



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF  
NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

January 2001

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

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## **APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS**

## INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities*, which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.

2. The inspection was partly based on data and documentation, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports. The views of the LEA's external partners were sought and the inspection also involved discussions with LEA members, groups of headteachers, parents, governors and staff in the education department and in other Council departments. A questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 80 schools. The response rate was 94 per cent.

3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 11 primary, six secondary, two special schools and a pupil referral unit. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support that is provided by the LEA contributes to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

4. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999 in so far as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.

## COMMENTARY

5. North East Lincolnshire was set up as a unitary authority to serve that part of the old Humberside authority centred around the town of Grimsby, a geographically isolated area at the mouth of the Humber estuary. It has a largely white population, which suffers high unemployment, has a low proportion of adults with higher education qualifications and is declining in number. Although small in area, the LEA serves, in Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham, three distinct communities. Although the port of Immingham has recently been expanded, there is a major need for regeneration throughout the area.

6. At the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16, the pupils' test and examination results are below national averages. In the primary schools, however, there is an adequate rate of improvement; indeed, at the end of Key Stage 2, the rate of improvement is strikingly good in English. At the age of 16 the improvement is fitful, and the secondary schools have also had little success in reducing truancy. The social and economic history of the area has left the schools with a need to confront low expectations both in the community and in their teaching. This has been tackled more effectively in the primary than in the secondary schools.

7. The LEA faces a very demanding situation. The Council has placed education high on its list of priorities, but its strategy and structure are not secure enough to guarantee that place in the top level of corporate planning. The education service is led by an officer in the third tier of the structure. The Council's budget fails to demonstrate members' commitment to education. The arrangements to secure Best Value are improving, but there remain significant weaknesses in present practice.

8. Nevertheless, within the education service itself both management and strategic planning have considerable strengths and these outweigh the weaknesses. The strengths are in the effective evaluation of services; the progress being made in the implementation of the Education Development Plan; the priority attached to school improvement; and the direction of support where it is needed most. The weaknesses are in the strategy to combat social exclusion; in the absence of a performance management system and in inadequate use of performance indicators to measure success.

The following of the LEA's functions are strong:

- support for literacy and numeracy in primary schools;
- support for governors;
- the identification of and support for schools causing concern;
- support for schools' financial management;
- support for personnel management;
- technical support for information and communications technology;
- the provision of school places from five to 16;
- arrangements for admissions to schools;
- support services for special educational needs; and
- support for under-fives.

Other functions are exercised in a satisfactory way, with the exception of these functions which are weak:

- support to improve standards in secondary schools;
- support for property management;
- the provision of school meals;
- the use of performance data;
- support for children in public care;
- the formulation of a Behaviour Support Plan;
- support for gifted and talented children;
- taking measures to combat racism; and
- the provision of post-16 education in some parts of the authority.

9. Governors, headteachers and other teachers have confidence in the LEA. However, the LEA needs to improve its corporate planning. The education department has established a culture of self-evaluation and is aware of most of what needs to be done to improve. By redesigning its internal management structure, it has put itself into a position to develop its strategy and implement it in well-planned programmes of activity. It deploys its resources according to priority. The LEA has clearly demonstrated its capacity to support improvement in its schools through its work on literacy, numeracy and for schools causing concern. Furthermore, it has provided good support for the Education Action Zone (EAZ) in its area, which has run into difficulties.

10. Given the general effectiveness of the services it provides and their moderate cost, the education service provides sound value for money.

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

### **Context**

11. North East Lincolnshire was established as a unitary authority in 1996. It serves the town of Grimsby on the south bank of the Humber Estuary, the neighbouring towns of Immingham and Cleethorpes along the estuary and a rural area to the south.

12. The region underwent sharp economic decline with the virtual end of the trawler fishing industry. Unemployment remains high at 6.8 per cent, compared with 4.3 per cent nationally. The 1991 census showed 7.4 per cent of the population had higher educational qualifications, compared with 13.5 per cent nationally. A decline in population is forecast from the current 156,000 to 135,000 in 2021.

13. The school age population is 28,178 and the LEA maintains 79 schools. Twenty-six are 5-11 primaries, 18 are junior, 18 are infant, three are nurseries and two are special schools. There are 12 secondary schools, four of which have sixth forms. Additionally, there are two pupil referral units (PRUs). An EAZ was set up in September 1998 and comprises three secondary schools, five primary schools, three junior schools, three infant schools and one nursery school in Grimsby.

14. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is close to the national average. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils is 1.1 per cent, well below the national average of 11.7 per cent. Statements of SEN have been made for 2.3 per cent of primary pupils and three per cent of secondary pupil compared with 2.6 and 3.9 per cent nationally

15. Sixty per cent of three-year-olds have places in nursery schools or classes or funded places with private, voluntary or independent providers and there are places for all four-year olds whose parents want one. Post-16 participation is low at 60 per cent, compared with 67 per cent nationally. Rates of teenage pregnancy are high.

### **Performance**

16. Overall, standards achieved in schools in North East Lincolnshire are below both national averages and those of similar authorities.

17. The attainment of pupils when they enter primary schools is just below the average of those LEAs that use the performance indicators in primary schools (PIPS) scheme to assess baseline attainment.

18. In recent years, the percentages of pupils achieving Level 2 and above in the National Curriculum tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 have been below both the national averages and the averages for LEAs serving similar areas. In the 2000 tests, results continued below national averages, although in reading this was only by one per cent and in spelling and mathematics by

two per cent, all improvements on previous years. The rate of improvement over recent years slightly higher than the national one.

19. At the end of Key Stage 2, the proportions of pupils attaining test results at level 4 or better and at level 5 or better in English and mathematics in 1999 were very close to those in similar LEAs, although a smaller proportion attained level 5 in science. In each subject results were below the national average. Improvements were made in all three subjects in 2000, and the gaps between the LEA and the national averages have narrowed. Information provided by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) shows the authority to be ninth in the country in terms of the improvement made in English since 1998.

20. In both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 test results, the proportion of boys attaining the target levels is lower than that of girls, by a similar margin to national targets.

21. At the end of Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils gaining level 5 or better in all three subjects is close to that in similar LEAs but lower than the national average. The rate of improvement in the last four years has been slightly better than nationally. The proportion gaining level 6 is slightly higher in each subject than in similar LEAs. Girls continue to outperform boys in English and are slightly ahead in science, but a slightly higher proportion of boys attain level 5 in mathematics.

22. Both the average points score and the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\*-C in the GCSE are significantly lower than the national average, although they are close to those for similar LEAs. Compared with schools in which a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals, there is considerable unevenness in GCSE achievements in the secondary schools in the LEA and, overall, the rate of improvement has varied around the national rate.

23. Inspection reports indicate the proportion of good primary schools is lower than nationally, but a little higher than in similar LEAs. About a third of the schools were in need of improvement at the time of inspection. Fewer secondary schools were found to be good in comparison with national and similar LEA's pictures. Considerably more – over half – were found to be in need of improvement at the time of their inspection, and teachers' expectations in secondary schools, particularly in Key Stage 3, were too low.

24. Attendance in primary schools has been close to the national average since 1995, apart from in 1999, when it fell below by two per cent. The rate of unauthorised absence has been about half of that nationally, and permanent exclusions have been very rare. In contrast, attendance has been below the national average in secondary schools. It has not improved over the last five years and unauthorised absence is almost double the national rate. The level of permanent exclusions in secondary schools is close to the national rate and to that of similar LEAs.



## Funding

25. The LEA's education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) is about one per cent less than the average for similar LEAs. In the first year of its existence, the Council spent only 98 per cent of this on education services, but since then it has spent at or slightly above SSA.

26. Within the overall education SSA the LEA's commitment to early year's education is evident from the main blocks, which are:

	<b>Under 5's</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Post-16</b>	<b>Other</b>
Budget as % of SSA	184%	93%	96%	85%	116%

27. The LEA has given priority to schools' delegated budgets by keeping central spending both low and under control. As a result, the amount held centrally is only £410 per pupil compared to the average in similar LEAs of £442. Comparisons of spending patterns (in £/pupil) within this retained sum shows the LEA to be generally in line with national and unitary averages. There are, however, some exceptions:

	<b>NEL</b>	<b>Unitaries</b>	<b>England</b>
Transport	44	67	74
Special needs	120	152	157
Access	88	62	63

The lower transport costs are due mainly to geography; lower special needs costs to higher than average delegation of statement funds to schools; and high access costs to the very high costs of providing school meals.

