



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF  
MANCHESTER  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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in conjunction with the  
AUDIT COMMISSION**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection of Manchester local education authority (LEA) was carried out by Ofsted, in conjunction with the Audit Commission, under section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities (December 2001)*. The inspection focused on the effectiveness of the LEA's work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value. The previous inspections of the LEA took place in the summer term in 1998 and 2000.

2. The inspection was based on a range of material, which included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, and data, some of which was provided by the LEA. That material also included: school inspection information; HMI monitoring reports and audit reports; and documentation from the LEA. Discussions were held with: LEA officers and members; focus groups of headteachers; and staff in other departments of the local authority. Other agencies and LEA partners, including diocesan representatives, participated in focus groups. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission reports on this LEA, published in June 1998 and 2000. A questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the work of the LEA, was circulated to 186 schools and its results were considered by the inspection team. The response rate to the questionnaire was 56 per cent.

3. Inspection judgements, converted into numerical grades, are used in the comprehensive performance assessment profile for the education service. The Audit Commission published the assessments for each upper tier council on 12 December 2002. The judgements from this inspection will be incorporated into the proposed subsequent annual update of the education service scores.

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

## COMMENTARY

5. The city of Manchester is the second largest city in England, with a population of just under 440,000. It is a major European regional centre with an increasing international reputation. In common with other major cities it has to manage the complex and fast moving agenda of national, regional, European and local initiatives available to help improve urban areas. It has managed this well.

6. Manchester has actively sought inward investment in order to pursue its ambitious regeneration programmes, and to tackle the very significant deprivation that characterises large areas of the city. Members and officers have a clear, shared, vision, which places raising educational standards at the heart of the social and economic regeneration of the city. This is reflected in coherent and, in many respects, innovative corporate initiatives and in the LEA's strategy for school improvement.

7. The LEA is aware that it needs to improve performance at a faster rate if it is to clawback the very real gap between the attainment of the majority of its pupils and that achieved elsewhere in the country. The overall performance of pupils in its schools is low in both absolute and comparative terms. Performance also varies considerably between schools, even in the same area of the city. In general, the rate of improvement in performance since the first inspection of the LEA in 1998 has broadly kept pace with that nationally, but has not consistently kept pace with LEAs in similar circumstances. The LEA's provisional data for national tests and examinations for 2002 shows, that apart from Key Stage 3, improvements in results have been slightly higher than nationally. The LEA has demonstrated real determination to meet the targets for performance at Key Stage 2 and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) that have been agreed with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) but, given the rate of improvement to date, the 2004 targets are not likely to be achieved.

8. The first inspection of 1998 discovered many serious weaknesses. The subsequent inspection in 2000 found that the LEA had made significant progress in a short time, but was still not sufficiently effective. Above all, despite the clear corporate priority given to social inclusion, the LEA was still failing some of the most vulnerable young people in the city.

9. The LEA has come a long way since that first inspection and has made at least satisfactory progress in almost all areas of its work. The extent of that journey, particularly in the improvement in the relationship between the LEA and its schools, from one that was largely dysfunctional into an active working partnership, should not be underestimated. The outgoing chief education officer has been instrumental in this improvement, providing firm and determined leadership. This is now an effectively run LEA.

10. Together, senior officers and members have set clear priorities for the development of the LEA. There is a strong, but supportive, culture of accountability throughout the council and its education services, and overall arrangements to secure continuous improvement and Best Value in council and LEA services are improving. The council has ensured that, for the most part, funding has matched its

priorities for education, though it urgently needs to ensure that its special educational needs (SEN) strategy is adequately funded. The LEA's success in attracting new sources of funding and its active partnership working is now substantially benefiting schools and pupils, particularly in the secondary sector. It has also made determined efforts to improve its access and inclusion strategies, and related services, to provide more effective support to schools and to its most vulnerable pupils. Nevertheless, as the LEA acknowledges, that improvement has not been as rapid as it needed to be.

11. Most of the LEA's functions are now carried out at least satisfactorily or highly satisfactorily. It now discharges the following functions well:

- corporate planning, and the implementation and evaluation of that planning;
- education development planning;
- leadership of elected members and senior officers, and decision making;
- partnerships and collaboration with agencies in order to meet its priorities;
- effective deployment of staff to support school improvement;
- support for numeracy;
- asset management planning;
- provision of human resources and catering services to schools; and
- combating racism.

However, the following functions continue to be inadequately discharged:

- intervention in schools causing concern;
- strategic planning and support for information and communication technology (ICT);
- ensuring value for money from support for SEN;
- support for behaviour; and
- procurement of grounds maintenance.

12. The LEA has regained the trust of the vast majority of its schools, and has re-engaged schools in the development and delivery of education policy and provision. It now needs to ensure that it builds on the firm foundations that have been achieved and provides strong and, where necessary, challenging leadership of future partnership developments with its schools. The development of the full service district model presents exciting opportunities, but also significant challenge. Meeting that challenge effectively will require clear definition of the respective roles and responsibilities of the LEA and schools in delivering new developments. It will also require further improvement in its collection and analysis of data, and greater clarity and rigour in evaluation of performance, in order to guide collective decision making. Without improvements in ICT infra-structure and support in order to share information more effectively, these developments may be compromised.

13. This is now a satisfactory LEA that has demonstrated that it can improve. It has created a number of innovative partnerships to support school improvement. Several developments are still new and some strategies, though well planned, have still to be fully implemented or to have an impact. However, the inspection team is confident that the LEA has the ability to improve further and to respond to the recommendations in this report.

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

### **Context**

14. Manchester is a major European regional centre and its international reputation was enhanced by the success of the 2002 Commonwealth Games. The redeveloped city centre and Manchester Airport continue to prosper, while the Commonwealth Games has provided additional inward investment and regeneration opportunities, especially in East Manchester.

15. Nevertheless, Manchester continues to be characterised by very significant areas of deprivation. On the basis of the government's multiple deprivation index, over three-quarters of Manchester's 33 wards fall into the ten per cent most deprived wards in England and Wales and only one ward gets close to the national average. Manchester's population is just under 440,000 and, although the total number of people living in the city has stabilised, there is a high level of population mobility, particularly in the most deprived neighbourhoods. The pupil population is 68,591 and falling. In 2001, 14.5 per cent of pupils chose to go to secondary schools in the independent sector or to neighbouring authorities. However, this trend is decreasing and is not consistent across the city.

16. Thirty per cent of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups, including Travellers: this is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language in Manchester is 16.4 per cent: five times the national average. The number of children of refugee and asylum seekers resident in the city is also rising sharply. Significantly more pupils continue to be entitled to free school meals than nationally: 56.4 per cent in primary schools and 44.6 per cent in secondary schools. The number of pupils with statements of special educational need is broadly in line with national averages. In January 2001, there were 1,210 children and young people under the age of 18 in public care.

17. The proportion of pupils continuing in full-time education or employment and training (81 per cent), has risen significantly since the last inspection, but remains well below that nationally. The proportion of pupils entering work-based training is low and has been steadily declining over the last three years.

18. Manchester LEA currently maintains 23 secondary schools, 140 primary or junior and infant schools, three nursery schools, 20 special schools, plus two pupil referral units. This is a reduction of 12 schools in total since the previous inspection. The number of surplus places has reduced from 23 per cent to an overall 8.5 per cent in 2001. The LEA has two statutory Education Action Zones involving a total of 40 schools; both zones have received extensions up to the end of 2004. All secondary schools and 56 primary schools are part of the Excellence in Cities initiative and the Sure Start initiative has been extended to 11 areas of the city.

### **Performance**

19. The overall performance of pupils is low, both in absolute and comparative terms. Performance also varies considerably from school to school, even in the same area of the city.

20. Attainment on entry to primary schools remains comparatively low. Baseline assessments indicate that over two-thirds of pupils enter primary education with lower levels of competence than that expected nationally.

21. In 2001, the percentage of pupils attaining expected levels in English, mathematics and science was well below the national average at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. The proportion of pupils gaining one or more A\*-G and five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE level was also well below the average nationally. The average points score of pupils at GCE A and AS level was above the national average and in similar LEAs<sup>1</sup>. The percentage of students achieving advanced level GNVQs was also above the national average. Attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 2, in English at Key Stage 3, and in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades, was broadly in line with similar LEAs; it was generally below the average in these LEAs in other respects.

22. The LEA's provisional data for 2002 indicates that the improvement in results in national tests at Key Stages 1 and 2 has been slightly higher than nationally; GCSE results have also improved. Performance at Key Stage 3 has, however, remained static and has, therefore, fallen further behind that nationally. Overall, performance remains well below that nationally and the gap is not closing quickly enough. At current rates of improvement the LEA and its schools are not likely to achieve the targets for 2004.

23. Ofsted inspections show that the percentage of primary schools (59 per cent) and secondary schools (43 per cent) that were good or very good at the time of their last inspection was broadly in line with similar LEAs, but below the national averages (70 and 66 per cent respectively). In 2001, levels of attendance in both primary (92.2 per cent) and secondary schools (86.7 per cent) continued to be well below the national averages, and below the average for similar LEAs, but have recently been improving faster than nationally. Levels of unauthorised absence were similarly higher than those nationally, but were in line with secondary schools in similar LEAs, reflecting a greater rate of improvement than that found in most of those LEAs. The rate of permanent exclusions from primary schools (0.06 per cent) and secondary schools (0.35 per cent) continues to be well above that nationally. It is, however, broadly in line with similar LEAs. The number of exclusions from primary schools has risen but, at secondary level, exclusions have reduced significantly and at a faster rate than in the majority of LEAs.

24. At the time of the inspection there were six primary schools and one special school in special measures, and five schools have serious weaknesses.

## **Funding**

25. Education funding is above the national average. Manchester has a high Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) allocation in comparison with all other groups of LEAs, including its statistical neighbours. Expenditure on education has been just

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<sup>1</sup> Manchester's statistical neighbours are: Nottingham, Greenwich, Blackburn with Darwen, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, Liverpool, Kingston upon Hull, Salford, Rochdale, and Birmingham.



above SSA over the three years from 1999-2000 to 2001-02. Spending dropped slightly below SSA in 2002-03 in order to repay overspends in previous years.

26. Education has benefited from a wide range of additional, grant-based funding. Standards Fund and other grants are higher than those for similar authorities and much higher than the national average. The LEA also attracts Sure Start and Children's Fund monies. Capital expenditure has increased steadily from £13 million in 1999-2000 to £34 million in 2002-03, due to an increase in capital grants and in borrowing. Expenditure per pupil is twice as high as in the LEA's statistical neighbours and nationally.

27. In 2001-02 the LEA delegated marginally less (84 per cent) of the local schools budget than similar authorities and nationally (85 per cent), though it has significantly increased delegation since 1999-2000. The gross delegated funding per pupil was higher than the average for English primary and secondary schools. The LEA has met all government targets in 2002-03.

28. The LEA's expenditure on centrally provided services for school improvement and special educational needs (SEN), is below the national average. Spending on statutory and regulatory duties has reduced significantly since 1999-2000 in line with the LEA's own targets. Expenditure on strategic management is above national averages, but below that of similar authorities. Expenditure on access and inclusion is also considerably above national averages and similar authorities; within this, spending on asset management and home-to-school transport is particularly high.

29. The overall spending on SEN as a proportion of the local schools budget is below the average for similar LEAs and nationally. The highest spending is on the special schools' budget and home-to-school transport, and on education other than at school. The LEA spends considerably less than other LEAs on additional educational needs factors in the funding formula for schools and on provision for pupils with statements. Funding for statemented pupils is not delegated to schools.

