

**North East Lincolnshire
Local Education Authority
Inspection Report**

Date of Inspection: October 2004

Reporting Inspector: Heather Richardson HMI

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Basic information

Name of LEA:	North East Lincolnshire Local Education Authority
LEA number:	812
Address of LEA:	Municipal Offices Town Hall Square Grimsby DN31 1HU
Reporting Inspector:	Heather Richardson HMI
Date of Inspection:	October 2004

Summary

Introduction

North East Lincolnshire is a relatively small LEA with some significant challenges. Almost half of its wards are in the 10% most deprived nationally for child poverty. However, the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average. Well-served by transport links, there is nevertheless little commuting out of the area. Its largely white population lives mainly in the adjacent towns of Immingham, Grimsby and Cleethorpes and is set to decline markedly over the next two decades. Unemployment remains above the national average and average wages are four-fifths of the national average.

Primary schools in North East Lincolnshire have continued to improve and standards at Key Stage 2 are in line with national averages and those in similar authorities¹. Despite some improvements in 2004, standards in secondary schools remain low and there is a widening gap between the performance of the LEA's schools and the national averages at GCSE. Pupils' attendance at primary schools is similar to national averages, but exclusions have increased. Secondary schools again perform less well, with attendance well below national averages and exclusions above.

There have been significant structural and political changes in the local authority since the previous inspection. The education service was combined with children's social services in 2001 to create the directorate of learning and child care, and the director is now part of the corporate management team. Local elections in May 2003 resulted in a change of control, with a joint administration taking office for the first time. A scrutiny panel with specific responsibility for education was formed and a designated portfolio holder appointed. It became clear in 2003 that the council's financial position was precarious. As a result, the local authority was subject to engagement by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and a monitoring board was established. At the time of the inspection, the new chief executive had yet to take up his appointment.

¹ North East Lincolnshire LEA's statistical neighbours are: Halton, Hartlepool, Thurrock, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton on Tees, Kingston upon Hull, Rotherham, Darlington, Middlesbrough and Tameside.

Main findings

Summary: The performance of North East Lincolnshire LEA is now unsatisfactory. Three aspects remain good, but in the majority of its functions, the LEA has not been able to arrest decline or secure sufficient improvement. Substantial energy has been spent on major organisational changes but the potential benefits for children and schools of the combined directorate created in 2001 are not yet evident, especially for some of the most vulnerable children. The performance of secondary schools remains relatively weak. The commitment of elected members and senior officers to education has not been reflected in their leadership since the previous inspection or in the LEA's overall performance. This is primarily because the LEA's systems and procedures, including performance management, are not robust. The LEA does not monitor its own performance or the use of its resources with sufficient rigour, and hence does not have an accurate understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses. In the current context of an acute corporate financial crisis, requiring difficult decisions by elected members, not knowing whether services are cost effective and well targeted is a significant concern. Until these weaknesses are tackled, the LEA's capacity to improve is not secure.

Areas of strength	Areas of weakness/for development
Corporate leadership of education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for early years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of plans and allocation of resources to priorities Progress in developing the combined directorate, with too few benefits for children Performance management which has lacked rigour and accountability Leadership of senior officers
Strategy for education and its implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative work with the Excellence Cluster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attainment and progress in secondary schools Clarity and consistency of monitoring, support, challenge and intervention in schools Slow progress in removing surplus primary school places
Support to improve education in schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for the national initiative to raise standards at Key Stages 1 and 2 Dissemination of good practice, in particular the quality and use of the LEA's website Support for governors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The promotion of self-managing schools The management and cost-effectiveness of services to support school improvement
Support for special educational needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rate of production of statements of special educational needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value for money
Support for social inclusion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting statutory requirements for vulnerable pupils Schools' commitment to social inclusion Systems to track vulnerable pupils and the provision made for them

Recommendations

Key recommendations

Corporate planning for education and its implementation: Improve the quality, alignment and use of strategic and operational plans to ensure priorities are clear, progress and accountability are readily monitored, and evaluation is rigorous.

Targeting of resources: Undertake a fundamental reappraisal of the education budget, ensuring resources are allocated to priorities.

Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value: Ensure the performance management of the directorate is rigorous, timely and well informed by comparative data.

Providing school places: As a matter of urgency, draw up a strategy and action plan to tackle the growing number of surplus places in primary schools.

Strategy for social inclusion: Ensure that statutory responsibilities and pupils' statutory entitlement to provision are met as a matter of urgency.

Other recommendations

Corporate leadership of education

Support for 14-19 education: Work with partners to develop a convincing, coherent strategy which properly addresses the needs of all 14-19 year olds.

Strategy for education and its implementation

The LEA's monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools and the targeting of support: Apply stringent criteria to the principles and procedures for monitoring, challenge, intervention and support to ensure transparency and effective differentiation.

Support to improve education in schools

Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement: Ensure the distinction between core entitlement and purchased services is transparent and applied consistently.

Services to support school improvement: Devise and use rigorous systems to account for the deployment of adviser time and for evaluating the effectiveness of school improvement activities.

Support for special educational needs

- Improve the quality of Individual Education Plans by ensuring that they include quantifiable targets for raising pupils' attainment.

Support for social inclusion

Provision for pupils educated other than at school

- Ensure that all pupils educated other than at school receive their statutory entitlement to full-time education.
- Develop formal systems to monitor alternative provision for pupils educated other than at school.

Support for attendance: Ensure support to improve attendance is targeted accurately according to need.

Support for behaviour: Ensure provision for pupils with EBD at Key Stage 3 is sufficient and that its quality and costs are monitored and evaluated.

Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection: Ensure all co-ordinators receive regular training.

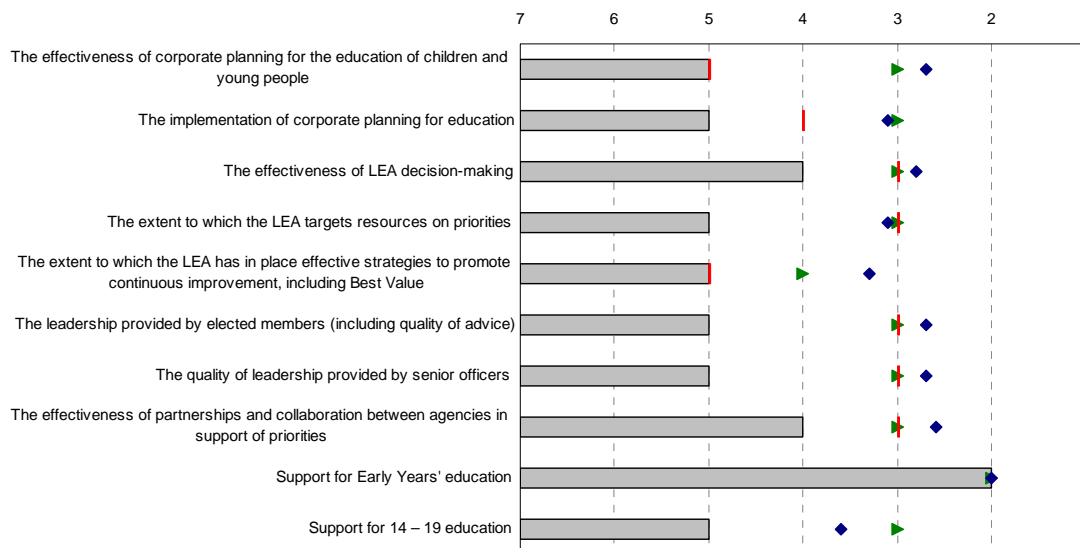
Provision for looked after children

- Ensure that every looked after child has an educational placement.
- Establish a manageable, complete and interrelated data system on all aspects of provision for each child.

Promoting racial equality: Improve monitoring procedures to ensure schools' race equality policies and action plans are implemented consistently.

Section 1: Corporate leadership of education

Summary table of judgements



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

Corporate planning for education and its implementation

1. Despite some improvements to procedures, corporate planning for education remains unsatisfactory. The implementation of plans is now also unsatisfactory. Plans still lack sufficient clarity and coherence and they are inadequately informed by the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation.

2. Since the previous inspection, the LEA has been subject to considerable change and exceptionally challenging circumstances. The Audit Commission's public interest report, published in March 2004, described the council as 'in crisis' with a financial position which 'remains precarious in the extreme'. This verdict came on top of criticisms in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA). Despite an improvement in the council's CPA score from 'poor' to 'weak' in 2003, the accompanying report noted continuing weaknesses at the corporate centre. The establishment of a monitoring board by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has been one consequence of the corporate crisis. The savings which the council is required to make are so great that in reality there is only one immediate corporate priority, the resolution of the financial crisis. The education service has inevitably been affected by required cuts of £0.75 million in this financial year. Although elected members have protected schools' budgets, other developments, for example proposals to expand pupil referral units (PRUs), have been delayed.

3. Several factors, including the publication of the community strategy in 2003, have increased the potential to achieve coherence in corporate planning. The strategy does not set out a discrete strand for education but attempts to draw together different services to deliver common themes. This provides an ambitious context for corporate plans. Education is a stated priority in corporate plans and, in the aftermath of the disappointing 2003 results, there is now a sharper focus on the performance of secondary schools as a key outcome. The procedures for corporate planning have also been improved through the establishment of a planning cycle. However, strategic and operational plans are not fully aligned, most notably with the financial planning cycle.

