



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF  
MEDWAY  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

**January 2002**

**Lead Inspector: Christine Brown HMI**

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

## **CONTENTS**

## **PARAGRAPHS**

**INTRODUCTION** 1 - 3

**COMMENTARY** 4 - 11

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

Context 12 - 18

Performance 19

Funding 20 - 24

Council structure 25 - 27

The Education Development Plan 28 - 33

The allocation of resources to priorities 34 - 40

Best Value 41 - 42

### **SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

Monitoring, challenge, support and intervention 43 - 47

Collection and analysis of data 48 - 50

Support for literacy 51 - 54

Support for numeracy 55 - 58

Support for information and communication technology 59 - 61

Support for schools causing concern 62 - 65

Support for governors 66 - 69

Support for school management 70 - 75

Support for improving standards in the early years 76 - 78

Support for post-16 education 79 - 81

Support for gifted and talented pupils 82 - 83

### **SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

Corporate planning 84 - 89

Partnership 90 - 92

Management services 93 - 99

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

Strategy 100 - 103

Statutory obligations 104 - 106

Improvement and value for money 107 - 109

## **SECTION 5: ACCESS**

The supply of school places	110 - 112
Asset management planning	113 - 114
Admissions	115 - 117
Social exclusion	118 - 120
Measures to combat racism	121 - 122
Provision of education otherwise than at school	123 - 126
Attendance	127 - 128
Behaviour support	129 - 133
Health, safety, welfare, child protection	134 - 136
Children in public care	137 - 138
Ethnic minority children	139 - 141

## **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* (September 2000) which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999 insofar as it relates to the work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.
2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to all schools. The response rate was 81 per cent.
3. The inspection sought to establish the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 12 primary schools, four secondary schools, two special schools, a primary school with a unit for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties 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, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money. Evidence was also drawn from other HMI visits to schools in the LEA as part of their national monitoring work.

## COMMENTARY

4. Medway became a unitary authority in April 1998 and is one of the most recent LEAs to be established. Unemployment in the area is relatively low but there are areas with high levels of social deprivation. The population includes many families who have no experience of higher education. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority heritage groups is well below the national average. The LEA has inherited a mixture of selective and non-selective systems of secondary education, which complicates admissions procedures, planning for school organisation and provision of places.

5. Standards of attainment are broadly in line with national averages. The rates of improvement have been at or above the national trend with the exception of those achieved by 11-year-olds, where the results are below the national average. For 11-year-olds the gap between Medway and the national results and the disparity between the performance of boys and girls are widening. Across the authority there is extensive variation in the performance of schools and over a quarter are underachieving when compared with like schools. As elsewhere, the recruitment and retention of teachers and headteachers is a problem that poses an increasing threat to school improvement.

6. Corporate planning is effective. The council is strongly customer-focused and has well-developed mechanisms for consulting the community. Good progress has been made in building productive partnerships with external agencies and in establishing constructive relationships with schools and the Education Action Zone. The council and its schools share a clear commitment to raising achievement, to equal opportunities and to social inclusion. Members provide satisfactory leadership. Resources are targeted appropriately in line with corporate policies and programmes of social and economic regeneration. Decision-making is open and transparent. Many inherited difficulties in areas such as school places and buildings have been tackled progressively. There has been increased resolve to find new solutions to long-standing problems such as some uneconomical arrangements of sixth-form provision and the high expenditure on pupils with special educational needs. Many relevant strategies, including those aimed at lifting expectations and increasing the take-up of further and higher education are still in the early stages of implementation and have yet to be manifested in higher standards.

7. The strategy for school improvement is developing steadily. The LEA, like its schools, is facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. Until posts were re-graded earlier this year the LEA had difficulty in attracting sufficient high calibre advisory staff to meet the demands. Vacancies have not only significantly increased the workload of the small central team but have constrained the rate of improvement in areas such as literacy and numeracy.

8. There has been a determined effort to manage the development of special educational needs and an increase in the pace of introduction of new initiatives. The changes planned have the potential to secure improvement. However, the strategy has not yet been translated into a manageable sequence of actions that allows schools to understand the intentions or to have confidence in the plans. Services to

support educational inclusion are sound. There are strengths in the way support is co-ordinated to improve attendance and for the benefit of children in public care. There are weaknesses in the strategy for developing support for ethnic minority pupils, despite sound practice on the ground. Progress, though uneven, has been made in reducing permanent exclusions but rates of permanent exclusions from both the primary and secondary sectors remain too high.

9. The LEA performs almost all of its functions at least satisfactorily and many of them well. Particular strengths of the LEA include:

- support for early years education;
- support to school governors;
- the strategy and support for the development of information and communication technology within the curriculum;
- the clarity and consistency of corporate plans;
- the leadership of senior officers and the advice given to elected members;
- partnership work with outside agencies and especially measures to raise expectations and combat the effects of social disadvantage;
- provision of personnel services to schools;
- support to raise the attainment of young people in public care;
- support provided by the education welfare service; and
- support provided by the educational psychology service.

10. There are weaknesses, but these are greatly outweighed by the overall strengths of the LEA. Weaknesses are:

- the implementation of the strategy for special educational needs;
- the strategy for supporting ethnic minority pupils; and
- catering services.

11. The authority has the energy, drive and ambition to make a difference. Senior officers provide effective leadership. Some key inherited challenges have been tackled successfully and aspirations have been raised. There is, however, much more to be achieved if the LEA is to meet its own performance targets and is to be fully successful in supporting schools to meet their targets, especially at Key Stage 2. The inspection team is confident that the LEA is capable of responding to the recommendations in the report, and of continuing to make progress.

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

### **Context**

12. Medway became a unitary authority in April 1998 and is one of the most recent LEAs to be established. The authority has a population of almost a quarter of a million. It comprises the mainly urban areas of Rochester, Strood, Chatham, Gillingham, Rainham and their outlying villages and communities. The area also contains a large and fairly isolated rural hinterland. The level of unemployment within the authority is below the national average and just slightly above the average for the south east.

13. Medway has some areas with high levels of deprivation; affluent wards are juxtaposed with some of the poorest, especially in Gillingham and Chatham. It is in these deprived areas where the LEA focuses much of its most intensive work. In addition, there is significant underachievement in rural communities and the LEA also targets resources within these areas. The population includes many families with no previous experience of higher education. Rates of participation in post-16 learning and progression to university have been low. In Medway only 3.8 per cent of the adult population are graduates compared with 7.2 per cent nationally.

14. The school population is about 45,000, including just over 600 children in maintained nursery provision. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is in line with national averages for both primary-aged and secondary-aged pupils. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is higher than the national average for primary-aged pupils and in line with the national average for secondary-aged pupils. The percentage of ethnic minority pupils, at just over five per cent, is well below the national average of 12 per cent. Few pupils have English as an additional language. All three and four-year-olds can receive free part-time nursery education if their parents wish.

15. Medway has 90 primary schools, ten of which have nursery units. Primary education takes the form of either separate infant and junior schools or all-through primary schools. Ten primary schools are voluntary aided and seven are voluntary controlled. Medway's primary schools are large by national standards. Around one-third have more than 300 pupils and only two have fewer than 100 pupils.

16. The LEA has a particularly diverse and unusual mix of 19 secondary schools. Two are comprehensive, 10 others are non-selective high schools, six are grammar schools and one is a bilateral school. Five of the grammar schools, and the bilateral school, are single-sex. Seven of the secondary schools have foundation status, one is voluntary aided, one is voluntary controlled and the rest are community schools. Three secondary schools have technology college status and one has language college status. All but one of the secondary schools has a sixth form. Sixth forms range in size from under 20 students to over 300; around one-third have fewer than 50 students.

17. There are three special schools. Twelve primary and two secondary schools have special units, referred to as 'centres' which cater for a variety of special

educational needs. Medway also has two pupil referral units and a hospital school room.

18. One secondary school, 15 primary schools and one special school in the north Gillingham area form an Education Action Zone (EAZ). The LEA played a leading role in its establishment in January 2000.

## **Performance**

19. A detailed analysis of the performance of schools in Medway has been supplied to the LEA in the form of a statistical profile, from which the following has been extracted:

- OFSTED inspection data indicates that attainment on entry to primary schools is broadly in line with attainment in similar authorities<sup>1</sup> and slightly less favourable than attainment found nationally.
- Attainment in the 2000 tests for seven-year-olds, the national English and mathematics tests for 14-year-olds, results at GCSE and the average point score of pupils at A-level were in line with national averages and in line with or above averages achieved in similar authorities.
- Attainment in the 2000 English test for 11-year-olds was below the national average but in line with the average in similar authorities. Attainment in the mathematics test for 11-year-olds was below both the national average and that achieved in similar authorities.
- Since 1998, improvements in the performance of seven year-olds, of 14-year-olds, at GCSE and at A-level have matched or exceeded national trends. Despite an overall trend towards improvement, the gap between Medway and national results at Key Stage 2 has widened.
- There is some evidence of under-performance by boys, which reflects the national picture. There is wide variation in the performance of schools; for example in 2000 the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 or above in English and mathematics tests for 11 year-olds ranged from below 50 per cent to over 80 per cent. A number of schools facing challenging circumstances have made very little progress in improving their higher grade GCSE results in the last three years. However, provisional results for 2001 show significant improvements.
- The most recent OFSTED inspection data indicates that the percentage of primary and secondary schools judged to be good or very good is broadly in line with national averages.
- The rate of permanent exclusion is well above the national average for primary and above the national average for secondary schools.