### **Council structure**

30. Manchester City Council currently consists of 76 Labour members, 21 Liberal Democrat and one Independent. It was one of the first authorities to implement new political arrangements in advance of legislation. In May 1999 the council structure changed by moving to a leader and cabinet decision-making model. This was confirmed in May 2001 with the adoption of a new constitution. The executive of the council comprises ten members; in addition to the leader and two deputies, there are seven executive portfolio holders, including education. There are five overview and scrutiny committees, including the children and young people overview and scrutiny committee. The new arrangements have speeded up the decision-making process. Members and officers are clear about their respective roles.

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

31. In the last inspection, the LEA's strategy for school improvement, as exemplified by its Education Development Plan (EDP) was barely adequate. The inspection recommended that the EDP be reviewed in consultation with schools to take better account of new Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Education Action Zone (EAZ) initiatives, to include clear actions to raise levels of attainment of underachieving groups and at Key Stage 3, and to improve the clarity of activity plans. The LEA has dealt with all the previous inspection's recommendations in its updated EDP for 2002-2007. The LEA's current strategy for school improvement, including the EDP, is now highly satisfactory and has a number of significant strengths.

32. The LEA is proposing further, very ambitious, developments to its strategy for delivering education and supporting school improvement, through the creation of full service districts. This is currently being trialled in conjunction with the two EAZs and will be implemented across the city by 2004. The full service districts strategy will develop an area focus for mainstream services and the council's Neighbourhood Renewal agenda. New management arrangements will lead to some delegation of decision making from the centre to district management groups involving the LEA, schools and other partners, and to ward level decision-making arrangements by the council. The LEA will need to ensure that, as this broader strategy develops, the EDP is revised to reflect changes to the delivery of education, and developments in multi-agency services.

33. Overall, the new EDP is a good plan, based on good consultation with schools, and the priorities identified receive their strong support. The schools surveyed rated the LEA's capacity to implement the strategy very highly. All national priorities and themes are covered well. The four key local themes identified by the LEA are fully justified by the thorough audit of strengths and weaknesses in performance. They are consistently, and imaginatively integrated into actions to address national priorities. The areas of performance targeted as part of the local public service agreement are fully justified by the audit.

34. The current improvement strategies are ambitious and well planned. The EDP sets out clear links between actions, activities, targets, priorities and quantifiable success criteria. Strategies for supporting and raising the attainment of underachieving groups and supporting pupils with SEN are coherent and very effectively integrated into all relevant phase and activity strands. Overarching links with other statutory plans and corporate priorities are explicit and underpin activities to support raising attainment and improving social inclusion. The work of the two statutory EAZs is very effectively integrated. However, the relevant EiC strategies are not interwoven specifically enough into the strategic planning of activity strands and do not fully reflect EiC's central role within the overall improvement strategy.

## **Progress in implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement**

35. In general, the LEA has made satisfactory progress in implementing the previous strategy for school improvement, as set out in the first EDP. It has made good progress in implementing its priorities to improve standards of numeracy and to

support creativity and the arts. It has taken appropriate action, where necessary, to try to accelerate progress, for example in restructuring the leadership and management of services supporting literacy. It has not, however, taken a strong enough lead in setting up formal systems for sharing good practice amongst schools as part of its strategy for improvement. Insufficient progress has also been made in delivering its priorities and targets for ICT and support to schools causing concern. Despite its best efforts, the LEA has not succeeded in fulfilling its prime objective of raising attainment at the rate needed to meet the very challenging targets it set itself for 2002.

36. The LEA's targets for 2004 agreed with the DfES are equally challenging. The aggregated schools' targets for 2003 are close to the LEA's for Key Stages 3 and 4. Schools' Key Stage 2 targets were, originally, substantially below the LEA's, indicating that schools had yet to be convinced that those targets were realistic. At the request of the DfES, the LEA has clarified its strategy for bridging that gap, and for targeting additional challenge and support to particular schools. The LEA is determined to reach the targets set. Nevertheless, based on provisional results for 2002, it will require twice the recent rate of improvement over the next two years to meet 2004 Key Stage 2 targets, and improvement will need to be three times faster if the LEA is to meet its GCSE targets. Given the rate of improvement to date, the 2004 targets are unrealistically high.

37. Evaluation of the implementation of the first EDP, and performance against some targets, was not rigorous enough. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the new EDP have been strengthened. The new format for monitoring enables actions to be tracked more effectively but, at present, there is too little opportunity for continuous evaluation and for identifying and tackling emerging factors that potentially affect progress.

### **Excellence in Cities**

38. Excellence in Cities has generally been implemented well. In most respects the LEA has successfully fulfilled its role in facilitating the development of EiC. It has not, however, been robust enough in monitoring some aspects of its implementation.

39. Although Excellence in Cities does not feature clearly enough in the LEA's overall strategic plans, in practice it has made some very significant contributions to the LEA's strategy for school improvement, for example, in supporting the LEA's high quality provision for the arts. Excellence in Cities in Manchester has been at the forefront of a number of developments nationally and practice developed by schools has contributed to national guidance and training materials. Excellence Challenge, which has extended EiC into the post-16 and higher education sectors, has also been well planned and implemented.

40. The establishment of the EiC Partnership has been key to the greatly improved relationships that now exists between the LEA and its schools, and is seen by both the LEA and headteachers as the model for local delivery of education and LEA/school partnership in the future. Excellence in Cities cluster arrangements for schools now underpin the LEA's new strategy for full service districts and implementation of the new Manchester Education Partnership.

41. The EiC Partnership has developed innovative practice in peer group monitoring, and evaluation. However, in some key respects, the Partnership's monitoring has lacked sufficient rigour. Joint protocols have yet to be agreed to address the overlaps emerging between some partnership monitoring activities and the LEA's overarching responsibilities for monitoring, supporting and challenging its schools. Such protocols will be needed to underpin the partnership between the LEA and schools in the management and delivery of education in full service districts. The LEA and the EiC Partnership are not yet in a position to identify whether all central EiC targets are being achieved, or the overall impact on groups of pupils receiving EiC support. This is inhibiting the LEA's overall evaluation of the effect of its strategy for school improvement.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Improve the LEA's strategy for school improvement, and its implementation, by:**

- establishing joint protocols which clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the LEA and schools in monitoring, challenging, supporting and, where necessary, intervening in schools;
- establishing similar protocols for monitoring and evaluating the management and delivery of education in full service districts;
- strengthening the framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the EDP and for ensuring the progress of activities; and
- incorporating EiC activities more explicitly into improvement programmes in the EDP, to show how they contribute to its priorities and activity plans.

### **Support for early years**

42. The LEA provides effective support for early years. Manchester has prioritised investment in early years and childcare; all four year-olds and a very high proportion of three year-olds (93 per cent) have access to a suitable early years place. In 2001-02, Ofsted judged 86 per cent of early years settings to be making satisfactory or better progress in developing the Early Years Goals; the authority is on track to achieve its target of 94 per cent by 2004.

43. The LEA gave good support to the establishment of the Early Years and Childcare Partnership and continues to do so, providing human resources, and advice and guidance, to assist the partnership in carrying out its functions. There are effective links between the EDP and the Early Years Development and Childcare Plan, ensuring a co-ordinated approach to developments. The plan sets clear objectives and targets to increase the range and quality of provision across the city, particularly in areas of disadvantage.

44. The Early Years and Childcare Partnership itself is sound. It is appropriately constituted and works within guidelines set out by the DfES. There are some

strengths to its work, for example in the very good range of information available to both parents and providers. Individuals and groups working with young children and their families have benefited from support and advice, and a comprehensive foundation stage training programme, provided through the Partnership. Training is planned, but, at present, there is no formal assessment in place to monitor individual children's progress against the Early Learning Goals prior to their transfer into mainstream school settings.

45. The Partnership has developed a satisfactory range of strategic and operational links with other key partners from across the city, including the Local Strategic Partnership, Learning and Skills Council, and the Children's Fund. Nevertheless, there are some weaknesses. Attendance at meetings is variable and the Partnership recognises that parent and teacher representation is weak. Some proposals for initiatives to develop childcare places are too fragmented. Although they do use the Childcare Audit, proposals are not always based on a wide enough range of evidence to ensure services are targeted most effectively to reach families in areas of high deprivation. In addition, not all bids for Neighbourhood Nursery Initiatives authorised by the partnership currently demonstrate the required sustainability over and above the five-year funding period.

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

46. The allocation of resources to priorities is satisfactory. It was poor at the time of the 1998 inspection and the LEA was recommended to improve the transparency of the allocation of education resources, improve the use of existing resources, and to target the resources available to overcome educational disadvantage more effectively.

47. The LEA has made good progress and has addressed most of the recommendations effectively. Consultation with schools about their budgets has improved, targets for delegation have been reached, strategic management costs have been reduced, school budget deficits have been reduced substantially, and a more transparent school funding formula has been implemented. However, there are still shortcomings in funding arrangements to support the LEA's inclusion strategy.

48. Education is key to the council's strategic plan and the local public service agreement. A three-year budget strategy links the education budget to key corporate and strategic objectives. There is regular and, in general, sufficiently rigorous monitoring of the budget by members and officers in the education budget strategy group. Nevertheless, in both 2000-01 and 2001-02, budget setting in relation to SEN budgets was weak, with unforeseen demands leading to overspend. Schools are consulted effectively during the budget process. The activity-based funding formula for schools has increased the transparency of budget decisions and schools consider these aspects of the LEA's work to be significantly better than at the time of the last inspection. The high levels of deficits in schools' budgets have reduced; however, relatively high surpluses are now accruing. The LEA has begun to require schools to account for these and, in general, surpluses reflect sensible budget planning by schools to cover substantial projected staffing or building costs.

49. However, there are weaknesses in the implementation of the funding formula. Following consultation with schools, the factor for funding additional educational need was reduced to only one per cent of the budget, much lower than in similar authorities and nationally. This limits the effect of the formula in distributing resources according to pupils' needs. Furthermore, a shortfall of £8 million in the estimated levels of funding to support the introduction of the formula, combined with otherwise sensible arrangements to protect schools that would lose funding as the formula was progressively introduced, has restricted its effect.

50. Funding for SEN is another area of weakness. The funding implications of the SEN review have not yet been finalised. This is too slow. Current funding for SEN favours statemented pupils. The LEA's placement policy has meant that there is relatively little dedicated funding for pupils without statements through, for example, additional educational needs factors. Schools are unclear about the LEA's current rationale for the deployment of SEN funding, rating this as less than satisfactory and in the bottom 25 per cent of all LEAs. A new funding arrangement is being modelled, which rightly aims to identify and direct additional funding more effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils with statements, irrespective of where they are placed. However, there is little time to incorporate these new funding arrangements into the revised special schools funding formula before its planned implementation in April 2003.

### **Promoting continuous improvement**

51. Strategies to promote continuous improvement are satisfactory and have a number of strengths at the corporate level. There is a clear framework in place, which provides for further improvement.

52. Chief officers lead on improvement of council services, and members have led on an initiative to involve middle management staff in identifying corporate values. The council's performance management framework is broadly effective. Performance monitoring information is focused on an appropriate range of key corporate indicators and targets, and is well presented. The children and young people's overview and scrutiny committee generally plays an active role both in the examination of proposed initiatives and in the scrutiny of outcomes.

