupils. Further benefits derive from the work of the youth service in assisting young people to participate in local democracy, and the multi-agency resource panel in ensuring appropriate provision for children with disabilities. Work with the police has been successful in promoting community safety and reducing truancy.

132. The council's local strategic partnership has developed a range of useful projects and programmes to promote social inclusion, some of which link with community cohesion and regeneration. The council's website, providing easy access to services and advice through the People's Network, and the availability of some documentation in community languages, are promising examples of policy in practice.

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External funding has been successfully sought, and used well to support social inclusion activities, particularly in raising the achievement of disadvantaged groups.

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

133. The LEA's planning of school places was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. It is now highly satisfactory, with good progress having been made in a number of areas, including a major reorganisation of special schools.

134. Primary surplus places, at 11 per cent, are high. The recent net capacity survey, using the new DfES methodology, has unexpectedly produced an additional 500 places and, appropriately, this is being investigated. The authority has sound strategies to address the most significant primary surplus places issues, including amalgamation, school closure and developing a neighbourhood nursery. Special school reorganisation proposals have been agreed, resulting in a redesignation of the age ranges and specialisms of schools and the closure of one school. However, the implementation of the special school review has had to be deferred for one year because funding from the DfES was not secured at the appropriate time. The imbalance of secondary places is to be addressed through the secondary review. It has applied for both private finance initiative credits and an academy as part of the funding for the review. The review is a complex strategic planning project involving a broad range of stakeholders, funding sources and critical timelines. The need for new places linked with growth is included in the school organisation plan.

135. There is a clear link between the strategies adopted by the LEA and improving standards in schools, in line with the school organisation plan. The current plan meets the statutory information requirements, but does not yet include the planned strategies for primary and secondary reviews at an appropriate level of detail. Stakeholders and diocesan authorities are consulted appropriately on the plan.

136. Pupil projections, which are within acceptable variations, are provided through a service level agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council and are carefully monitored for accuracy. Information is rightly shared with schools for their own planning purposes. There are effective links with the council's housing and planning departments and educational needs are a priority in negotiating section 106 agreements. Two new primary schools and one secondary school are to be provided through such arrangements.

137. The school organisation committee is properly constituted, chaired by the cabinet member for education and, until recently, has dealt mainly with uncontroversial proposals. It is being briefed on the secondary review. In recognising that future decisions arising from the primary and secondary reviews may be more challenging, it has anticipated the potential need for legal advice and acknowledged that its independence from the council must be assured.

### **Admissions**

138. The authority's effectiveness in relation to admissions was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The LEA's self-evaluation indicates that it continues to be satisfactory, as does the school survey, and no fieldwork was undertaken.



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## Asset management

139. Asset management planning was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection; it is now highly satisfactory, with good capacity for further improvement. The asset management plan meets all statutory requirements and the authority has improved those areas identified by the DfES as needing further work. The plan provides comprehensive information on well-targeted priorities and committed and future projects. These are also included in the corporate asset management plan, which clearly allocates education capital to education projects. Risk assessments and option appraisals ensure the LEA achieves value for money when bringing together a range of funding sources.

140. The asset management plan steering group is now in place, including appropriate school representation, and it has worked with the LEA to identify condition and suitability priorities. The local policy statement is clear and comprehensive and there is a sound strategy to link the capital implications of strategic plans. Schools are expected to link capital investment with their school improvement plans, and to demonstrate that their use of funding supports agreed asset management plan priorities and tenant responsibilities. The authority's requirements relating to schools' capital spend are generally in line with DfES guidance, but schools do not always fully understand the procedures for deploying their devolved capital funding.

141. A recent internal assessment of the LEA's progress with asset management provides a robust analysis of key pressures and barriers to more effective delivery. It has resulted in sound proposals for improvement, including rigorous monitoring of more targeted performance indicators and helping schools to link their capital investment outcomes with improved educational standards. The quality of the condition and suitability data will also be improved. This is currently managed by property services and the LEA has rightly highlighted the need to resolve ownership of the database should property services be outsourced.

142. The authority has secured substantial capital funding through New Deal for Schools, basic need and other sources. In order to support its secondary review, it is pursuing the development of an academy based on an existing school partnership and is planning to secure a significant private finance initiative scheme. The authority recognises the need to plan carefully, given the capital demands on both the LEA and schools of developing two linked reorganisation schemes, in addition to primary projects and the special school review. As the authority has already experienced difficulties with delays in funding streams for its special schools review, it is aware that contingency plans are essential in case either the academy or private finance initiative schemes do not progress as anticipated.