28. By passing on increases in SSA and by its commitment to increasing delegation, the LEA has this year raised schools' delegated budgets by 12.3 per cent, which is well in excess of the national average of 9.8 per cent. The level of delegation in the authority is now 85.3 per cent, compared to 84.2 per cent in the average unitary LEA; consequently, the average amount per pupil delegated to schools is £2377 compared to a unitary average of £2349.

29. The formula for distributing delegated funds is simple, transparent, and targets resources at schools in areas of need effectively. It is kept under review by a local management of schools group which involves headteachers and is known locally as the Fair Funding working group; as a result schools are content with both the level and distribution of resources.

30. Resources to provide capital developments in education have increased considerably over the Council's four-year history, from £222,000 in 1996/7 to around £3,400,000 proposed for the current year. In addition, vigorous efforts have resulted in substantial additional revenue and capital resources being accessed for education through a range of grant related funds. Schools, like all residents of North East Lincolnshire, are provided with useful on-line guidance to sources of grants and how to bid for them.

## **Council Structure**

31. North East Lincolnshire Council has 42 members, of whom 22 are Labour, 11 Conservative, 5 Liberal Democrat and 4 Independent. In April 2000, a six-member cabinet was established, the responsibility for the LEA being held by the portfolio holder for leisure and lifelong learning. Pending legislation, the cabinet refers its recommendations to a politically representative cabinet committee. There are two scrutiny commissions of nine members each. These commissions both have general, rather than specific responsibilities (see paragraph 86).

## **The Education Development Plan**

32. The Education Development Plan (EDP) has eight priorities. They are:

- (i) helping schools to become self-monitoring, self-evaluating and self-improving institutions;
- (ii) ensuring good schools with distinctive qualities;
- (iii) raising the morale of teachers by recognising and enhancing their skills and abilities;
- (iv) raising attainment in literacy;
- (v) raising attainment in numeracy;
- (vi) using information and communication technology (ICT) to benefit teaching, learning and management;
- (vii) supporting individual achievement and personal development; and
- (viii) improving the performance of underachieving groups of pupils.

33. The EDP has the strength that its proposals for action are very clearly costed and that the plan demonstrates the connections between itself and the LEA's other plans and strategies, including the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP). The school visits showed that the schools have a good knowledge of the EDP and that, almost without exception, they support its priorities, even though they make little use of them in their own development planning. The LEA has also evaluated the implementation of the plan and is able to demonstrate progress with all the priorities. The process of evaluation has led to revision and improvement of the plan.

34. The English and mathematics test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show that progress is being made towards meeting the plan's academic targets at that level. Much more remains to be done to meet the target for GCSE performance.

35. There are some weaknesses in the plan. The link between audit, priority and outcome is too loose. For example, priority three encompasses the LEA's work with the professional development of teachers, but it is not established in the audit that the morale of teachers is a problem or that the activities proposed have any specific connection to the matter of morale. More generally, the plan makes too little use of measurable outcomes as criteria of success. Thus, although the evaluation of the plan is valuable, it is necessarily more concerned with establishing that activities have taken place than establishing the connection between those activities, school improvement and, in particular, the attainment of pupils. The plan does not explicitly address the matter of raising teachers' expectations, especially in secondary

schools. Officers are aware of this deficiency and intend to remedy it in the next revision of the plan.

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

36. The authority has moved slowly in re-aligning its expenditure priorities from those of a district council to those of a unitary authority. Progress was hindered by a difficult financial position upon inception, when the Council was forced to make cuts totalling around £17,000,000 over two years. Another round of cuts, totalling around £5,000,000, was needed to set a balanced budget this year. The BVPP informs residents that significant areas of previously provided services have been cut in order to restructure and set a balanced budget. Unfortunately, it does not clarify which services these are. In the absence of this clarity, the Council has failed to show where its budgetary priorities actually do lie.

37. Elected members have protected school budgets throughout this turbulence and headteachers appreciate this, citing it as clear evidence of the Council's commitment to education. However, since the Council is spending considerably more than SSA overall, the high priority given to learning in the BVPP does not sit well with spending on education which is, by contrast, no more than SSA.

38. The Council does not have a clear capital strategy which sets out its policies for accessing, prioritising and utilising funds. To date such decisions have been based on expediency rather than sound strategic planning and this has contributed to the present backlog of repairs to school buildings. Although the will to develop such a capital strategy was apparent during the inspection, plans to do so were not.

39. Within the education department the targeting of revenue funds is good. Elements of this have been reported above. The removal of 1760 surplus places and tight budgetary control to ensure that outturns match planned expenditure at LEA and school level, are further examples of ways in which officers and headteachers, by working together, are helping to maximise funds available to schools. The way in which funds are targeted is exemplified by the reduction in the Year 6/Year 7 funding difference from 22 per cent to 15 per cent, the resourcing of pupils' special needs using banding rather than a flat rate, and the support given to schools causing concern.

40. Plans for further improvement are well developed. They include the proposed restructuring of school meals provision which seeks to re-direct spending to educational outcomes and the early plans to target resources at improving performance measures rather than to plan spending in terms of a base budget plus inflation. These both indicate an organisation determined to make the most of its resources.

### **Best Value**

41. Missing and inaccurate performance indicators in the BVPP are signs of unsatisfactory preparations for the introduction of the Best Value regime by the Council. Concerns about the plan were raised with the Council by the District Auditor. These have been accepted by the current senior management team, are

being addressed to the satisfaction of the district auditor, and the plan has been approved. There is now an agreed procedure for officers and members to follow when they carry out reviews, and elected members are reviewing their structures and practices, particularly in the area of scrutiny, to support the process better.

42. However, the Council does not have a corporate strategy for the procurement of services. Providing, rather than securing, services and hence jobs are given a high priority in corporate planning documents. This makes it difficult to produce Best Value reviews which are as rigorous as they should be on the questions of challenge and competition. The first education review, on the education welfare service (EWS), lacks just this rigour.

## **Recommendations**

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

- the EDP should be improved by establishing clearer links between the audit of performance and the priorities for activity, and by making more use of measurable criteria for success in the implementation of activities .
- the Council should show more clearly how its resources are allocated to its priorities;
- a capital strategy to show how the Council will gain access to capital funds should be developed and priorities set for their use; and
- more rigour in challenge and competition in Best Value reviews should be ensured by developing a procurement strategy consistent with Best Value principles.

## **SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Implications of other functions**

43. The LEA plans its school places and arranges for the admissions of pupils to school in such a way as to facilitate school improvement. The management support services it provides for the schools also do so, for the most part, especially those provided for finance and personnel. The exceptions here are the property and school meals services. Special educational needs provision, especially the consultancy provided, also offers good support as do, on balance, the services to promote access, notwithstanding the weaknesses in improving secondary school attendance and in the provision of support for children in public care.

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

44. The LEA has a sound strategy for monitoring the work of its schools and for identifying those likely to be in need of further support. The standards division maintains a profile for each school, consisting of an analysis of test and examination performance, key points from the latest Section 10 inspection report and significant information gathered in visits by advisers and officers. Profiles are regularly updated and reviewed. As a result, the LEA has a sound knowledge of its schools, enabling it to monitor changes and quality, though this is better and more extensive for primary schools than secondary.