53. The Best Value Performance Plan is clear, well-structured and integrates plans and targets across the council. It was given an unqualified opinion by the District Auditor in 2001-02. The use of Best Value as a vehicle for improvement is a corporate priority and good systems are in place. The council has identified fewer but more broad-ranging Best Value reviews for 2002-03 in line with its commitment to incorporate Best Value principles into day to day service delivery. The reviews are all crosscutting and include crime and disorder (jointly with the police) and culture (including learning). Best Value has been effectively integrated into service provision in education.

54. Recent Best Value reviews of the attendance and behaviour support service, learning support services, children in need, payroll, ICT and schools' repairs and maintenance were examined as part of this inspection. In general, the reviews were satisfactory, and have led to improvements and better-focussed services in some

areas such as the school repairs and maintenance service, provision for looked after children and learning support services. Action plans have been incorporated effectively into departmental planning. Nevertheless, although the reviews were generally effective, with sufficient challenge and, in most cases, adequate consultation and comparisons, there were weaknesses in the attention paid to alternatives for providing services. Members were not actively involved enough and there was an excessively high representation on the review teams of the staff of the service under review and their unions. The most common outcome of reviews has been the restructuring of the services.

55. The work of the education department and the progress of the management action plan are monitored monthly by the senior management team. Most service plans address the LEA's strategic plan targets and there are clear outcome-related targets, including some linked to the satisfaction of schools. Service standards have been agreed for each service. However, the use of data to monitor the performance of services, and as a tool for evaluating the progress and effectiveness of strategies and support, is not well enough developed. This is limiting the effectiveness of a number of areas of the LEA's work, for example, in supporting behaviour and SEN.

56. The LEA has actively used external evaluation from higher education institutions and external consultancy to help it improve. There is a strong emphasis on feedback from schools through an annual survey and visits to schools by senior managers. The LEA's self-evaluation of its performance in preparation for this inspection was generally accurate. Nevertheless, the weaknesses in evaluation of the previous EDP were again apparent. Although there is now a sharper focus on monitoring its work, the education department has not yet adopted a comprehensive approach to evaluating the quality and performance of services as well as the delivery of core activities.

### **Recommendations**

**Improve the LEA's capacity to continuously evaluate its performance by strengthening the collection and analysis of data, in order to:**

- improve aspects of strategic planning and better inform decision making;
- improve the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of strategies, initiatives and services on the performance of pupils; and
- systematically identify and promote models of effective practice that could be implemented across schools to speed up improvement.

## **SECTION 2: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

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

57. The LEA carries out the majority of its school improvement functions satisfactorily or highly satisfactorily. It has made good progress in improving its support since 1998 when the LEA was generally unsatisfactory or poor. The LEA has responded vigorously to Ofsted and consultancy reports on the effectiveness of services. The main school improvement service is being reorganised for a second time since 1998 with the intention of further improving the LEA's monitoring, challenge and support to schools. The latest transition was still in progress at the time of this inspection, but schools were very positive in their views of the growing sense of partnership in this support.

58. The LEA has made some significant progress in implementing national strategies such as numeracy, literacy and Key Stage 3 and in developing its support for minority ethnic pupils. Progress with ICT has, however, been unsatisfactory and much remains to be done. Progress in supporting schools causing concern is mixed and, though protocols and procedures are much improved, too many schools have either slipped from the serious weakness category into special measures or spend too long in special measures. The work of other services is appropriately focussed on school improvement and, with the exception of support for behaviour, their support is largely effective.

59. The cost of core services supporting school improvement is below average nationally and for statistical neighbours. There are a number of strengths in that support and in the work of individual services, but their impact in terms of raising overall standards has not been as consistent or, in some cases, as dramatic as it needed to be. At present, the LEA's services provide satisfactory value for money overall.

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

60. The LEA has responded well to recommendations in previous Ofsted reports and is currently implementing the recommendations of a consultancy report in 2001. There are currently clear protocols for monitoring, challenge and intervention. Three key documents have been issued following consultation with schools, which explain the triggers for intervention, the kinds of support a school might expect, and the process that will be followed.

61. Challenge is evident in most schools and there is a differentiated programme of monitoring. Use of data to target schools is sound, and sometimes good, for instance in schools identified for intensive support in numeracy. This means that support is effectively deployed according to need and in inverse proportion to success.

62. There has been inconsistencies in the effectiveness of link advisers in the past and this has been one of the reasons for recent changes to the service. These inconsistencies are evident in notes of visits to schools, some of which have been insufficiently evaluative and have not set a clear enough agenda for future action.



Link advisers are now assigned to clusters of schools based on the six EiC districts. Only five of the full complement of 12 advisers are currently in post and the LEA has employed sensible transitional strategies to maintain continuity of support. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these new arrangements.

63. Intervention strategies are clear, but there is currently some lack of clarity about the minimum levels of support available to schools. The LEA is able to justify two visits to all schools this term because of the transitional changes. However, discussion with schools reveals that some expect this level of visiting to continue. The LEA plans to clarify allocations of support once the management team of the new school improvement service, the Manchester Education Partnership, is in place in January 2003. Similarly, given the current stage of implementation, it has yet to draw up a written agreement detailing the respective roles and responsibilities of schools and the LEA under the new arrangements.

64. The LEA's intention is that subject advice should be facilitated by, but not directly provided by, the LEA and that the professional development programme should either function as an arms-length operation or should be offered to schools through brokerage. At this stage there has been very limited progress on providing advice on alternative providers.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Improve support to school improvement by:**

- defining the differentiated allocation of LEA support and challenge to schools under the new arrangements; and
- establishing how subject advice and professional development are to be facilitated, brokered or provided.

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

65. Monitoring and challenge are highly satisfactory. Strengths include support for secondary schools, improvements in target setting and the reduction in the number of schools causing serious concern. The last report indicated good progress in the provision of data to schools. Since 2000, progress has been sound, but the LEA is still behind many others in several respects, and there are still some shortcomings in the strategic use of performance data.

66. Good quality data are provided to schools for target setting. Data is timely, includes a suitable element of challenge, and informs the target-setting process well. This has led to a much closer agreement between the LEA's and the schools' aggregated targets. A school is challenged where the LEA judges its targets to be too low and this is formally recorded. The LEA has provided good support and training for headteachers and governors to support the target-setting process. Schools confirm these improvements, rating support as highly satisfactory and better than in the previous inspection.

67. There are weaknesses in some other aspects of data provision to schools. The one page summary profile introduced at the time of the 2000 report has been discontinued temporarily because of too many errors. The analyses do not enable schools to easily identify good practice in other schools and the LEA is at an early stage in value-added analysis. Electronic transfer of data is unsatisfactory and is inhibiting the effective transfer of data from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

68. The use of data to identify under-performing schools and underperformance in numeracy and literacy has improved and is now good. The use of minority ethnic data is also good, although not sufficiently embedded into the joint annual review process between schools and link advisers. The LEA does not use data well enough yet to identify underachieving groups of pupils, or underachieving departments, in schools, or the effect of pupil mobility on standards. Improved expertise in the research and statistics unit, and the use of software incorporating the unique pupil number, mean that the LEA has the capacity to make necessary improvements if the collection and analysis of data are effectively channelled through the unit.

### **Recommendation**

#### **Improve the effectiveness of monitoring and challenging of schools by:**

- improving the quality and range of data provided to link advisers to increase their knowledge of schools and the degree of effective challenge and support they can offer.

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

69. The LEA's identification of and intervention in under-performing schools is unsatisfactory, even though procedures have improved since the last inspection. The number of schools identified by Ofsted as requiring much improvement has reduced very significantly from 30 at the time of the last inspection to 12 currently, but this masks some enduring difficulties. Progress has been unsatisfactory because of the significant number of schools that slip from serious weakness into special measures or spend protracted periods in special measures.

70. Of the nine primary schools in special measures in January 2000, three closed, one was amalgamated and subsequently placed into special measures and one remains in special measures. Four schools made the necessary improvement, but not within the time expected nationally. A major concern is that five of the seven schools currently in special measures were previously in serious weakness. This is well above the national rate. LEA evaluation has focussed too narrowly on total numbers in each category. Although they featured in the success criteria in the first EDP, other aspects, such as time spent in special measures, have not been reported on. This weak analysis calls into question the reality of the projected target of no schools in special measures by 2003, and the adequacy of the resulting, very reduced, contingency fund for schools causing concern. Ofsted data indicates that, in 2001, the average number of days support was below the national average.

71. Whilst the effectiveness of support in primary schools is mixed, the LEA has improved its systems for identifying, intervening in and monitoring the progress of schools causing concern. Action plans and statements of action detailing additional LEA support are sound. In the past, the LEA did not always intervene quickly enough in the case of weak management, but this aspect has been strengthened. The LEA has made good use of its powers to appoint additional governors and withdraw delegated funding. It has issued one formal warning. The LEA has been very successful in secondary schools. It is a credit to the schools and LEA alike that, while Manchester has ten schools officially designated as being in challenging circumstances, only one is judged by Ofsted to have serious weaknesses and none require special measures.

72. There is an appropriate framework to monitor schools' progress. The deputy chief education officer meets regularly with the headteacher and chair of the governors of the school, and with relevant officers. The progress of these schools is a standing agenda item for the weekly senior management team meeting with the executive member. Although the monitoring of progress is rigorous in most respects, its effectiveness is undermined by the weaknesses in analysis highlighted above and in the clarity with which this has been reported to members.

### **Recommendation**

#### **Improve the effectiveness of work with under-performing schools by:**

- identifying more effectively why schools have not made the requisite progress while in serious weakness or special measures, and instigating remedial actions.

### **Support for literacy**

73. At the time of the last inspection, support for schools in raising standards in literacy was unsatisfactory. Although standards at Key Stages 1 and 2 had risen, they remained below those in similar authorities and well below national averages. A key weakness in the strategy was the quality of management, which resulted in inconsistent and variable support to schools. The LEA was recommended to review the management of the strategy.

74. Support for literacy in Key Stages 1 and 2 is now satisfactory. Because of earlier weaknesses there is still some ground to make up, but, once the primary team establishes itself fully, there is good capacity for further improvement. Links with other teams have been significantly strengthened, most notably through the joint working between literacy and numeracy consultants, but also through better liaison with other teams such as the ethnic minority achievement service

75. The LEA's analysis indicates that most of the schools receiving intensive support have improved at a faster rate than the average for the LEA and above the rate of improvement nationally. Despite this success the LEA still faces a considerable challenge. The performance of schools remains below that of similar authorities and, in line with the national trend, the rate of improvement has slowed.

The LEA, with the support of the DfES, is now providing more support to a small number of its lowest performing schools and is confident that the shortfall between its Key Stage 2 targets for 2004 and schools' targets will be substantially reduced. Nevertheless, given the rate of progress to date, the LEA's 2004 target for English at Key Stage 2 is unlikely to be achieved.

76. After considerable turbulence in the staffing and management of the primary literacy team since the last inspection, the team has now gained the necessary stability. The team of four consultants is now well led. The head of service, who also leads the LEA's successful support team for numeracy, has quickly gained a sense of the most pressing areas for development. The team recognises that it has much ground to make up as a result of previous weaknesses in management and support for schools, and has begun to do so. However, there is currently no specialist support for English available, particularly for Key Stages 1 and 2. This is a gap in the LEA's strategic support.

### **Support for numeracy**

77. At the time of the last inspection, support for numeracy in Key Stages 1 and 2 was good and had led to significant improvements in standards; it was a particular strength of the LEA's support for schools. There was more limited support for mathematics at Key Stage 3, but buying in support from another LEA had filled gaps in expertise.

