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IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF
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LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection examined:

- the Education Development Plan;
- progress made on its priorities;
- progress on implementing the Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zone initiatives;
- progress made on implementing the recommendations of the report of June 1998;

focusing on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.

2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA officers and members. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to all schools. The response rate was 73 per cent.

3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through school focus groups. The focus groups tested the views of headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The focus groups also considered whether the support provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4. Manchester LEA was first inspected two years ago, in Spring 1998. That inspection discovered many serious weaknesses, and the report made a large number of recommendations which set the Council a formidable agenda. At the same time, inspectors expressed the view that; "There is no mistaking the political will for change and improvement, and that is a significant advantage for the LEA as it tackles a challenging agenda."

5. That confidence has proved broadly justified. The Council has taken many of the tough decisions that had been evaded for too long. Moreover, the appointment of a new Chief Education Officer (CEO) in December 1998 led to a significant shift in culture, providing effective professional leadership and engendering a new relationship with schools: one of greater openness and increased responsiveness.

6. The LEA is no longer, as the first report commented, "beset with problems". In a short time, it has made considerable progress, both on the majority of the OFSTED recommendations and on the priorities set out in the Education Development Plan. Since 1998, the LEA has made significant progress in:

- removing surplus places in schools;
- reducing school budget deficits;
- improving relationships with schools;
- improving consultation and communication with schools;

and within the education department, in:

- budget and asset management planning;
- implementing the Excellence in Cities initiative;
- support for the use of performance data;
- the provision of education for excluded pupils;
- the provision of behaviour support;
- the timeliness of issuing of statements for special educational needs (SEN).

7. This report sets out in detail the progress the LEA has made in all these areas, and in relation to five of the eight priorities set out in the EDP. The progress is, we believe, substantial and sustainable. The report does not, however, amount to a clean bill of health. In several of the areas set out above, and in others, although there has been considerable improvement, it is still not sufficient. The LEA's undoubted progress as an organisation is not yet leading to significant improvement in the schools. There continue to be two areas of management weakness: the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and, notwithstanding the improvements mentioned, the development of the SEN strategy.

8. Above all, the LEA is still failing some of the most vulnerable young people in the city. It does not have the capability to monitor the educational attainment of all looked-after children and one of the key systems for child protection is out of date. Provision for meeting the needs of pupils off-rolled from schools because of non-attendance is inadequate. At the time of the inspection (March 2000), 282 pupils

had rarely attended school, if at all, during this school year and had been removed from school rolls. This represents over seven per cent of 15/16 year olds in Manchester who receive no provision and do not feature in the schools', or the LEA's, published examination results, rendering them unsound.

9. The LEA needs to tackle these problems with some urgency. It has the capacity to do so, and to improve further. We do not believe it will benefit from further inspection in this cycle, but we are certain the people of Manchester have every right to expect still better performance from the LEA.

CONTEXT

10. There have been no significant changes in the socio-economic characteristics of the LEA since inspection in Spring 1998. The LEA currently maintains 25 secondary schools, 150 primary schools, 3 nursery schools, 21 special schools, plus 3 Pupil Referral Units. Nine schools are identified by OFSTED as requiring special measures and twenty one schools have serious weaknesses, half as many again as the national average. The LEA's secondary schools are part of the Excellence in Cities initiative and there are two Education Action Zones.

11. There has been no significant change in the performance of Manchester schools since the first inspection. It remains below the national averages at all key stages. The following detailed points are worthy of note:

- at Key Stages 1 and 2, the percentages of pupils achieving the expected levels in English and mathematics tests rose between 1997 and 1999. Although rates of improvement are, generally, better than those found nationally, levels of attainment are below those of statistical neighbours and those found nationally;
- at Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 in English and mathematics tests rose between 1997 and 1999 at faster rates than found in statistical neighbours or nationally; overall, attainment is below the national mean;
- at GCSE, the percentage of pupils gaining five grades A*-C rose from 27.2 per cent (1997) to 31.2 per cent (1999), a rate of improvement better than statistical neighbours and nationally. The percentage of pupils gaining five grades A*-G rose from 77.5 per cent (1997) to 81.8 per cent (1999) a rate of improvement significantly lower than statistical neighbours, although greater than achieved nationally. However, levels of attainment remain lower than those found in statistical neighbours or found nationally;
- levels of pupil attendance have improved, and levels of pupils' unauthorised absence and permanent exclusions have reduced since the last inspection.

12. Manchester City Council currently consists of 80 Labour and 19 Liberal Democrat Members. In May 1999 the Council structure changed. Education now has a lead member, referred to as the executive member for education, and a deputy. The executive member for education serves on the majority group's executive members group. There is an executive committee comprised of lead members and their deputies, together with opposition representatives. The executive committee exercises the functions previously undertaken by various council committees, and every two months, with additional representatives, considers education policy issues as an education committee. The executive committee's proposals are always subject to referral to the relevant scrutiny committee, before submission to the City Council.

13. A new Chief Education Officer was appointed in December 1998. The structure of the education department remains much as described in the June 1998 report.

THE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN (EDP)

14. The Education Development Plan (EDP) has been accepted by the Secretary of State for three years. It is based upon a sufficiently detailed audit and schools were adequately consulted on the priorities. It has a distinctive local flavour reflected in the promotion of creativity through the arts and sport. The majority of headteachers interviewed demonstrated an awareness of the content of the EDP and expected to integrate aspects of it into their own school improvement plan this year. A small minority of headteachers saw little of relevance in the Plan for them.