143. Schools receive good advice on managing property matters and resources. Not only does the finance manual provide sound general guidance on procuring services, but there is also clear guidance on premises' project management and planning. Schools are able to purchase some support from the education team. There are clear plans to link, where possible, capital plans involving both education and children's services properties and developments.

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

144. At the time of the last inspection support for pupils out of school was poor. Since then, significant improvements have been made. There is now a sound strategy and the quality of the provision is good. Both recommendations arising from the last inspection have been implemented. The LEA has achieved the target of making full-time equivalent provision for all pupils without a school, with the exception of a very small number of teenage mothers and children in hospital. Improvements to the pupil database have resulted in a good system that enables the LEA to track pupils accurately. A 'missing children' protocol has been introduced to trace the movements of pupils out of school who are moving house. A major thrust of the LEA's work has been to develop preventive measures, to avoid wherever possible the need to educate children out of school.

145. Provision for up to 12 primary-age pupils is made through a unit attached to a newly built primary school. This includes full- and part-time placements together with dual registration with mainstream schools. The aim is to reintegrate pupils to mainstream as quickly as possible, assisted by outreach support. All pupils are returned to mainstream before the end of Key Stage 2.

146. Full- and part-time placements for Key Stage 3 pupils are provided by the pupil referral unit. The majority of pupils attend part time with dual registration with mainstream schools. Again, supported early reintegration to mainstream is the aim, and the success rate is high. Outreach teacher support, both for reintegrating pupils and to help schools retain pupils with behaviour difficulties, is highly valued by secondary schools special educational needs co-ordinators. A recent Ofsted inspection found the pupil referral unit to be very good with a number of excellent features and no major weaknesses. This represents a significant improvement from an earlier very critical report.

147. Alternative curriculum provision for pupils in Key Stage 4 is co-ordinated by the pupil referral unit to match the needs of individual pupils, including those who have been permanently excluded and those whose school programme is breaking down. Each pupil's programme is tailored to include work placement, key skills, and college- and school-based courses, as appropriate. Provision has been extended through partnership between the DfES, the LEA and a local employer. Almost all the Key Stage 4 provision consists of accredited courses, using a wide variety of accreditation. A joint protocol with Connexions has been established. Collectively, this is good and improving provision, and is a major factor in reducing the number of secondary exclusions.

148. Provision for children in hospital or out of school because of illness is good, with good links with the health service and the adolescent mental health service. Long-term hospital stays are usually outside the city, and a limited hospital teaching service provided through the staff of the pupil referral unit to meet the needs in Peterborough. This service also provides home tuition where necessary.

149. Provision for schoolgirl mothers and pregnant teenagers is good, again with a strong focus on continuing education. A reintegration officer has recently been appointed, and has had considerable success in helping a number of girls to continue in education, including some who have had a long break since leaving school. The LEA has thorough arrangements

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for monitoring the quality of education provided by parents who choose to educate their children at home.

### **Attendance**

150. Support for attendance was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Since then, and particularly in the current school year, improvements have been made in deploying resources and providing guidance for schools, and it is now highly satisfactory. Good systems are in place, but some are relatively recent and thus not fully proven. Attendance and unauthorised absence rates for both primary and secondary education were in line with national averages in 2000-2001, and have improved since. The targets set for 2002-2003 were met or exceeded in 2001-2002 and those for 2003-2004 have been revised in the light of this.

151. Clear criteria are used to allocate the time of education welfare officers, with regular reviews to ensure resources are deployed in line with need. In addition, education welfare officers' time is allocated for specific responsibilities, such as work with the young offenders team, Travellers, asylum seekers and refugees, child employment matters, and home-educated children. Good working links are maintained with neighbouring LEAs' services. Attendance targets are agreed with each school, with appropriate challenge.

152. The education welfare service deploys a good range of strategies. A very helpful schools attendance handbook contains guidelines on all aspects of attendance and, if a school's attendance presents particular problems, a team of education welfare officers provides intensive support. There is good guidance for pupils transferring from primary to secondary schools, with additional support for those identified as likely to experience particular difficulties. Regular truancy sweeps, an example of good collaboration with the police, are followed by appropriate action. Using a 'fast track' referral system, intensive support and supervision is provided for individual pupils with poor attendance records. The LEA has shown itself willing to use its legal powers, and the rate of prosecution for attendance recently is far in excess of the national average.