45. Each school has an assigned adviser who serves as the main link with the LEA and visits the school once each term. The autumn term visit focuses on target setting. The focus of the other visits is common, such as monitoring the implementation of the numeracy or literacy strategy, or the progress of self-review and evaluation practice. For secondary schools, the arrangements for these visits are negotiated in the light of developments in the school. In addition to oral feedback, written reports are sent to the headteacher, although not the chair of governors, following the visit. Most headteachers of schools visited indicated that they find the notes useful, although some are less explicit and rigorous than the oral feedback written reports. Views about the extent to which they are challenged as a result of contacts with advisers were similarly variable. While some had clearly been stimulated to a re-examination of aspects of current practice, others had not experienced this, and have a limited view of challenge as only applying in the setting of targets. This is an aspect of the work of the advisers which has not been fully developed, for example by working out in advance of each visit the matters of teaching and management that each school can be usefully challenged to improve; or by deciding that no visit is necessary to a school which is already improving.

46. The education development plan (EDP) contains a comprehensive list of indicators used to identify schools in need of additional support. School profiles are regularly monitored, and the occurrence of any of the listed features leads to an adviser visit to investigate the seriousness of the matter and whether the school needs additional support. The determination of need may involve a more protracted investigation involving several advisers for two or three days in the case of a secondary school before a decision is reached about the nature and scale of

intervention needed. This is a systematic and effective form of monitoring that enables the LEA to intervene and support a school at an early stage of any difficulties. It enables the LEA to direct its resources to schools with the greatest need.

47. The LEA maintains two professional development centres and provides a wide range of courses and workshops for teachers and others who work in schools. The programme is prepared in consultation with an advisory group of headteachers, college representatives, advisers and officers, and is closely related to the EDP priorities. Evaluation sheets are completed at the end of each course. These indicate a high level of satisfaction, but no systematic evaluation at a later stage to assess the longer-term impact of the courses is undertaken. Well-judged service level agreements (SLAs) are available at suitable levels, ranging from full access to the development programme to consultancy services by advisers. A very high percentage of primary schools purchase the standard SLA, while the premium SLA is proving more popular with secondary schools.

48. It is chiefly through the work of the school improvement team that the LEA fulfils its responsibilities for monitoring and support of schools. Given the size of the LEA, and hence the size of the service, it is not possible to cover all specialist subjects and aspects in equal depth. For example, there is no modern foreign linguist and no one with recent senior management experience in a secondary school. This is recognised and in providing support for schools the need to 'broker' expertise to complement that of the team is fully accepted. Some gaps are filled from time to time by secondments of headteachers and other teachers. A short while ago a seconded headteacher prepared a guide to services available from sources outside the LEA. While this strategy is generally effective, one school reported that it had been unable to obtain help in two key areas not covered by advisers.

### **Collection and analysis of data**

49. The education department provides locally benchmarked performance data for both primary and secondary schools to enable them to compare their performance with that of other similar schools in the authority. For secondary schools, attempts have been made to widen the context beyond the LEA by sharing information with other adjacent LEAs, but this has not been wholly successful. The data currently provided goes little, if at all, further than that which most schools already have, other than providing a broad LEA context. Other than in making simple comparisons, most of the schools visited had made little use of the LEA benchmark data. Headteachers and other teachers have not had adequate guidance on how to use performance data to manage school improvement, in some cases because they have not taken advantage of training opportunities.

50. A database of information about the attainment of individual pupils is being built up. This is not at present linked with other information about schools attended and by the end of a key stage there are often substantial differences in the membership of the cohort actually in the school and those attributed to the school by this database. This makes it difficult to use the data and software provided by the LEA as the prior attainment basis for establishing performance targets, and many schools prefer to use their own systems instead.

51. The chief use made of the data provided is in target-setting. The process for setting attainment targets is set out clearly in the EDP. This is supplemented by detailed papers issued to schools providing a step-by-step guide. The sequence of the process is to analyse the prior attainment of pupils within the cohort, to forecast anticipated attainment using the data provided in the Autumn Package, and to increase this to represent a reasonable challenge. Schools are, nevertheless, unclear as to how to determine what constitutes reasonable challenge.

52. Although some training has been provided for headteachers and senior staff, visits to schools indicated a variety of practices used to set targets and that in several schools there is no clear understanding of the difference between a forecast and a target. In particular, several headteachers need more help if they are to make full use of the target-setting software provided by the LEA. Where targets proposed by the school are lower than those predicted by the LEA, the advisers challenge them. It is difficult for a school to resist this challenge, since failure to agree targets with the LEA is one of the EDP triggers for more detailed scrutiny and possible identification as a cause of concern. Several headteachers view the target setting discussions as being chiefly concerned with setting school targets that support those of the LEA, and do not in this context see them as genuinely aspirational targets for the school. Where the school proposes targets which are higher than those calculated by the LEA, there is often no further discussion.

### **Support for literacy**

53. Support for literacy in primary schools is of a very high standard. The LEA has recently increased its Key Stage 2 literacy target and is now aiming to ensure that 80 per cent of pupils will achieve Level 4 or better. This is an ambitious target, but recent levels of attainment show significant improvement on earlier years and indicate that there are good prospects of the target being achieved. The support for literacy in secondary schools has made a slow start.

54. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in primary schools is very well managed by a senior adviser, supported by two full-time consultants and an additional full time consultant in the education action zone (EAZ). It is an effective team with a clear agenda for action and very good links with schools. Training provided for both teachers and classroom support assistants has been of consistently good quality, and the purpose-built joint literacy/numeracy centre is very fully and well used. Most primary schools have benefited from the training of classroom support assistants in the Additional Literacy Strategies materials. Sharing of good practice between schools is effectively encouraged by the development of directories of expert teachers and expert coordinators. In addition, some well-produced videotapes have been made of lessons showing good approaches to guided reading and writing and these are used effectively both on training courses and in individual schools. The implementation of the NLS has been monitored across all primary schools by the assigned advisers who were prepared for the task by the literacy consultants.

55. The proportion of pupils gaining level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 – 57 per cent - is lower than the national average, although it has improved over recent years.

Support to extend the literacy strategy into Key Stage 3 has been slow to get underway, and there is currently a vacancy for an English adviser. A half-time consultant to carry this forward is to be appointed, and conferences have been held to prepare for the introduction of Key Stage 3 literacy. Some schools have begun to make use of methods used in the literacy hour. Literacy summer schools have been hosted by some secondary schools over the past three years and are considered by the LEA to have been effective.

56. In response to the schools' survey, more than four-fifths of primary schools rated the authority's support for literacy as good or very good. Less than half the secondary schools considered that the quality of support they had received could be so described, although none rated it as less than satisfactory.

### **Support for numeracy**

57. Since the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) in 1999, the development of numeracy in primary schools has been supported well and standards have improved from a low baseline. Although still below the national average, the percentage of pupils attaining level 4 or better at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000 (69 per cent) exceeded the LEA's target for that year. The target set for 2002 is 75 per cent which, in the light of the improvement made in recent years, is not especially ambitious, even though it is higher than the 73 per cent target proposed by DfEE in 1998.

58. The NNS is well managed and led by a general adviser who devotes half her time to the work. She is supported by two consultants, one a full-time seconded deputy headteacher and the other in a half-time post. In addition, another half-time consultant has been appointed to support mathematical development in Key Stage 3. The action plan for the strategy is good, with clear targets and success indicators. The team is well regarded in the schools, more than four-fifths of which rated support for numeracy as good or very good.

59. Support is differentiated between schools effectively, with 16 identified on the basis of pupils' attainment for intensive support during the first year and a further 20 in the current year. Good use is being made of the leading teacher initiative by about two-thirds of primary schools. Regular newsletters are circulated and contribute usefully to sharing best practice.

60. In the summer term 2000, assigned advisers visited all primary schools as part of the regular monitoring arrangements and observed numeracy lessons in each school. A useful report was prepared at the end of this exercise, which identifies strengths of the work so far together with areas for development and contains recommendations for action to be taken by headteachers, by teachers and by the numeracy team itself. This evaluation is thorough and timely and should contribute to the further strengthening of the implementation of the strategy.

61. Secondary school standards in mathematics are improving, although they fall short of the national average. In 2000, 58 per cent of pupils gained Level 5, compared with 65 per cent nationally. Steps have been taken to extend the work of the numeracy strategy into Key Stage 3 following the appointment of a consultant to



support this work. Training conferences for secondary teachers were held in the spring and summer terms, and some secondary schools have introduced parts of the teaching methodology of the strategy into their work with younger pupils since the beginning of the present term. Four numeracy summer schools have been organised in each of the past two summer holiday periods, and are considered by the LEA to be contributing to improved standards for the pupils taking part.