4. Plans are not consistently of good quality. Weaknesses in the 2004-05 corporate plan, particularly in relation to Best Value, necessitated its resubmission to the ODPM monitoring board. Links in plans between activities, outcomes and timescales are often imprecise. The quality of operational plans is variable and links to higher plans are superficial in some instances. Progress on the implementation of plans is now reviewed regularly using key performance indicators and is routinely reported to elected members. However, weaknesses in planning and some lack of rigour in performance analysis, including the use of comparative data, limit the effectiveness of monitoring. Evaluation is leading to improvements in the delivery of services, for example in some traded services to schools, but this is variable.

5. The creation of the combined directorate of learning and child care in 2001, together with the director's membership of the corporate management team, has improved both the status and position of education within the corporate structure. The benefits include an increased awareness in other directorates of the work of education and, in return, greater corporate challenge to the directorate of learning and child care. However, the benefits are relatively recent, with limited impact on outcomes for children and young people. Moreover, any gains have been outweighed by the consequences of the local authority's financial crisis and by difficulties in establishing the combined directorate. The complexities of drawing together two different services have been exacerbated by the need to address significant weaknesses in social care services for children and by difficulties in recruiting key staff. In reality, the directorate is combined in name only. The director's focus on education has been diverted and supporting systems and structures, including performance management, have not compensated adequately for this.

Recommendation

- Improve the quality, alignment and use of strategic and operational plans to ensure priorities are clear, progress and accountability are readily monitored, and evaluation is rigorous.

Targeting of resources

6. The LEA's allocation of resources to priorities is unsatisfactory. In the period after the previous inspection, when this function was judged highly satisfactory, the

council's stewardship of its finances fell into deep crisis, exposing fundamental weaknesses in systems and management, relating in particular to budget-making and control. These were analysed in the external auditor's public interest report in February 2004. Since then the focus has rightly been on putting the council's finances on a sound footing. This in itself has produced significant uncertainty across the council: there were delays in setting a balanced budget for 2004-05; at the time of the inspection the accounts for both 2002-03 and 2003-04 had yet to be agreed and signed off; preparation of the 2005-06 budget has been delayed.

7. Although some budgets have been projected over a three-year-period, the council is only now setting about formulating a clear medium term financial strategy. The alignment of service planning with financial planning has been unsystematic. The recommendation in the previous inspection report that the council should show more clearly how its resources are allocated to priorities has been only partially tackled. The use of service statements setting out service objectives, activities and costs had only a limited effect in determining priorities during the 2004-05 budget preparation exercise.

8. Budget making has been based on an incremental approach with insufficient fundamental review. There have often been wide discrepancies between initial budgets and outturns. The external auditor drew particular attention to the unsustainability of funding repeated overspending on special educational needs (SEN) from underspending on other budget headings. Budget monitoring procedures have not highlighted difficulties early enough and allowed timely action to be taken. This problem has been recognised and new procedures are now in place, but it is too early to judge their impact.

9. Set against these shortcomings, there are, nevertheless, some strengths. The council's commitment to spending on education is not in doubt. In 2004-05 spending is 8% above the Formula Spending Share. Additional government resources have been passed on to schools. In approaching cuts to spending, the council has been consistent in prioritising the protection of school budgets ahead of central services. Whether this continues to be sustainable in the longer term has not, however, been subject to sufficient analysis.

10. The funding formula for schools, described in the previous inspection report as 'simple, transparent and targeting resources effectively', is now rightly the subject of further review in order to maintain its effectiveness. The Schools Forum is well established and provides a sound vehicle for consultation. Only a very small number of schools are in deficit: none are secondary schools and none has a deficit of more than 2.5%. School balances on the other hand are above average and too high.

Recommendation

- Undertake a fundamental reappraisal of the education budget, ensuring resources are allocated to priorities.

Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value

11. The LEA's strategies to promote continuous improvement remain unsatisfactory. Some aspects of performance management have improved, particularly in relation to individual appraisal, but a coherent performance management system is not yet fully established in either the council or the directorate of learning and child care. Corporately, there is a new drive to establish consistent and robust approaches but it is too recent to have had an effect. A culture of performance management is not yet rooted in working practices. While performance information is regularly collected and presented, it is often not analysed sufficiently and used to inform subsequent action.

12. The council's planning lacks sufficient coherence to form a basis for performance management. Plans are often characterised by descriptive generalisation and lack of focus on improvement issues. The council's overall improvement plan is weak on key educational matters, where targets and intended outcomes lack sufficient challenge. Similarly, the service planning process does not identify the priorities for improvement clearly enough to provide a sound foundation for individual performance management.

13. Systems for individual appraisal are in place and the directorate has recently achieved 'Investors in People' status. The 'Developing my Performance' guidance to staff provides helpful advice on systems of induction, supervision and appraisal. Implementation is nevertheless inconsistent. Key activities in the performance management of senior officers, for example, have not taken place.

14. These weaknesses have resulted in an education service that has insufficient awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. The self-evaluation carried out for this inspection demonstrates an unrealistic assessment of the current quality and effectiveness of LEA performance across a wide range of activities.

15. The Best Value review approach has not been a major force for change in the education service. An extensive review of care and support in early years was carried out in 2001/02 but, after the council's poor showing in the 2002 CPA, subsequent review activity was suspended with the agreement of the Audit Commission. New approaches to service improvement are now being introduced, based on three different kinds of review. Major educational issues – SEN and the LEA's contribution to school improvement – are sensibly included in the programme for the first year and work on the first stages is already under way.

Recommendation

- Ensure the performance management of the directorate is rigorous, timely and well informed by comparative data.

Decision-making, leadership by elected members and advice given to them

16. Decision-making was highly satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. It is now satisfactory. Procedures for decision-making are transparent.

Since the previous inspection, the leadership by elected members has been unsatisfactory; despite some recent improvements, it remains so. Inconsistencies in the quality of advice to elected members and weaknesses in their capacity to scrutinise adequately the work of the directorate have contributed to the weaknesses in the LEA and its decline in performance since the previous inspection. There has, for example, been inadequate progress in key areas such as developing a strategy for 14-19 education, including the issue of small sixth forms, and in implementing the strategy for social inclusion. Monitoring procedures have not ensured, for example, that all statutory entitlements for vulnerable children are met. However, elected members are committed to improvement and strategies are in place to develop expertise and improve procedures.

17. All elected members, including opposition members, have good access to supporting information, but the quality of information is variable. Members have not shied away from taking difficult decisions, principally to reduce spending. They have also sought, and sometimes secured, alternative ways of making provision. Many recent decisions have inevitably been in response to the financial crisis rather than the pursuit of policy. In protecting schools' budgets and services to schools, some of the cuts have disproportionately affected some vulnerable children and young people and been counter to declared priorities to improve social and educational inclusion. Members are taking steps to examine the impact of recent decisions and have, for example, interviewed looked after children and their carers and teachers to explore the quality of provision, but this is not yet informing subsequent decisions.

18. Many elected members in the joint administration were new to office as well as to power in May 2003. The financial crisis they have faced has made their task more difficult. Much has already been done to develop members' knowledge and expertise. Further good work is planned, including links with Beacon councils and the development of the role of the portfolio holder. The decision to have two portfolio holders and two scrutiny committees to link with the combined directorate was pragmatic and sensible when members took up office. However, members have yet to develop sufficient coherence in supporting and scrutinising the work of the directorate, not least in promoting 'Every Child Matters'. Members and officers rightly acknowledge that, despite some improvements, scrutiny does not yet ensure rigorous challenge to the work of the directorate. Lengthy anecdotal minutes do not contribute to efficient practice.

Leadership by senior officers

19. This is now unsatisfactory. Senior officers in the directorate retain considerable support from schools and partners, but the overall performance of the directorate has declined since the previous inspection. Restructuring has been a contributory factor, but the LEA has failed to respond appropriately to some key recommendations in the previous inspection report and to ensure efficient and effective delivery of a number of key services, not least through sound performance management.

20. In addition to the initial restructuring to create the combined directorate of learning and child care in 2001, three divisions have recently been created in the directorate. As a result, all senior officers in the directorate now have a wider range of responsibilities than at the time of the previous inspection. At the time of this inspection, deputy directors had not adequately mastered their extended roles nor were they being held fully to account. The potential for greater coherence and improved services from the combined directorate has not yet materialised. There are significant weaknesses in the management and outcomes of some services, in both school improvement and social inclusion. Some improvements are evident, such as the increased rate of producing statements of special educational need, but other statutory commitments, including provision for children education other than at school, have not been met.

21. Senior officers are committed to school improvement and have been successful in promoting improved attainment in primary schools. Communication and consultation with schools are good, as exemplified in the dissemination of proposals for secondary review, 'Better Schools – a Better Tomorrow'. However, despite endorsing the principles, schools and other partners express concern about the LEA's ability to devise an effective strategy to implement them. This is borne out by the lack of a convincing action plan.

22. Senior officers do not make rigorous use of performance and management data, particularly in comparing the LEA's performance with that of similar authorities and with national averages. In several areas, the LEA has substantial data which it is not using adequately to review and challenge practice. In other areas, there are weaknesses in tracking and recording systems. As a result, data are incomplete, complex to collate and accountability is lacking.

Strategic partnerships

23. At the time of the previous inspection, the LEA's partnership work was highly satisfactory. Since then the LEA's engagement with partners has increased, but so too have expectations on LEAs to work effectively with a range of partners. This function is now satisfactory.