78. Support for numeracy continues to be good and has been strengthened since the last inspection, particularly at Key Stage 3. The school survey reflects high levels of satisfaction. The LEA's support for its schools is effective and has contributed significantly to teachers' confidence and knowledge in teaching mathematics. The primary team has strong links with the ethnic minority achievement service and special needs support. Leading mathematics teachers are used well and rated highly. Although the teams know they face a considerable challenge in raising attainment in mathematics at a faster rate, they remain committed to improvement and have good capacity to sustain and further develop their support to schools.

79. The rate of improvement in most schools receiving intensive support is greater than the average for the LEA. Nevertheless, the LEA faces a continuing challenge in raising standards of achievement. Standards in Key Stage 2 have risen at a faster rate than nationally and the LEA achieves standards in line with those in similar LEAs. The rate of improvement at Key Stage 1 is slower, and below that in similar authorities. Despite the additional support already described in paragraph 73, given the rate of progress to date, the LEA's Key Stage 2 mathematics target for 2004 is also unlikely to be achieved.

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

80. At the time of the last inspection support for ICT was unsatisfactory. It continues to be so. The weaknesses, and associated recommendations in the last report, concerned technical support for primary schools, lack of clarity between LEA and secondary schools on investment, and lack of integration between administrative

and curriculum ICT. The LEA has made unsatisfactory progress in addressing these. It is under no illusions that it needs to significantly improve this area of support to schools, but has not integrated this priority clearly in the new EDP.

81. The LEA has made sound progress in addressing a number of the objectives in the first EDP, including, for example, the roll out of National Grid for Learning funding, meeting pupil: computer ratios, the provision of curriculum advice, and the establishment of four City Learning Centres across the LEA. These are developing effectively as centres of excellence and support for schools. The first to be established has a good partnership with its cluster of schools and is offering both curriculum and a technical support service. However, the LEA's failure to make sufficient progress in the key objective of developing a clear, shared, ICT strategy has undermined progress.

82. The number of central support staff is low. At present there is one Key Stage 3 consultant and one primary consultant for all the schools and the LEA does not provide technical support for curriculum ICT systems. Leadership and management of ICT across the education department, and links between corporate and education department planning, are weak. Schools are ill informed and under-represented in planning processes, and there is no LEA-wide group representing different stakeholders to discuss ICT strategy. Schools in general rate curriculum ICT and technical support as less than satisfactory, with primary schools indicating a decline since the last inspection.

83. Monitoring of ICT provision and the progress of pupils in schools has been inconsistent and consequently the processes employed for Best Value and targeting school support are insecure. While the take up of New Opportunities Fund training has been monitored its impact on teachers and schools has been neglected. The LEA has not regularly monitored progress against school ICT development plans and there are no systematic strategies for identifying and providing support in direct proportion to success. Primary schools presently receive support on an *ad hoc* basis. Technical support for curriculum networks has been a particular problem for primary schools, and presently the LEA is offering no advice on appropriate providers. Schools are aware that the LEA is unable to staff such a service at present.

## **Recommendations**

### **Improve support for ICT by:**

- ensuring support for ICT is adequately staffed and well managed, if necessary, brokering additional support from external providers for curriculum and administrative ICT in schools; and
- developing systems for monitoring school provision and pupil progress, to ensure effective allocation of support.

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

84. The LEA's support for the Key Stage 3 strategy is highly satisfactory. The LEA has implemented the Key Stage 3 strategy in line with national policy and sees it as a key element in its drive to improve the quality of its schools and the standards achieved by pupils. Schools rate the LEA's support highly and consider it to be much improved since the last inspection. The English and mathematics strategies are beginning to have an impact on standards in schools. Much remains to be done to raise standards, but the Key Stage 3 team is providing a wide range of support and advice, and developing effective models of good practice. There is good capacity for continued improvement.

85. The gap between the schools' performance and the national average is widest at Key Stage 3. The LEA's analysis indicates that the good progress made by some minority ethnic groups in Key Stage 2 is not sustained across Key Stage 3. In 2001-02, attendance improved, though levels of absenteeism remain a barrier to raising attainment at Key Stage 3. The LEA and schools have set challenging targets for 2004; the rate of improvement will need to increase markedly if the LEA is to meet them.

86. The LEA's consultants, under the leadership of the recently appointed head of service, form a coherent team. They are well qualified and enthusiastic, with a shared vision for improvement in standards and quality of teaching that is understood and shared by most schools. Links with the primary literacy and numeracy strategy are strong and the teams work effectively together on specific projects such as transition between Key Stages 2 and 3. The team also works well with other services supporting minority ethnic pupils and attendance and behaviour. Significant support is provided for special schools and pupil referral units resulting, for example, in some special schools attaining good levels of performance in the Key Stage 3 national tests.

87. The two longest-established teams, those for English and mathematics, provide a well-targeted programme of training and intensive support. Monitoring and evaluation in English and mathematics are systematic, and based on a thorough identification of needs and clear plans of action. Guidance has been developed to help departments monitor pupils' progress across the key stage. The support provided by both sets of consultants is highly regarded. The strategy for developing literacy in subjects across the curriculum has been well received by schools.

88. Support for science is also becoming established and has benefited from involvement in the pilot year; schools have valued the support and advice provided for the auditing process. The strategy for teaching in the foundation subjects has been successfully launched, and lead departments have been identified to provide support to schools. The ICT strategy has also been launched satisfactorily, though a recent resignation from the ICT team leaves a significant gap, which is unlikely to be filled before April 2003, reducing the effectiveness of this element of support.

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

89. The ethnic minority achievement service (EMAS) was last inspected in detail in 1998. It was unsatisfactory. The lack of detailed data on the performance of minority ethnic pupils was a key weakness, resulting in an inability to set meaningful targets and monitor progress, including the effectiveness of the LEA's own actions. The inspection in 2000 noted that broad targets had been set, but that the need to raise the performance of minority ethnic groups was not reflected clearly in the activities of the EDP.

90. Support has now improved and is highly satisfactory. Although standards fluctuate year on year, and for many groups decline from Key Stages 3 to 4, the performance of most minority groups has improved significantly, particularly at Key Stage 2. Increasing numbers of Traveller children are entered for national tests, and although standards are modest, they are improving. The service knows that much more remains to be done to secure equality of opportunity for minority ethnic groups, notably in raising standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 and reducing the exclusion of African Caribbean boys.

91. Progress since 1998 has been good and EMAS has good capacity for improvement. Key improvements have been made in the leadership of the service, resulting in better integration of the team's work with that of other school improvement services, and better monitoring of the performance of different minority groups, including Travellers. The work of EMAS and the Traveller education service are now more closely linked with the LEA's support for school improvement and for inclusion and this is reflected in much greater emphasis on minority ethnic achievement in the new EDP. Schools rate the support provided as very satisfactory, including support for pupils with English as an additional language. The LEA has also made good progress in implementing the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

92. The ethnic minority achievement service has responded well to changing needs, notably the rapid rise in refugees and asylum seekers. It has made good use of DfES grants, for example, to provide bilingual assistants and an education welfare officer. Inter-agency work is well developed, notably for refugee children. The core grants for minority ethnic groups are managed well, delegated appropriately, and monitored carefully. Additional grants are used to enhance support for particular groups or to undertake development work, for example in monitoring and promoting the attainment of gifted minority ethnic pupils.

93. Data on the performance of minority ethnic groups have improved steadily since 1998 and are being refined both to take account of the new DfES categories and to reflect the diversity of minority heritage groups, notably Travellers. Research has been commissioned to identify the reasons underlying, for example, the relatively strong performance of Bangladeshi pupils at Key Stage 2. The data is now better used for target setting, often with the support of ethnic minority achievement service staff. Ambitious targets have been set for all groups, but these do not, as yet, reflect pupils' prior attainment accurately, and data on individual pupils is not included in the package provided to schools. Exclusions are also monitored by

ethnicity, and research into the reasons for the high level of exclusion of African Caribbean boys has been commissioned.

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

94. The LEA's support for gifted and talented pupils is highly satisfactory. The strategies for improving the performance of gifted and talented pupils, through EiC and the EAZs, are sound. All secondary schools, 20 primary schools and two special schools have been involved in specifically targeted activity with gifted and talented pupils through EiC. This difference in the involvement of the phases is reflected in the more positive response of secondary schools, which regard the LEA's support as highly satisfactory. Primary schools involved in Excellence in Cities were positive about the LEA's support, but primary schools, in general, rated it as less satisfactory.

95. Schools have been supported in a wide and imaginative range of initiatives across the curriculum, but notably in the arts and sport. Individual schools have undertaken enrichment activities that have raised the performance of targeted groups, for example in mathematics master-classes linked with local universities. Additional support, such as summer schools, learning mentors, access to study resources, and through the City Learning Centres, have been well planned and the take-up is good. Schools receiving support feel that the initiatives and the support provided by the LEA have raised expectations of pupils' abilities.

96. The LEA has successfully bid for additional funding to promote better involvement of minority ethnic pupils and for the establishment of advanced learning centres for mathematics, drama and English. Links with other activities are satisfactory and, for example, LEA training for English and mathematics includes attention to teaching more able children. A project is underway with Excellence Challenge to mentor pupils from Year 9 in order to encourage more to progress to higher education. Good support is provided for the training co-ordinators and all responsible teachers in primary schools have been trained; most have achieved national accreditation.

97. The senior EiC co-ordinators monitor the implementation of the provision for gifted and talented pupils to ensure that all schools in the EiC initiative have co-ordinators and that plans are effective. Targets have been set, but these need updating. Whilst overall standards achieved at higher levels in national tests are rising in line with similar authorities, they remain well below national averages. Individual schools monitor the impact of their activities on targeted groups of students and opportunities exist for sharing good practice through cluster groups. However, evaluation of the progress made by cohorts of gifted and talented pupils is not well enough developed to enable the LEA to comprehensively identify the overall effect of the initiative.

### **Support for school leadership and management**

98. At the time of the last inspection, support for school leadership and management was satisfactory. The LEA's assessment, supported by key indicators and the views of schools, is that it remains satisfactory and no detailed fieldwork was



undertaken as part of this inspection. Nevertheless, this inspection does indicate that sufficient progress has been made in supporting schools to develop their capacity for self-management, including self-evaluation, and in developing the skills of leadership and management, particularly in those schools where management was a cause for concern.

### **Support to governors**

99. Support for governors was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. There was, however, too little emphasis on equipping governors to deal with important issues such as performance data, target setting and supporting school improvement. The service has continued to improve and the weaknesses identified previously have been addressed. The service is now very satisfactory, though more remains to be done to rationalise communication and advice.

100. The needs of individual governing bodies are now better met though targeted advice and training. The monitoring of governing bodies has been improved. Link advisers attend at least one governing body meeting per year, and in the small number of cases where there is disagreement over targets they attend target-setting meetings. The service is rated as satisfactory by primary schools and by most secondary schools. The LEA is much more active in tackling issues, for example, vacancies for LEA governors have been reduced from 25 to 15 per cent and active recruitment is increasing the number of governors from minority ethnic groups.

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

101. The effectiveness of services to support school management is satisfactory. Improvements over the last three years include a clearly set out services directory, a much sharper customer focus and improved ratings by schools. There is evidence of action to improve poorer services such as property services and support for ICT in administration, and there are reasonable prospects of further improvement.

102. The fair funding services directory is clearly set out with good information on the traded and statutory services, service standards and on costs. Some services, for example financial support, repairs and maintenance and catering, are offered at a range of levels. Nevertheless, services from external providers are not listed in the directory where the LEA does not offer a service, and there is only *ad hoc* support for schools to buy services externally. Manchester is, however, participating in developing a joint, independent, brokerage service with neighbouring LEAs. This will provide comparative information for schools about different service providers and, eventually procure and manage contracts, leading to better and more wide-ranging choice for schools.