### **Behaviour support**

153. Behaviour support has improved since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory. It is now satisfactory. The number of permanent exclusions has continued to fall as provision has improved. The last cycle of Ofsted inspections showed that there is now a higher proportion of schools where the quality of the schools' climate, including attitudes and behaviour, was satisfactory or better. However, in response to the school survey made six months prior to the inspection, more than half the secondary schools and one third of the primary schools rated support for behaviour as poor or very poor.

154. The current behaviour support plan is a comprehensive document covering all the required areas. Although its official review date is 2004, senior officers who have joined the authority more recently have decided to anticipate this and a full-scale revision is being prepared.

155. A joint post combines the management of the LEA's behaviour support service with the headship of the emotional and behavioural difficulties school opened in 2001. The

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benefits of this structure have not yet been borne out in practice, as the establishment of the new school has constrained the time available for the LEA's role. Good quality support is provided for primary school pupils, teachers and parents, but the quantity is still limited. Moreover, the development of an equivalent outreach support service for secondary schools has been severely constrained, because the schools are either unwilling to purchase such a service or have already committed their resources to the development of their own learning support units. As a consequence, some behaviour difficulties escalate because they are not addressed at an early stage.

#### *Recommendation*

#### **In order to improve the support to schools for behaviour:**

- re-examine the requirements and possibilities for the management of a behaviour support service, and ensure that schools are consulted and fully informed of what developments are intended.

156. There is emerging good practice in the pupils at risk panels, managed jointly by headteachers and the LEA's officers, and valued by schools for the advice and support provided in managing pupils presenting serious behaviour problems. The rotating membership of the panels facilitates the sharing of good practice between schools. Through the secondary panel, schools operate a pupil interchange arrangement, which can provide a fresh start for pupils. The dual registration arrangements, particularly at Key Stage 4, enable schools to continue to work with a significant number of pupils who otherwise might be excluded, and this has contributed to the reduction in permanent exclusions.

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

157. Provision for health, safety and welfare was not inspected. It was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, and the LEA's evaluation is that it continues to be so.

158. Child protection arrangements were satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. As a result of some improvements, they are now highly satisfactory. They continue to meet all statutory requirements. A detailed child protection handbook has been circulated to schools. All schools have designated teachers and about two thirds have followed the LEA's recommendation to identify designated governors. Most training for teachers and governors is purchased from Cambridgeshire through a service level agreement, though some, including that for education welfare officers and other officers, is provided by the LEA. Detailed records of training uptake are kept and these are updated regularly. The LEA plays a prominent part in the area child protection committee, and teachers are encouraged to become members of the committee's working groups. The education welfare service operates a telephone help line that is increasingly being used by teachers with concerns and questions.

159. Acting on the recommendation of the last inspection, the LEA issued clear guidance to schools about referral procedures, though there are indications that not all schools are as prompt as they should be in making such referrals. Although the protocols for action on the receipt of referrals clearly state that schools are to be informed about the outcomes of referral, there are occasional instances where schools are not notified of decisions reached or action

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taken. Such failures, although not common, do not contribute to developing better relationships and trust between schools and the responsible sections of the department for education and children. Following a recent inspection of children's services by the Social Services Inspectorate, a detailed action plan has been prepared to deal with its recommendations.

***Recommendation***

**In order to improve the effectiveness of child protection procedures:**

- take steps to ensure both that schools follow the laid down procedures for immediate referral of any complaints or suspicions about child abuse and that schools are notified about action taken following referral, or, in the case of no action, the reasons for this.

**Looked after children**

160. Support for raising the attainment of looked after children was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Since then there have been significant improvements and it is now good. The last report's recommendation to improve the quality and organisation of data to track their achievement has been fully implemented, and the data are used well to help enhance their attainment. The number of looked after children of school age in Peterborough – 280 in November 2002 – is higher than the national average, but steps are being taken to reduce the number and figures for the year show a small decrease.

161. Attainment targets for this group of children are suitably challenging, and exceed those set by central government. Moreover, with one small exception, these targets have been achieved and in some cases exceeded. At the end of both Key Stages 2 and 4, the attainment of looked after children exceeds the national average, in most cases by a substantial margin, though the LEA is aware that there is still a significant number who do not enter for GCSEs.

162. Both the EDP and the Quality Protects management action plan include priorities and objectives for work with looked after children and those leaving care, and the council gives a high priority to its corporate parenting responsibilities. A corporate parent steering group, chaired by the lead member for children, is following an action plan to look at a range of aspects of the education and welfare of children in care and the contribution to this of the full range of council services. This group also receives regular reports on pupils' attainment. Several Peterborough schools had designated teachers for looked after children before this became a national requirement, now fully met. Regular, good quality training is provided for teachers and the uptake is monitored carefully. The recent merging of the children's social work and the education departments is resulting in social workers being more informed about and involved in children's attainments and educational progress. Specified allocations of the time of both an educational psychologist and an education welfare officer are earmarked for work with looked after children.