24. The context for the LEA's partnership work has been strengthened by several factors. These include the development of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the creation of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) and the publication of the community strategy and associated plans. There is a consensus from the LEA and partner organisations that representation on the LSP and CYPSP is at the right level. The CYPSP is being restructured to form the Children and Family Partnership Board, and key players, including the director of learning and child care, have a clear understanding of the priorities for improving partnership arrangements at this strategic level. One result of the LEA's participation in the LSP is that education now has a stronger profile in the community.

25. The LEA's partnership with its schools benefits from good consultation and, in most cases, strong relationships. Its work with external partners has resulted in some tangible benefits for pupils. The Early Years and Child Care Development Partnership (EYCDP) has been particularly successful in improving provision and raising standards for young children in schools and settings. The work of the Multi-Agency Support Team and the Family Action Support Team with vulnerable young children and their families is valued by schools. In contrast, partnership work in relation to 14 to 19 year olds has not succeeded in producing a coherent strategy. There are also some inconsistencies in the LEA's relationships with partners. There are, for example, no formal meetings with the dioceses. Unlike the LSP, not all partnership work has benefited from the right level of engagement, including some work with professional associations.

26. Importantly, partnership working within the combined directorate is still fragile. There is still much compartmentalised work, represented at times by a duplication of requests to schools, but more significantly in some weaknesses in provision for vulnerable children and young people.

Support for Early Years

27. The support provided for early years education continues to be good. The strategy is based on a clear understanding of the needs of young children and their families. It is linked closely to other plans and is a key council priority. The strategy benefits from the substantial expertise and professionalism of its staff and from strong partnership work. As a result, support for early years is well-focused and effective.

28. The LEA has secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of pre-school settings and schools. This enables it to target appropriately the work of the early years team and the training programme offered to all providers. Data provision is much improved although building confidence in the use of the Foundation Stage profile is not yet secure.

29. Support for early years has many strengths, including the quality of support provided to settings, schools and families by area SEN co-ordinators. They offer extensive training and provide both support for both cluster and network meetings. There are good systems for monitoring the progress made by children undergoing formal assessment and others whose progress is a cause of concern.

30. The provision of information to parents is extensive and accessible through a range of media and locations. The Children's Information Service also ensures that health and outreach workers are actively involved with the transient section of the population and other harder to reach groups.

Support for 14-19 education

31. Support for 14-19 education is unsatisfactory. An area-wide plan for 14-19 education has been devised through the local learning partnership. This sets out

some very broad general aims but there is no coherent strategy to implement them. There is a lack of analysis and understanding of the needs of the 14-19 age group, particularly lower attainers, and insufficient emphasis on the provision of a more appropriate curriculum and on raising attainment at Key Stage 4. Gaps in provision have not been identified. The LEA's 'Better Schools – a Better Tomorrow' document, which includes a proposal for a small joint school sixth form in Cleethorpes, does not address adequately the post-16 needs of the majority of young people who do not attain five or more A*-C grades at GCSE. Work with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has, until recently, relied too heavily on the local learning partnership.

32. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is consistently below the national average and the proportion of young people remaining in education after the age of 16 is also lower than the national figure. Although average points scores at GCE Advanced Level are below the national average, value added data show that overall students achieve in line with expectations.

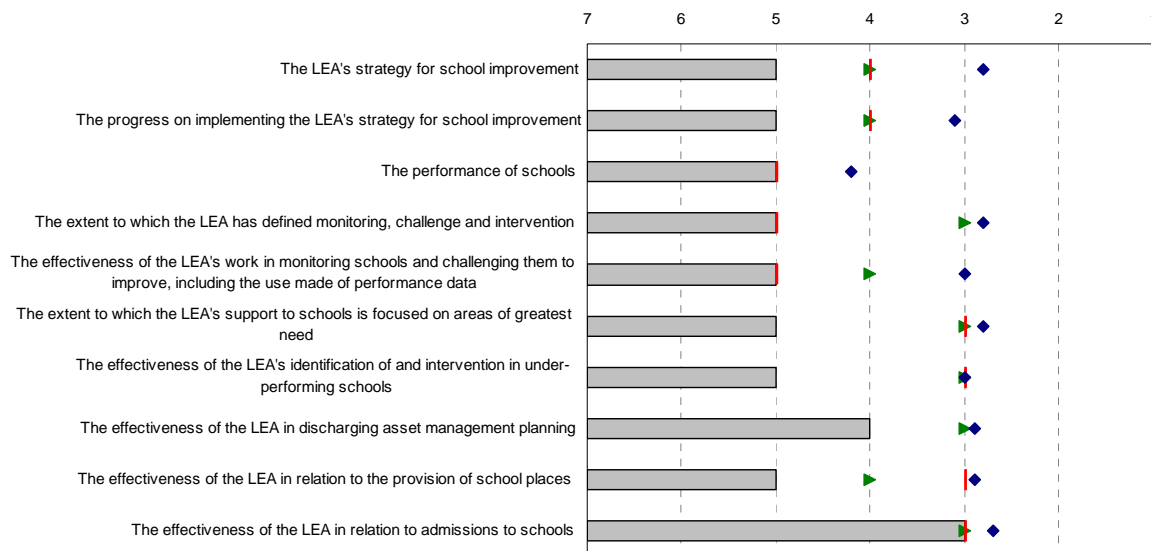
33. Useful partnerships are developing between providers and particularly between the local further education college and schools. These have helped to expand the range of opportunities for 14-16 year olds, which now includes a variety of vocational courses and projects aimed at disaffected young people. As yet, this has had little impact on overall attainment at Key Stage 4 across the LEA as a whole.

Recommendation

- Work with partners to develop a convincing, coherent strategy which properly addresses the needs of all 14-19 year olds.

Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation

Summary table of judgements



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

The strategy for school improvement and its implementation

34. At the time of the previous inspection, both the strategy for school improvement and its implementation were satisfactory. This is no longer the case and both functions are now unsatisfactory. There are some strengths, notably the improved attainment in primary schools and the impact of support for collaborative work between schools. The LEA's support for admissions remains highly satisfactory. However, there are weaknesses in the quality of plans, in the use of resources, in the LEA's strategy for monitoring, challenge, support and intervention, and in the performance of secondary schools. Insufficient surplus primary school places have been removed. There are some good links between the strategy for school improvement and those for SEN and social inclusion, as demonstrated in the primary strategy's support for underachieving groups. However, links between these strategies are not yet coherent.

35. The LEA has secured the support of schools for the broad school improvement programme through consultation on the Education Development Plan (EDP). The overarching priorities reflect national and local priorities and are justified in principle by audit. However, current updated activity plans for 2004-05 to implement these priorities often lack precise success criteria or detailed timescales. The monitoring and reporting of the plans focus too much on recording activity rather than analysing its impact.

36. The implementation of the strategy for school improvement informs and benefits from the collaborative work with the Excellence Cluster. For example, the increase in attainment at Level 4 in English at Key Stage 2 is greater in cluster schools than in the rest of the LEA. Although the cluster's plans are also imprecise, there is evidence that the analysis of performance and improved data is informing future activity. The cluster is contributing to improvements in other schools in the LEA through, for example, support for learning mentors and the performing arts.

37. The LEA and its schools have been successful in securing improvement in the attainment and progress of primary school pupils. Attainment is now in line with national averages and those of similar authorities and pupils' progress is in the top 25% nationally. This represents sound progress from the previous inspection and significant improvement since the formation of the LEA. Successful implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, now the primary strategy, is mainly responsible for this improvement.

38. The situation in secondary schools is poor by comparison. Despite an improvement in GCSE results in 2004, provisional figures show that the gap between the LEA's results and the national average is wider than in 2002, the LEA's previous best performance. The attainment and progress of secondary school pupils remain among the lowest in the country, and consistently well below the national average for five or more GCSE A*-C grades. Attainment at GCSE in 2003 was below that of similar authorities. The improvement in the 2004 GCSE results is attributable in no small part to the poor results in 2003 focusing the minds of the LEA and its schools. Collaborative strategies developed through the secondary forum, with the support of the Department for Education and Skills and the local LSC, have started to bring about the necessary degree of improvement.

39. The LEA has not met any of its attainment targets in 2003 or 2004. Targets for 2005 are closer to schools' aggregated targets, but some are unlikely to be achieved given current performance and rates of improvement. These include mathematics at Key Stage 2 and all subjects at Key Stage 3. Meeting the target for 5 or more A*-C GCSE passes in 2005 will require an increase of 4.7 percentage points, which is greater than any increase achieved to date. Moreover, the LEA has not met a half of the key performance measures it set itself in the EDP.

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

40. The LEA's definitions and the effectiveness of its work in monitoring, challenging and intervening in schools were unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. This remains the case. The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on greatest need is now also unsatisfactory. Despite improvements in the quality and use of data, there is a lack of precision in the LEA's strategy for monitoring, challenge, support and intervention in schools. Flaws in the design, conduct and monitoring of the strategy result in a lack of transparency, inconsistent practice and inadequate information about deployment and real costs. This is mainly because the LEA does not differentiate clearly enough between those

schools which are experiencing serious difficulties and those about which there are lesser concerns. In addition, there is insufficient accounting for the use of resources, notably adviser time.