62. The start made on implementing the numeracy strategy is good, and schools are benefiting from support of high quality.

### **Support for ICT**

63. Improving the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to benefit teaching, learning and management in schools is one of the priorities of the EDP. A suitable range of activities is identified to achieve this priority, but the success criteria are concerned with improving levels of provision and internet access, rather than with teaching and pupils' attainment. School inspections show that the progress in ICT made by pupils in primary schools is similar to the national picture, but in secondary schools it falls below national levels. Recent inspections of secondary schools have found that poor progress is made in more than half the ICT lessons in Key Stage 3 and almost two-thirds of lessons in Key Stage 4. These are approximately twice the national figures. However, useful work has been done in using ICT applications in the development of literacy in some primary schools, there are plans to develop a numeracy website and increasing attention is being paid to ways in which internet use can contribute to work in various subjects. While an analysis of schools' needs in relation to ICT provision was made at the preparatory stage of the action plan, there is no evidence of a comparable survey of teachers' ICT competence, although the senior adviser responsible for this work has a sound knowledge of schools and is the assigned adviser for a group of schools. Nevertheless, training and development are not always geared effectively to teachers' needs.

64. It is an LEA target that by 2002 the computer/pupil ratio in all schools will achieve the national average. Most secondary schools have a good level of provision, but there is some variability between primary schools. While those in the EAZ and some others have adequate numbers, others have very few computers in relation to the number of pupils, and of these some have exceeded their useful life.

65. The four-year strategy for implementing the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) is sound, and good progress has been made in providing access to the internet in all schools. Although the LEA has a clear rationale for the selection of schools for NGfL funding, some schools are unsure about how choices have been made and about the way funds have been allocated. The strategy provides well for a development of internet-based curriculum materials, and the 'lighthouse for education' website carries useful and interesting material that is regularly updated. It also makes available a range of useful examples of good practice of all kinds in the LEA's schools, thus contributing to the spread of good practice. These developments are to be supported by the introduction of broadband technology as early as possible.

66. The overall ICT strategy makes provision for an integration of curriculum and administrative ICT in schools. This has been achieved and is working well in the secondary schools visited, with the exception of two split site schools where technical difficulties are currently being resolved. However, there is no clear overall statement of the benefits which can stem from the integration, or of how to achieve them. The plan provides for schools to use the internet for communication with the authority and with each other using email. Although as yet little use is made of this for the transfer of financial and other data, its use for general communication is increasing. All schools are licensed to use modules of the SIMS administration software, though not all at present are doing so. Headteachers are being made aware of the government's Information Management System strategy and plans for the introduction of the unique pupil number and individual pupil census are well advanced.

67. The training provided by the ICT team is well planned. Regular meetings of ICT co-ordinators in both primary and secondary schools are organised, and the educational development service (EDS) programme contains a wide range of suitable training courses. It includes courses covering basic computer skills, the Learning Schools Programme, specific courses in word processing and the use of spreadsheets and teaching and learning in using NGfL facilities. The training plan takes account of New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training, and schools have been helped to identify suitable NOF providers. There is a high level of take-up among schools for the traded ICT curriculum support.

68. Technical support for ICT is now good. After several poor customer survey ratings, the education department decided, in April 1999, to merge the technical support team with that of the Council's central ICT department. Since then this fully delegated service has met most schools' needs by developing a range of reasonably priced SLAs to which all schools subscribe. The service now enjoys very high satisfaction ratings. The service has recently stepped in to successfully effect a recovery plan for the EAZ whose external ICT provider could not fulfil its contractual obligations.

### **Support for schools causing concern**

69. The LEA is effective in identifying and supporting schools that are causing concern and has a good record of helping them to improve quickly.

70. Following OFSTED inspections, two primary schools in the LEA have been found to require special measures. One of these had, by June 1999, made the required progress for these to be lifted, while the second has been in special measures since the same month. In addition, one secondary and four primary schools have been identified as having serious weaknesses. Of these, three, including the secondary school, have made satisfactory progress and have been only a short time in this category. The authority's support for these schools has been good, making a significant contribution to their improvement. Progress was carefully monitored by the assigned adviser and the LEA made effective use of feedback from HMI and specialist advisers to provide well-judged support for teachers.

71. In addition to the two categories of concern arising from inspection, the LEA has itself identified a further 11 schools as giving cause for concern. The EDP sets out 15 attributes, any one of which triggers further investigation by the school improvement team to determine whether or not the school needs additional support and resources to remedy its weaknesses, and therefore should be designated as a school of concern. The team is also expected to propose solutions. If necessary a larger team of advisers may conduct wider ranging inspection. Where it is determined that a school should be so designated, governors are notified and an action plan is prepared together with a supporting budget in the expectation that the cause for concern should be remedied within nine months at most.

72. The list of attributes is sufficiently comprehensive to make it unlikely that a school with problems can go undetected, but the operation of a single category of schools causing concern does not differentiate between those where the cause of concern is of minor order and those that are in more serious difficulties. Although the EDP statement implies a difference between schools with 'some concerns' and others with 'serious concerns', this is not a distinction in the generally used terminology. There are some occasions where schools are placed in these categories chiefly to enable them to benefit from additional support and/or finance to overcome what are essentially lower order difficulties. This causes confusion and, not unreasonably, these schools do not welcome being described in the same terminology as is used for schools with major problems.

### **Support for governors**

73. The support services for governors are effective and highly regarded by the schools. The clerking and training services are purchased by all the primary schools and nearly all of the secondary schools. The school visits and discussion with a representative group of governors showed enthusiastic support for the services in all but one school.

74. The education department has been successful in recruiting governors. At the time of the inspection only five per cent of governors' posts were vacant and the LEA's recruiting activities had produced a waiting list of local people ready to fill vacancies. The education department's readiness to provide advice on specific matters and the willingness of senior officers to attend governing body meetings are particularly useful features of the support. The centrally organised courses for governors are well attended; those for newly appointed governors are particularly valued. The SLA under which training is provided entitles each governing body to two hours of bespoke training each year which is used effectively by governors to raise their skills in matters affecting their individual schools. Governors also see the clerking service as a useful source of advice and as an effective channel of communication between themselves and the LEA. The governors' forum provides for a further two-way flow of information and opinion.

### **Support for school management**

75. This part of the LEA's work is the subject of the first priority of the EDP, where its main thrust is to develop schools' capacity to improve themselves on the basis of the reviews they themselves conduct of their own performance. To this end, the LEA

is using a management programme developed by another LEA along with OFSTED's self-review training for schools. The encouragement of this work has been through courses, through the dedication of one of the routine advisory visits to it and through further support to develop classroom observation where the schools have requested that extra assistance.

76. The initiative has been successful in raising schools' awareness of, and interest in, self-review. Two-thirds of the school visited had set up such a programme, sometimes using the LEA's recommended systems and sometimes devising their own. Particular benefits have come from the advisers working with school managers to develop the latter's skills in classroom observation. The advisers' consultancy work with headteachers was appreciated in nearly all of the schools visited but the influence of the LEA on management development is more evident in primary than in secondary schools. In the secondary schools visited the Investors In People scheme was more influential than the LEA's own work. In general, the LEA's support for management is more effective in primary schools than in secondary, reflecting the distribution of expertise among the advisers. The support was good in half of the ten primary schools where it was inspected, and satisfactory in a further three. By contrast it was good in only one of the six secondary schools, satisfactory in a further three, and weak in the remainder. In view of the slowness of the secondary schools to improve, this is a considerable weakness.

77. School management, in both primary and secondary schools, is effectively supported through the LEA's programme of help for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and through the programme of headteachers' conferences. The recent establishment of similar conferences for deputy headteachers has been much appreciated by that group. By contrast, schools' subject leaders in both primary and secondary schools do not receive enough support in the development of their managerial, rather than their subject, expertise, sometimes because they do not take up what is offered. Finally, the secondment of headteachers, either to assist in the management of schools causing concern, or to carry out specific short-term tasks on behalf of the LEA, has had considerable benefits for the professional development of the staff concerned. It is a well-managed strategy.