163. A number of council initiatives are aimed at improving attainment. All looked after children in Year 10 have been provided with laptop computers, and foster carers' homes have

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been equipped with a computer. Recently an awards evening was organised to mark the achievements, academic and otherwise, of looked after children. A major piece of work, to which several older looked after children have contributed, has reviewed the content and use of personal education programmes (PEPs). At the time of the inspection all children had a completed PEP or one in preparation, with an extensive section on attainment and educational progress. Target times for the completion of PEPs have been set in accordance with DfES/Department of Health guidance. Some schools, particularly secondary schools, find it difficult to meet this demanding schedule. A protocol for the education of looked after children is currently subject to consultation, which clearly identifies responsibilities for action on a wide range of aspects of their education and welfare.

### **Measures to combat racism**

164. Measures taken to combat racism, previously unsatisfactory, are now satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection, the LEA was slow in taking decisive action, and racist incidents were not monitored. The council has responded effectively and has made good progress in improving policies and procedures, but the benefits of these have yet to be fully realised.

165. The council is strongly committed to the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality, and determined to integrate equality principles into policies and practices. However, officers, schools and the LEA's partners express concern over reports that some elected members do not adhere consistently to policy. A revision of the corporate equalities policy reflects the council's community leadership role, and corporate and departmental steering groups have been set up to drive and monitor its implementation. The recent community cohesion action plan is impressive in range and detail, and procedures for dealing with harassment are well-defined. Suitable training is provided for council staff and school governors on equality issues. Plans are in hand to address findings from a recent survey that highlighted a workforce unrepresentative of the local community.

166. The LEA provides suitable leadership to schools, who report positively on improved activity to combat racism, but rightly identify that much still needs to be done, particularly with local communities. However, effective work in a number of schools, through the youth service, with minority ethnic communities, between council departments and with other agencies, has resulted in well-targeted actions and activities. In response to two serious local incidents, action in bringing together schools, community leaders, the police and others through a race equality group was prompt and decisive. The group continues successfully as a forum developing longer-term strategies for addressing racism.

167. A comprehensive and useful good practice guide for managing cultural and linguistic diversity outlines clearly schools' responsibilities for promoting social inclusion. Guidelines for dealing with racist incidents are very clear. Monitoring information, based on returns from all schools, has been thoroughly analysed; results indicate a lack of confidence by schools in the identification and reporting of racist incidents, and the need for more robust reporting and monitoring procedures. Findings are to be used to inform further training.

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## Section 5: Corporate issues

### Introduction to corporate issues

168. Peterborough council has completed the modernisation of its structures since the last inspection and elected members are still coming to terms with new procedures. While there have been some improvements, notably in corporate planning and its implementation and the LEA's partnership with external agencies, there has been less improvement in other aspects. In particular, the council has not yet resolved how best to harness the expertise of all members and win the confidence of schools. However, the expertise of the portfolio holders is widely recognised and the leadership of senior officers remains strong.

### Corporate planning

169. Corporate planning was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Both the corporate plans and their implementation are now satisfactory, and this represents satisfactory progress. The capacity for further improvement is also satisfactory.

170. The previous inspection judged that the links between corporate intentions and departmental plans were insufficiently developed and that monitoring of the contribution of plans such as the EDP to corporate objectives was unsatisfactory. The recommendation to improve the co-ordination between the council's corporate aims and departmental strategies has been met. The recommendation to monitor more rigorously the contribution of the departments to corporate objectives has been partially met through performance management and regular reports to the chief executive's group, but it is acknowledged that monitoring by elected members is under-developed.

171. The council's vision, expressed in the draft corporate strategy for 2003-2006, focuses on the economic opportunities and quality of life in Peterborough, but the supporting statement makes clear that education is central to achieving this vision. As was noted in the council's recent corporate assessment, there is consistency between the main priorities in the community strategy, the corporate plan and departmental plans, including the EDP. There is, however, some variation in how the priorities for education are expressed. There is also some inconsistency and inaccuracy in the use of terminology in the plans, and a lack of clarity in resource allocation, timescales and success criteria which impedes accurate monitoring and evaluation. There is now an undertaking to align the budget and planning cycles and to ensure that departments stay within both plans and budget. Albeit belated, this important reform represents a determination on the part of senior elected members and senior officers to improve efficiency. It is recognised that there is more to do on identifying resources within the corporate strategy. Progress is reviewed, but this is not yet consistently rigorous or systematic. However, lines of accountability are clear.