41. Advisers are better prepared for their visits and have access to a wider range of data than at the time of the previous inspection. However, there is still inconsistency and some lack of rigour in the work of advisers. Some schools are inadequately challenged and a high proportion are failing to meet their targets. There are also inconsistencies in the number of visits which advisers make to schools. The core entitlement is insufficiently discriminating; some schools receive substantially more input, for which there is no clear rationale. Furthermore, while the LEA does distinguish between core entitlement and purchased services, there is discrepancy in delivery. This creates confusion for some schools whose expectations of core support are unrealistic and demonstrates over-dependence on officer time.

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

42. This has deteriorated and is now unsatisfactory. Although still low and with no schools subject to special measures, the number of schools identified by Ofsted as having serious weaknesses or underachieving has increased in the last 18 months and action to identify and support some schools has been slow. The lack of clear distinction between those schools which require intensive support and those which have lesser concerns restricts incisive LEA action, particularly in those schools which are performing significantly below target levels. In addition, there is confusion among schools about procedures and practice relating to schools causing concern. The LEA convenes frequent meetings to review schools but these lack sufficient focus to evaluate fully the impact of specific actions and the progress being made by schools. As such, they do not contribute sufficiently to improvement or make best use of expensive resources, notably advisers' and officers' time.

43. Once identified, the LEA has a good record in supporting schools categorised by Ofsted to secure timely improvement. However, reports to elected members are not sufficiently rigorous to support proper scrutiny of performance.

Recommendation

- Apply stringent criteria to the principles and procedures for monitoring, challenge, intervention and support to ensure transparency and effective differentiation.

Asset management planning

44. Asset management planning is satisfactory. The LEA has a sound knowledge of its building stock. Problems with data on the condition of buildings, arising from the operation of the asset management software, have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Department for Education and Skills and a programme of resurveys every five years is on course for completion next year. Suitability surveys

were carried out well, with the full participation of schools and using a sound methodology.

45. As recommended at the previous inspection, a satisfactory prioritisation process has been established involving schools through the asset management group. Reasonable efforts have been made to align school and LEA asset management planning through the monitoring of schools' use of devolved capital and self help schemes. However, the monitoring is insufficiently focused on the outcomes to be achieved by the projects.

46. The LEA inherited a very substantial backlog of condition work. Increases in recent years in the availability of capital have allowed the top priority work to be largely completed but the task remains daunting, with the cost of outstanding work estimated to total £47 million. While tackling this backlog is a priority within the corporate asset management plan, the council's current level of identified resources is not sufficient to meet all the identified needs and the position is exacerbated by restrictions on capital spending, arising from actions needed to resolve the council's overall financial crisis. Much depends on the success of the council's bid to rebuild and remodel secondary school buildings under the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Providing school places

47. The planning of school places was previously highly satisfactory but is now unsatisfactory, mainly because the LEA has not developed a clear strategy to tackle the growing number of surplus places in the primary sector.

48. The LEA's performance at the previous inspection was characterised by decisive action to tackle primary surplus capacity and plans for further necessary action. In the event, comparatively few places have been removed since the previous inspection and no clear strategy has been agreed for addressing the continuing decline in primary pupil numbers. Discussions are taking place with schools about principles to underpin a major authority-wide review, but these are in their early stages and there is little sense of urgency. In the meantime, surplus places in the sector are projected to increase from 13%, already above average, to 19% by 2007.

49. The authority has agreed a broad vision for secondary provision under the banner "Better Schools – A Better Tomorrow". Following an unsuccessful Private Finance Initiative bid, this forms the basis of the LEA's submission under the Building Schools for the Future programme. All schools have been fully consulted and are supportive, including the school which faces closure under the proposals. The plans, however, remain generalised at this stage and links with the 14-19 strategy are tenuous. The issue of small sixth forms remains unresolved, as at the time of the previous inspection.

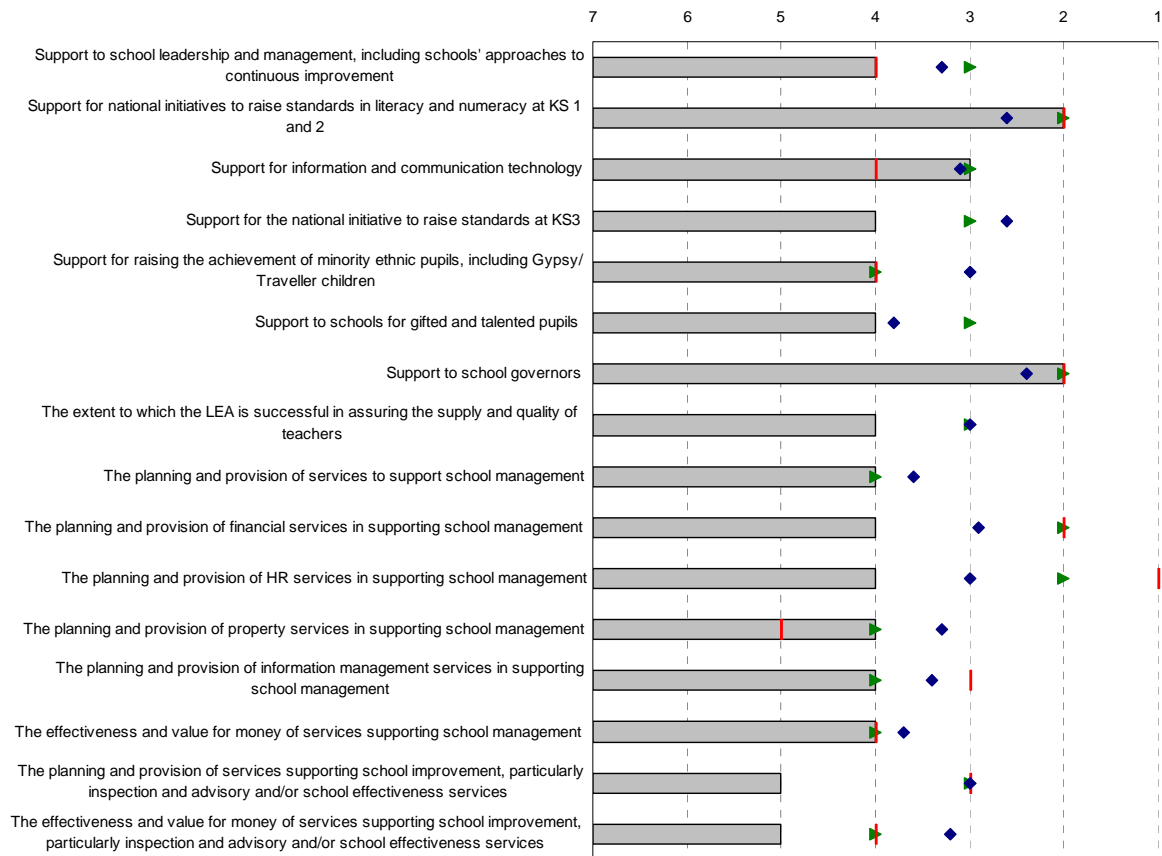
50. The school organisation committee has been properly constituted, but has not yet been called upon to determine many proposals.

Recommendation

- As a matter of urgency, draw up a strategy and action plan to tackle the growing number of surplus places in primary schools.

Section 3: Support to improve education in schools

Summary table of judgements



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

Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement

51. The LEA's support for school leadership and management remains satisfactory. There are strengths in aspects of the LEA's work, especially the dissemination of good practice and support for collaboration between schools. In addition, there are strengths in individual services, notably support for the National Primary Strategy and for governors. Support for ICT in schools is highly satisfactory, including the provision of a well-used LEA website. However, the LEA has not done enough to promote self-management by schools. The LEA's relationship with most schools is good, but it is not mature enough to sustain real autonomy.

52. The quality of support which the LEA provides to school leadership and management to support school improvement lacks coherence and there is some inconsistency. It is good in relation to the National Primary Strategy, in ICT and the work with governors. However, weaknesses in the support for school improvement,

particularly the lack of clarity in monitoring, challenge, support and intervention restricts schools' capacity for self-management. It also contributes to inefficient deployment of advisers.

53. The advice and training offered by the LEA to senior staff and particularly to governors have improved, although this is more highly valued in primary schools. Support for schools to conduct self-review has improved and is now more robust. This work is enhanced by improved data on the performance of schools and the support which advisers and schools receive in its use. The reports which schools receive from advisers are increasingly analytical. Consequently, schools and governors are better placed to use the written feedback from advisers to inform school development planning. The LEA's procedures to identify and share good practice are successful, including the well-used 'Lighthouse' website. A range of supportive networks has been established between schools. Successful induction programmes are offered to newly appointed staff and senior managers.

54. However, support for procurement still lacks an over-arching strategy. In relation to school improvement, it is overly dependent on individual adviser knowledge and, for management services, is unsystematic. However, schools are regular purchasers of support and services from providers beyond the LEA. Some services to support school management, although still satisfactory, have deteriorated since the previous inspection. As with services to support school improvement, the distinction between core entitlement and traded service is unhelpfully blurred.

55. The involvement of elected members in scrutinising the quality of leadership and management is increasing. The lack of sufficient rigour in reports provided by officers constrains the extent to which members can securely evaluate performance.

Recommendation

- Ensure that the distinction between core entitlement and purchased services is transparent and applied consistently.

Support for the national initiatives at Key Stages 1 and 2

56. Support for the implementation of the National Primary Strategy continues to be good. This is because the strategy is effectively managed by the primary strategy manager and the strand managers for literacy and numeracy. They are well supported by experienced and respected consultants.