103. Schools were well involved in the specification of the services and there was a one-year trial of the service level agreements. Buy-back by schools is very high. The demand exceeded the LEA's initial estimations and, as a result, charges were slightly above the cost of provision. However, the profit made over the first year of the contract has been used to freeze charges in 2002-03. There is an annual process of surveying schools' views of services and changes have been made as a

result, for example to administrative ICT support and to the personnel and management support service. However, traded services are offered only as a three-year contract from 2001-2004. This is too restrictive and is unsatisfactory. Although withdrawal is possible, to do so schools must invoke the complaints procedure, limiting their freedom of choice.

### **Recommendation**

#### **Improve the effectiveness of services to support school management by:**

- ensuring schools are able to withdraw from service level agreements purchased from the LEA by giving reasonable and agreed notice.

104. The **financial services** provided to schools are satisfactory. There has been considerable improvement since the 1998 inspection when they were graded as very poor. Financial support and advice is now rated as better than satisfactory by schools, and more positively than in 2000.

105. Four levels of financial support are offered. The standard package is comprehensive and buy-back across all four options is high (96 per cent). There is effective monitoring of budgets. Links with management support and school improvement officers are good, and there is a well-integrated approach to supporting schools causing concern. However, there is no consistent benchmarking of school expenditure by the LEA. Although the finance team have encouraged schools to use consistent financial reporting standards and to use the Audit Commission benchmarking website, further improvement will be limited unless the finance service encourages schools to plan their budgets over the medium term and to use benchmarking actively.

106. The council's financial ledger system is outdated, slow and insufficiently focused on customers' needs. In previous years, this has led to delays in reconciliations and difficulty for schools in understanding the information it produces. Since April 2001 all schools have operated their own bank accounts, eliminating the need for regular reconciliations, and these are monitored quarterly through the school information management system.

107. The personnel and management support team provides **human resources** support, together with other services to schools. Support for human resources was unsatisfactory at the time of the first inspection; it is now good and highly likely to improve further. Schools have very positive views of the service, rating it significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection; professional personnel advice and casework are rated as good and, for secondary schools, in the top 25 per cent of LEAs. All but one school buys the service.

108. The service is strongly focused on schools' needs. It produces high quality documents, advice and training on personnel issues such as performance-related pay. It carries out effective policy development work as well as offering good casework support. It has excellent links with other services such as finance and those supporting schools causing concern. Industrial relations are good and there are few industrial tribunals.

109. The service monitors its contacts with schools to identify particular concerns. Each school has a management support officer who is available on demand to deal with a wide range of issues, some of which are referred on to other teams. Nevertheless, whilst the breadth of the personnel and management support service is a strength, it is potentially plugging gaps in other services, for example in aspects of payroll, which are not financed through the payroll service level agreement. The council's personnel and payroll system is not focused on its customers' needs and does not allow ready access to performance monitoring information.

110. **Property services** were poor at the time of the 1998 inspection, they are now highly satisfactory with good prospects of improvement. In the school survey the quality of both building maintenance services and programming and management of building projects was rated as broadly satisfactory, and significantly better than previously.

111. The Best Value review of the service led to the reorganisation of the education team to give more strategic support to schools linked to asset management planning. The repairs and maintenance service provided by the council's direct service organisation, 'City Works', has improved and is more focused on its customers' needs. The repairs and maintenance service level agreement offers a fixed price list for repairs and maintenance on a pay as you go basis. Schools are not tied in to a contract, there are discounts for high volume users and there is responsive emergency support. The service is used by 97 per cent of schools. The LEA has innovative plans for bulk purchasing to reduce costs for individual jobs.

112. Technically qualified estate officers provide good support to schools. This includes brokering of alternative repairs and maintenance services. The officers actively encourage schools to link their school development plan to the LEA asset management plan. Annual workshops with headteachers have done much to actively involve schools in jointly planning and managing their property assets with the LEA. Schools are given good information about their premises and advice on sources of funding. Management of building projects is effective and to time, and schools are fully involved.

113. The **strategy and support for ICT in administration** are poor. The previous inspection recommended that links between the support provided for administrative and curriculum ICT be improved. Lack of expertise in the education department has resulted in little progress in this area. Furthermore, in some areas of rapid development nationally, such as electronic links with schools and the intranet, the LEA has dropped further behind. Development has been impeded by an absence of corporate leadership. This strategic vacuum has led to departments developing their own, unrelated ICT infra-structure, which limits data sharing. Some key corporate ICT systems are not sufficiently focussed on the needs of customers and, in the case of the financial system, are antiquated.

114. These weaknesses have been compounded by the lack of leadership from the LEA in developing an ICT strategy for education that has the support of schools and is focused on outcomes. The current strategy is narrowly focused on infra-

structure and is not effectively shared with schools. Schools do not yet have reliable electronic communication links with the LEA, they do not have access to the LEA intranet, and there is no schools intranet. The LEA has recently confirmed the secondment of an officer with extensive experience of school-based ICT systems to lead on strategy and support in education. Without effective strategic leadership in this area, further improvement is uncertain.

115. Schools are very critical of ICT strategy and technical support. Technical support is rated as poor or very poor by two-thirds of schools, and in the bottom 25 per cent of all LEAs. Schools rate electronic communication between schools and the LEA as less than satisfactory. Support for administrative ICT is offered under a service level agreement and, despite schools' negative views, buy-back is high. Most schools use the same system for administration and the LEA is implementing a compatible central system to hold pupil information. The team has been enlarged to provide a more responsive service in response to schools' criticisms and support is improving, but from a low base.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Improve support for ICT by:**

- developing greater consistency between corporate and educational strategic planning; and
- achieving closer links between curriculum and administrative ICT, better integration of different ICT systems, and more effective electronic transfer of information.

116. The LEA's provision for **cleaning and caretaking** is satisfactory. The LEA's planned brokerage arrangements should deliver satisfactory improvement. In the school survey, the quality of facilities maintenance: covering cleaning, grounds maintenance and caretaking, was rated as just above satisfactory and in the top 25 per cent of all LEAs by secondary schools, and significantly better than previously. Most schools employ their cleaners and caretakers directly, though some buy in the cleaning service from the council. The LEA does not offer client support, contract supervision or brokerage of cleaning services. The service level agreement offered by the education department covers cleaning and caretaking support and 82 per cent of schools bought the service in 2001-02. Service level agreements are flexible and customised according to school needs, and charges are reasonable.

117. The **grounds maintenance** service traded by the LEA was unsatisfactory in the 1998 inspection. Although a service is no longer directly offered by the LEA, provision to schools remains unsatisfactory. Schools surveyed commented that grounds maintenance is poor and unresponsive. The LEA does not include a grounds maintenance service in the services directory for schools, despite the fact that neither the council's operational services department does offer a service, nor does the LEA offer schools advice on alternative service providers. Most schools purchase the service externally.

118. The **catering service** for schools is a good service with excellent prospects of improvement. The service has an excellent focus on the needs of schools and children and on staff development. The catering contract offered to schools is flexible and school-focused, with a good range of offers tailored for primary, secondary and special schools. It includes management of catering premises and equipment, and additional services such as Halal meals, medical diets and theme days. It offers good value for money and take up of meals is high. Good advice is available on nutrition and on catering options. In the school survey the quality of the catering service was rated as above satisfactory and in the top 25 percent of LEAs nationally.

119. There have been real improvements over the last two years, particularly in the innovative meals packages, which take account of nutritional standards and link to the curriculum. The service is well managed and charges and outputs are regularly benchmarked and monitored. Schools' and pupils' views are acted on and profits have been used to improve services and to invest in equipment in schools. However, the LEA does not make provision to monitor hygiene, health and safety or the nutritional quality of meals in schools that do not buy into the contract.

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

120. Support for the recruitment and retention of teachers is highly satisfactory. In January 2001, there were no unfilled vacancies, a much better position than in most other LEAs. There are difficulties with retention. For instance, only 50 per cent of newly qualified teachers were retained for a second year in 2001, well below the national average of 88 per cent. However, the priority now being given to this issue, together with increased staffing, provides a firm base for further improvement.

121. There is a good range of recruitment strategies. The LEA has been successful in securing funding for a recruitment strategy manager. The recruitment of newly qualified teachers is particularly effective, with over 60 headteachers and deputies involved in interviewing 250 trainees for the Manchester pool and approval list. Induction programmes for newly qualified teachers (and new headteachers) are in place and valued by the schools. Two recruitment drives have successfully targeted Australian teachers. The graduate teacher programme has been developed in recent years, culminating in an initiative with two other LEAs that reserves one third of places for applicants from minority ethnic heritage. High priority is given to supporting those schools causing concern and in challenging circumstances.

122. Nonetheless, the inadequate analysis of data to detect trends, subject shortages or geographical patterns has been a significant weakness. The LEA is not using data to predict recruitment needs and this is a shortcoming. Information is collected from primary schools on vacancies, but not from secondary schools. A research and project officer has recently been appointed and progress has been made in addressing this weakness. Questionnaires completed by teachers leaving their post are now being analysed. Nevertheless, all the data relating to recruitment and retention are not collected in one place.

123. The LEA's continuing professional development programme is a strength and does contribute to its retention strategy. The support given by the enrichment

team for the creative arts earns particularly high praise from schools. Advice on other providers is limited, but there are some innovative proposals to accredit teaching experience in collaboration with Higher Education institutions. Consideration is also being given to support with accommodation during the first five years in post. These initiatives are at an early stage, but are indicative of the LEA's determination to improve its retention of teachers.

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

124. There have been significant reorganisations of services to support school improvement. The major change is the formation of the Manchester Education Partnership (MEP). The new structure comprises a 'school effectiveness team' focussing on monitoring, challenge and support; an 'innovations team' with a remit to deliver EDP priorities and national priorities; and, eventually, an 'ICT team'. The structure was due to be fully implemented from September 2002, but this has only been partially accomplished. The LEA has quite sensibly delayed appointments in order to ensure it engaged the specified calibre of staff. It does mean that, at the time of the inspection, only five of the 12 link advisers were operating and, though two of the senior managers of the MEP were appointed, only one was in post.

125. The reorganisation is imaginative. Schools have been thoroughly consulted and the great majority are very supportive. The likelihood of successful implementation is enhanced by much of the proposal being based on existing successful work in EiC and EAZs, on neighbourhood working and the direct involvement of schools. However, in discussions, some schools have expectations for centrally provided support that would be inconsistent with the policy to promote greater self-autonomy of schools.

126. In general, the leadership of services is highly satisfactory. The MEP is strategically led by the deputy chief education officer and the city-wide strategy board, which includes headteachers' representatives. When fully established the MEP senior management team will include the three team managers and, sensibly, the senior EiC co-ordinator. It is too early to judge the leadership of the teams within the MEP, but the post holders have been recruited from national fields, and by a rigorous selection process, which included headteachers. Leadership of primary numeracy and literacy teams and the ethnic minority assessment service is strong, and support to schools has improved considerably in the last two years.

127. Strategic planning is also highly satisfactory and clearly linked to corporate objectives. There have been improvements recently, for example in the planning of support for attendance, and planning by services supporting school management is generally good. The quality of service planning leads to good deployment of staff to meet identified needs. There are sound procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the implementation of plans, but there is still some inconsistency across services.