### *Recommendation*

<b>In order to improve the quality of plans and the monitoring of their implementation:</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ensure that the terminology of strategic and action planning is used accurately</li></ul> |
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and with a shared understanding, and that measures are precise.

### **Decision making**

172. Decision making was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, as was the advice given to elected members. Both continue to be satisfactory, as is the capacity to improve.

173. The modernised decision-making procedures are being followed and the delegation of decision making is clear. Having recognised some weaknesses in practice, particularly the limited engagement of non-executive members, sensible steps have been taken to involve the education and children's select panel at a consultative stage. This change is very recent and has not yet secured the confidence of members and partners such as the professional associations. Its limited impact is linked with the council's systems for providing advice to members. Officers provide clear information, but non-executive members are frustrated by recent restrictions on requesting information. Cabinet members are kept well informed through their regular meeting with the director for education and children's services, who also meets with lead members from the opposition parties. The leader of the council and senior officers are deploying a range of strategies to improve the level of debate, but at present decision making fulfils the legal requirements without full ownership of the processes by all elected members.

174. The decision in May 2002 to move to one overview and scrutiny commission was designed partly to reduce burdens on officers, but is demanding of members' time and it is recognised that members need more training to fulfil their roles. In particular, elected members are not yet confident in using data to scrutinise performance. A sub-group is responsible for receiving quarterly performance management reports and progress reports on post-inspection action plans, but review is not consistently challenging. Hence, the procedures are in place, but their ability to effect rigorous scrutiny of decisions is, as yet, unproven.

#### ***Recommendation***

**In order to subject educational decisions and plans to appropriate scrutiny and review:**

- ensure that members receive training to fulfil their role and, in particular, develop their expertise in using data to scrutinise performance.

175. An inspection and advisory group for education and children has been established with sound intentions and its remit has been properly amended to reflect the new department. However, it is not clear how the intelligence gathered is fed into the decision-making process. Thus, potentially useful information and expertise is not being fully exploited and the group runs the risk of undermining the transparency of the decision-making process.

#### ***Recommendation***

**In order to improve the quality of decision making:**

- clarify the remit of the advisory group and its relationship to the decision-



making process.

176. Elected members have demonstrated the capacity to take important decisions as in the merger of the education and children's service departments and, more recently, the outsourcing of some services. The latter, reportedly, represents a significant change of heart on the part of many members. Difficult decisions to be taken, such as those arising from the secondary school review, will put the revised procedures to the test.

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

177. At the time of the previous inspection the leadership provided by officers was good and that of elected members was highly satisfactory. The leadership of senior officers continues to be good and that of elected members is satisfactory. The weaknesses in leadership by elected members have been recognised and decision-making procedures are being revised. Provided that the changes are embedded in working practice, then the capacity to make further improvements in this area is satisfactory. The capacity of senior officers is good. The recommendation in the previous report to supplement the senior officer team has been met.

178. The cabinet members with responsibility for education and children's services are, rightly, highly regarded for their expertise and commitment. Such high regard does not extend to all elected members. Elected members have demonstrated their commitment to education through increasing and protecting the funding of schools, but their collective understanding of educational issues is under-developed. For example, members do not have a shared understanding of how education, social inclusion and regeneration inter-relate in meeting the needs of Peterborough in the twenty-first century.

179. Schools and elected members are strongly of the opinion that the modernised political structures are not yet serving education well; this partly, but not wholly, accounts for schools' critical views of the collective leadership of elected members. In particular, the structures are seen to thwart the expertise of non-executive members, as well as limiting the opportunities for new members to develop specialist knowledge. This, in turn, contributes to a view that decisions are taken by too few members, with many feeling or appearing disenfranchised. At worst, this is exacerbated by the perceived parochialism of some members in promoting ward rather than strategic goals and by some inappropriate public statements. There is no evidence that decisions are not being taken appropriately, but the lack of confidence in the systems and in political leadership is marked. The council has sought external advice and some sensible modifications of procedures are in hand. However, these have yet to make a difference, and thus enable more members to engage fully with the decision-making processes, build expertise for the future and provide appropriate leadership.

### ***Recommendation***

**In order to strengthen the strategic leadership of members and gain schools' confidence:**

- take steps to develop and deploy members' collective knowledge of educational issues, and increase members' participation in decision making.