### **Other areas**

78. The LEA attaches high priority to early years education. The evidence of pupils' performance on entry to Key Stage 1 is that the pre-school work is providing the pupils with a good foundation for their statutory schooling, especially when the difficult social and economic circumstances of the area are taken into account. The work, building on initiatives originally paid for by the EAZ and now replaced by 'Sure Start', together with the forthcoming establishment of an early excellence centre, has been thoroughly and effectively planned and it is the first priority of the LEA's new strategic plan.

79. The LEA's nursery support in the EAZ has been proportionately much greater than that made available in other areas. The nursery school in the zone is now being used as an early years training provider. This has the potential of securing some return on the investment made there.

80. The support for early years has considerable strengths. Training activities are co-ordinated with the Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership. They involve classroom assistants as well as nursery teachers and other practitioners. This has been effective in promoting valuable team work. The support made available through consultancy by the advisory service has been effective because it has been adjusted well to the individual needs of the schools. This was particularly the case in one of the schools visited where both the nursery's accommodation and its curricular provision had been improved with the guidance of the advisory service.

81. Provision for post-16 education is weak in parts of the area and the staying on rate is low. In the Grimsby part of the LEA, there is both a sixth form college and a further education college, but in Cleethorpes and Immingham the four secondary schools have sixth forms. Three of these are small, and in two the numbers have dwindled substantially in recent years. Even the operation of a joint sixth form by two of the schools does not resolve these difficulties. The academic standards achieved in the sixth forms are low overall and the range of courses available to the students is limited. There is no possibility that these sixth forms will be able to provide a satisfactory implementation of Curriculum 2000. A further difficulty is that even the present provision is only achieved by some diversion of resources from Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in the same schools, with the result that main school teaching groups are larger than they should be. This is particularly problematic in those schools where standards of achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 are weak.

82. The LEA is aware of these problems and of the need for a better solution. The North East Lincolnshire learning partnership has recently set up a working group to prepare an area wide plan for 14-19 provision, in anticipation of the establishment of the Learning and Skills Council in April 2001. Meanwhile, the need for action is urgent.

## **Recommendations**

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

- advisers should use the information they have about the schools to identify, in advance of their visits, the matters about which they are going to challenge the schools;
- there should be an evaluation of the effects of staff development work on practice in schools;
- the use of performance data should be improved by ensuring that the information in the pupil achievement database reflects as accurately as possible the pupils attending the school, and by providing more effective guidance and training in the target setting process to differentiate between forecasts and targets.
- support for ICT should be improved by;
  - (i) ensuring that in planning for ICT development greater prominence is given to improving teaching, learning and attainment levels;

- (ii) ensuring that training and development for teachers in ICT is more accurately targeted on their needs; and
  - (iii) providing training and support to help schools make more use of ICT in management and in the analysis and transmission of data;
- support for schools causing concern should be improved by introducing an additional category of concern to distinguish the schools requiring extra support from those with major problems;
  - support for the management of secondary schools and the middle management of both primary and secondary schools should be improved; and
  - pending the completion of the 14-19 area plan and a more permanent resolution of the present difficulties with post-16 provision in Cleethorpes and Immingham, the LEA should work with the schools to ensure that the present provision is better matched to the needs of the students and less heavily subsidised by the diversion of resources from the 11-16 age group.

## **SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

### **Corporate planning**

83. Corporate planning, both at the whole local authority and the education department levels, has been, since the inception of the unitary council, an evolving process. As the evolution has occurred, the newly produced documents have not always fully reflected the pre-existing ones and the result has been a lack of coherence in strategic planning. For example, the newly published corporate management plan lists three strategic service issues for the education service in the current year. These bear no clear relationship to the LEA's priorities as set out in the LEA strategic plan or to the Best Value performance plan, both of which were formulated before the corporate management plan and which do, themselves, relate to one another. The top management structure of the Council's officers which places the head of the education department in the third tier of the structure works well in day-to-day terms, but is not such as to secure the place of education in the Council's strategic management.

84. Within the LEA's strategic plan, the priorities are well established. They accord a clear top priority to school improvement, and bring together the full range of the LEA's plans as well as the priorities for education set out in the BVPP. However, there are some missing areas: support for gifted and talented pupils and a coherent approach to combating social exclusion. There is also some lack of coherence in the plan as a whole because it is unclear about how the separate priorities relate to the role and vision for the LEA, the LEA's principles and aims, each of which is also set out in the strategic plan.

85. There are other features of the LEA as an organisation which display a much more effective approach. The education department has implemented a new management structure in which sub-divisions are responsible for the three areas which the strategic plan defines as the LEA's main functions, namely, the attainment of pupils, the inclusion of pupils and the provision or procurement of services. The services provided by the LEA are planned well: they are based on analyses of need; their work is systematically evaluated; and the results of the evaluations are fed back into the planning cycle so that the services can be further improved. The weakness of the evaluation element of the work is that there is, as yet, no system of performance management to assess the contribution of individual officers to particular parts of the work. There is an intention to introduce such a system, and when introduced it will in turn necessitate the more systematic use of clear measures of success which are at present missing from the EDP and from the evaluation of in-service courses. The education department is well placed to make the necessary changes to its arrangements for evaluation. In addition to its arrangements for service planning it has also recently produced an analysis of its own strengths and weaknesses. The accuracy of that analysis is, with very little exception, confirmed by this inspection.

86. The Council's recent changes to its political system are already enabling speedy decision making and are supported by a high quality of advice from officers. The scrutiny function, however, has yet to establish itself in practice as far as

educational matters are concerned. Members interviewed were concerned that the new structures are limiting the participation both of Council members who do not have cabinet posts, and of representatives of the wider educational community in discussion of, and consultation about, educational decisions. Some headteachers also take the view that they are now more remote from members.

87. These reservations notwithstanding, the school visits and discussion groups showed that, with little exception, the educational community is convinced of the value attached by the Council to education and the commitment of officers and members to school improvement. The schools also share the vision and priorities of the LEA, not least because the authority communicates and consults well with them. Some particularly productive communication is happening through the sets of educational video recordings it has produced to support teachers and the education department's use of its web site to spread good teaching. In these activities and in others, for example its support for a school with an experimental five-term year, the LEA is committed to innovation. In all of this, the schools see themselves as working in partnership with officers and members. The authority is led effectively.

88. The LEA works well with other bodies in the wider community, including the diocesan authorities, the police, the NHS trust, and the Humberside Partnership which provides for careers education as well as links with business. Relations with the EAZ are good. Since the EAZ was set up with minimal central staffing, most of the support and development services for schools and some for the zone's central management have, of necessity, been purchased from the LEA. Following the DfEE's decision to delay extending the finance of the EAZ, an LEA adviser has been seconded to take over as its acting director and, with the production of a revised development plan for the zone, the links have been further strengthened.

### **Management services**

89. With two exceptions, these services provide very good value for money, contribute to school improvement and provide an infrastructure on which school managers can rely. Fair Funding has worked well in the authority and has strengthened the relationship between schools and the education department. Schools will shortly be provided with more extensive advice on alternative providers as part of the strategy to ensure that LEA services are fully meeting the needs of schools in a cost-effective way. Support for property matters has been unsatisfactory and still has room for improvement, although the inspection revealed recent significant improvements.

90. All traded services are advertised corporately and in good time for schools to make informed choices. SLAs are clear and specify the performance standards to be expected. However, it is an unnecessary requirement for schools to sign up for three years, given that they can opt out by giving three months notice. Buy-back is high, and this results not from inertia on the part of the schools but from their satisfaction with the services provided: a position reached because service staff are solely concerned with, and are experienced in, issues relevant to schools.

91. The education department operates an annual service-testing regime. Schools' views are gathered each year and reported to members. Service managers can



demonstrate how these views are built into their subsequent years' development and improvement plans. Taking this forward into a formal Best Value regime should not prove difficult when a procurement strategy and a corporate approach to performance management are established.