128. There is a highly satisfactory level of expertise across these services. It is particularly good in the enrichment, numeracy and literacy teams, and new appointments to the 'school effectiveness team' have significantly increased expertise in senior management of primary schools. The MEP intends to build on the experience of EiC, and EAZs, in using the expertise of schools and headteachers

to enhance the management support available to secondary schools. There are gaps in expertise, however, in the behaviour support team and the authority lacks sufficient breadth of expertise in ICT.

129. Performance management procedures are satisfactory and operate to an agreed corporate framework. There are clear induction procedures and staff have a suitable range of training opportunities. Managers regularly discuss the performance of members of their team, but links are not always clear between service targets and those for individual members of staff. Link advisers' work is scrutinised and there is formal observation of a link adviser's work with staff in schools leading to oral and written feedback that informs review cycles.

## **SECTION 3: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

### **Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's special educational needs (SEN) provision**

130. Special educational needs provision was poor in 1998 and still unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. It has undergone a great many changes over recent years and, following effective consultation, the LEA has established a clear agenda for the future development of SEN in Manchester. There is strong support for the inclusion approach and schools are working effectively with the LEA to promote the policy. In general, provision is now satisfactory. However, decisions on funding have been slow and financial planning is not clearly linked to the strategy at present. The monitoring of provision in schools is not as effective as it needs to be. The LEA now has a firm base on which to proceed, and has the capacity to make the necessary improvements. Nevertheless, it needs to move forward quickly to address these weaknesses and implement its strategy, and to raise the attainment of pupils with SEN.

#### **The strategy for special educational needs**

131. At the time of the last inspection the LEA's strategy was ineffective. The LEA was recommended to improve the quality of strategic planning by proceeding with an audit of need and provision, agreeing the desired pattern of provision, and developing a longer term rolling plan with quantified targets. Satisfactory progress has been made and there is now a sound, agreed, long-term strategy with inclusion focus groups to develop areas of SEN. Schools support the strategy and now rate most aspects of SEN support more highly.

132. There is a clear policy for meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, following extensive consultation with schools and the wider community. Whilst this has meant that developments have not proceeded as fast as expected, it has resulted in a clear commitment to inclusion from all parties, including elected members. The strategy defines pupils' entitlement and reflects the timescales and targets for development required by current legislation. It also takes account of the local development of full service districts. Sound monitoring and review procedures for the implementation of the strategy have been established, with a multi-agency steering group and an education implementation group. Aspects of the strategy, such as primary provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties are being implemented. The LEA's target to provide for 45 per cent of statemented pupils in mainstream schools by 2004 is being actively pursued. The proportion of newly statemented pupils in mainstream schools (57 per cent), for example, has doubled since 1997.

#### **Statutory obligations**

133. Meeting statutory obligations has been a high priority for the LEA. At the time of the first inspection, the number of statements prepared within the required time was exceptionally low (5 per cent). By the last inspection this had increased to around 60 per cent, but was still unsatisfactory. Since 2000, the LEA has made good progress. Provision is now satisfactory and the LEA is vigorously pursuing its statutory obligations.



134. The LEA continues to work hard to improve the timeliness of statements and has developed good relationships with health professionals in attempting to improve attendance at medical appointments. The number of statements prepared within 18 weeks has increased to 82 per cent with exceptions and to 55 per cent without exceptions. The establishment of the SEN casework service and decision-making panel has contributed to the progress made, and schools appreciate the improved service they receive. The quality of annual reviews and statements is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the reviews, whilst conducted properly, can be carried out several months late, and individual statements vary in the extent to which they specify adequately the support to be provided by the LEA.

135. There is an active parent partnership scheme that provides good guidance for parents. The LEA uses the North West disagreement resolution service and provides appropriate advice to parents on their rights.

### **School improvement**

136. The LEA provides satisfactory support to schools to help them improve their support for pupils with SEN. Sufficient progress has been made since the last inspection. A Best Value review of services to support SEN has been conducted effectively and the outcomes, including changes to the learning support services, are being implemented satisfactorily. Development plans are in place for all services, and encompass the review's recommendations. The learning support service is well regarded in primary schools and, in line with the review, delegation is being investigated for April 2003. Whilst there are currently recruitment difficulties, the LEA has sufficient capacity for further improvement. Clear and precise information about the respective roles and responsibilities of schools and the LEA is provided in the updated handbook on SEN.

137. The criteria for statutory assessment are in line with the Code of Practice. Following a statement, a pupil is currently allocated a funding band, which triggers additional resources after a plan for their use is submitted to the LEA. A new formula is being investigated, which will fund all statemented pupils and apply to mainstream and special schools. The allocations are regularly reviewed, but moderation arrangements are not well developed. Special educational needs co-ordinators appreciate the network of support and value the training they receive. One of the focus groups of the SEN strategy is working on ensuring that a comprehensive SEN training programme is developed and delivered.

138. All pupils have individual education plans, although they vary in quality. Targets have been set for individuals with SEN through these individual education plans, but insufficient use is made of the data to monitor pupils' progress. Ofsted's Section 10 inspections of schools indicate that the progress of pupils with SEN is unsatisfactory in over 20 per cent of primary schools in Manchester compared to eight per cent in similar LEAs.

## **Value for money**

139. At the last inspection value for money was unsatisfactory. The LEA has made some progress in controlling SEN budgets and it now has better systems in place to manage overspends. All SEN services have appropriate budget monitoring and action plans in place following the Best Value review. Nevertheless, there has been insufficient progress in tackling some weaknesses in support to schools, and value for money remains unsatisfactory.

140. The LEA recognises the areas for further development. Although it has held briefing meetings to explain the allocation system for additional educational needs funding, it is not well understood or accepted by schools. The LEA is currently modelling a new 'matrix' formula, which will fund all statemented pupils and apply to mainstream and special schools. This will establish clearer criteria for SEN funding and an accompanying moderation system is planned. However, the LEA has limited time to develop this system as a basis for the revised special schools funding formula to be introduced in April 2003. The LEA has piloted a self-evaluation procedure for monitoring schools' expenditure on SEN. These monitoring arrangements will form part of the responsibilities of the Manchester Education Partnership, but have yet to be implemented and monitoring of individual pupils' progress as part of these arrangements is not well developed.

141. In general, the progress of pupils with SEN in primary schools is unsatisfactory. Monitoring of their progress, of schools' provision and expenditure on SEN, and the financial planning for the SEN strategy, are still underdeveloped at school and LEA levels. At present the LEA does not have the means of identifying whether its expenditure on SEN provides value for money.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Improve support for special educational needs by:**

- further developing the SEN strategy, to include detailed funding proposals for all stages of its implementation;
- urgently implementing the new funding system for pupils with statements of SEN;
- ensuring all schools monitor their expenditure on SEN, and that this is in turn monitored by the LEA; and
- implementing a system to monitor the progress of pupils with SEN.

## **SECTION 4: PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

### **Summary of effectiveness in promoting social inclusion**

142. The LEA's effectiveness in promoting social inclusion was poor at the time of the first inspection. It had improved, but was still unsatisfactory when inspected last time. Despite the high corporate priority given to social inclusion, the LEA was still failing some of the most vulnerable young people in the city. The report challenged the LEA to tackle these problems with some urgency. The LEA now promotes social inclusion well; it supports it satisfactorily.

143. The council continues to demonstrate a very strong commitment to social inclusion through the Community Strategy and associated corporate and strategic planning. Education plays a prominent role in social inclusion and regeneration projects and in city-wide partnerships and initiatives such as Sure Start, the Street Crime Initiative, and the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy. This is also reflected in the LEA's planning of provision, including the strategy for school improvement.

144. The LEA has worked hard to make the improvements needed to services and to remedy weaknesses in policy and practice highlighted by the previous inspection. There are some strengths, for example in its implementation of the corporate commitment to protecting cultural diversity and combating racism. There has been improvement in its support, for example, to looked after children, and in its monitoring of the achievement of differing groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups. Schools now judge the LEA's overall support for social and educational inclusion as better than satisfactory.

145. Nevertheless, the shift in emphasis from support and intervention for individual pupils to helping schools become better at the strategic management of inclusion, has not been rapid enough. The LEA is aware that it has not yet convinced all schools of the need for this change, or ensured that they understand and fully support some strategies, especially for improving attendance and behaviour. The development of the full service district model, and the increased multi-agency working this will entail, will increase the pace of change. The LEA is aware of the challenge this presents but, given the progress made so far, it has the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

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

146. At the time of the last inspection in 2000, the planning of school places was good and had improved considerably since 1998. Many of the strengths that led to that improvement are still apparent. However, not all aspects of the LEA's current work are as strong and, overall, the LEA's planning of school places is now highly satisfactory.

147. The LEA has demonstrated effective leadership and clear strategic priorities in the decisive reduction and rationalisation of secondary places since 1998, and the on-going review of primary places. It has also shown good vision in decisions on reorganisations, taking account of raising standards, increasing inclusion, regeneration, admissions and building quality in the process. It has good

consultation arrangements, and schools and parents are effectively involved and informed throughout the reorganisation process. The dioceses are involved effectively in school reorganisations. Links with neighbouring LEAs are good.

148. Surplus places in secondary schools have been successfully reduced to below the national average, and the proportion of schools with surpluses of 25 per cent or more places is lower than average. The LEA's priority is now on ensuring there are sufficient secondary places across Manchester to meet basic need. Primary surplus places remain just above the national average. The LEA is engaged in a continuing review of primary places and has good plans to reduce areas of surplus and of excess demand.

149. Nevertheless, the forecasting model being developed, whilst reasonably accurate, does not take account of information from the very substantial Roman Catholic sector or of detailed health sector data. The effects of regeneration in attracting families back into inner city districts are not yet included in forecasts, and detailed projections based on housing development are not yet available. The school organisation committee focuses narrowly on its statutory duties and does not meet frequently enough to allow the group to discuss and comment on the review proposals in progress. The school organisation plan is appropriately structured and sets out the LEA's intentions in broad terms. However, it is insufficiently detailed over projections and proposed actions in specific areas of the city and plans for the reorganisation of primary schools.

### **Asset management planning**

150. Asset management planning is good. The LEA has strengthened its strategic approach to asset management planning, and to school place planning and admissions, through the reorganisation of its planning and property staff into a single team. Its planning is also closely linked to the council's objectives for regeneration, inclusion and improving standards. The LEA's asset management plan is good and was assessed as above average by the DfES. The LEA's longer-term (ten year) view rightly considers the quality of school buildings as a whole and off-sets savings from the maintenance of older buildings against the cost of new building.

151. The LEA has one of the highest levels of need for funding to improve the condition of its buildings in the country (£490 per pupil, compared with a national average of £91 per pupil). The LEA has begun to reduce the backlog effectively over the last three years and has ambitious plans for the future investment of £200 million. Funding has increased steadily since 1999-2000. There has been a 68 per cent increase in capital funding in 2002-03 compared with the previous year, due partly to successful basic need bids. The LEA is innovative in making use of joint funding and regeneration monies to augment its capital grants and has been effective in generating matched funding on behalf of schools.

152. The LEA has completed its condition and suitability surveys and is in the process of carrying out sufficiency assessments in discussion with schools. The asset management planning database effectively links information on condition and building quality to suitability and sufficiency issues as well data on schools' performance. This is updated annually by estate officers after discussion with

schools. Good, clear asset management planning information is provided for schools. Priorities for investment are transparent and agreed with schools through the asset management planning steering group.

153. Schools are positive about the LEA's management of capital projects and there is relatively little slippage in the capital programme. The LEA is, rightly, seeking to develop schools' own asset management planning capacity through regular seminars and workshops, training, newsletters and joint work on school development planning with estate officers. However, schools have been slow to spend their devolved capital and the LEA is encouraging them to use this for joint schemes where possible.