---

<sup>1</sup> The LEAs closest statistical neighbours are: Calderdale, Stockton-on-Tees, Rotherham, Doncaster, Kirklees, Hillingdon, Darlington, Portsmouth, Bolton, Torbay.



- Attendance, including the rates of authorised and unauthorised absences in both primary and secondary schools, is in line with national averages.
- Since the LEA was established, five primary schools have been found by OFSTED to require special measures and seven primary schools to have serious weaknesses. Five schools have been removed from special measures. At the time of the inspection one primary school was deemed to require special measures. In addition, the LEA had identified five primary and two secondary schools as causing serious concern.

## **Funding**

20. Medway's education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) per pupil for 2001/2002 is in line with its statistical neighbours and the unitary average but 4.9 per cent below the average for England. The council education SSA has increased faster than the national average for the past two years.

21. Since it was established in 1998, the council has spent below the education SSA, although it has moved nearer to it in successive years. Expenditure was only marginally below the education SSA in 2000/2001 and for the current year the education budget has been set at the SSA. Medway has taken up all of its Standards Fund options.

22. The level of delegation for 2000/2001 was 84.7 per cent, compared with an average of 84.2 per cent in unitary authorities. This has increased to 86.2 per cent in 2001/2002. Individual school budgets (ISB) per pupil for 2000/2001 are above the unitary average for primary and secondary schools.

### **Schools delegated budgets**

£ per pupil	Primary £ per pupil	Secondary £ per pupil
Medway	1,899	2,548
Statistical Neighbours	1,761	2,484
Unitary	1,807	2,524

Source: CIPFA education budget statistics 2000/2001

23. Centrally retained funding (£422 per pupil) is in line with the unitary average (£427 per pupil), although below the national average (£446 per pupil). Medway spends more on SEN in total than similar authorities and the national average by six per cent and four per cent respectively. It also spends a higher than average proportion of the SEN expenditure on pupils without statements.

24. The education capital programme is over £12.5 million and includes major school extensions and two new schools. Private developer contributions will exceed £0.5 million in 2001/2002. The LEA has secured formula capital allocations from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as a result of satisfactory progress on its

Asset Management Plan and is currently preparing a Public Finance Initiative bid for the replacement or partial replacement of school buildings.

### **Council structure**

25. Medway council has 80 members comprising 38 Conservatives, 25 Labour, 15 Liberal Democrats and two Independent Liberal Democrats. There is broad cross-party consensus on policy and priorities for education with the needs of learners firmly and appropriately at the heart. The decision-making process is transparent.

26. Until October 2001, the council functioned with a traditional structure that operated through committees, including an education committee and a resources and performance monitoring sub-committee. Just prior to the inspection the council implemented a modernised political management structure. In the new system, a leader, a deputy leader and eight cabinet members from the Conservative group make most decisions about how services should be delivered and how policies are put into practice. Meetings of the cabinet are open to the public. Overview and scrutiny committees hold cabinet to account, undertake external scrutiny, develop and review policy and consider Best Value reviews. For education, there is a youth and education scrutiny committee made up of non-cabinet members including two parent governors and two diocesan representatives. Labour and Liberal Democrat members chair the overview and scrutiny committees. The full council decides on the budget and makes major policy decisions. Whilst the new arrangements appear logical and feasible, it is too early to evaluate their impact.

27. In early 2001 a council-wide reorganisation took place, which was accompanied by a major office move for education services. The re-organisation strengthened the links between education, leisure, libraries and the arts. The new Education and Leisure Department is one of four directorates under the line management of the chief executive. It has a structure that includes a director and four assistant directors responsible for school services, lifelong learning, leisure and business services.

### **The Education Development Plan**

28. The Education Development Plan (EDP) was approved for three years subject to the general conditions applicable to all LEAs. The plan has strengths, but also significant weaknesses. The priorities are derived from a detailed audit of the LEA's performance, which makes good use of OFSTED and LEA data. The plan has a strong local flavour and suitably reflects national priorities. Clear links are made with the council's strategic plans; sound links are established with other statutory plans and the Education Action Zone plans. There is a sound process through which service plans are related to EDP priorities and whereby EDP activities are translated into action plans for individual officers. The priorities of the plan, now in its third year, have remained the same:

- raising expectations and standards;
- improving the quality of leadership and management;
- improving the quality of teaching and learning;
- providing challenge and support for schools causing concern;

- supporting pupils' needs that impact on learning; and
- engaging parents and the local community in raising expectations and standards.

29. The major weakness in the plan is that it proposes too many activities and action points. Whilst many of these are useful and practical they tend to obscure and dilute the main purposes of raising expectations and improving standards. In places it is difficult to see the relationship between the overall purpose and suggested activities, or to predict what will be included under the different headings. The need to improve the attainment of boys, although recognised, does not receive sufficient attention. There are other shortcomings. Overarching success criteria for the priorities are a useful addition to the plan but in general they are too vague and, unlike the majority of success criteria for individual actions, are not measurable. Deadlines for some actions are imprecise and not set against clear milestones to facilitate monitoring of progress. The rationale behind activities designed to raise standards within ethnic minority groups is unclear.

### **Recommendations**

For the Education Development Plan 2002-7:

- identify a more limited number of tightly-focused activities and concentrate especially on those areas that contribute strongly to helping schools reach their targets; and
- improve the quality of overarching success criteria and identify clear timescales and milestones to facilitate the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress.

30. Consultation on the EDP has been thorough. The school survey and visits to schools confirm that there is sound understanding of the EDP and broad support for its priorities. Most of the schools visited felt the plan was relevant to their own priorities.

31. There are clear systems for monitoring the progress of the EDP that include arrangements for the appropriate involvement of headteachers. Elected members receive regular and useful reports on progress towards meeting the success criteria. Constructive summaries have been produced each year identifying key EDP achievements and areas for further development.

32. Despite significant weaknesses within the plan itself, the EDP is being implemented with success and satisfactory progress is being made overall. The strategy for supporting secondary schools in challenging circumstances has helped raise standards in six out of the seven schools involved. The quality of leadership and management within primary schools and the quality of teaching at both phases are improving. Good progress is being made in helping schools implement self-review. There has been a significant reduction in the proportion of schools designated as having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures. Sound progress has been made towards meeting targets for improving attendance.

33. The LEA has set highly challenging targets for Key Stage 2 and GCSE. Provisional results for 2001 indicate that the LEA has not met its interim targets,

although for GCSE it has closed the gap between the targets set and actual grades attained. At Key Stage 2 the gap between Medway and national results has widened and the disparity between the performance of boys and girls has become more acute. The LEA is not on course to meet its 2002 targets at Key Stage 2 and will find meeting GCSE targets a challenge.

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

34. The council's allocation of resources to agreed priorities is satisfactory overall, although there is a lack of transparency in the allocation of corporate overheads and in the costing of individual traded services.

35. The council has a clear budget strategy. Spending on education has increased significantly since reorganisation and now matches Standard Spending Assessment (SSA). The council is committed to ensuring that future increases in education SSAs are passed to the education budget. There is, however, a lack of transparency in the allocation of corporate overheads and, apart from that for information technology, an absence of service level agreements against which cost effectiveness and value for money of corporate services can be judged. Without such information, it is difficult for the education service to ascertain whether the £4 million identified as recharges represent best value.

#### **Recommendations**

- review the allocation and reporting of corporate recharges in order to make them more transparent; and
- establish mechanisms to allow greater client control of corporately delivered services.

36. Consultation with schools on the budget is timely and effective. Indicative budget information is helpfully shared with schools in the autumn term, provisional budgets are sent in January and final budgets distributed to schools in mid-February. Documentation is comprehensive and information is presented clearly.

37. The LEA reviews its school funding formula in close partnership with schools. Although the 2001/2002 funding model has been simplified it remains too complex. Plans are in place to undertake a review of school funding to ensure it links closely to need. As a result of earlier decisions Medway will achieve over 87 per cent delegation next year and is consulting schools on further delegation in the future.

38. The true costs of some traded services are not readily apparent. There are examples of services where part of the budget has been delegated to schools although the service budget has not been reduced in proportion.

## **Recommendation**

- ensure greater transparency in the costs of services where budgets are partly retained by the LEA and partly delegated to schools.

39. Control of the centrally retained education budget is sound. Expenditure in the previous financial year was within one per cent of the budgets, and forecasts for the current year suggest a similar position. Budget planning is timely and accurate. Budget decisions are reflected in individual service plans at a general level, but not yet at the level of specific activities. Centrally retained education budgets have been reduced each year with a corresponding growth in school budgets.