57. Targeted work is focused appropriately on improving teaching and learning together with leadership and management. It is successful in continuing to raise attainment within the primary phase and is making a significant contribution to middle management in primary schools by building the internal capacity required to sustain improvement. The provision and analysis of data support both the identification of weaknesses and the tracking of subsequent input over time. Despite this success, however, the number of schools not achieving their targets is still substantial.

58. The LEA has a good range of mechanisms to disseminate good practice. These are well used by the primary strategy team to target schools with particular needs. Good use is also made of leading teachers to enhance the work of consultants. This is now being successfully extended through the use of experienced headteachers as the consultant leader programme becomes embedded.

Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3

59. Support for the Key Stage 3 strategy is satisfactory. The strategy manager takes a clear lead and the strategy is well aligned with the National Primary Strategy to establish continuity and aid transition from primary schools. Core and optional training is offered and rated highly by schools. Consultants have credibility with schools and work closely with heads of department and strategy co-ordinators. They offer differentiated support to schools according to identified need and the priorities for their deployment are clear. Visits to schools focus on appropriate issues including the analysis of data, identification of pupils in need of additional support, and teaching and learning. However, some reports of these visits fail to document identified weaknesses accurately or specify actions to address them with sufficient precision.

60. The LEA now provides pupil level data which are used to track progress through the key stages. There is improving use of individual pupil targets based on prior attainment, with discussions at target setting meetings increasingly focused on individual pupils rather than cohorts. However, neither consultants nor schools have yet been successful in tackling the culture of low expectations, which was noted in the previous inspection report. Pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 remains below national averages, as does the progress pupils make between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy and Traveller children

61. Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy and Traveller children remains satisfactory. The LEA now retains the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) as a central resource. This is more efficient given the small number of minority ethnic pupils in the authority and enables the LEA to target and monitor its use more effectively. The service has established good links with the literacy team and the educational psychology service. One benefit of this is the correct distinction between pupils' needs which result from special educational needs and those resulting from English as an additional language. The focus now is on training for schools rather than reacting to requests to support individual pupils. However, the LEA has not yet convinced all schools, particularly secondary schools, of the benefits of this approach. The authority has not produced a separate policy for Gypsy and Traveller or asylum seeker children although good guidance, support and training have been provided to schools by the EMAG consultant.

62. The recommendation in the previous inspection report to monitor fully the attainment of minority ethnic pupils as an aid to raising standards has been met. Attainment is in line with, and in some instances above, the average for the authority. The LEA is aware of which groups of pupils are under attaining, although numbers are very small. However, the LEA does not compare its achievement data sufficiently with other LEAs which have equally small numbers of minority ethnic pupils.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

63. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. The LEA's support is better structured and more comprehensive than at the time of the previous inspection but it is not consistently well targeted. Moreover, in some schools, the links between gifted and talented strategies and raising standards are not well understood.

64. Following the previous inspection, the LEA improved its provision through the appointment of a senior adviser to lead the strategy. In addition, a strand coordinator has been provided from Excellence Cluster resources. Schools now have guidelines to assist them in the identification of gifted pupils. Good training has been provided to support the LEA's guidance, including training for newly qualified teachers and governors. Guidance on the identification of talented pupils is less explicit. This has resulted in some ambiguity in targeting pupils for a range of activities in sport, music and the arts, including some sponsored by the Excellence Cluster. The LEA has run several successful summer schools and, in 2004, involved year 9 pupils to mentor and support year 6 pupils. The progress of pupils attending the summer school is now being tracked.

65. Almost all schools now have a coordinator and an appropriate policy in place. There are good opportunities for sharing good practice through network meetings and dissemination of materials through the education website. School co-ordinators are enthusiastic about their role and the positive impact of strategies on pupils' confidence and self esteem, particularly younger pupils. However, monitoring is at an early stage of development and much evidence about the impact of support for gifted and talented pupils, both by the LEA and schools, is anecdotal and insufficiently focused on pupils' attainment and progress.

Support for school governors

66. Governors continue to receive good support from the LEA and this has strengthened their leadership role in schools. Governing body support staff are highly regarded by schools. They are well briefed and provide highly proficient advice to governing bodies and individuals.

67. The LEA has established a successful, high profile governor recruitment strategy. Vacancy rates are low at 5.5%, half that of similar LEAs. This strategy is matched by a comprehensive training programme which achieves good attendance rates and is well received. Governors are also kept well-informed of current

developments through regular newsletters. This support is enhanced through conferences, the most recent of which focused on inclusive schools. In addition, the LEA maintains a very effective governor forum to ensure there is full engagement in council issues and appropriate opportunities for debate.

68. Members of governing bodies are increasingly involved in target-setting and school self-review activities involving link advisers. Improvements in the use of data within the LEA are contributing to governors' increased confidence and participation in these activities. Governing bodies also receive clear and high quality written guidance which supports them in carrying out their responsibilities. This combination of activity and advice enables them to be increasingly challenging of their schools.

The supply and quality of teachers

69. Support for the recruitment and retention of teachers is satisfactory. The LEA has sound strategies in place to recruit teachers, although it does not yet collect or analyse data sufficiently to ensure activity is well targeted. Most primary posts, with the exception of headteacher posts, are filled without difficulty. In secondary schools, some posts are difficult to fill and in some schools there have been periods of high staff turnover.

70. A range of appropriate recruitment strategies is used to help schools access information and attract candidates. The LEA is involved in a Teacher Training Agency funded project researching and supporting initial teacher training (ITT) placements in geographically isolated schools. A link with an ITT provider has recently been established to increase the number of placements in schools, although these are not always targeted at areas of greatest need. The graduate training programme is also used to assist with filling posts. However, there are no specific additional strategies to tackle shortage subject areas or to provide housing assistance, for example.

71. Continuous professional development (CPD) is well planned to match identified needs. A representative steering group is responsible for analysing training needs based on a wide range of data, including Ofsted reports, school improvement plans, and LEA data. This analysis determines the courses offered, but is not sufficiently linked with recruitment and retention. Support for CPD co-ordinators is being prioritised to promote a culture of CPD leadership. There is good support for NQTs and newly-appointed headteachers.

Services to support school management

72. The planning, provision, effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management are satisfactory. This was an area of very considerable strength at the previous inspection and, although property services have improved, the picture in two other key services – those relating to finance and human resources – is one of deterioration, albeit from a high baseline. The loss of experienced and expert staff who had the confidence of schools, along with the

turbulence caused by internal restructuring and unfilled posts, have affected the quality of services. Schools comment positively on the continuing hard work and commitment of individuals, but this has not always been underpinned by sufficiently robust planning and a systematic focus on improvement.

73. Nevertheless, a reasonable package of services is on offer. Services are flexible in what they can provide, contract timescales are appropriate and schools can withdraw at any time with notice. Satisfactory mechanisms are in place for consultation through the Schools Forum and headteacher meetings. Service level agreements (SLAs) generally provide a clear specification of what schools can expect if they buy back, although there is insufficient rigour in distinguishing between core provision at no cost to schools and the traded service.

74. Although the LEA's role as a broker of services is comparatively underdeveloped, there has been some recent progress. Support is available to schools on the procurement of services such as school meals and grounds maintenance. Some work has been done to facilitate access by schools to alternative suppliers in other areas but it has not been systematic and no written advice has been provided on how schools should apply Best Value principles in the context of securing management services.

75. Financial services were good at the previous inspection but are now only satisfactory. The LEA has been unable to convince schools that restructuring has led to anything other than a decline in service. The loss of key staff has affected performance. Nevertheless responses to the school survey show that over 80% of both primary and secondary schools rate the service as satisfactory or better. Schools are notified of budgets in good time and advice and support on budget-setting is readily available through a comprehensive service level agreement. A helpful software package is provided for schools. This is updated annually and enables schools to project budgets over three years. Payroll administration is very highly rated in the school survey.

76. The human resources service has suffered similar problems to financial services, including a loss of confidence on the part of schools. Excellent at the previous inspection, it is now satisfactory. However, many strengths identified at that time remain. A proactive policy on sickness absence, working in close liaison with the health service and with schools, has resulted in low numbers of teachers on long-term sickness absence. There have been no education cases at industrial tribunal. There is a continuing good record on the training of governors, including for individual governing bodies, and support staff. Model policies continue to be provided for governing bodies, for example, most recently on recruitment and leave. However, the issue of moving to single status for all staff remains unresolved, after an unsatisfactory attempt to introduce new arrangements two years ago.

77. Property services have improved and are now satisfactory. Recommendations from the previous inspection have been implemented and positive action has been taken to improve customer care. The introduction of a central call point has improved responsiveness and better procedures are in place to ensure systematic monitoring of team performance. Fees are now negotiable, following

concerns from schools about management costs. The result is a more highly regarded service: 75% of schools regard the service as satisfactory or better. The management of individual projects remains variable, although the great majority are completed to time and budget.

Services to support school improvement

78. At the time of the previous inspection, there were weaknesses in aspects of the planning and provision for school improvement services. The effectiveness of services to support school improvement remains unsatisfactory, primarily because of weaknesses in the deployment of advisers. Management weaknesses and limited progress on key outcomes such as attainment, attendance and exclusions in secondary schools contribute to unsatisfactory value for money.

79. Performance management of the school improvement service has benefited from recent revisions. It is now more evaluative and achieves greater clarity in relation to service priorities. However, practice is still inconsistent. Service priorities are mainly focused on raising standards, but objectives are sometimes ill defined and success criteria too imprecise to measure progress adequately. Consequently, evaluations lack rigour and service managers make insufficient critical use of comparative data to review performance.