### **Admissions**

154. The LEA's admissions policy was satisfactory previously. The LEA had consulted widely to produce a sound policy that took account of the DfES code of practice and gave proper weight to parental preference. The LEA's assessment is that it remains satisfactory. This is supported by key indicators and by schools, which consider that effectiveness of admissions procedures has improved significantly since the last inspection. Secondary schools, in particular, rate admissions procedures in the top 25 per cent of all LEAs. Though appeals increased significantly with the change of admissions policy, 85 per cent of children were allocated places at their preferred school in 2001. The proportion of pupils opting to be educated in schools outside Manchester's borders or in the independent sector has fallen slightly. No detailed fieldwork was undertaken as part of this inspection

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

155. There were serious weaknesses in this area of the LEA's provision at the time of the last inspection. Good progress has been made, provision has improved, as have the database and monitoring arrangements. The LEA now makes satisfactory provision for pupils who have no school place and there is a good strategy for future development in the Behaviour Support Plan. This has been enhanced by the review of this area in the Best Value review of attendance and behaviour services in 2001. Its recommendations are being implemented to further improve provision.

156. Full time alternative provision is made for all excluded pupils and those out of school for more than 15 days due to exclusion. The LEA provides a comprehensive range of provision: with pupil referral units at Key Stages 2 and 3, and a range of alternative provision at Key Stage 4, overseen by the Manchester Youth College. This Key Stage 4 provision is wide ranging, both geographically and in what is offered, and the LEA is rightly proposing to register this provision as a single pupil referral unit operating in a number of separate settings. Attendance at alternative provision in Key Stage 4 is now adequately monitored, but the LEA recognises the need to introduce firmer monitoring of educational provision and pupils' progress. This is planned as part of the role of the proposed head of the Key Stage 4 pupil referral unit, but improved monitoring has not yet been implemented. Pupils'

progress and attendance at pupil referral units are monitored and standards are rising at Key Stage 3.

157. Referral systems are effective and the development of cluster inclusion panels is beginning to have positive effects on reintegration in some areas of the city. Headteachers report examples of good practice in reintegration using learning support units and alternative provision. However, there is no systematic sharing of good practice to support this work. Worryingly, reintegration of excluded pupils into mainstream education is falling.

158. Liaison with other agencies is satisfactory, with some good examples of work with health in the pupil referral units. There is a systematic procedure for monitoring the education of children at home, involving the education welfare service and link advisers. The provision of education for children out of school for medical reasons and for schoolgirl mothers is also well monitored. The LEA makes offsite provision, but aims to include the pupils in mainstream education and has good links with schools.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Improve the provision for pupils who have no school place by:**

- establishing the Key Stage 4 pupil referral unit and monitoring of the quality of all alternative education provision; and
- systematically investigating the reasons for falling numbers of pupils being reintegrated into mainstream education, and the impact of the current range of provision, including learning support units.

### **Attendance**

159. The previous inspections judged support to schools to improve attendance as unsatisfactory. Recent improvements mean that support is now satisfactory. In particular, the LEA has made satisfactory progress with the recommendation to target support in inverse proportion to success. This has not been popular with many schools. In the school survey both primary and secondary schools rated support as less than satisfactory and significantly worse than at the time of the 2000 inspection. Around three-quarters of secondary schools rated it as poor or very poor.

160. A major factor in schools' dissatisfaction is the legacy arising from inconsistencies in the quality of support and differing practice by education welfare officers, for example, in their willingness to pursue prosecutions. There is insufficient challenge to schools in setting targets for attendance. The LEA recognises these weaknesses and the new chief education welfare officer has tackled these issues vigorously. A new city-wide strategy has been produced, and a new service level agreement is in draft form, with specific attention given to promoting consistency of practice, including more use of prosecutions and an enhanced training programme for education welfare officers.

161. The LEA is right to give raising attendance levels a high priority. Attendance rates are still too low and unauthorised absence is double the national average. However, provisional data for 2001-02 shows that, over the last two years, improvement in attendance rates in both primary and secondary schools places the LEA in the top 25 per cent nationally. As part of the local public service agreement action plan, the service has established a promoting attendance group, with wide multi-agency membership. An additional education welfare officer post has been funded, and challenging targets have been set for improving attendance. Additional funds have also been made available through the standards fund in 2002-03. The LEA has collaborated well with the police to mount truancy sweeps and funded electronic registration systems in high schools as part of the Street Crime Initiative.

162. There is a sound management plan. This incorporates the recommendations from the previous inspection and a District Audit review, as well as the best value review of attendance and behaviour support services. However, weaknesses in the consultation process on support for attendance as part of the review resulted in inadequate consideration of alternative provision. The LEA has developed joint strategies with the two EAZs for supporting schools in the zones. The resulting combination of education welfare officer and school-provided support is a valid and effective strategy and has contributed to the one per cent increase in attendance in high schools over the last year. However, secondary schools, in general, still perceive that much of this improvement has evolved through unilateral actions by schools and not as part of an LEA strategy.

### **Behaviour support**

163. In 1998 the LEA's support for improving behaviour was poor. The subsequent inspection in 2000 found evidence of considerable progress and provision was satisfactory, despite primary schools' dissatisfaction with access to behaviour support and the continuing demand from schools for segregated provision. The LEA has made further efforts to improve the effectiveness of services, and has made some progress. However, it has not taken schools along with it. The weaknesses in provision currently outweigh strengths and the LEA's support is unsatisfactory. Whilst schools acknowledge improvements since last time they still rate support as less than satisfactory. Without the support of schools in pursuing the strategy, the capacity for further improvement is significantly reduced.

164. The rate of permanent exclusions is falling faster than the national level and challenging targets have been set for the future. The number of fixed term exclusions is rising and the LEA has not undertaken sufficient analysis to identify the possible reasons for this. There are targets for the reduction in fixed-term exclusions in the 19 schools involved in the Street Crime Initiative. However, at present, the LEA has no reliable historical data on which to base targets for the LEA as a whole.

165. The Behaviour Support Plan sets out a clear strategy with priorities, targets and actions to achieve them. However, the approach to consultation on the plan failed to engage many schools and, in contrast to much of the other developments in the LEA's work, schools have little sense of partnership or ownership of the strategy. This unsatisfactory consultation was also used as the basis for the Best Value review of attendance and behaviour, and fundamentally weakened the consideration of

alternatives for providing behaviour support, including possible delegation to schools. Schools are unclear over the LEA's approach to supporting behaviour.

166. The work of the behaviour support service has been refocused following the last inspection and the Best Value review. The outcomes of the review are clearly evident in the service action plan for the service, with 75 per cent of its time being focussed at primary schools. However, this approach is being reviewed following pressure by secondary schools. There are currently gaps in the senior management of these services.

167. A satisfactory range of guidance has been given to schools on managing behaviour and comprehensive support materials concerning anti-bullying. There is good co-ordination of behaviour support with the SEN strategy. School-based police officers are in place in schools involved in the Street Crime Initiative and a useful behaviour audit has been completed as part of this initiative. Headteachers also report some innovative approaches being developed through inclusion panels in clusters of schools and some good operational links are developing with learning mentors and learning support units in schools. Nonetheless, whilst there is some effective joint working by service managers, this is not yet systematic or evident in plans for the future, and there is no systematic sharing of good practice across the LEA.

## **Recommendations**

### **Improve support for attendance and behaviour by:**

- clarifying and formally agreeing with schools the strategies and approach to supporting attendance and behaviour;
- defining the respective roles and responsibilities of schools and the LEA within co-ordinated strategies, including those incorporating initiatives such as EiC and EAZs;
- developing more systematic approaches to sharing good practice between schools;
- strengthening the role of education welfare officers in schools' annual target setting in liaison with the link adviser; and
- systematically investigating the reasons for rising numbers of fixed-term exclusions, and the effectiveness of the current range of provision, including learning support units.

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

168. The LEA satisfactorily meets its responsibilities regarding the health, safety, welfare and protection of children. The previous inspection found that important aspects of the city's child protection procedures were insecure. Satisfactory progress has been made in addressing the recommendations of that inspection and



the LEA now meets its statutory obligations and has full details of designated teachers and their levels of training.

169. Officers of the LEA play a significant role in the area child protection committee and its sub committees. That work is complemented by the education child protection steering committee, which has representation from both key services and schools. There are designated teachers in all schools; a clear and up-to-date database is kept and their level of training is closely monitored. Training has been provided to schools and recent foundation training has targeted those schools who have not received training or have changed personnel. Child protection procedures are up-to-date and circulated to all schools. Relationships between education and social services are satisfactory with effective joint strategic planning.

170. Satisfactory health and safety advice is provided to schools. The health and safety policy is thorough and there are clear guidance notes provided to schools. Schools value the support they receive from health and safety officers in assisting them in risk assessment and reviewing procedures. There is useful guidance on risk assessment for school visits, but the LEA does not have adequate procedures in place for checking or monitoring risk assessments undertaken by schools prior to school visits.

#### **Recommendation**

##### **Improve health and safety procedures by:**

- improving procedures for monitoring risk assessments undertaken by schools for educational visits.

#### **Looked after children**

171. Support for looked after children was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Sound progress has been made and the LEA now gives proper attention to its role as corporate parent. There is a corporate commitment and a plan of action to secure further improvement, linked to the EDP. Support for these children is now highly satisfactory.

172. The attainment of looked after children had been improving since the previous inspection but, until this year, standards at all levels remained unacceptably low. However, the LEA's initial data for 2002 indicate very significant improvements in attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, and in the level of exclusions. The LEA is now on track to meet the challenging EDP targets for 2003. Although rates of improvement have been similar to that of other pupils in the LEA, attainment in other key stages remains comparatively low. There has been insufficient progress towards targets to improve the attendance of these pupils.

173. A multi-agency steering group manages strategy, a corporate parent panel meets quarterly to monitor progress on the action plan, and the relevant scrutiny committees receive an annual report on attainment. At present, there is no overarching plan in the council for children's services, which the education of looked after children should form part. However, education is playing a key role in the

current development of the new strategy and, in the interim, education targets and developments have been clearly monitored. Manchester is also part of a Pathfinder Project for children, young people and their families of which looked after children are an integral part.

174. The LEA's database on these children is secure. All schools have designated teachers and half have a designated governor. Schools value the training and support given and a good governor's guide has been developed. The LEA has reached its target of 84 per cent of looked after children in Manchester schools having a personal education plan by September 2002, and is on target for all these children to have such plans. There are now study support workers in four residential homes and looked after children are given the highest priority in school admissions. Good protocols are in place between education and social services and there is satisfactory exchange of information. A dedicated education welfare officer post has been established following the Best Value review of attendance and behaviour. However, looked after children without a school place are only given a minimum standard of ten hours tuition. This is unsatisfactory.

### **Recommendation**

#### **Improve the support for looked after children by:**

- improving the teaching time for looked after children who have no school place to ensure that appropriate full time equivalent education is offered.

### **Measures to combat racism**

175. This function was not inspected previously. Nevertheless, the first inspection did identify weaknesses in some functions, such as the lack of systematic monitoring of the performance of minority ethnic groups, which were impeding the LEA's capacity to combat racism and promote racial equality. The LEA has made good progress in addressing these weaknesses and now performs this function well. It has good capacity for continuing improvement if its actions to deal with exclusions of African Caribbean boys and its support for some schools causing concern are effective.