40. The overall primary school balances are over 10 per cent and are too high. Although it has been slow to act, the LEA now has an appropriate strategy for monitoring school balances and for challenging those with excessive surpluses; as yet, there is insufficient evidence of its effectiveness. Secondary school balances, at about 5 per cent overall, are not excessive. Only two secondary schools are in deficit.

## **Best Value**

41. Arrangements to meet Best Value requirements are satisfactory overall, although support and monitoring of schools' application of the principles of best value are a weakness. Medway has a sound corporate Best Value framework based on the business excellence model. The Best Value Performance Plan for 2001/2002 was approved without qualification by the external auditor. The programme of reviews appropriately covers service areas of high risk or those where there are opportunities to make efficiency savings. The framework is supported by a comprehensive toolkit, but this is rightly seen as too elaborate and distracting; plans are in place to simplify it so that a greater emphasis is placed on improvement rather than on the process of reviews. Good corporate support has been available to services undertaking Best Value reviews. For example, a central budget of £150,000 has been made available to help services under review employ external consultants to assist with obtaining comparative data. However, members' involvement during reviews has been inconsistent and arrangements are being developed to involve them more fully. There is a Best Value review of SEN in progress, due to be completed in December 2001.

42. Most schools visited during the inspection were unclear about the principles of Best Value. Schools are required by the LEA's scheme of delegation to submit a statement with their budget plan each year setting out what they will do to implement the principles of Best Value but are not doing so. The LEA has failed to engage schools sufficiently in the Best Value principles and written guidance is inadequate.

## **Recommendations**

- strengthen and reinforce the written guidance to schools on the principles of Best Value;
- ensure that schools submit a statement setting out how they are meeting Best Value principles; and
- use the information to shape differentiated support.

## SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### Monitoring, challenge, support and intervention

43. The LEA performs its functions of monitoring, challenge, support and intervention competently. Evidence from school visits, focus group interviews and the school survey indicates that schools have been consulted on, and informed about, procedures. Arrangements support autonomy and school self-improvement. The new LEA invested productive time and effort in building up school profiles and now knows its schools well. All of the evidence available is used to place schools in one of five categories. There is a suitably differentiated and appropriate system that allocates time for monitoring and support in proportion to the needs of individual schools. There is a shared agenda for any visits made to schools that provide a sound foundation upon which to build effective monitoring and challenge. Evidence from school visits and files shows that, where there have been concerns, management and attainment are improving, but in some schools not as quickly as necessary.

44. The monitoring system is focused appropriately on school improvement and the development of school self-review. Where visits are made, these regularly include joint observations and other work with school staff. In all schools visited suitable emphasis had been given to developing the competence of the senior management team and subject leaders to monitor and review the work of the school. However, in a quarter of primary schools visited, the move towards developing skills of school self-review has led to too much prominence given to classroom observation and to the monitoring of teaching. For a few schools requiring intensive focus this was at the expense of the much-needed use of consultant time to work alongside teachers in the classroom demonstrating lessons and improving teaching skills. For all schools the outcome of monitoring visits is an oral feedback, supported by a written note of visit that is sent to the headteacher; more recently, reports and notes of visit have also been copied to the chair of governors. The best of the written feedback seen provides schools with clear concise judgements and recommendations for improvement. However, written feedback is of variable quality and a significant minority of reports and notes of visit lack clear and rigorous evaluations.

#### **Recommendation**

- improve the quality of written feedback so that all notes of visit provide clear judgements and, where appropriate, sharply focused recommendations.

45. The criteria for intervention are clear and agreed with schools. Data and other information are increasingly being used successfully to identify schools that might be coasting, weak or failing. Few schools have been identified by OFSTED within the last year as causing concern. The LEA uses its target-setting process to help challenge complacency and tackle underachievement by providing each school with an indicative range within which to set its targets. This move has not been welcomed universally in schools but most of those visited valued the increased challenge and most have set more ambitious and realistic targets. Some schools have accepted

LEA targets, whilst others have been able to argue alternative but equally challenging targets by making convincing use of pupil-level data.

46. The advisory team has responded well to school evaluations about their work and improvements have been made to working practices, including better co-ordination of the work of literacy and numeracy teams. Service planning for school improvement is linked well to EDP priorities and to the needs of schools. Performance management and review systems for the work of the service are developing well. There are good induction procedures for new advisory staff and sound strategies in place to develop greater consistency in the way the team operates. Visits to schools confirmed that most advisers fulfil their roles effectively but there remain undue variations in quality in relation to the rigour of evaluation provided for schools.

47. The LEA has found difficulties in recruiting and retaining high quality advisers and, despite all the best attempts to mitigate the effects of changes, turnover of staff has brought inevitable discontinuity in levels of support provided for schools. To help ease problems, advisory posts were re-graded during the reorganisation and this has enabled the team to recruit high calibre staff to vacant posts. The team now has a balance that represents a reasonable reflection of phase need and senior management experience in schools, although secondary schools questioned the team's ability to monitor and challenge high-level management decisions. The LEA buys in consultants where needed and is increasingly making productive use of experience and expertise available in schools. The LEA was judged to have made at least satisfactory contribution to school improvement in all but one of the schools visited and a good contribution in nearly half of the schools. The costs of the school improvement services are average and they provide sound value for money. The advisory service has not yet been part of a Best Value review but is taking account of Best Value principles in planning future developments.

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

48. Support for schools in the use of performance data is satisfactory. Schools are provided with a suitable range of value-added and benchmarked data that allows them to compare their performance with similar schools, other schools in the LEA and schools nationally. For small schools, for which the normal comparisons would be statistically unreliable, useful alternative comparisons are offered, derived from data on individual pupils. Schools have also been provided with effective training in using data to analyse attainment and set targets. All primary schools visited were reasonably familiar with the use and interpretation of data. Most secondary schools visited, supported by the LEA where necessary, have developed good levels of expertise.

49. Data and information are increasingly used well by LEA staff to track the progress of schools. There is a prompt response to unexplained dips in results and, where necessary, issues are followed through with headteachers. Link advisers have received appropriate training in the analysis and use of a wide range of data. Visits to schools indicate that most link advisers are able to hold challenging and supportive discussions with headteachers and other staff. Most link advisers also provide sufficient support to help schools determine strategies to meet the



performance targets. Guidance and workbooks provided by the LEA have proved valuable in helping primary schools to identify gaps in attainment and provision in English and mathematics and to improve action planning.

50. Electronic transfer of performance data is now satisfactory. Secure systems to enable the electronic transfer of Key Stage 2 data are now in place. Visits to schools indicate that for the first time data arrived in good time to facilitate the grouping of pupils in Year 7, to inform predictive targets and to assist with the planning for teaching and learning.

### **Support for literacy**

51. Support for literacy is satisfactory. It has been targeted well at areas of weakness but unavoidable turnover of LEA staff has had a negative effect on its impact despite the best efforts made to minimise disruption.

52. Attainment on entry to school and for seven and 14-year-olds is broadly in line with national averages. The 2000 English results for 11-year-olds were below the national average. The 2001 provisional English results indicate that 69 per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or higher. This is well below the LEA target of 77 per cent. The Key Stage 2 target for 2002 of 80 per cent of pupils attaining Level 4 or above is unlikely to be met. There is a growing gap between the attainment of boys and of girls. In both the secondary and the primary phases, there are wide variations in standards between schools and, in some primary schools, between cohorts. About a third of primary schools will need to secure significant improvement if they are to reach their 2002 targets.

53. In response to the school survey, primary schools rated the LEA support for literacy as satisfactory. Medway has a sound strategy for raising standards in literacy that involves providing suitable support for headteachers and governors, subject co-ordinators in primary schools, and all staff in schools where intensive support is provided. Steady progress has been made in improving teachers' subject knowledge. Summer literacy schools have helped boost the attainment of pupils. Training courses focus on relevant topics such as grammar and boys' writing, but schools visited reported undue variability in the quality of training. In the schools visited there were a few examples of insufficient in-class support from consultants to help teachers develop effective teaching skills and to implement the strategies suggested for supporting boys.

#### **Recommendation**

- review the balance of work of consultants to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to working alongside teachers in class.

54. A sound start has been made to the implementation of the national strategy at Key Stage 3. Training has been well received. Schools identified as needing more intensive support are benefiting from LEA support for planning, for targeting specific groups of pupils and for demonstration lessons.

## **Support for numeracy**

55. Support for numeracy is satisfactory overall, and rapidly developing strength. The LEA had made a good contribution to school improvement in the majority of primary schools visited where numeracy formed a focus for attention. More widely, as shown by the response to the school survey, primary schools rate the LEA support for numeracy as satisfactory.

56. Attainment on entry to school and for seven and 14-year-olds is broadly in line with national averages. The 2000 mathematics results for 11-year-olds were below the national average. The provisional mathematics results for 2001 indicate that 63 per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or above. This represents an improvement but nevertheless the result was below the LEA target of 77 per cent. The 2002 target of 80 per cent of pupils attaining Level 4 or above is unlikely to be attained.