### **Financial services**

92. Financial support for schools is very good. The modest size of the education finance team, together with their expertise and good leadership, enables them to offer a reasonably priced basic SLA with a growing range of additional services to meet particular needs. Reconciliation of accounts is increasingly completed electronically with problems resolved as part of the SLA. As a result, school finances are in a healthy state: licensed deficits are minimal in both number and scale, balances are reasonable, but where they are not, governors are required to provide justification.

93. The section has plans to develop the service which are timely, appropriate and achievable. It is proposing to provide more support for schools to reconcile their own accounts, expand the book-keeping service and increase headteachers' financial management capabilities by offering appropriate courses and improving the three year budget planning service. The school survey and visits confirmed that schools justifiably recognise the quality of this service.

94. A range of more generic services is also offered, where appropriate on a trading basis, by the Council's financial department. Payroll, exchequer and audit services all enjoy the same high level of regard by schools and they play their part in providing the secure financial base which the schools enjoy.

### **Personnel services**

95. Personnel support is excellent. Schools are provided with the appropriate documentary guidance and are kept informed of developments by a newsletter. The service is staffed appropriately to carry out basic administrative functions and to help resolve more complex casework, all at a transparent cost close to the median for similar authorities.

96. The service is particularly effective in areas of operation typically regarded as difficult for both schools and LEAs to resolve. For example, an officer is dedicated to helping reduce staff absence figures and the LEA has some of the lowest absence figures in the country. The authority inherited substantial early retirement commitments, which have been added to by reorganisations to remove surplus capacity. Further burdens on this expenditure are rightly being controlled by a range of measures involving occupational health advice, redeployment and brokering a 'New Start' for staff in another school where possible. In addition, officers support governors fully in matters of teachers' competence and discipline issues when this is necessary to promote school improvement. It is not surprising that schools rated this service highest of the 47 LEAs surveyed.

97. Support for ICT in management services is reported in Section 2.

## **Property management services**

98. Although there are signs of improvement, the schools receive poor support for property maintenance. Some schools are still unclear about the respective roles of the capital team and the architectural consultancy team. The service has not been customer focused and this has resulted in inefficiency typified by poor response times, poor communications and poor client support.

99. Although architectural services are delegated to schools, and currently 90 per cent subscribe to the SLA, some schools are doubtful that they will continue to do so. Evidence was provided by schools to suggest that quotations were sometimes inflated, and the management cost of projects is excessive. The education department is being charged unjustifiably high management costs because a lump sum is charged regardless of the volume of work, with further charges as actual work is completed.

100. Fair Funding and increased delegation to schools of property related funds are having a significant positive effect on service delivery, and school visits confirmed that headteachers were noting signs of improvement. The architectural consultancy team has recently carried out a wide ranging and very honest appraisal of its position, and has put in place a range of practical measures to meet the concerns raised by schools. However, whilst improvements are apparent, the main focus of the appraisal was to ensure jobs were protected rather than customers satisfied, and hence did not fully embrace Best Value principles.

101. The capital team within the education department is centrally funded and, as repairs and maintenance funds are increasingly delegated, its role in the day-to-day maintenance of school buildings provides poor value for money.

102. Asset management overall is satisfactory. Improvements are apparent but some aspects are in need of urgent attention. A poor inheritance, together with a poorly developed capital strategy, has resulted in a backlog of work estimated at around £40,000,000. However, investment levels have increased, and the LEA was in the top quarter of successful bids in the 1999 round of New Deal for Schools. Improvements to a significant number of schools' heating and security systems have been carried out recently with minimal disruption, and school visits confirmed the more positive outlook of headteachers.

103. The Asset Management Plan is being produced to time and suitability surveys are being undertaken in partnership with headteachers. Condition surveys were carried out efficiently and headteachers have had an opportunity to check the data. However, completed surveys with estimates for essential repair work were delivered without an opportunity for schools to discuss the implications. Furthermore, the local policy statement does not set out a transparent mechanism for schools to be involved in the prioritisation of projects. As a consequence, the LEA does not have a secure mechanism for ensuring that its strategic asset management plan accords with individual schools' development plans.

## **School meals service**

104. The school meals service is weak. Take-up is low, quality is poor and costs are very high. The original contract was poorly drafted and has resulted in over-staffing, with the consequent costs being met as a supplement to the contract and paid for out of the education budget. The LEA was slow in taking decisive action and the contract had to be extended for one year until March 2001.

105. However, the situation is now being tackled with some vigour and a solution is expected to be in place for April 2001. Headteachers and chairs of governing bodies have reached agreement on one of the proposals put forward by a consultant and a new specification has been put out to tender. Parents and governors were not fully consulted and this was part of the background to an adverse publicity campaign at the prospect of the removal of the hot meal option. Nevertheless, at the time of the inspection, elected members were, rightly, determined to seek much better value for money and concentrate resources on educational imperatives.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve strategic management:**

- strategic planning should be improved by ensuring a closer alignment between the Corporate management plan and the other levels of planning;
- the planning and evaluation of services should be improved by introducing a system of performance management;
- the property support to schools and overall asset management should be improved by:
  - i) clarifying the roles of the officers concerned, to reduce confusion and improve efficiency;
  - ii) developing, in collaboration with schools, a system to set priorities for capital projects;
  - iii) establishing a process by which school plans and the asset management plan are complementary, and where responsibilities are agreed; and
  - iv) reducing the costs of the management of project work; and
- the value for money of the school meals service should be improved by finding a more cost-effective means of providing an adequate mid-day meal.

## **SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION**

### **Strategy**

106. The LEA has produced a satisfactory policy and development plan for SEN. The plan specifies a range of suitable projects for development. These include the Parent Partnership Scheme, dyslexia training, the use of national training to meet the needs of autistic pupils and the deployment of teachers from special schools to provide training for teaching and non-teaching staff in mainstream schools. The SEN policy gives a clearer view than the development plan of the authority's intentions in developing area special schools that will provide support for other educational establishments.

107. The authority has taken positive steps to limit the number of statements. It uses a banding system which is applied after the assessment of individual pupils to allocate resources to statements. However, although the EDP has specific targets that focus clearly on SEN provision, the authority's intention to promote inclusion and develop the present provision in either special schools or units attached to mainstream schools is under-emphasised. The proposed consultation on new funding strategies for SEN is timely but it is not clear how the outcomes will be implemented. The Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) is an integral part of the strategy, but although it provides guidance on the current provision, it lacks clear targets, makes inadequate use of performance data and does not specify adequate success criteria.

### **Statutory duties**

108. The LEA is taking appropriate steps to meet its statutory duties in relation to SEN. It provides written guidance for parents about the provision available within and outside the authority. The assessment of children at Stage 4 of the Code of Practice is carried out within a reasonable time-scale but the production of statements within 18 weeks, although improving from 42 per cent in 1999 (rising to 85 per cent if exceptions are taken into account) to 47 per cent (rising to 83 per cent with exceptions) in 2000 is unsatisfactory.

109. Parental choice is given due regard and a high proportion of pupils with statements is included in mainstream schools (68 per cent). Although this fulfils parental requests, some schools do not have adequate arrangements to allow the pupils full access to the curriculum or independent access to the building.

110. The LEA is always represented at transitional reviews and also at annual reviews, if requested.

### **School improvement/value for money**

111. Schools understand the banding system adopted by the LEA and its financial arrangements for supporting the pupils but there are problems with the workings of the system. There are five bands for statemented pupils. Band one is for profound and multiple learning difficulties or for profound physical or sensory difficulties and, at the other end of the scale, band five is for less severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The high numbers of pupils at band five have a wide range of needs and the rationale for their assessment is not clear. Nor is the rationale for the placement

allocated to pupils in band one and band two, which can either be at a special school, or at a mainstream school with or without specialist provision. The arrangements made for under-fives vary. Some pre-school children are allocated a place at one area special school and start before their third birthday, but those allocated to the other attend a different range of alternative provision until they are five.

112. School visits showed the educational psychology service (EPS) gives satisfactory support. The visits confirmed the schools' judgements in the survey. However, four schools visited found that there were unsatisfactory time delays in obtaining EPS support, although all felt that the actual quality of support when it arrived was satisfactory or better.