180. At the time of the previous inspection, the education department had undergone significant change, including the appointment of a new director. Since then there has been further major change in the merger of the education department and children's social services to form the department for education and children in October 2001, under the leadership of the director for education and five assistant directors. There is a strong consensus from elected members, officers and schools, endorsed by inspection judgements from social services and corporate assessment, that this was the right strategic decision. This inspection team concurs. However, although the merged department has made satisfactory progress in developing its internal systems, schools are unclear of the implications for them and struggle to recognise discernible benefits. They do recognise that this is partly attributable to the time required to bring about such changes. The responsibility lies with both the department and with schools to develop a clearer, shared understanding of the relationship between school improvement and social inclusion, which the department exemplifies.

181. The high regard which schools and elected members have for the director for education and children's services is fully justified. She has managed the changes very effectively through building consensus with schools and partners, and supporting elected members during a time of change. As yet, the assistant directors do not enjoy the same confidence with schools, despite examples of outstanding work by individuals, some of whom have only been in post for a short time. This is an issue of presentation rather than substance, which has not been helped by some temporary appointments, albeit for valid reasons. The LEA is determined to secure permanent appointments as a matter of urgency, but there is also a need to raise the profile of the assistant directors and thereby assist schools' understanding of the director and her assistant directors working as a team. The work of the department is ably supported by the chief executive who combines clear understanding of what is needed to improve corporate systems with a considerable insight into issues concerning education and inclusion.

### **Partnership**

182. Partnership between the LEA and external agencies was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, mainly because operational weaknesses undermined satisfactory partnerships at senior levels. There has been good progress and partnership working is now highly satisfactory. Provided the proposed corporate realignment of partnership working results in more strategic and efficient partnership working, the capacity to improve further is good.

183. The strengths noted at the time of the previous inspection have continued. These include the department's partnership with health and the strategic and operational partnerships with the police. At a strategic level these continue to be facilitated through the weekly meetings of all directors with the chief executive. At an operational level, work with the youth offending team and the regular truancy sweeps are examples of good collaborative working which has strengthened since the previous inspection. The LEA provides good support for the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education.

184. The LEA has also witnessed a growth in the partnership working, particularly under the auspices of the children's strategic partnership where the integration of education and children's services has given additional energy and potential to this partnership. In its work

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with early years, for example, the LEA's collaboration with partners is producing beneficial outcomes for children and families, through the sharing of expertise, data and planning. Similarly, an excellence in clusters initiative has been established since the last inspection, in which partnership working has strengthened the LEA's support for participating schools.

185. The partnership work involving the department for education and children's services is set against a developing corporate context, but one which has yet to be fully secured. The chief executive is very clear about the need for the council to engage more strategically with other partners and for improved communication back to the council. Sound proposals for achieving this aim await agreement by the council. Similarly, elected members now have a greater awareness of the importance of partnership working in meeting the council's objectives, and recognise the need to improve practice.

186. The Greater Peterborough partnership is now the local strategic partnership, having evolved since its creation in 1992 when the main focus was economic regeneration. Education and learning is now one of six priorities in the community strategy launched in January 2002. There is a clear understanding of the importance of education to the prosperity of Peterborough and that this is integral to social inclusion. The education group of the Greater Peterborough partnership is not yet fully established, but arrangements are in place.

187. Few benefits of partnership working are recognised by schools, a situation reflected in low ratings in the school survey. The LEA recognises that much of its partnership working has yet to result in tangible outcomes for schools. Benefits have been seen in some areas, such as support for looked after children and, given the current stage of partnership working, there is clear potential for more to be discerned. The LEA is aware of the need to make the benefits of its partnership working explicit to schools.

### **Support for early years**

188. The LEA's support for early years is now very good. It was good at the time of the last inspection. Since then, good strategic and operational planning, a strong focus on raising attainment and on improving the range, quality, co-ordination and integration of services, have resulted in very high quality support for families, providers and practitioners.

189. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership is confident, vibrant and strives for excellence in all that it does. All aspects of its work are intelligent, innovative and extremely well informed. Continuous improvement is paramount, and strategy is reviewed continually to ensure services are delivered well. The partnership has made good progress towards targets in the strategic plan; areas of deprivation are well served, targets for the provision of childcare places have been exceeded, and information for parents is comprehensive and accessible. A directory of services, widely available within the local community, sets out the range of provision clearly, and how to access it.