57. There is a clear strategy for raising standards in numeracy that is based on an audit of all schools and well-focused, intensive work in some. Schools know what level of support they are intended to receive and benefit from assistance with the numeracy audit, curriculum planning and support by a consultant for teachers in the classroom. School self-evaluation courses have helped schools to audit provision and identify areas for improvement. Sound progress has been made in target setting, tracking pupils' progress and action planning. Even so, there is wide variation in the rate of progress and attainment found at the end of Key Stage 2 and much remaining to be done if standards are to be raised and targets met. Over a half of primary schools will need to secure significant improvement if their 2002 targets at Key Stage 2 are to be met.

58. Support for the national strategy at Key Stage 3 has been well received by secondary schools visited. Schools in the intensive group have begun well with support by the consultant for a departmental review, demonstration lessons and help with planning schemes of work. The LEA is in the process of identifying suitable leading mathematics teachers.

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

59. There is effective support for information and communication technology (ICT). The LEA has a clear vision for enabling Medway's schools to raise standards progressively over a four-year period. The development plan contains ambitious but realisable performance targets for all types of school and for all facets of the work. Full advantage is taken of the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) grant and New Opportunities Funding (NOF); these are well integrated with the LEA's wider strategy and are being administered effectively. A very thorough audit has been conducted of schools' resources and of teachers' skills. The LEA gives useful guidance on school development planning and assists schools well with self-review.

60. The LEA carefully analyses the results of the schools' reviews, the data submitted for tests and examinations at Key Stages 3 and 4 and the findings of OFSTED inspections. This enables areas to be identified where curriculum guidance and training is needed and where intensive support should be offered. For example, there has been training on the applications of ICT to learning in literacy and

numeracy, and there is currently a project to improve schools' teaching of control technology. Good use is made of the expertise available in schools, including one with Beacon status, to support their neighbours. The ICT co-ordinators' network is being helped to refine assessment and moderation skills. Use of the telephone helpline usually generates a prompt response to schools' enquiries. It is envisaged that the LEA's ICT website will provide an immediate source of support but it is still at an early stage of development. Useful guidance has been given on choosing providers of NOF training and the LEA, itself a contributor, is responding positively to criticism encountered in a minority of schools visited that some initial sessions have not allowed sufficiently for teachers' differing starting points.

61. The LEA's imaginative implementation of NGfL has contributed to a very good level of resourcing in schools by national standards. The target for connecting all schools to the Internet via a broadband connection is already close to realisation. The LEA has played a major role in negotiating with contractors, ensuring that alternative connections are available while the changes are made, and advising schools when difficulties are encountered. Although the difficulties encountered in making the installations have been relatively few, a small minority of schools has perceived them as serious obstacles, particularly where they lack the in-house technical knowledge to recognise what help to seek. For the majority of schools, the greatly improved resources have raised expectations and epitomise the LEA's strong leadership in this area.

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

62. The LEA provides satisfactory support for schools causing concern and for those in special measures or with serious weaknesses. The proportion of primary schools identified by OFSTED as requiring some improvement is slightly above the national average and averages for similar authorities but has been reduced by almost a third during the three years that the authority has been in existence. In secondary schools, the proportion needing some improvement is broadly in line with national averages and averages for similar authorities.

63. The LEA has brought about notable improvements compared to its position at inception. January 2000 marked the low point in the number of primary schools identified as having serious weaknesses or in need of special measures. In total 14 schools were in one or other category with 10 having serious weaknesses and four needing special measures. In addition, the LEA inherited two secondary schools with serious weaknesses. The majority of schools have been removed from special measures within two years. At the time of the inspection, four schools had serious weaknesses and one primary school was deemed to need special measures. Two schools with serious weaknesses and the one school requiring special measures had been identified within the last year. There are five other primary and two other secondary schools categorised as causing the LEA serious concern and receiving additional support.

64. The EDP priority relating to providing support and challenge for schools causing concern outlines an appropriate programme of support and intervention. Challenging but realistic targets have been set for improvement. In the early days, LEA knowledge of individual schools was inadequate and systems of early

intervention and prevention were not rigorous enough to identify difficulties in every school at a sufficiently early stage. Appropriate action, especially in primary schools, is now being taken to remedy weak leadership by headteachers and governing bodies. In two schools visited this has been a key factor in securing a good rate of improvement. There remain, however, undue variations in the quality of evaluation and feedback provided for schools following advisory visits.

65. Systems have been tightened considerably. Triggers for intervention are now clear and give appropriate recognition to a wide range of factors that may lead to a school failing. Schools are clear about the category to which the LEA has assigned them, the reasons for categorisation and the implications for the levels of support allocated. Action has been taken to ensure effective co-ordination of support for schools causing concern. Additional resources are located systematically and their cost effectiveness properly evaluated. Elected members take a keen interest in the progress of schools causing concern and, in the case of schools currently causing serious concern, the LEA has used its statutory powers appropriately to issue formal warnings.

### **Support for governors**

66. Support for governors is good. The LEA is increasingly effective in supporting governing bodies in the strategic management of their schools. The impact of the support is especially evident in schools causing concern, where governors have developed good levels of understanding and appreciation of their roles and responsibilities.

67. Governor support services are managed effectively. Nearly all schools buy into a comprehensive package of support; this includes clear briefing papers, informative updates for chairs of governors and clerks, access to training, and the support of a governor liaison officer. Courses about national initiatives are timely and termly briefing meetings are held for literacy, numeracy and SEN governors. There are productive relationships between governors and LEA officers and good mechanisms for involving and consulting with governors on strategic issues. The Governors Forum is actively involved in shaping future priorities for the LEA. For example, the forum has recently produced a document setting out its revised vision for education, which has contributed to the process of education development planning. The LEA maintains a list of experienced clerks who can be called upon in an emergency. It provides effective training and termly briefing sessions for governing bodies' own clerks. The LEA has a pool of experienced governors who are prepared to join the governing bodies of schools causing concern. When such governors are needed they are matched carefully to the needs of the school.

68. In most schools visited, governors feel well supported by their governor liaison officer who attends three governor meetings per year as the director's representative. For schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses there is a careful match of officer to the needs of the school so that additional expertise can be provided to governors in areas causing concern. Initially the arrangement, offered to schools at a discount, was seen as a good way of building relationships between the new LEA and schools; however, with good partnership working now established such intensive and undifferentiated support is no longer necessary.

## Recommendations

- revise the use of governor liaison officers; and
- where schools wish to retain the service, ensure that true and not discounted costs are charged.

69. About a third of schools visited during the inspection had some difficulty in recruiting governors. The governor support service runs a well-timed annual recruitment campaign to support schools. The service responds well to inquiries about becoming a governor from the local and national advertisements and keeps a list of volunteers.

### Support for school management

70. Support for management is satisfactory with some clear strengths. Schools' most recent OFSTED inspection reports indicate a marked improvement in the quality of management and efficiency, especially within primary schools, although there are still over a quarter where management and leadership require some improvement. Despite a series of appropriate steps taken by the LEA to support schools, recruitment and retention of teachers remain factors inhibiting improvement.

71. There is a range of appropriate development opportunities for school senior managers and training has been well received. Successful conferences with outside speakers of good standing are well attended. Headteachers and deputy headteachers are encouraged to gain national qualifications. The LEA is developing its brokerage role in providing management support to schools. For example, the induction programme for new headteachers is provided in conjunction with another authority. In one secondary school visited, the LEA had brokered good quality support from neighbouring authorities to assist the school in conducting a subject review. Good support has been given both to primary and secondary schools to enable them to gain the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Investors in People awards.

72. Responses to the school survey indicate that the programme of self-evaluation training has been very well received by primary schools. In primary schools visited the benefits of the course were seen in the positive approach to target setting, action planning, monitoring and strategies to improve teaching. Secondary schools view the programme of self-evaluation training as satisfactory. There is a complementary course on school self-evaluation for primary and secondary subject leaders and in most schools visited this is helping to provide a coherent approach to school self-evaluation. Link adviser monitoring and review visits are increasingly building on the self-evaluation model.

73. The LEA actively promotes the dissemination of good practice. Link advisers seek out and encourage innovative or successful work and enable teachers to share their expertise through well-attended good practice seminars. Good use is made of expertise within Beacon schools; a primary school has shared good practice in

auditing test results with another school and a secondary Beacon school has supported a primary school with developing ICT in the curriculum.

74. Support for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) is well organised and responsive to requests from teachers. Induction tutors have received good training to prepare them for their roles. Useful opportunities are provided for NQTs to go on courses, visit other schools to observe good practice, and within their own schools to become familiar with policies and procedures.

75. The LEA is responding to the high level of teacher turnover with a range of suitable strategies such as attendance at recruitment fairs and support for schools wishing to employ overseas-trained teachers. Nearly all schools visited during the inspection reported problems with recruitment and retention of teachers, and headteachers are rightly concerned about the potential negative impact on standards. Schools were having difficulties filling posts at all levels and were increasingly employing inexperienced teachers. The LEA is doing as much as it can to support schools in such circumstances through the provision, for example, of relevant training courses.

### **Support for improving standards in the early years**

76. Support for improving standards in early years education is effective. It is driven by successful planning based on a thorough audit of need and good financial support. The Medway early years development and childcare partnership provides good oversight and co-ordination of improvements. Within the LEA work is supported by a good range of professionals including early years advisers, a pre-school SEN service, childcare and play development teams. The children's information service provides good quality information for parents, childminders and providers in early years settings.