113. The behaviour support service, the SEN support service and the services for visually impaired, hearing impaired and physically disabled pupils are all providing at least satisfactory advice and guidance to schools, and so helping them to improve the quality of their provision.

114. The pre-school assessment team plays an important role in the early assessment and intervention for pupils in the non-statutory age group. The link with pre-school providers and with the Sure Start initiative is a positive one, and the team works effectively and in a multi-disciplinary way with the health and social services.

115. In comparison with national averages, the LEA delegates more money to schools and retains less at the centre. However, it does not evaluate the effectiveness with which delegated funds are used, and as a consequence it is not clear that the money provides good value.

## **Analysis**

116. The LEA generally exercises its SEN functions well. The documentation supporting the statementing process is of good quality and the well-organised individual pupil files demonstrate attention to detail in supporting SEN pupils. The LEA is aware of the cost implications for pupils placed out of the authority and prefers where appropriate, to use its own provision. The links established with other authorities are enabling the LEA to take up cost effective places for low incidence disabilities and for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and to purchase expertise and advice for schools and for INSET provision.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve special educational provision:**

- more statements should be processed within 18 weeks;
- the banding system should enable each pupil's need to be met fully;
- the placement of pupils with statements should provide pupils with full access to all aspects of schooling with as much independence as possible;

- delegated funds for SEN should be effectively evaluated to ensure they provide value for money.

## SECTION 5: ACCESS

### The supply of school places

117. Although surplus capacity remains an issue for the LEA, performance to date and value for money in the planning of school places have been good. The LEA inherited a large number of surplus places and took decisive action by drawing up a three-year plan to remove 1760 places. The current position is shown below:

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
Overall surplus (%)	15.1	6.1
% of schools with over 25% surplus	35.5	8.3

118. Overall surplus is slightly higher than recommended (around ten per cent) and there are too many pockets of high surplus, particularly in primaries.

119. Nevertheless, the LEA's use of data is sound and this, together with its other operations, has been endorsed by the district auditor (DA). Current predictions show a sharp decline in the primary school population, and after short-term growth at secondary level, a long-term decline here also. Plans to deal with this by taking out a further 2000 places over the next four years are well developed, and include the inevitable need for school closures. All schools with significant surplus have been contacted and detailed discussions with senior officers have begun. All other schools have been made aware of the issue, and school visits confirmed that headteachers in relevant schools had been briefed and understood the need for action. Senior elected members have properly been briefed on the need for action and the plan will be presented to cabinet and the school organisation committee later in the term. Preparations so far are sound and history suggests that the LEA will resolve the problem in a way that focuses on school improvement.

120. The LEA has acted on the DA's recommendation to provide, where resources allow, accommodation at popular schools, and the infant class size plan has been implemented successfully. However, there remains the unresolved issue of small sixth forms.

### Admissions

121. Arrangements for admissions work well. Parental information and admissions criteria are clear and meet statutory requirements. There is a unified timetable and common application forms; 94 per cent of parents get their first preference of school and 74 per cent of mid-year appeals are heard within 15 days. All normal secondary transfer appeals are resolved by the spring half term.

122. Recent improvements have largely arisen from improved consultation and include personalised letters to parents of transferring pupils, restructured catchment areas in Cleethorpes and a growing use of technology to make the work more efficient. As a result secondary headteachers are kept updated as the admissions process unfolds, parental preferences are analysed, pupil mobility is being tracked and better data are being provided to the officers who plan school places.

## **Provision of education otherwise than at school**

123. Four services are involved. Those supporting pupils in hospital, pupils being educated by their parents and pregnant schoolgirls are adequate; that which provides home tuition is poor. The support for pupils in hospital provides each pupil with approximately three hours tuition a day. This provision is flexible so as to meet the needs of each pupil according to their medical condition. Support for education provided by parents at home is satisfactory. There are effective arrangements for advisers to visit homes and the visits are followed by clear letters to parents about the quality of provision they are making. The detail in home visit records is more descriptive than evaluative but the LEA has challenged the quality of provision made by some parents. The 'Young Mums Unit' provides places for 25 pupils on a part time basis for 15 hours per week. This is a highly necessary service in this LEA where there is one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the country.

124. The support for home tuition is poor. Children in public care get ten hours a week and Year 11 pupils taking examinations are offered up to ten hours a week but only in the summer term. All other pupils are provided with only five hours a week, regardless of age or ability. The authority has not formulated a plan to increase this time. Home tutors use a diary to record the content of the teaching. As a description of what has been done the records are adequate, but they fail to provide a proper assessment of the pupils' progress and attainment.

125. The costs of these services are lower than the national average. Overall, the services provide sound value for money in support for hospital tuition, pregnant schoolgirls and education provided by parents. The amount of teaching and the assessment of quality provided by the home tuition service are inadequate.

## **Attendance**

126. Support for schools in raising attendance is provided by the education welfare service which recently underwent a Best Value review. This, and the current inspection, revealed that the weakness in attendance is at secondary level. Since 1995 it has always been below national averages, and sometimes below the averages of similar authorities. Secondary school unauthorised absence has been a significant problem over this time. It has decreased a little, and the LEA just missed its EDP target of 1.6 per cent for last year. It has much work to do reach the 2000/01 and 2001/02 targets of 1.2 per cent and 0.9 per cent respectively.

127. Schools take a very positive view of the LEA's support for attendance. The school survey produced a response significantly more positive than that achieved by other LEAs. Schools appreciate the work of the EWS in promoting better school attendance. Individual educational welfare officers maintain good contact with schools and are working productively with teachers to introduce a first day response strategy to deal with absences. Nevertheless, this support has not had the necessary effect on secondary pupils' attendance and the performance of the EWS can only be rated as fair.



128. Data are collected and appropriately analysed for trends and significance, but the analysis does not include the attendance of particular groups such as children in public care or minority ethnic children.

129. The EWS has some chance of improving to meet the challenges of the review. There were, however, weaknesses in the Best Value review. The consultation process did not pay adequate attention to headteachers' comments as well as omitting other client groups. There was incomplete specification of the action required of the service and no use of performance indicators linked specifically to a costed action plan. The most serious weakness was the lack of rigorous challenge to the assumption that a competitive supplier could not be found.

### **Behaviour support**

130. Although the quality of support to improve behaviour in schools is sound, the planning of the service is weak.

131. The behaviour support strategy is a major theme of the EDP. There is clear information about the provision to be made but there is not enough about the planned impact on pupils' attainment, nor are there quantified targets against which the progress of the LEA's behaviour strategy can be measured. Central to the strategy are the deployment of the multi agency support team (MAST), the pupil inclusion team (PIT) and the outreach work of the pupil referral unit (PRU). The intention of MAST to work with the pupils at risk of exclusion and PIT to intervene quickly with excluded pupils is working well in practice and is appreciated by schools. Although there is more variation in levels of exclusion in primary than in secondary schools, permanent exclusions for both phases have mostly been similar to national averages and those of similar LEAs since 1995. During the last financial year the total number of permanent exclusions reduced by eight, to 36.

132. The outreach support provided for schools is satisfactory, but the service has only a small number of staff, there being one full-time equivalent (FTE) at primary level and 1.2 FTE at secondary level. However, although only three schools visited found the current support too low, the schools' survey showed a mixed response to the LEA's behavioural support provision.

133. The PRU provides satisfactory support for pupils excluded from school. The education department's recent review of the PRU's quality of behaviour support has shown the need to improve various matters, including staffing and line management. However, the review lacks robust performance data and clear evaluative judgements about the success or otherwise of the existing provision. These are significant weaknesses in the document.

134. The Behaviour Support Plan is unsatisfactory. It adequately describes the existing provision but fails to analyse the future needs of children or the schools in the authority. Targets are not clear, success criteria are vague and no time-scales are given for completion of tasks.