176. The council's policies on race equality and its commitment to deal with racism are clear and well publicised. A working group, 'Agenda 2010', is the forum for planning, development and review of the council's progress towards its ambition for a harmonious and equitable city. The council's planning and strategy are informed by consultation with a wide range of partners, including the police, housing, and community groups. An audit of the LEA's schools and staffing profile has led to the identification of key priorities, targets and actions to begin to redress inequalities.

177. The LEA has begun to recruit teachers and governors from minority ethnic groups and is gradually building up the number of teachers being recruited through a graduate-training scheme. The LEA has audited the number of minority ethnic mentors, including learning mentors and mentors from business partnerships in order to co-ordinate activity and target further recruitment. The LEA supports a range of activities in its schools that promote cultural harmony and celebrate

Manchester's varied cultural and faith groups. Major activities, such as the arts festival, encourage representation of a range of cultures and traditions, though the LEA does not monitor overall provision to identify areas for future action.

178. The council and the LEA have made a strong response to the enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. Guidance is provided for schools on dealing with racist incidents and on reporting them. Recorded incidents are reported termly to provide the LEA with early feedback and are analysed annually. The LEA monitors returns and offers guidance and training where schools are uncertain. The quadruple rise in the number of incidents reported is evidence of the success of the LEA's strategy. The LEA now has good data on pupils' performance and can identify more clearly what action needs to be taken. The monitoring of exclusions by ethnicity reveals that a disproportionate number of African Caribbean boys are currently permanently excluded from the LEA's schools. The LEA has commissioned a project to involve, among others, excluded pupils and their families to identify underlying causes and to build an effective strategy.

## **SECTION 5: CORPORATE ISSUES**

### **Introduction to corporate issues**

179. The first inspection in 1998 judged that corporate leadership and planning was highly satisfactory, with some significant strengths. Procedures for implementing and evaluating education plans were, however, unsatisfactory and affected the LEA's ability to evaluate its effectiveness and efficiency. The inspection also found decision making on education had been poor and had failed to tackle longstanding problems. The quality of leadership by senior officers in education was also poor. The subsequent inspection in 2000 found significant improvements, judging that decision making was highly satisfactory and that senior officers, particularly the new chief education officer, were providing good leadership. Satisfactory or good progress has continued to be made and this is now an effectively run LEA.

180. Members and officers have continued to develop a clear, shared, and very ambitious vision for the social and economic regeneration of the city, with raising educational standards at the heart of its future development, and corporate priorities. The council has developed a number of innovative strategies to attract funding and to use national initiatives to address long-standing problems in educational provision and the regeneration of areas of the city. A clear framework has been developed, which ensures that decision making and actions across the broad front of social and educational initiatives in the city are timely and involve all relevant parties.

181. There is a culture of accountability within the council focussed clearly on improving services in order to achieve its ambitions. Officers know the framework in which they operate and their contributions to overarching strategies and cross-cutting initiatives that involve education. They are now better supported by more effective, and steadily improving, performance management information.

### **Corporate planning**

182. Manchester's economic growth in recent years is testimony to the very effective implementation of its ambitious corporate planning. The strengths in the clarity, coherence and consistency of corporate planning reported by the first inspection have been consolidated. Corporate planning is good. The planning cycle is well linked to financial planning and ensures that its challenging development targets are affordable and, therefore, potentially achievable.

183. The Community Strategy provides a clear hub for the Best Value Performance Plan, departmental plans, and corporate projects. The strategy, managed through the Local Strategic Partnership, underpins the very clear corporate thrust of sustainable social and economic regeneration. Education is featured prominently in one of the seven themes and associated areas for action: investing in children, young people and families. Delivering major improvements in educational attainment is integral to the city's key objective of securing economic and cultural development.

184. The management and delivery of the Community Strategy, and related corporate and strategic objectives, are complex, but highly effective, and provide a clear framework for defining the work of members, departments and services in contributing to the corporate priorities of the council. Education is leading on the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy and the development of new arrangements for the delivery of mainstream services and neighbourhood renewal through the full service districts initiative. In general, good progress has been made in consolidating cross-service planning. This is particularly evident in recent work in implementing strategic initiatives involving education and other services to support social inclusion.

185. The LEA's own strategic management plan 2000-03 is well written, comprehensive, and aligns its own objectives imaginatively with corporate priorities and the Community Strategy. Priorities in the plan, and key performance indicators, reflect the Best Value Performance Plan and the education department's focus on improved service provision, and are sensibly reflected in the new EDP. Not all the targets in the development plan, however, are reflected in local targets in the Best Value Performance Plan.

186. The department's management action plan is clearly linked to the strategic management plan objectives. It provides an implementation plan for each priority area, including brief but clear targets and actions related to performance indicators, and overall management responsibilities for delivery of objectives. However, not all service plans consistently reflect this planning format and are not, therefore, clearly enough focussed on the delivery of the department's core functions. The potential for services to monitor their delivery of corporate and departmental objectives more effectively is not being fully realised.

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

187. This is now an effectively run LEA. Senior officers and elected members provide good leadership. The improved strategic direction being provided by members and officers noted at the time of the previous inspection has been further strengthened. The chief executive's department and corporate senior management team continue to give an effective lead. There are clear procedures for decision making by members and officers. The council has reviewed its decision-making and scrutiny procedures following the first year and has made a positive effort to maximise the involvement of members and stakeholders in decision making. Briefings and other communications enable backbench members to remain fully in touch with, and contribute to, decisions.

188. Members are generally well informed, individually and collectively. Analysis of progress towards some targets in the first EDP was not always clear but, in general, advice from officers, and briefings and reports on education are clear, informative and well argued. This enables members to be effective in carrying out their role in monitoring the performance of services and schools. Scrutiny procedures are used well as a means of driving improvement, rather than simply monitoring policy. The delegation of powers is clear and allows officers to act, whilst remaining accountable for their actions. Members have been prepared to support some hard decisions, for example in school reorganisation, as well as some very

innovative and radical schemes, for example in piloting area regeneration through education in the full service districts strategy.

189. The outgoing chief education officer (CEO) has provided strong strategic leadership and has co-ordinated and managed the work of the education service well, ensuring the delivery of corporate priorities. Recent and radical changes to school improvement services were necessary. The consequent creation of the Manchester Education Partnership, and the appointments of related senior staff, should help to implement necessary improvements and to consolidate the growing trust of schools in the LEA. The decision to restructure the education directorate has created a more coherent policy and planning framework, clearer roles for senior staff and services, made line management and accountability clearer and improved the focus on the delivery of education and corporate priorities. However, as this report has highlighted elsewhere, the analysis and use of data to inform decision making and evaluation of the delivery of the department's work, though greatly improved, is not well enough developed.

190. Though in post only a short time, the new CEO has rapidly gained the respect of schools and officers. He has a clear vision and strategy for how developments need to be taken forward.

## **Partnership**

191. At the time of the last inspection the LEA's collaboration with other agencies and support for partnership working was satisfactory. Good progress had been made in many areas, including the development of positive partnerships between the LEA and its schools, and with the EiC and EAZs. Further progress has been made, and the range of partnerships and structures to manage strategic liaison are now good.

192. Manchester has a long history of managing and developing partnerships with a wide range of national and local agencies within and outside the authority. The council has clear strategic approaches to partnership to deliver corporate priorities and initiatives, including education. The Local Strategic Partnership has introduced management structures which, though still bedding down, are helping to ensure that the various partnerships are not working in isolation or duplicating effort.

193. Partnerships with the diocesan boards are good and the standing advisory council for religious education is working well. Consultation arrangements with schools continued to improve and are now very effective. The partnership with EiC is integral to the LEA's development of new patterns of collaborative working. Strategic and operational partnerships between the LEA and the two statutory EAZs are particularly strong. Both zones are piloting the LEA's introduction of the full service district model, and one EAZ has responsibility for managing one of the three excellence zones established under the EiC initiative. Nevertheless, the dissemination of good practice in the EAZs across the city is not yet well enough developed.

194. The education department has developed a wide range of effective partnerships with other council departments and external agencies. The LEA's

strategy for street crime reduction, for example, covers a wide range of initiatives and partnerships with police, youth offending teams, youth service, MEP, Connexions and many other local authority services. A number of these partnerships are beginning to show tangible results in improved attendance or reduced exclusions, and are providing improved police support to clusters of schools and their surrounding communities.

## **APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS**

*This report makes a number of recommendations designed to help the further progress of the LEA. The following are key to that progress and should be considered as priorities for action. They are:*

**Improve the LEA's capacity to continuously evaluate its performance by strengthening the collection and analysis of data, in order to:**

- improve aspects of strategic planning and better inform decision making;
- improve the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of strategies, initiatives and services on the performance of pupils, and
- systematically identify and promote models of effective practice that could be implemented across schools to speed up improvement.

**Improve the LEA's strategy for school improvement, and its implementation, by:**

- establishing joint protocols which clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the LEA and schools in monitoring, challenging, supporting and, where necessary, intervening in schools;
- establishing similar protocols for monitoring and evaluating the management and delivery of education in full service districts;
- strengthening the framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the EDP and for ensuring the progress of activities; and
- incorporating EiC activities more explicitly into improvement programmes in the EDP, to show how they contribute to its priorities and activity plans.

**Improve support for information and communication technology by:**

- developing greater consistency between corporate and educational strategic planning;
- achieving closer links between curriculum and administrative ICT, better integration of different ICT systems, and more effective electronic transfer of information;
- ensuring support for ICT is adequately staffed and well managed, if necessary, brokering additional support from external providers for curriculum and administrative ICT in schools; and
- developing systems for monitoring school provision and pupil progress, to ensure effective allocation of support.



**Improve support for special educational needs by:**

- further developing the SEN strategy, to include detailed funding proposals for all stages of its implementation;
- urgently implementing the new funding system for pupils with statements of SEN;
- ensuring all schools monitor their expenditure on SEN, and that this is in turn monitored by the LEA; and
- implementing a system to monitor the progress of pupils with SEN.

**Improve support for social inclusion by:**

- clarifying and formally agreeing with schools the strategies and approach to supporting attendance and behaviour;
- defining the respective roles and responsibilities of schools and the LEA within co-ordinated strategies, including those incorporating initiatives such as EiC and EAZs;
- developing more systematic approaches to sharing good practice between schools;
- strengthening the role of education welfare officers in schools' annual target setting in liaison with the link adviser; and
- systematically investigating the reasons for rising numbers of fixed-term exclusions, and falling numbers of pupils being reintegrated into mainstream education, and the effectiveness of the current range of provision, including learning support units.

***The report also makes the following recommendations:*****Improve the support to school improvement, including monitoring and challenge to schools by:**

- defining the differentiated allocation of LEA support and challenge to schools under the new arrangements;
- establishing how subject advice and professional development are to be facilitated, brokered or provided; and
- improving the quality and range of data provided to link advisers to increase their knowledge of schools and the degree of effective challenge and support they can offer.

**Improve the effectiveness of work with under-performing schools by:**

- identifying more effectively why schools have not made the requisite progress while in serious weakness or special measures, and instigating remedial actions.

**Improve the provision for pupils who have no school place by:**

- establishing the Key Stage 4 pupil referral unit and the monitoring of the quality of all alternative education provision.

**Improve the support for looked after children by:**

- improving the teaching time for looked after children who have no school place to ensure that appropriate full time equivalent education is offered.

**Improve health and safety procedures by:**

- improving procedures for monitoring risk assessments undertaken by schools for educational visits.

**Improve the effectiveness of services to support school management by:**

- ensuring schools are able to withdraw from service level agreements purchased from the LEA by giving reasonable and agreed notice.

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