77. The LEA began from a low base of provision; good progress has been made in expanding early years' provision, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas. Free part-time places are now available for all three and four year-olds. There is an appropriate diversity of provision across the private, voluntary and maintained sectors, providing a suitable range of choices and options for parents. There is good provision and support for young children with special educational needs. There is effective collaboration with the health authority to provide support for the recently established Chatham Surestart.

78. Data from the inspection of nursery education settings show all providers to be satisfactory and almost half are good. The LEA co-ordinates training and development opportunities by making good use of its own team and external providers. Training courses are popular and are having a positive impact in schools visited.

### **Support for post-16 education**

79. Support for post-16 education is satisfactory. The LEA has worked in active partnership with schools and other stakeholders to stimulate debate and discuss

plans for developing post-16 education. An ambitious strategy and new arrangements for securing improvements post-16 are in the early stages of implementation.

80. The council has made a strong commitment to improving the quality of post-16 education. There are sixth forms at 18 out of the 19 secondary schools and at two of the special schools. Student numbers in sixth forms range from below 20 to just above 300; just under half of all sixth forms have fewer than 150 students. The very small size of some sixth forms brings into sharp relief issues of viability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In view of the uncommonly wide variation in the different types of school in the area, a key strategic priority for the LEA has been to take the steps necessary to ensure that all students have access to a broad range of academic and vocational opportunities and extra-curricular activities. Schools support such developments. Consultation on ways forward has been widespread and appropriate. The majority of schools and other partners are in favour of the chosen move towards developing more rational complementary and collaborative local arrangements between schools and the higher and further education college.

81. The LEA is currently working closely with headteachers to implement and monitor new arrangements. There is variability in the degree of collaborative action already taken by schools. In interviews with headteachers and during visits to schools some genuine concerns were expressed about the difficulties in reaching agreements, formulating effective joint timetables and in overcoming travel difficulties for students and teachers. There was evidence in schools visited of some potentially effective arrangements upon which to base models of good practice within two out of the eight collaborative groupings of schools. It is, however, too early to evaluate the effectiveness of partnership working across all areas of the authority.

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

82. Support for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. Increased attention has been given to this area following the appointment of an adviser with relevant expertise and a remit to develop provision. A working party has been convened and is making reasonable progress in identifying good practice, finding potential partners, linking with national networks and planning for the future. Work has started on the production of an informative web site, on formulating advice on the identification of gifted and talented pupils and in setting up local and national contacts.

83. The LEA has yet to embed the development of provision for gifted and talented pupils into its lifelong learning strategy. In a few schools visited there are pockets of good practice and expertise but overall there is a lack of awareness of the need to develop school provision for gifted and talented pupils. Summer schools provide a good opportunity for developing the expertise of teachers and providing enrichment experiences for pupils. Teachers and governors who have attended recent courses are highly motivated to develop school policies and procedures for identifying gifted and talented pupils. The LEA runs a well-supported programme of free out-of-school courses for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils on Saturday mornings. Although primarily aimed at raising the aspirations of all children, the courses do provide stimulation for the gifted and talented.

## **SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

### **Corporate planning**

84. Corporate planning is strength. There is an ambitious and imaginative vision for future developments in Medway that is widely shared and understood. The council's strategic plan and the Best Value Performance Plan provide a clear framework for the delivery of corporate priorities. Six core values guide policy direction and strategic objectives. Education is implicitly involved in all six themes but the sixth, 'realising everyone's potential', is most directly related to educational priorities. Plans and planning for education inform and are informed by the corporate strategic plan and the work of the core value group. Planning across the council is underpinned and given stability by an appropriate five-year financial strategy.

85. There are very sound procedures for implementing, reviewing and evaluating corporate plans. Customer satisfaction surveys and other mechanisms such as focus groups, the 'Citizen's Panel' and the Youth Parliament are used effectively to elicit views and opinions of partners and stakeholders. Within education, the annual survey of school opinion has been an important device for supporting continued improvement to the quality of service delivery. Members are increasingly well-placed to monitor the performance of schools and the progress of educational developments in the LEA. The resources and performance monitoring sub-committee has discharged appropriately its brief of scrutinising OFSTED section 10 reports and monitoring standards of attainment; the new modernised local government structure has been designed to strengthen democratic scrutiny further.

86. There is a satisfactory framework within the education department for producing service plans that illustrate how the directorate's strategic objectives are to be met. Service plans are usefully cross-referenced to the EDP and to the major performance measures against which progress can be measured; they are, however, under-developed in terms of the financial and resource information necessary for judging the cost-effectiveness of actions and activities. Service plans across the whole of the education department are translated by individuals into action plans and these form the basis for the sound targets against which performance is reviewed and staff development needs assessed.

87. The authority makes decisions openly. Headteachers and governors have sufficient opportunity to influence priorities at an early stage. The needs of learners are given a high priority and there is a good broad cross-party consensus on most educational issues. Financial decisions relating to schools are made well. There is a secure budget consultation process that begins sufficiently early for schools to receive final budgets in good time. Since inception three years ago, the authority has worked progressively to deal with inherited problem areas. In particular, issues surrounding school places and buildings have been tackled systematically and steadily. For example, between 1999 and 2000 the council drew £2.6 million from reserves to support improvement of school buildings, the expansion of SEN provision and provision in pre-school education.



88. Members provide satisfactory leadership. They have become increasingly prepared to make difficult, sensitive and not always universally popular decisions such as changes to SEN formula funding and the closure of a secondary school in the area. There has been increased resolve to find new solutions to longstanding issues such as improving the provision of post-16 education. For many of these more recent decisions, the implementation of plans are still in the early stages and it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness.

89. Officers provide purposeful and effective strategic leadership. There is a well-developed partnership between officers and schools based on mutual respect and trust. Schools rightly welcome senior officers' high expectations and the unambiguous commitment to developing school autonomy and to raising standards. Elected members are ably supported by officers and are given clear and well-structured advice. Briefing papers are clear, contain relevant factual information, explore alternatives and provide a range of options for member consideration.

## **Partnership**

90. Partnership working is a strength. The council has made a strong commitment to serve its residents and to secure improvement by delivering high quality responsive services that represent the best possible value for money. The authority is in the early stages of developing a community plan and has established a local strategic partnership. Council departments are increasingly working together productively and are starting to be successful in bringing together education, social services and health professionals. Responses to the school survey indicate that schools perceive problems at an operational level regarding partnership with social services and health. Nonetheless there are successful joint initiatives that are working well, and much better than in many other LEAs, for the benefit of children in public care and for those youngsters with complex medical needs.

91. The LEA has been effective in building strong and purposeful relationships and is involved in a number of appropriate multi-agency initiatives that require close co-operation with external partners. For example, a counselling project, Place 2 Be, is working successfully in several schools visited. It is reported to be giving new confidence to pupils with emotional problems. Schools usually refer pupils but the children can, and do, refer themselves. There are strong working relationships with the police. Their participation in safety awareness and personal and social education is highly valued by schools, though some of those visited regretted a diminution in contact since the service to schools was cut by half. There is an active drug action team and the statistics show that school participation in programmes to promote drug awareness is substantially higher in Medway schools than in many other LEAs. There are also good co-operative relationships with the diocesan authorities and the Medway Racial Equality Council.

92. The LEA has a close working relationship with the Education Action Zone (EAZ). There are examples of good collaborative work between the LEA and the EAZ to support schools causing concern, in particular in providing complementary support for literacy and numeracy and management support for schools.

## Management services

93. Medway provides satisfactory management services to schools. Information on services is provided, in a consistent corporate style, well in advance of the start of the financial year, allowing sufficient time for schools to make informed choices on which services to buy back. Arrangements for those schools wishing to opt for LEA traded services are simple and easy to follow. Service specifications, however, apart from personnel, offer limited choice and lack differentiation.

### Recommendation

- offer schools greater choice to buy back packaged services or their component parts.

94. The LEA does not have a procurement strategy. In January 2001 the LEA distributed guidance to schools that proposed a useful set of questions to ask potential providers before making decisions from among the alternatives. Although the guidance is basic, it is a step in the right direction.

95. **Financial services** for schools are satisfactory. Appropriate advice and support are given to schools by telephone and during visits. The finance team provides adequate support on school-based accounting software. The education finance service is bought back by almost all primary schools and three-fifths of secondary schools. Finance staff are working towards providing a more customer-focused service; a schools' finance guidance manual is near completion, although it has taken too long to complete. Financial services are rated as satisfactory overall in the school survey.

96. **Personnel services** are good. In the school survey, primary schools rated all elements of the personnel service as very good and secondary schools rated advice and guidance almost as high as any LEA inspected so far. Service specifications are clear and offer various levels of personnel advice and administrative support. Good personnel advice and guidance are provided to schools, together with effective support on casework. A comprehensive personnel handbook has been produced recently and distributed to all schools. A user-friendly newsletter 'What's New?' provides a good range of topical information as well as providing valuable details of changes in legislation.