190. Strategic partnerships are strong, and multi-agency working is far-reaching and effective. Arrangements for networking, both locally and nationally, are impressive. Strong links with local authority teams, other local authorities and other agencies, ensures the inclusion of children with special educational needs and hard-to-reach groups in the Foundation Stage curriculum. The successful child-minding network, linked to the early excellence centre, has improved markedly the quality of childcare provision within the city,

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and the work of the early years' inclusion services has brought advantages to parents and children, including children with special educational needs.

191. Individuals and groups working with young children and their families have benefited from high quality training, support and advice. A well-targeted and comprehensive training programme for teachers and providers, which includes accredited courses and training for special educational needs co-ordinators, has been very well received. Its impact on practice has been significant in that a number of registered settings are working towards quality assurance recognition schemes. Links between the strategy for early years education, and strategies for raising attainment and promoting inclusion are secure, and good liaison with the education and children's service has improved teaching quality in the Foundation Stage. The Peterborough record of achievement, used in maintained and non-maintained settings, provides a good profile of children at the Foundation Stage, and a cohesive record of progress.

### **Support for 14-19 education**

192. The previous inspection report noted that the LEA's support for 14-19 education was satisfactory in that it was keeping abreast of national developments and was underpinned by developments at Key Stage 3. Schools with small sixth forms had already entered into federations to provide greater student choice and the LEA was participating in the 14-19 task group of the local learning partnership.

193. The LEA's support for 14-19 education continues to be satisfactory. It is addressed in the EDP, with the focus primarily on raising attainment at Key Stage 4. To this end, several schools are already offering a modified curriculum, some through the DfES increased flexibility project. The excellence in clusters schools are receiving additional support to develop vocational education and disseminate good practice. The LEA has, rightly, recognised the need to increase its school improvement staffing to meet the challenging agenda in its secondary schools.

194. The LEA's main strategy for supporting 14-19 education is within its review of secondary schools. The principles underpinning the review are appropriate and have been broadly accepted. These are of schools working collaboratively to meet the needs of all Peterborough's pupils and thereby raise attainment and improve progression rates into post-16 and higher education. Complementary specialist school status is part of the collaborative approach. One group of schools has already made a formal commitment to partnership with, at this stage, a common post-16 timetable and a single admissions forum. However, much remains to be worked out and both the LEA and schools recognise that there are hard decisions to be made if the desired outcomes for the young people of Peterborough are to be met.

## **Appendix 1: Recommendations**

The report makes a number of recommendations.

The following recommendations should be acted upon as a matter of urgency:

### **In order to improve the allocation of resources to priorities:**

- fully cost all strategic and service plans at activity level, matching the resources needed against those available, and identifying how gaps can be addressed.

### **In order to improve strategic and financial planning:**

- accurately determine the level, quality, quantity and costs of central services needed to support education activities, particularly in view of the proposed strategic partnership.

### **In order to strengthen the management of SEN provision:**

- prepare a strategic plan for the implementation of the SEN policy that sets out clearly how the aims of the policy are to be achieved, states the anticipated costs, and defines clear success criteria.

### **In order to improve the basis for strategic planning of SEN provision:**

- establish an efficient means through which to conduct systematic audits of children with special needs.

### **In order to improve the support to schools for behaviour:**

- re-examine the requirements and possibilities for the management of a behaviour support service, and ensure that schools are consulted and fully informed of what developments are intended.

### **In order to improve the effectiveness of child protection procedures:**

- take steps to ensure both that schools follow the laid down procedures for immediate referral of any complaints or suspicions about child abuse and that schools are notified about action taken following referral, or, in the case of no action, the reasons for this.

### **In order to subject educational decisions and plans to appropriate scrutiny and review:**

- ensure that members receive training to fulfil their role and, in particular, develop their expertise in using data to scrutinise performance.

However, the following recommendations are also fundamental in that they affect the LEA's overall capacity for improvement:

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**In order to improve the transparency of monitoring, challenge and intervention:**

- implement more rigorously the number of support days specified for schools in each of the categories in the framework for monitoring the performance of schools.

**In order to improve monitoring and challenge in secondary schools:**

- modify existing agreements with schools to strengthen the procedures for challenging secondary schools, and ensure that the LEA has the capacity to carry them out.

**In order to improve support for gifted and talented pupils:**

- set out clearly the LEA's intended action, how it is to be resourced, and how it is to complement and extend the work of the Beacon schools and the excellence cluster.

**In order to improve the quality of leadership and management of schools:**

- produce a coherent strategy for leadership and management development, including support for middle managers.