80. The deployment of staff and resources matches service priorities and schools' needs in the delivery of the national strategies. There is also clarity in the deployment of the educational psychology service. However, the allocation of advisory resources to support core responsibilities is unsatisfactory. The advisory service is generously staffed in relation to similar LEAs. This, in combination with weaknesses in the systems to account for advisers' time, leads to additional visits to schools beyond their core entitlement. This inhibits the targeting of resources on greatest need and creates over-reliance on officer support by some schools. Furthermore, because the LEA's categorisation procedures are inadequate, the subsequent allocation of resources to schools lacks transparency because there is no underpinning rationale for their deployment. The value for money provided by the school improvement service is therefore unsatisfactory.

81. Schools buy into SLAs with the school improvement service. The distinction between entitlement and what should be purchased is however confused. SLA specifications are clear, but boundaries are not sufficiently well observed. The traded service for attendance compromises the LEA's ability to target priorities.

82. The monitoring of staff deployment is improving. Workloads are increasingly monitored. However, this does not yet provide an accurate analysis of work patterns or of the contribution made to schools' progress by the advisory service. Training programmes are geared towards improving individual and service capacity. An effective induction programme is matched to service needs and the link between service standards and individual targets is clear. The LEA has enhanced its capacity by seconding an experienced primary school headteacher to support schools and LEA officers in the use of data. Credibility with the majority of secondary schools

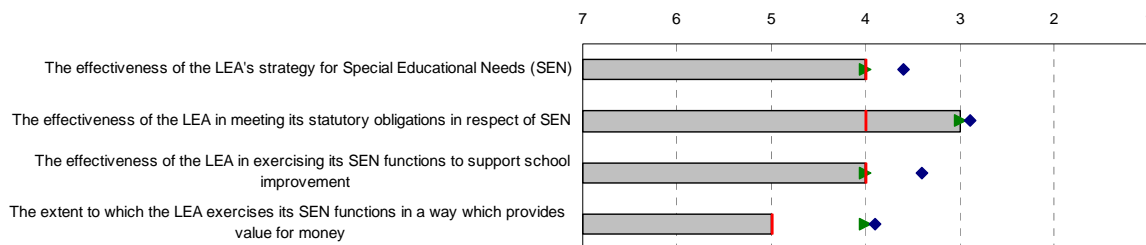
has improved but only because senior managers who are well-respected by schools undertake a disproportionate responsibility as link advisers. After a period of understaffing, the educational psychology service is now adequately staffed.

Recommendation

- Devise and use rigorous systems to account for the deployment of adviser time and for evaluating the effectiveness of school improvement activities.

Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)

Summary table of judgements



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

The strategy for SEN

83. This area remains satisfactory and the developments which have taken place in the last eighteen months show the capacity for further improvement is good. The principal educational psychologist, who also oversees the provision for pupils with SEN, has brought a renewed impetus to this aspect of the LEA's work. Through a combination of vision and pragmatism, he and his colleagues have succeeded in tackling an entrenched view of special needs education which focused on diagnosing and labelling pupils, and on resource provision rather than on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This has taken time and, together with the slow speed of response immediately after the previous inspection, has meant that recent improvements are not yet fully embedded.

84. The LEA's strategy is well articulated and reflects the government's agenda for increased inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. It is closely aligned to other educational plans and to corporate policies on inclusion. It has been the subject of extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders, including schools, professional associations, parents, elected members, governors and related agencies such as the health services. The LEA did not consult with pupils, but is working with the CYPSP on developing better ways of involving them in future. The action plan identifies clear priorities for implementation, but lacks details of resource requirements and milestones for monitoring progress.

85. The LEA has worked closely with partner agencies to define clear protocols for joint working. These have been particularly successful in relation to the production and review of statements. Officers from the LEA play an active role on the Humber Regional Partnership. There is a clear commitment to targeting resources on early intervention and on reducing expenditure on out of area placements. However, the long-standing weaknesses in the management of the SEN budget and the delays in providing suitable alternative provision within the LEA have limited the impact of these policies. There are sound procedures in place to

enable elected members, senior officers and heads of service to review progress. Increasing use is made of local and national benchmark information to support this process.

86. The LEA's Accessibility Action Plan is clear, fulfils statutory requirements and identifies appropriate priorities for implementation. The individual and combined responsibilities of the LEA, schools and other agencies for its implementation are well defined.

Statutory obligations

87. Recent rapid improvements in this area mean that the LEA's performance in meeting its statutory obligations is now highly satisfactory. Since January 2004, all statements, whether with or without exceptions, have been completed within the statutory eighteen week period. The procedures and structures put in place to support this are robust and have the potential to ensure that the current impressive level of performance is maintained. The quality of the statements, however, is variable. In many instances, the objectives are very general and not sufficiently adapted to the specific needs of a particular pupil. Officers are aware of this and are developing strategies to improve the quality of statement writing.

88. Parents are provided with a good range of relevant information and guidance on procedures relating to SEN and on their own and their children's rights. This information is published on the council's website as well as in hard copy. The style of presentation, however, is not always sufficiently 'user friendly'. The parent partner arrangements are effective in providing independent advice and helping to resolve disputes. Very few complaints have to be taken to tribunal.

89. The LEA works in close co-operation with partner agencies. Officers have worked hard on improving liaison with other professionals, particularly in the health services, and on increasing consistency in the application of agreed protocols. There is appropriate representation from the authority at reviews, particularly for pupils placed out of authority or transferring from one key stage to another. Until recently there was a large backlog of unamended statements within the authority. This is now being cleared rapidly and all statements are scheduled to be amended by the end of 2004. The increasing emphasis by officers and schools on improving teaching and learning for SEN pupils is leading to increasing cessation of statements.

SEN functions to support school improvement

90. This continues to be satisfactory with good capacity for further improvement. The LEA has recently introduced a rigorous system for using P-scales and Fischer Family Trust information to monitor the progress made by the lowest 20% of attainers and to assess their performance. There is increasing support for, and understanding of, these procedures within schools. The progress of pupils with SEN is also part of the performance reviews which schools conduct with their assigned advisers.

91. The LEA is making increasingly good use of headteachers of special schools to provide outreach support and advice to mainstream schools, a role endorsed by the headteachers themselves. The LEA provides a good range of training and the regular meetings for SEN co-ordinators have been particularly important in extending teachers' understanding and expertise. Further training, however, is needed on the preparation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs). At present, the targets set in IEPs are too general, are rarely quantified and do not focus sufficiently on raising attainment. Timescales for completion of identified actions are also unclear. The LEA does not yet have effective procedures for monitoring and improving their quality.

92. As a result of better systems of recruitment and retention, the educational psychology service is now fully staffed. Better dialogue with schools and shared planning and review mean that the service is beginning to be rated more highly by headteachers and other staff. A recent monitoring report on the SEN support service gives clear evidence of the positive impact in schools, particularly in relation to pupils with statements. At present, however, this has mainly been in primary schools and the allocation of time to secondary schools is not sufficiently related to need.

93. There is increasing sharing of information between SEN support services and school improvement officers, which is being used to support monitoring processes within schools. At the time of the inspection, however, there was a lack of clarity about what arrangements were going to be made to provide link advisers for special schools.

Value for money

94. There has been insufficient progress in this area and it remains unsatisfactory. The LEA has had a long-standing problem in keeping its expenditure on SEN within budget. Despite budget increases, spending, for example on out of area placements, has continually exceeded the agreed budget. There has been no effective system for ensuring that the out of area placements used provided value for money.

95. Since the arrival of the new head of service and the setting up of the SEN panel, the LEA has developed an improved system for the identification of pupils with SEN. The criteria are transparent, rigorously applied and are understood and supported by schools. Funding to schools is allocated in relation to need and in accordance with the Code of Practice.

96. The LEA's systems for monitoring the use of SEN funding and evaluating its impact are unsatisfactory. The authority recognises this and has made it a high priority for improvement. This is reflected in recent developments. These include a detailed study of value for money of out of area provision and the introduction of clear procedures for assessing the value added to the performance of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils. The information gathered in this way is beginning to be used to inform long-term policies, such as the establishment of a new secondary

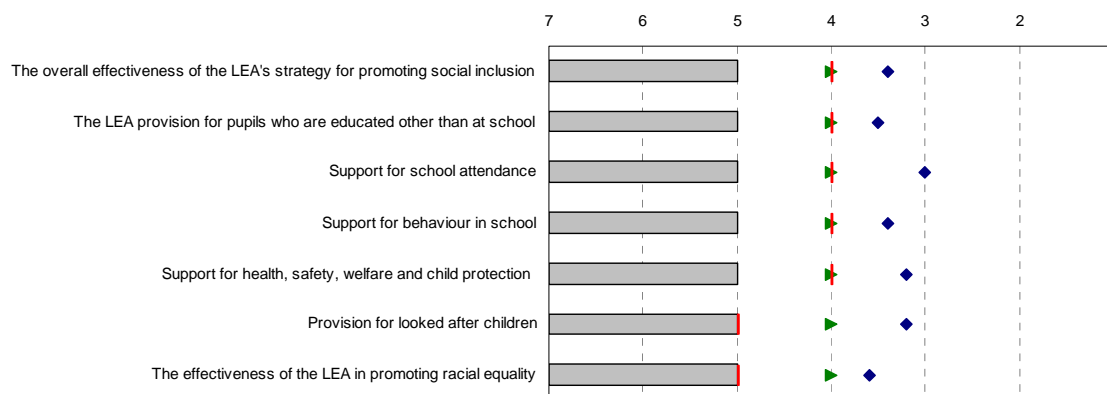
PRU. These developments, however, are too recent to have had sufficient impact to compensate for the long-standing weaknesses in this area.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of Individual Education Plans by ensuring that they include quantifiable targets for raising pupils' attainment.