97. Medway does not provide support for **administrative ICT** but makes satisfactory arrangements to advise schools on options available, and provides a brokerage service on their behalf. Schools rated ICT administration and ICT strategy as satisfactory in the school survey. However, electronic information exchange between the LEA and schools was rated unsatisfactory. Since the date of the survey, steady progress has been made. At the time of the inspection nearly all schools were connected to broadband, although not all of the connections were fully operational. In January 2001 the LEA undertook a dry run of an electronic return of the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) that involved about three-quarters of schools.

With broadband connections up and running, the LEA is now in a good position to work with schools, to prepare for the statutory PLASC return in January 2002.

98. Support to schools from **property services** is satisfactory. In response to the survey, schools rated the programming and management of building projects as generally satisfactory. The LEA provides a well-regarded design and surveying consultancy service that is bought back by almost all primary schools and three-quarters of secondary schools. All school repairs and maintenance budgets have been delegated; the LEA does not provide a building maintenance service. Evidence from school visits and in response to the school survey indicate that there is a lack of understanding between schools and the LEA about respective responsibilities for monitoring expenditure on building maintenance and procuring services.

99. The **school meals service**, provided under a corporately arranged contract, is poor and does not offer good value for money. Meal take up of both free school meals and paid meals is low and has declined significantly since the start of the contract in 1997. Schools rated the service as poor in the school survey. The contract was extended in September 2001 for a further year to bring the termination date in line with other corporate catering contracts within the council. In doing this, the LEA failed to respond to strong customer dissatisfaction expressed in an internal survey carried out in February 2001. The new LEA contact officer has taken action to improve the quality of school meals.

#### **Recommendations**

- work with the current catering contractor to improve the quality of meals produced within schools; and
- in partnership with schools, urgently prepare a new contract to be put out to tender for those schools wishing to be part of a corporately arranged contract.

## SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

### Strategy

100. The strategy for Special Educational Needs (SEN) is satisfactory in terms of stated principles and broad intentions but has weaknesses in implementation. The development of socially inclusive practice in schools is a key feature of plans and the LEA policy for SEN is fully in line with national policies for increased inclusion. At each stage of development and change, headteachers, teachers, governors, parents and other agencies including voluntary organisations, have been consulted fully. Most of those interviewed understand and give full support to the principles underpinning SEN development and policies. The main weakness is a lack of specificity about forward plans and the timetable for developments, which means that schools do not yet understand fully how, individually, they fit into the LEA's overall plan for meeting pupils' SEN. In two-fifths of schools visited, the implementation of LEA strategy for SEN provision was creating genuine concern.

### Recommendation

- produce an agreed forward plan for SEN and inclusion developments and a timetable with an associated programme of support and training for school staff.

101. A prompt start was made to developing SEN policy and provision. Within its first 18 months of existence, and aided by substantial capital developments from its own resources, the LEA had reduced reliance on pupil placements outside the LEA, re-invested resources in the LEA's own provision of units in mainstream provision and developed early years provision, including the appointment of area special educational needs co-ordinators for early-years settings. The implementation of these measures was sensibly staged and their impact is reflected in the higher proportion than the national average, of pupils with statements that are now successfully educated in mainstream school and the significant reduction in the number of pupils placed in special schools outside of the authority.

102. The LEA is committed to early intervention to support children with special educational needs and to providing schools with the flexibility to make good use of all resources at their disposal. Appropriate moves have been taken to simplify systems and reduce bureaucracy. The LEA implemented, from September 2001, decisions to delegate funding for statements of more commonly encountered special educational needs. This development is entirely consistent with government policies, but the process of the delegation of resources for statements has left about half of schools visited uncertain about their continuing capacity to fund fully the requirements of all statements in the longer term. There is also evidence that despite the LEA's provision of training courses to cover the new arrangements, there has been insufficient support for schools in this process.

## **Recommendations**

- provide more in-school support and training to schools to help them enhance their own capacity to handle statemented budgets effectively; and
- analyse patterns of individual school spending on statemented SEN, share findings with schools and make any amendments necessary to delegation arrangements.

103. The inclusion agenda is set against higher than average spending on SEN in total, which includes higher than average levels of funding allocated to non-statemented SEN. Following appropriate consultation, the LEA implemented sensible changes for allocating resources for non-statemented SEN funds to ensure that the finite resource is closely targeted at need. Budgetary control of centrally retained SEN budgets is sound. The LEA monitors SEN expenditure satisfactorily and schools are aware of their entitlement. Two teams, the Learning Support Service in the primary sector and a new SEN Inclusion and Monitoring Team (SENIMT) are identified as the instruments for developing closer analysis of effectiveness in deploying resources to meet pupils' SEN and for securing greater confidence within schools in handling those resources.

## **Statutory obligations**

104. Discharge of statutory obligations is regularly monitored and, overall, support in this area is satisfactory with few significant weaknesses. The multi-disciplinary decision-making group, which includes one headteacher representative, meets fortnightly to review requests for assessments to ensure fairness and transparency across the LEA; in general, it succeeds. There are effective processes for the administration of statements. In the last academic year, 92 per cent of statements were processed within 18 weeks and if those delayed for reasons beyond the LEA's direct control are included, the rate of completion is 63 per cent; this is slightly above the national average.

105. The quality of statements and individual education plans examined during the inspection was satisfactory overall. Annual reviews are consistently monitored and amendments made promptly; arrangements, including those for pupils in schools outside the LEA, are appropriate.

106. The LEA gives an appropriate priority to fostering good liaison and seeking views of parents. Parent partnership arrangements are sound and the recent move to contract out the service to a voluntary organisation has been well judged and effective. There is now a good link with the local independent conciliation service for parents, although not all schools visited were aware of this. Registration of parental appeals with the SEN Tribunal has reduced by about a half over the last two years but is still slightly above the national average.

## **School improvement and Best Value**

107. The LEA's support for school improvement in special educational needs is sound overall with some clear strengths. The education psychology service is effective, providing high quality and expert support, both routinely and in school emergencies. Learning support services are highly regarded for their expertise and rigour. The sensory support services bought from a neighbouring LEA are also reported to be effective. Training and networks for special educational needs coordinators are sound and so is the documentary advice provided for schools. Through its Best Value review, the LEA is currently looking at alternative ways of securing support for schools without diminishing its quality.

108. In-school reviews (ISRs) provide effective arrangements for school staff to meet regularly with a range of professionals to discuss strategies for supporting individual pupils with special educational needs. The operation of the ISR is a particularly potent force, not only for improved alignment of resources to SEN but also in building school capacity to promote, monitor and record the progress of pupils with SEN. It is rightly well regarded by the schools visited for its concentration of internal and external expertise, both to respond to individual difficulties and to examine more strategic issues related to school development.

109. The provision for special educational needs provides satisfactory value for money. The LEA has sound systems for planning and monitoring SEN budgets. Three factors justify the above average expenditure on SEN at present: the good quality of support in schools; the need to support the transition to a new funding regime; and the cost of investing in a new, more inclusive pattern of provision. The Best Value review of SEN, which is exploring further options for providing greater flexibility, is projected to assist in the process of realigning budgets.

## **SECTION 5: ACCESS**

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

110. Planning of school places is satisfactory. Planning processes are both thorough and technically sound. Medway's pupil population is forecast to rise over the next five years, assuming a six per cent growth in both the primary and secondary sectors. There are sound levels of accuracy in pupil forecasting for the borough as a whole, although forecasting is progressively less accurate at area and individual school level. Data are supplied by Kent County Council and then appropriately modified by Medway to reflect local knowledge of admissions and housing developments.

111. The overall level of primary surplus places is lower than in similar authorities. The LEA has made sound progress in reducing surplus places through planning primary school amalgamations. The overall level of secondary surplus places is slightly above that found in similar authorities. The LEA has made steady progress in reducing surplus secondary places by a combination of increasing places at several schools and closing an under-subscribed school with weaknesses.

112. External stakeholders are adequately consulted in developing the school organisation plan. The plan meets statutory requirements and is linked with and cross-referenced to other plans. However, the plan lacks detail and this places limitations on it as a strategic document. In particular, it does not clearly set out future direction on post-16 provision, or make sufficient reference to the post-16 review, although these details are available elsewhere. Actions proposed in the concluding section of the plan are vague and are neither ranked in any order of priority nor given a time frame for completion.

### **Asset management planning**

113. Asset management planning is satisfactory. The Asset Management Plan is comprehensive and accords well with the school organisation plan and the EDP. Deadlines for submitting both policy statements and data on the condition and suitability of school buildings have been met. The Department for Education and Skills has assessed the authority's progress as satisfactory. There are a number of strengths within the plan, although there is scope to improve transparency by giving more detail at an individual school level. The LEA has secured formula capital allocations and is currently preparing a Public Finance Initiative bid for the replacement or partial replacement of school buildings. Schools are generally supported in their own responsibilities for asset management, although there is currently a lack of monitoring arrangements.

114. Despite satisfactory progress overall, the LEA has not engaged schools fully in the preparation of the plan; consequently it is viewed by the majority of schools visited as a LEA document, rather than a useful piece of management information.