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

135. The provision for health, safety, welfare and child protection is effective for the most part, but there are weaknesses in the arrangements for training in child protection. The authority has recently published a thorough document that covers important aspects of safety legislation. The additional curricular publications for food and textiles and physical education, however, are no longer up-to-date. The system for obtaining telephone assistance from the health and safety officer works well. Annual health and safety checks are appreciated by schools and are generally very thorough. The child protection register is updated annually and includes details of the named senior teacher in each school and a training history of courses attended by all staff. However, the education department does not pursue those schools whose records indicate a lack of recent and relevant training. This aspect of the service is unsatisfactory. The area child protection committee (ACPC) has been revamped and now includes an independent chair and coordinator. This is a proper response to the recent criticisms of the Social Services Inspectorate. The ACPC training programme is too narrow in scope.

## **Children in public care**

136. Although there are designated education welfare officers and youth workers for young people in residential units, the support for young people in public care (YPPC) is unsatisfactory. Both the EDP and the Quality Protects Management Action Plan are weak in identifying the needs of these children, and there is no analysis of pupils' prior attainment to provide an adequate basis for setting GCSE targets for YPPC. This year, no pupil achieved five A\* - C grades but 11 per cent achieved four such grades. Although 44 per cent achieved one A\* - G grade, this fell well short of the 50 per cent target. The authority recognises its failings in this area and has recently appointed a coordinator, jointly funded by the social services and education departments, to work exclusively on improving the service. The schools' survey graded support for YPPC significantly poorer than in other LEAs. This view was confirmed during school visits. However, the coordinator's appointment is a visible example of collaborative working between education and social services and the recently compiled register of YPPC is an effective first outcome of this joint venture.

## **Ethnic minority children**

137. The number of ethnic minority pupils in the LEA's schools is low. There are currently no Traveller children in the area. Although the support as revealed by the school visits where the issue was inspected is satisfactory, there are specific weaknesses.

138. The Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG) action plan is well focused on raising attainment, and includes challenging targets that are just higher than the overall performance for North East Lincolnshire schools at the end of Key Stage 2 and for 5A\* - C grades at GCSE. However, there is no systematic monitoring of performance of different ethnic groups. This weakness is contrary to the stated intentions in the EMTAG action plan and the EDP. There is a referral system for support for English as an additional language (EAL) that schools

understand but the criteria for time allocation from the bilingual support teacher are not clear. There has been a recent initiative to build an EAL strand into the national literacy strategy work. This initiative is sound, but weakened by the failure to monitor the performance of ethnic minority pupils.

### **Gifted and talented pupils**

139. The education department is aware of a number of initiatives in the schools to support these pupils, for example, in mathematics, literacy, ICT, modern foreign languages, sport, music, science and technology. The LEA has also been successful in securing SRB funds for 'regeneration through enterprise', which included a proposal to establish an enterprise college for talented young people to develop their ideas and talents across a broad front. The EDP mentions exceptionally able pupils but does not define the groups concerned or the provision to be made for them. Although the LEA is gathering individual pupil level data for each key stage, there is no detailed analysis of pupils' performance at the higher end of the attainment range. There is a nominated LEA adviser who co-ordinates a response to enquiries about gifted and talented pupils, but there is no clear strategic approach to meet the educational needs of gifted and talented pupils. As a result, such initiatives as there are are piecemeal.

### **Social exclusion**

140. The LEA's approach to social exclusion, including its response to the Macpherson inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, is not coherent enough to be effective. It is strategically weak. A draft paper on equality and ethnicity has been produced and is to be circulated to each governing body shortly. The paper raises some fundamental questions and makes some clear recommendations but there are as yet no clear plans for its implementation. The LEA has requested that schools record racist incidents but has done nothing to analyse and respond to the findings.

141. The successful education action zone (EAZ) bid and SRB projects have brought some additional resources into the authority in support of social inclusion. Support for under-fives including Sure Start, the work of MAST and PIT, the outreach support from the PRU and the attendance work of the EWS have also contributed to inclusion. However, there is little evidence of a coherent approach covering all groups in danger of social exclusion. The reorganisation of the education department to provide for a sub-division specifically responsible for inclusion signals the LEA's wish to move forward in this matter, and provides the potential for it to do so.

### **Recommendations**

#### **In order to improve access to education:**

- the time allocation of home tuition should be increased and bring it in line with equivalent full time provision;

- more effective support to improve attendance at secondary level should be provided in particular, to reduce the level of unauthorised absence;
- the planning of support for behaviour should be improved with the use of clear performance indicators to show what improvements will be made and what the effects will be on the standards achieved by pupils;
- support for the child protection service should be improved by providing a broader training programme for named child protection teachers and ensuring that they attend;
- the stated intentions of the EMTAG Action Plan and EDP should be fulfilled to monitor the attainment of ethnic minority pupils as an aid to raising standards;
- a strategy to improve the opportunities available to gifted and talented pupils should be developed, supported by detailed analysis of their performance; and
- a strategy to promote social inclusion should be developed, including clear procedures for combating racism.

## **APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

- the EDP should be improved by establishing clearer links between the audit of performance and the priorities for activity, and by making more use of measurable criteria for success in the implementation of activities .
- the Council should show more clearly how its resources are allocated to its priorities;
- a capital strategy to show how the Council will gain access to capital funds should be developed and priorities set for their use; and
- more rigour in challenge and competition in Best Value reviews should be ensured by developing a procurement strategy consistent with Best Value principles.

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

- advisers should use the information they have about the schools to identify, in advance of their visits, the matters about which they are going to challenge the schools;
- there should be an evaluation of the effects of staff development work on practice in schools;
- the use of performance data should be improved by ensuring that the information in the pupil achievement database reflects as accurately as possible the pupils attending the school, and by providing more effective guidance and training in the target setting process to differentiate between forecasts and targets.
- support for ICT should be improved by;
  - (iv) ensuring that in planning for ICT development greater prominence is given to improving teaching, learning and attainment levels;
  - (v) ensuring that training and development for teachers in ICT is more accurately targeted on their needs; and
  - (vi) providing training and support to help schools make more use of ICT in management and in the analysis and transmission of data;
- support for schools causing concern should be improved by introducing an additional category of concern to distinguish the schools requiring extra support from those with major problems;
- support for the management of secondary schools and the middle management of both primary and secondary schools should be improved; and

- pending the completion of the 14-19 area plan and a more permanent resolution of the present difficulties with post-16 provision in Cleethorpes and Immingham, the LEA should work with the schools to ensure that the present provision is better matched to the needs of the students and less heavily subsidised by the diversion of resources from the 11-16 age group.

**In order to improve strategic management:**

- strategic planning should be improved by ensuring a closer alignment between the Corporate management plan and the other levels of planning;
- the planning and evaluation of services should be improved by introducing a system of performance management;
- the property support to schools and overall asset management should be improved by:
  - v) clarifying the roles of the officers concerned, to reduce confusion and improve efficiency;
  - vi) developing, in collaboration with schools, a system to set priorities for capital projects;
  - vii) establishing a process by which school plans and the asset management plan are complementary, and where responsibilities are agreed; and
  - viii) reducing the costs of the management of project work; and
- the value for money of the school meals service should be improved by finding a more cost-effective means of providing an adequate mid-day meal.

**In order to improve special educational provision:**

- more statements should be processed within 18 weeks;
- the banding system should enable each pupil's need to be met fully;
- the placement of pupils with statements should provide pupils with full access to all aspects of schooling with as much independence as possible;
- delegated funds for SEN should be effectively evaluated to ensure they provide value for money.

**In order to improve access to education:**

- the time allocation of home tuition should be increased and bring it in line with equivalent full time provision;
- more effective support to improve attendance at secondary level should be provided in particular, to reduce the level of unauthorised absence;

- the planning of support for behaviour should be improved with the use of clear performance indicators to show what improvements will be made and what the effects will be on the standards achieved by pupils;
- support for the child protection service should be improved by providing a broader training programme for named child protection teachers and ensuring that they attend;
- the stated intentions of the EMTAG Action Plan and EDP should be fulfilled to monitor the attainment of ethnic minority pupils as an aid to raising standards;
- a strategy to improve the opportunities available to gifted and talented pupils should be developed, supported by detailed analysis of their performance; and
- a strategy to promote social inclusion should be developed, including clear procedures for combating racism.

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