Section 5: Support for social inclusion

Summary table of judgements



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

The strategy for social inclusion

97. The LEA's strategy for social inclusion is unsatisfactory. A major reason for this is the LEA's failure to meet statutory obligations in the key areas of education otherwise than at school (EOTAS), health and safety, child protection and looked after children. The LEA was slow to respond to the recommendations of the previous inspection. There are weaknesses in monitoring procedures, in prioritising social inclusion in councillors' decision-making and a lack of coherence across the two 'arms' of the learning and child care directorate. As a result, the efforts made over the last two years by officers – several of them newly appointed - have not succeeded in arresting the decline in overall performance.

98. The council's commitment to social inclusion is clearly stated in the community strategy and corporate plan. It is in line with national strategies and closely related to plans for improving SEN provision. However, the decisions which have been made to try to solve the council's financial problems have sometimes worked against, or slowed down, the implementation of the strategy. This is reflected, for example, in the decision to disband the unit for pregnant schoolgirls and to delay the support for behaviour.

99. The LEA has established clear referral and support procedures for children at risk. Relevant partnerships have been established to support this work, including the CYPSP, the multi-agency support teams and the alternative providers of education for children educated otherwise than at school. However, practice does not consistently reflect these procedures.

100. Social inclusion forms part of the LEA's routine monitoring and challenge of schools, but measures of performance indicate that the extent to which schools have embraced inclusion is variable. Authority-wide monitoring has been hampered by the inadequacy of information. The data on children at risk are incomplete and tracking systems are not sufficiently robust to enable the LEA to be confident that all children are receiving the support they should. Data on educational and social care issues are not easily interrelated.

101. Support for improving provision is variable. In some areas, such as the promotion of racial equality, there has been insufficient training. In other areas, notably health, safety and child protection, the training has not been prioritised to focus on key staff. Performance indicators either show a decline, as for example in behaviour, or insufficient improvement, as in attendance, education otherwise than at school and looked after children.

Recommendation

- Ensure that statutory obligations and pupils' statutory entitlement to provision are met as a matter of urgency.

Provision for pupils educated other than at school

102. Provision in this area has declined and is now unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in aspects of provision and in the tracking of pupils but, most significantly, the statutory requirement to provide suitable full-time education for all excluded pupils is not being met. Despite considerable recent improvements, only 73% receive 20 or more hours of tuition; 10% receive fewer than 13 hours.

103. The authority's strategy for meeting the curricular and extra-curricular needs of pupils is sound and understood by schools. There is clear guidance for parents who wish to educate their children at home and there is a sound policy for monitoring both the provision made and the welfare of the young people concerned. The LEA's hospital home tuition policy, however, is still in draft form. The required data on pupil attendance, placement and provision are collected by the LEA, but it is not systematically analysed to identify patterns, trends and implications for further development. Furthermore, the way that the database is organised does not allow for easy and efficient monitoring of all relevant information on EOTAS pupils.

104. The LEA's policies are having an inconsistent impact. The proportion of Year 11 pupils who received alternative tuition and who attained 5 or more GCSE passes at A* to G or equivalent last year was below the national average. Of the Year 11 pupils attending PRUs, only one pupil had an attendance rate of over 92%. However, the proportion of those receiving alternative tuition reintegrated into schools during that time was in line with the national average.

105. The authority makes use of a range of alternative providers to supplement and enhance provision. These providers include colleges, PRUs, New Start, the youth service and projects arranged by neighbouring authorities and private

companies. Although the authority does check on the quality of provision, the quality control mechanisms are not formalised. As with information on pupils, there is too heavy a reliance on the personal knowledge held by individual officers. To reduce costs, the council recently disbanded its pregnant schoolgirls' unit. There was little consultation about this with schools and parents and there is no clear indication that the alternative provision made is being monitored rigorously.

Recommendations

- Ensure that all pupils educated other than at school receive their statutory entitlement to full-time education.
- Develop formal systems to monitor alternative provision for pupils educated other than at school.

Support for attendance

106. Previously satisfactory, support for attendance is now unsatisfactory. The LEA's strategy to reduce authorised absence and the associated changes in the focus of work of education welfare officers have yet to make a difference, particularly in secondary schools. Attendance in primary schools is now in line with the national average. Attendance in secondary schools, although rising, remains below the average.

107. The LEA has restructured its support for attendance. The education welfare service has been realigned to work in partnership with the family support service. Its capacity to work directly with schools has been reduced as a result of funding cuts. Although partly driven by the need to make savings, the realignment is also a clear attempt to explore alternative and potentially more efficient ways of working within the combined directorate. It is also a move from response to prevention, particularly in Key Stage 3. Despite the cuts in the service, there have been some successes in targeting support at schools with the highest absence rates and in reducing authorised absence rates. However, the LEA has not yet secured a shared understanding with schools over the allocation of resources. Moreover, there is a conflict between the LEA's need to target schools with the greatest levels of absence and its continuing operation of an additional traded service whereby schools, not necessarily with the greatest need, can buy in from the depleted resources. This is diluting its capacity to fulfil its statutory commitments.

108. The LEA is not yet using the available information and strategies available to best advantage. Fast Track processes are deployed appropriately to ensure the full range of legal powers is used and there is also purposeful partnership work with the police in truancy sweeps. However, the LEA undertakes insufficient analysis of data to determine which strategies are the most effective or to make comparisons with other LEAs. Although data have been used well to identify schools with high rates of absence, the link between attainment and attendance is insufficiently developed.

Recommendation

- Ensure support to improve attendance is targeted accurately according to need.

Support for behaviour

109. Support for behaviour remains unsatisfactory. Rates of exclusion are above the national average in primary and secondary schools. In the latter they have increased by over 50% between 2000 and 2004. The LEA has not managed to secure adequate provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) in Key Stage 3.

110. The recommendation from the previous report to improve both planning and support for behaviour through the use of clear performance indicators has only been met in part. The success criteria in the behaviour support plan are not sufficiently linked to outcomes for pupils. The LEA has not achieved a shared understanding with all schools of its strategy to take a more proactive and preventive approach with Key Stage 3 pupils. There has been insufficient analysis of the links between behaviour and attainment or the effectiveness of its strategies.

111. The LEA does not yet have sufficient PRU places for pupils with EBD in Key Stage 3. As a result, too many pupils are excluded and are placed in expensive out of area places. This has been a major contributory factor of the spiralling SEN budget. The LEA has recognised the need to increase provision within the LEA, but budget constraints have delayed the opening of the planned PRU. In contrast, good progress has been made at Key Stage 4 where learning support units, funded by the LEA and the former Education Action Zone, have helped to stabilise exclusions.

112. The multi-agency support team is rightly highly regarded by schools for the quality of its support. It has reduced exclusion rates among the high percentage of pupils who have statements for behaviour. In contrast, pupils without statements who receive school-based support perform less well as alternative strategies are insufficiently embedded in schools.

Recommendation

- Ensure provision for pupils with EBD at Key Stage 3 is sufficient and that its quality and costs are monitored and evaluated.

Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection

113. Provision in this area has declined since the previous inspection and is now unsatisfactory. The LEA does not fully meet its obligations and a significant proportion of schools lack confidence in the LEA's management of a range of health, safety and child protection issues. However, the work done very recently by newly-appointed staff indicates that there is sound capacity for improvement.

114. The LEA and the Area Child Protection Committee collaborate well. The guidelines and procedures which they have produced include well-presented advice and supporting materials. The LEA has also produced a sound policy and framework for education visits. A good range of relevant training has been conducted in relation to all these guidelines for schools and for other stakeholders. However, there has been insufficient monitoring of attendance by key personnel at those courses. Although all schools have a named child protection co-ordinator, at the time of the inspection only 36% had received recent training and 42% had never received any training. No information was available on the percentage of schools' education visits co-ordinators who had attended training.

115. Two Part 8 enquiries into child deaths have been conducted since the previous inspection. Progress on the action plans has been monitored appropriately. The LEA has reacted effectively to the recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive in relation to the handling of asbestos.

Recommendation

- Ensure all co-ordinators receive regular training.

Provision for looked after children

116. Despite considerable recent improvements, progress in this area has been insufficient to overcome long-standing weaknesses. Provision remains unsatisfactory. However, the skills and achievements of recently appointed staff show that there is good capacity for further improvement.

117. Improving provision for looked after children is a recurring theme in corporate plans. Recently, the LEA has introduced a range of strategies to help raise their attainment, including providing them with study guides, laptops and access to homework clubs and study centres. Carers have also been given advice on how to help children improve their numeracy and literacy skills. The impact of these approaches has been variable. Performance fluctuates considerably and is generally low. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE rose from 0% in 2003 to 19% in 2004.

118. Councillors have received training to become more effective in their role as corporate parent. A good attempt has been made to involve young people and their carers in a wide range of social, as well as educational, events. Councillors have also conducted a series of interviews with children in public care to gain feedback on provision. This resulted in questions to officers, and further follow-up monitoring is planned.