## **Admissions**

115. Admission arrangements in Medway are sound overall with some clear strengths. The LEA has a particularly diverse and unusual mix of secondary schools, including foundation, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, single sex and selective schools. In view of this, admission arrangements work remarkably well. The number of first preferences met for all maintained secondary schools in Medway in 2001 was 93 per cent. The admissions team has successfully streamlined selection processes so that all Medway grammar schools now use the same application form, a common admissions timetable and the same selection tests.

116. Primary admission arrangements are satisfactory overall. The LEA invites feedback from parents and this shows that the vast majority find it easy to apply for a primary school place. The LEA has been working hard to implement a consistent primary admissions policy with two intakes, in September and January, for five- year-olds as they come of age. All of the community schools and all but four of the ten voluntary aided primary schools have implemented the policy.

117. The admissions booklets provided for parents for September 2001 are comprehensive and conform to the admissions code of practice. The secondary booklet is clear, understandable and includes a helpful flowchart giving a key for the selection process. Primary information is less user-friendly and the LEA is rightly reviewing the layout for future years.

## **Social exclusion**

118. The support for this area is very sound. Social inclusiveness is at the heart of Medway's corporate agenda. There is a good understanding of the Medway population and the implications for creating educational opportunity. Strong leadership is exercised at a senior level. Four of the council's six core values are expressly concerned with creating conditions in which everyone can realise their potential. The council reviewed its social inclusion and community development functions last year and improved its mechanisms for supporting community and voluntary organisations. The Community Safety Plan, for which Medway has been accorded Beacon status, analyses thoroughly the causes of disadvantage against socio-economic indicators and sets in train a series of appropriate measures to combat them. The LEA is a key player in the Community Safety Partnership that oversees the plan, and many of its own initiatives derive from corporate policy.

119. With its partners, the LEA is involved in a broad range of relevant initiatives. These have been suitably designed to raise expectations but, as many are still in the early stages of development, they have yet to be reflected in improved standards. The LEA works closely with the Education Action Zone in north Gillingham and promotes good practice through the Surestart project, the positive parenting project, breakfast and homework clubs, and pilot Connexions projects. The out of school learning project and the outdoor education ventures at the Arethusa Centre provide appropriate enrichment activities. The Children's University, organised in partnership with Greenwich University, is aimed at raising educational expectations in three of the most disadvantaged wards by guaranteeing higher education placements. The scheme gives special consideration for children in public care.



Two young people, formerly in public care, have just gained admission to university. The Youth Parliament is an impressive organisation for involving young people directly in good citizenship. It is rapidly gaining respect for its contributions to the social debate. It includes representatives of all the schools and other organisations for young people, including children in public care. Several mentoring schemes operate in conjunction with the Education Business Partnership and voluntary organisations to support disadvantaged or at-risk pupils and, in some instances, to smooth their passage on transfer between schools.

120. There are strengths in the routine work of services to support children in public care and to improve attendance but weaknesses in the strategy to support ethnic minority heritage groups. Measures to reduce the rate of permanent exclusion have only been partially successful. The commitment of all concerned almost guarantees that the number and complexity of the initiatives, and the partnerships which support them, will continue to grow and this puts pressure on the personnel of a small authority. The council is aware of this and is rightly setting up a representative co-ordinating body to seek ways of rationalising the situation and maintaining the cohesive approach.

### **Measures to combat racism**

121. There is a good strategy for promoting racial equality and combating racism. Support to schools is satisfactory, although there has been tardiness in implementing procedures. An effective corporate equal opportunities policy was approved in 1999, setting sound principles for employment and service provision and requiring all departments to produce an action plan. A working party was established to monitor progress. The LEA responded within a few months with a constructive and exhaustive education plan. The Racial Equality Council worked in close partnership with the authority and the education service and was able to influence the plans and monitor the adoption of the council for racial equality standards.

122. The LEA's policy for schools, 'Diverse and Equal' was produced in March of this year and launched at a conference in June. It is another quality document, embodying an appropriate response to the Report of the Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. It includes guidance on the recording of racist incidents. The system has yet to bed down. The schools visited are duly recording incidents but there is some ambiguity about when they are to be reported to the LEA and some uncertainty about what constitutes an incident. There has been no opportunity as yet to analyse the outcomes. Nevertheless, the school visits suggest that schools do identify with the intentions of the policy. The LEA was quick to issue guidance to schools in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the early indications are that this has been appreciated.

### **Recommendation**

- clarify the guidance on the reporting of racist incidents so as to allow more immediate monitoring.

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

123. The strategy for meeting the needs of pupils who must be taught other than at school is clear and there is a suitable range of provision. The LEA works on the sound principle that the strong ties should be maintained with the schools from which pupils originate wherever this is feasible in order to maintain as much curriculum continuity as possible and facilitate reintegration. Reasonable efforts are made to teach the whole National Curriculum and to meet the requirements of national tests and examinations. For older pupils there are appropriate links for career guidance. The health service makes appropriate contributions to supporting pupils and training staff.

124. There is a hospital class that provides well for pupils who are long term patients or who have to attend hospital regularly. Other pupils unable to attend school because of medical or psychological conditions receive home tuition or, especially at Key Stages 3 and 4, group tuition at a centre. All the pupils catered for are expected to have healthcare plans. There is provision for the tuition of pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mothers, either at home or in a group. While it might not be viable to maintain a continuous service in a small authority, it is a weakness that there is no comprehensive policy or guidance setting out the options and actions to be taken the moment the need arises.

### **Recommendation**

- prepare a comprehensive policy and guidance setting out options for the support of pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mothers and defining actions to be taken.

125. Pupils whose parents choose to educate them at home are carefully tracked by the inclusion officer and the educational welfare service, and their education is monitored properly by the advisory service. There are home visits which accord with the LEA's established procedures and which result in useful reports and guidance to parents.

126. Pupils who have been permanently excluded receive the full National Curriculum in the pupil referral units (PRUs) and there is appropriate alternative curriculum provision for pupils in Key Stage 4 in co-operation with further education providers. Increasingly, in accordance with the LEA's inclusive policies, pupils remain on their school registers while at the PRUs and are not therefore, strictly without a school place. Some pupils have full time placements shared between the school and the PRU. All excluded pupils are found PRU placements and tuition facilities are only employed when other reasons require it. Pupils receive on average more than 18 hours per week and the LEA is well on course to meet government targets for full time education for all exclusion and medical placements.

## **Attendance**

127. There is good support for schools in maintaining and improving attendance and reducing unauthorised absence. Attendance in Medway compares well with

other LEAs and the statistics indicate an improving trend, particularly in reducing unauthorised absences in secondary schools. The LEA monitors carefully the variations between schools and responds appropriately. The educational welfare service (EWS) has been reorganised and its time allocated to schools according to a needs-led formula. When absence levels in particular schools exceed the agreed indicative targets they receive additional support. A code of practice is issued embodying helpful guidance to schools and officers. The role of the EWS is clearly focused on monitoring and improving attendance. Visits by educational welfare officers (EWOs) are used well to check registers and identify cases for support and investigation on co-operation with the school staff. There is an objective and un-bureaucratic referral system that results in suitable action, such as home visits.

128. More often than not these procedures are effective and sufficient in themselves but the LEA also has a good range of additional, preventative measures. When necessary, a meeting of the parents with a senior officer is called on LEA premises. EWOs sometimes meet with groups of pupils who are at risk, discuss attendance issues at staff meetings or attend school panels, chaired by a governor, to consider pupils with worrying patterns of broken attendance. In rare instances where it is necessary the LEA does not hesitate to take legal action. The schools visited speak highly of the service. The police support the EWS with regular truancy sweeps and the schools value their contribution. The EWS gives special attention to monitoring the attendance of children in public care, to reinforcing the efforts of the pupil referral units and the special schools and centres.

### **Behaviour support**

129. The LEA has worked hard to reduce exclusion and establish effective support to schools in managing behaviour. It has made considerable progress in devising and implementing a consistent, inclusive strategy and, while it still has problems to solve, the strengths of its approach outweigh the remaining weaknesses. There is a good Behaviour Support Plan, which reflects the EDP's priorities. It is well understood by schools and has their support. It aims to reinforce schools' self-sufficiency in dealing with behaviour, to provide measured support when necessary and to create a range of options, in and out of the school, to prevent exclusions. In most respects, it has been successful. However, the targets set for reducing permanent exclusions, by around a third each year, while reasonable, have not been met and progress has been uneven.

130. At Medway's inception, rates of permanent exclusion were high compared to those nationally and in similar authorities. This was true in both phases but the comparison was particularly unfavourable in primary schools. There was a marked improvement until 1999/2000 when primary rates deteriorated badly while secondary rates improved to around national levels. Provisional data indicates that primary rates have since been brought back under control but that the secondary improvement has been partly eroded. Rates of permanent exclusion are still too high. Schools are becoming more aware of the problem but a few are still too ready to exclude before exhausting all the alternative strategies including those available from the LEA. In the past, potentially disruptive pupils have not always been known to the LEA prior to their exclusion. The places in the primary centre for meeting emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) are taken up by pupils who have been

permanently excluded, admitted to a pupil referral unit (PRU) and then assessed as having special educational needs. To break this cycle of unnecessary permanent exclusion calls for determined co-operation between headteachers and the LEA.