**In order to provide appropriate support for newly appointed headteachers:**

- clarify and publish the criteria for support and establish procedures to ensure the support is provided, monitored and evaluated.

**In order to address the recommendations of the previous inspection report:**

- finalise the ICT strategy and the supporting action plan for implementation, including resource implications.

**In order to demonstrate the value for money of funding delegated to schools for special educational needs:**

- ensure that the system for monitoring the use of delegated funding is firmly established and that data about the attainment and progress of SEN pupils is developed.

**In order to improve the quality of plans and the monitoring of their implementation:**

- ensure that the terminology of strategic and action planning is used accurately and with a shared understanding, and that measures are precise.

**In order to improve the quality of decision making:**

- clarify the remit of the advisory group and its relationship to the decision-making process.
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**In order to strengthen the strategic leadership of members and gain schools' confidence:**

- take steps to develop and deploy members' collective knowledge of educational issues, and increase members' participation in decision making.

## Appendix 2: Record of Judgement Recording Statements for the inspection

No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
<b>SECTION 1 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY</b>			
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	4	
2	The performance of schools	4	
3	Funding, including the co-ordination of external funding	3	
4	The LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	3	
5	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	4	
6	The extent to which the LEA targets its resources on priorities	4	
7	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement including Best Value	4	
<b>SECTION 2 SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT</b>			
8	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge, and intervention and shared those understandings with schools	3	
9	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	4	
10	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	3	
11	The effectiveness of LEA identification of and intervention in under-performing schools	2	X
12	Support to schools for raising standards in Literacy	2	X
13	Support to schools for raising standards in Numeracy	2	X
14	Support to schools for raising standards in and the curriculum use of information and communications technology	3	
<b>No.</b>	<b>Required Inspection Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>NI</b>
15	Support to schools for raising standards at Key Stage 3	2	
16	Support to schools in raising standards of ethnic minority and Traveller children including the effective deployment of the ethnic minority and Traveller achievement grants	2	
17	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	5	



18	Support for school leadership and management including support for schools effort to achieve Best Value	4	
19	Support to school governors	3	
20	The effectiveness of its services to support school management	4	
20a	Financial services	4	X
20b	Human resources	2	X
20c	Property services	3	X
20d	Services for ICT in school administration	4	
20e	Cleaning and caretaking	3	X
20f	Grounds maintenance	4	
20g	Catering	4	X
21	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	4	
22	The effectiveness of the leadership of services to support school improvement	4	
23	The effectiveness of the deployment of staff to support school improvement	4	X
24	The effectiveness of strategic planning of services to support school improvement	4	X
25	The effectiveness of the performance management of services to support school improvement	4	X
26	The standard of expertise of staff to support school improvement	3	
27	The effectiveness of services to school improvement	4	X
28	Value for money of services to support school improvement	4	X
<b>SECTION 3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS</b>			
29	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for SEN	4	
30	The effectiveness of the LEA in taking steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	2	
31	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	4	X
32	The extent to which the LEA has exercised its SEN functions to meet the requirements of value for money	4	

<b>SECTION 4 PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION</b>			
33	The overall effectiveness of the LEA in promoting social inclusion	4	
34	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	3	
<b>No.</b>	<b>Required Inspection Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>NI</b>
35	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	3	
36	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	4	X
37	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to provision for pupils who have no school place	2	
38	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to school attendance	3	
39	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to behaviour at school	4	
40	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to health and safety, welfare and child protection	3	
41	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to children in public care	2	
42	The effectiveness of the LEA in combating racism	4	
<b>SECTION 5 CORPORATE ISSUES</b>			
43	The clarity, consistency, coherence and feasibility of corporate plans	4	
44	The effectiveness of the procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans	4	
45	The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making (particularly financial decision-making)	4	
46	The quality of leadership provided by elected members	4	
47	The quality of the leadership provided by senior officers	2	
48	The quality of advice given to elected members	4	
49	The effectiveness of the co-ordination of actions in support of priorities involving collaboration between several agencies	3	
<b>OVERALL JUDGEMENTS</b>			
50	The progress made by the LEA overall	3	

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51	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	3	
52	The overall effectiveness of the LEA	3	

*Note:* An X in the 'NI' column means that fieldwork was not conducted on this function during this inspection.

JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 1 to 7 point scale:

- Grade 1 – Very good
- Grade 2 – Good
- Grade 3 – Highly satisfactory
- Grade 4 – Satisfactory
- Grade 5 – Unsatisfactory
- Grade 6 – Poor, significant weaknesses
- Grade 7 – Very poor, fails to provide effective support to schools