119. In order to ensure greater continuity in monitoring, annual reviews and reviews of personal education plans are now timed to take place simultaneously. However, despite recent improvements, not all pupils have a personal education plan and the quality of plans is very variable, with some being very poor. Not all pupils have been actively involved in drawing up their plans. At the time of the inspection,

five pupils had not been in educational placements for almost half a term. In two other cases, it was not possible to ascertain whether pupils had a placement. The database is not complete and does not bring relevant information on child care and education together in such a way as to allow for rapid and effective monitoring and early intervention where necessary.

Recommendations

- Ensure that every looked after child has an educational placement.
- Establish a manageable, complete and interrelated data system on all aspects of provision for each child.

Promoting racial equality

120. The LEA's support for promoting race equality remains unsatisfactory. Despite some progress in the establishment of a corporate equalities group and in support for schools to develop their own policy, there are gaps in the LEA's knowledge and little contact and consultation with local community groups.

121. Schools have been consulted on a model policy which has drawn on good local practice. The LEA has established that schools have race equality policies in place, but it has insufficient knowledge about the extent to which schools are implementing their policies and action plans. Appropriate systems have been established to receive, record and monitor racist incidents in schools. The LEA has been successful in ensuring a high level of return, but it has been less successful in ensuring whether or not schools are rigorous in identifying and reporting incidents. Moreover, the LEA does not provide an evaluative report for schools on the extent and nature of racist incidents in the authority. It provides insufficient information for the police who are unaware of the extent and nature of racist incidents in schools. The guidance to schools on which incidents to report to police is unclear.

122. Training in race equality has been provided to some headteachers, but it is sporadic and limited to schools currently with minority ethnic pupils. Some progress has been made on monitoring the workforce by ethnicity. Although there is a rising trend, the current representation of 0.9% is below the minority ethnic population of the LEA. The Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education makes a positive contribution to promoting cultural and religious diversity, but it does not fully represent all the major faiths in the LEA.

Recommendations

- Improve monitoring procedures to ensure schools' race equality policies and action plans are implemented consistently.

Appendix A

Record of Judgement Recording Statements

Name of LEA :	North East Lincolnshire Local Education Authority
LEA number:	812
Reporting Inspector:	Heather Richardson HMI
Date of Inspection:	October 2004

No	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	Fieldwork *
Context of the LEA			
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	6	
Overall judgements			
0.1	The progress made by the LEA overall	6	
0.2	Overall effectiveness of the LEA	5	
0.3	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	6	
Section 1: Corporate strategy and LEA leadership			
1.1	The effectiveness of corporate planning for the education of children and young people	5	
1.2	The implementation of corporate planning for education	5	
1.3	The effectiveness of LEA decision-making	4	
1.4	The extent to which the LEA targets resources on priorities	5	
1.5	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value	5	
1.6	The leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice)	5	
1.7	The quality of leadership provided by senior officers	5	

1.8	The effectiveness of partnerships and collaboration between agencies in support of priorities	4	
1.9	Support for Early Years education	2	
1.10	Support for 14 – 19 education	5	
Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation			
2.1	The LEA's strategy for school improvement	5	
2.2	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement	5	
2.3	The performance of schools	5	
2.4	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge and intervention	5	
2.5	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	5	
2.6	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	5	
2.7	The effectiveness of the LEA's identification of and intervention in underperforming schools	5	
2.8	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	4	
2.9	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	5	
2.10	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	3	NF
Section 3: Support to school leadership and management, including schools' efforts to support continuous improvement			
3.1	Support to school leadership and management, including support for schools' approaches to continuous improvement	4	
3.2	Support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at KS 1 and 2	2	
3.3	Support for information and communication technology	3	NF
3.4	Support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3	4	
3.5	Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/ Traveller children	4	

3.6	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	4	
3.7	Support for school governors	2	
3.8	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	4	
3.9	The planning and provision of services to support school management	4	
3.9a	The planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management	4	
3.9b	The planning and provision of HR services in supporting school management	4	
3.9c	The planning and provision of property services in supporting school management	4	
3.9d	The planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management	4	NF
3.10	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school management	4	
3.11	The planning and provision of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	5	
3.12	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	5	
Section 4: Support for special educational needs			
4.1	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs	4	
4.2	The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	3	
4.3	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	4	
4.4	The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money	5	

Section 5: Support for social inclusion			
5.1	The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion	5	
5.2	The LEA provision for pupils who have no school place	5	
5.3	Support for school attendance	5	
5.4	Support for behaviour in schools	5	
5.5	Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection	5	
5.6	Provision for looked after children	5	
5.7	The effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality	5	

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

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

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

Note: in the case of JRS 1: socio-economic context of the LEA and JRS 2.3: performance of schools, grades relate to comparisons against national averages:

- Grades 1-2: Well above
- Grade 3: Above
- Grade 4: In line
- Grade 5: Below
- Grades 6-7: Well below.

Appendix B

Context of the inspection

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

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

- the progress the LEA has made since the time of its previous inspection in 2000;
- the overall effectiveness of the LEA and its capacity to improve further;
- the LEA's performance in major aspects of its work;
- recommendations on areas for improvement.

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

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

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

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• admissions to schools;• support for information and communication technology;• information management services. |
|---|

Inspection judgements are made against criteria that can be found on the Ofsted website. For each inspected function of the LEA an inspection team agrees a numerical grade. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are to be found in Appendix A. These numerical grades must be considered in the light of the full report. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment profile for the education service.

Context of the LEA

North East Lincolnshire is relatively unchanged from the time of the previous inspection. It remains an area with significant challenges. Unemployment is lower than at the time of the inspection in 2000, but remains relatively high at 3.8% compared with the national average 2.6%. The average wage is only 79.3% of the national average. There are significant levels of deprivation. Six of the authority's 14 ward's are ranked among the 10% most deprived wards for child poverty.

The population of North East Lincolnshire is 158,000, similar to that at the previous inspection, but with a projected decline over the next two decades greater than any other authority. The school age population is 26,190 and represents a similar proportion of the total population as nationally. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage (3.75%) is well below the national averages. The LEA maintains 3 nursery schools, 15 infant schools, 15 junior schools, 29 primary schools, 12 secondary schools, 2 special schools and 2 pupil referral units

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in primary and secondary schools is in line with the national averages. The percentage of pupils in primary and secondary schools with statements of special educational need is above the national averages.

There have been changes to service delivery and political structures since the previous inspection. The learning and child care directorate was created in 2001, bringing together education and children's social services. There is now a scrutiny panel with specific responsibility for education and a designated portfolio holder for education. At the time of the inspection the local authority was subject to engagement by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and a monitoring board was in place.

The performance of schools

Pupils' attainment on entry to school is below the national average. However, attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2 is in line with national averages and pupils make above average progress between these key stages. Rates of improvement at Key Stages 1 and 2 are at least in line with those found nationally and in similar LEAs.

Attainment at Key Stage 3 is below the national average and pupils make below average progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Rates of improvement at Key Stage 3 are in line with national averages in mathematics and science, but are below in English. They are below that of similar authorities in all subjects.

Attainment at GCSE is well below the national average and pupils make below average progress between Key Stages 3 and 4. Rates of improvement at GCSE vary. The improvement rate for the average points score is in line with the national rate and that of similar authorities, the rate for one or more A*-G grades is above average, but for 5 or more A*-C grades the improvement rate is well below average. These comparisons are based on 2003 data, when the LEA's performance dipped at GCSE. Provisional data for 2004 indicate improvement in some aspects of

performance, including an increase in 5 or more GCSE A*-C passes. Nevertheless the gap between the LEA's performance and national averages is wider in 2004 than in 2002, the LEA's previous highest GCSE score.

The LEA has not met any of its attainment targets in 2003 or 2004. Targets for 2005 are closer to schools' aggregated targets. However some targets, notably mathematics at Key Stage 2, all Key Stage 3 targets, and that for 5 or more GCSE A*-C passes are unrealistic, given current performance and rates of improvement.

The findings of recent school inspections show that the percentage of primary schools found to be good or very good is similar to that found nationally and in similar LEAs. The percentage of good or very good secondary schools was well below the national average and below that in similar authorities, but the number of schools in the sample is small.

Attendance in primary schools is in line with the national average, and unauthorised absence is below. In secondary schools, attendance is well below the national average and unauthorised absence is above. Permanent exclusions have increased in both primary and secondary schools and are both now above average.

Funding data for the LEA

SCHOOLS BUDGET	North East Lincolnshire	Statistical neighbours average	Unitary Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Individual schools budget	2,754	2,822	2,795	2,900
Standards fund delegated	34	52	56	63
Excellence in Cities	41	60	28	35
Schools in financial difficulty	0	5	4	4
Education for under fives (non-ISB)	54	51	87	85
Strategic management	61	35	31	30
Special educational needs	194	109	116	126
Grants	40	32	26	26
Access	96	79	63	60
Capital expenditure from revenue	2	30	19	24
TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET	3,275	3,273	3,224	3,354
Schools formula spending share	3,014	3,073	3,057	3,197

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2004-05

LEA BUDGET	North East Lincolnshire	Statistical neighbours average	Unitary Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Strategic management	107	92	89	99
Specific Grants	12	22	18	14
Special educational needs	22	37	36	36
School improvement	35	36	35	38
Access	50	113	137	142
Capital expenditure from revenue	7	2	2	2
Youth and Community	28	73	70	75
TOTAL LEA BUDGET	261	375	387	406

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2004-05

Notes:

All figures are net.

Funding for schools in financial difficulties excludes transitional funding.

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

Notes