### **Recommendations**

- work closely with headteachers to agree early intervention programmes for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties; and
- strengthen the referral and assessment procedures for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties so as to reduce the likelihood of permanent exclusion as a prerequisite to appropriate placement .

131. The means of preventing exclusion are already in place. The behaviour support service (BSS) is well managed. There is good support to schools in developing behaviour policies and useful written guidance regarding exclusion. The BSS operates an effective telephone helpline. It responds promptly to referrals, particularly when pupils are known to be at risk. Its staff, which includes the outreach teachers based in the PRUs, gives valuable training and advice to teachers and support regarding individual pupils. Intensive support for a fixed period is available when behaviour management is under threat in a class or year group in a school. Educational psychologists also give helpful advice on behaviour.

132. When support in school alone is not enough, the PRUs offer a variety of arrangements to prevent permanent exclusion, from short-term and part-time attendance to longer-term and full-time placements, with pupils remaining on their school rolls. The inclusion officer attends meetings regarding pupil support plans, advises on procedures and seeks to promote inclusion and reintegration. The expertise and effectiveness of the LEA's personnel was widely praised during the school visits and a number of good examples were cited of the success of the mechanisms for prevention and reintegration. Where there were reservations, they concerned the sufficiency, rather than the quality of the service.

133. The mechanisms for referral are seen to be fair and objective. An interdisciplinary providers' panel reviews cases. The secondary headteachers have formed their own panel, with LEA support, to agree the best placements for excluded pupils so that all schools contribute equitably and those least well placed are not overburdened. This is working well and reflects credit on all concerned. Attempts made to draw primary headteachers into similar arrangements in local groups have, so far, met with mixed success. The majority of permanent exclusions are from a relatively small number of schools and the degree of protection that such co-operation offers to those in disadvantaged circumstances is likely to be a powerful factor in changing attitudes and reducing permanent exclusion.

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

134. Documentation and advice on health and safety in schools are good. In the school survey, both primary and secondary schools rated LEA support for health and safety in schools well above satisfactory. Similarly, in visits to schools during the

inspection, in no school was support rated unsatisfactory and in a majority good. There is a well-established programme of risk assessment training. From evidence of schools visited, site visits are systematic and effective with rigorous attention to standards, effective analysis of issues and trenchant recommendations for improvement. Schools are well supported in developing their own health and safety policies.

135. There is sound work on promoting pupil welfare through the joint work with health services and in particular a healthy schools initiative. This initiative is progressing well and now engages a third of LEA schools in developing curriculum approaches not only to drugs and health education, but also citizenship education and links with local communities.

136. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory, strengths outweigh weaknesses, and there are clear signs of improvement. Following a social services inspectorate inspection two years ago, the social services department has vigorously tackled the issues raised and problems identified. Inherited procedures for handling child protection issues have been revised in line with the framework for assessment. The area committee for child protection has a sound programme for reviewing inter-agency child protection work and challenging targets for improvement, as well as a rigorous audit for monitoring compliance with procedures and standards. All schools have a designated teacher but just under two-fifths of them have not been trained recently; further training opportunities have been timetabled. All registered children have an assigned social worker and all child protection conferences take place within the statutory times limits.

### **Children in public care**

137. Provision for children in public care is very good. From vesting day, the council has actively taken corporate responsibility to promote the well-being and educational attainment of children in their care. Reports to members are effective, regular and informative, with young people themselves regularly attending committee meetings to express views. The Medway challengers, a group of young people meeting on a formal basis every two weeks, is a key mechanism for formal reporting of concerns to members but it does not supplant the right of individual children to make their own views known. Members not only take an appropriate strategic role, but are also ready to celebrate success and invest in improvement. Successful investment in support of the Year 6 cohort led to improved pupil performance at Key Stage 2; the provision of laptops and information and communication technology training for foster parents; and bursary support for two former children in public care at university are evidence of the council's commitment to, and success in, raising standards. There is effective officer involvement in all aspects of developing provision for children in public care and strong partnership between education and social services. All schools have a designated teacher and all children in public care have a named social worker.

138. Support for children in public care in relation to educational attainment, target setting and in ensuring early access to required provision is good. Although there will be no jointly provided electronic database of all children in public care until April 2002, there is ample evidence of effectively and regularly maintained joint information available to all those involved in this area. Details of pupil performance

are provided longitudinally and schools set appropriate educational and other targets for them. Target setting is thorough and based on effective information; as a result, the LEA has set targets which are more ambitious than the national ones and is in the process of refining them further to make them more challenging still. Whilst performance of children in public care in Medway remains well below the performance of others in their cohort at Key Stages 2 and 3, performance at all levels including GCSE is significantly ahead of national targets for children in public care and is improving. Best Value principles underpin the approach to this area by both education and social services departments. The children's services and quality protects plans define a clear strategy to promote the educational attainment of these children and young people.

### **Ethnic minority children**

139. There are weaknesses in the strategy for supporting minority ethnic pupils, including Travellers, which has limited the development of the LEA's services in this area. The EDP and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant Action Plan are consistent with each other but do not provide a clear rationale for the objectives that have been set. The strategies listed are relevant, though many are more descriptive of routine practice than newly considered priorities and there is little indication of how they are to be implemented. No group targets are set, although there has been progress in developing the database for analysing attainment, attendance and exclusion by ethnicity. Despite the strategic weaknesses, the support delivered to schools for pupils with English as an additional language reflects a tradition of sound practice and is mainly of satisfactory quality.

#### **Recommendation**

- develop clear priorities, strategic objectives and action plans for supporting ethnic minority pupils and raising their achievement.

140. The LEA has taken steps towards improving strategic operation. The management of the service has been strengthened and this is helping to overcome the effects of difficulties in staffing the service at a senior level. The relocation of the service within lifelong learning is helping to establish sound links with other school improvement services.

141. Sound support is provided for Travellers. However, there is little reference within LEA strategic plans to Traveller education. The LEA remains too heavily dependent on the records kept by the Kent Traveller Education Achievement Service (KTEAS), the provider of services for Medway schools, and has not been able to base priorities on its own data. The KTEAS supports schools by assessing pupils, agreeing targets, and providing packages for school use and for distance learning. It negotiates the curriculum support required of schools when pupils are on the move. It monitors transfer between schools.

## **APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The report makes a number of recommendations. The following are key to the LEAs further improvement:**

### **In order to strengthen strategic development and planning**

For the education development plan 2002 - 2007:

- identify a more limited number of tightly-focused activities and concentrate especially on those areas that contribute strongly to helping schools reach their targets;
- improve the quality of overarching success criteria and identify clear timescales and milestones to facilitate the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress; and
- develop clear priorities, strategic objectives and action plans for supporting ethnic minority pupils and raising their achievement.

### **In order to ensure greater transparency in the deployment of resources:**

- review the allocation and reporting of corporate recharges in order to make them more transparent;
- establish mechanisms to allow greater client control of corporately delivered services; and
- ensure greater transparency in the costs of services where budgets are partly retained by the LEA and partly delegated to schools.

### **In order to improve support for pupils with special educational needs:**

- produce an agreed forward plan for SEN and inclusion developments and a timetable with an associated programme of support and training for school staff;
- provide more in-school support and training to schools to help them enhance their own capacity to handle statemented budgets effectively; and
- analyse patterns of individual school spending on statemented SEN, share findings with schools and make any amendments necessary to delegation arrangements.

**In order to improve support for behaviour:**

- work closely with headteachers to agree early intervention programmes for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties; and
- strengthen the referral and assessment procedures for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties so as to reduce the likelihood of permanent exclusion as a prerequisite to appropriate placement.

**The report also makes the following recommendations:**

**In order to improve schools' understanding of Best Value:**

- strengthen and reinforce the written guidance to schools on the principles of Best Value;
- ensure that schools submit a statement setting out how they are meeting Best Value principles; and
- use the information to shape differentiated support.

**In order to improve monitoring, challenge, intervention and support:**

- review the balance of the work of consultants to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to working alongside teachers in class;
- improve the quality of written feedback so that all notes of visit provide clear judgements and, where appropriate, sharply focused recommendations;
- revise the use of governor liaison officers; and
- where schools wish to retain the service, ensure that true and not discounted costs are charged.

**In order to improve management services:**

- offer schools greater choice to buy back packaged services or their component parts;
- work with the current catering contractor to improve the quality of meals produced within schools; and
- in partnership with schools, urgently prepare a new contract to be put out to tender for those schools wishing to be part of a corporately arranged contract.



**In order to improve support for pupils with no school place:**

- prepare a comprehensive policy and guidance setting out options for the support of pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mothers and defining actions to be taken.

**In order to improve measures to combat racism:**

- clarify the guidance on the reporting of racist incidents so as to allow more immediate monitoring.

**© Crown copyright 2002**

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

**Tel: 020 7421 6800**

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

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

**Medway Local Education Authority  
Civic Centre  
Strood  
Rochester  
ME2 4AU**

Or from the OFSTED website:[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)