15. The eight priorities identified in the EDP are;

- to improve the standards of attainment in literacy at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3;
- to improve the standards of attainment in numeracy at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3;
- to support and improve schools which are in special measures, have serious weaknesses, or are otherwise of serious concern to the LEA;
- to promote social inclusion;
- to improve standards of attainment achieved by the end of Key Stage 4;
- to enhance the quality of school management and leadership;
- to increase opportunities for the promotion of creativity and independent learning as a means of enhancing motivation and self esteem, achievement and excellence;
- to improve the provision and the use of ICT in schools to enhance management, improve learning opportunities and to raise standards of attainment in IT and across the curriculum.

16. Overall, the EDP is just adequate: it is feasible and achievable. It focuses on appropriate priorities, supported by 52 activity plans. However, insufficient attention is given to supporting schools to improve pupils' attainment at Key Stage 3 and of raising the attainment of more able pupils (now an element of the Excellence in Cities initiative). Although the LEA has broad targets, there are no specific activities designed to raise the attainment of ethnic minority groups who are underachieving.

17. The EDP details performance targets for all schools for the Year 2000. At Key Stage 2, 80 per cent of pupils are challenged to achieve at least level 4 in the English tests by 2002. Progress towards this target is inadequate. In 1999, only 61.4 per cent of pupils met the required level. Better progress is being made towards meeting the LEA's Key Stage 2 mathematics target. The 2002 target is challenging, but attainable, particularly in the light of the high quality of numeracy support being provided to schools (see paragraphs 31 – 34 below).

18. Good progress is being made towards the LEA's 2002 GCSE targets. The proportion of pupils achieving at least one GCSE grade has reached the 2002 target. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C grades is improving steadily, making the 2002 target of 35 per cent challenging but attainable, particularly in the light of additional resources available through the Excellence in Cities initiative.

However, these figures should be viewed with scepticism. Over seven per cent of Year 11 pupils were removed from secondary school rolls in December 1999 because of persistent non-attendance and are not included in the figures.

19. The target for children who are looked-after by the local authority is extremely ambitious. In 1997/98 only 14 per cent achieved at least a single GCSE/GNVQ qualification compared with a target of 50 per cent for the Year 2000. The activity designed to promote the educational attainment of looked-after children does not include any actions targeted at schools to raise the achievement of such pupils.

20. The EDP has other shortcomings. Activity plans are of varying quality. Some identify clear, time-limited action to be taken with measurable and realistic success criteria. In others, activities have no timescales for the implementation of actions and success criteria are vague. A large number of activities and associated actions are imprecise, resulting in schools being unclear what support to expect.

21. There are appropriate structures in place to monitor and evaluate the progress of each priority, involving headteachers and relevant LEA officers. In addition, the children and young peoples overview and scrutiny committee reviews progress regularly with, in the case of Priority 4: Social Inclusion, elected members visiting schools to observe policy in practice. However, the termly progress reports, although broadly following a house style, are insufficiently rigorous and do not consistently focus clearly on the progress made on each identified action.

Recommendations:

In order to improve the quality of planning for school improvement the EDP should be reviewed, in full consultation with schools, to:

- take into account new initiatives such as Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones;
- include targets for ethnic minority pupils determined from an analysis of the attainment of all pupils, and include clear action to raise the levels of achievement of underachieving groups;
- provide support to schools to raise standards of attainment at Key Stage 3;
- ensure that all activity plans have clear, time-limited actions, focussed on appropriate groups of pupils and schools, and success criteria which are measurable and attainable;
- ensure rigorous reporting of progress to an agreed format.

PROGRESS MADE ON PRIORITIES IN THE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EDP PRIORITY 1

TO IMPROVE THE STANDARDS OF ATTAINMENT IN LITERACY AT KEY STAGES 1, 2 AND 3

22. Insufficient progress has been made in raising pupils' attainment in literacy. At Key Stage 1 there has been no overall change in the proportion of KS1 pupils achieving level 2 in English in the last five years; results are below those for similar LEAs and well below those found nationally. Nevertheless, there has been a slight increase - 3.5 per cent - in the proportion of pupils gaining Level 2 in the reading tests.

23. Although, over the last five years, there has been a considerable improvement (25.2 percentage points compared with 21.9 percentage points nationally) in the proportion of pupils gaining level 4 in English at Key Stage 2, overall attainment is still well below the national mean. Although Key Stage 2 results improved by 4.3 percentage points from 1998 to 1999, this was below the national rate of improvement of 5.5 percentage points. The proportion of pupils achieving level 4 did not increase in 40 per cent of schools in 1998/9. Despite overall improvement, the LEA is unlikely to meet its 2002 literacy target.

24. There has been, however, a marked improvement in attainment at Key Stage 3. The proportion of pupils achieving level 5 in English at Key Stage 3 increased by 17.5 percentage points, compared with a national improvement over the same five year period of 8.1 percentage points. Performance overall is well below that found nationally, but in line with that of similar LEAs.

25. The support received by schools for the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, now in its second year, has been inconsistent. On occasions, support focused too closely on monitoring and did not provide sufficient practical help to teachers. Initially, there were inconsistencies in the monitoring of lessons and some monitoring did not include the identification of strengths and weaknesses or provide guidance on areas for improvement or development. A number of schools, including the headteachers interviewed as part of this inspection, welcomed the quality of support provided now by their literacy consultants. In the past, the quality of support has varied considerably, with some consultants lacking credibility and failing to gain the confidence of teachers. The LEA has taken appropriate measures to tackle competency issues.

26. Since September 1998, the LEA has provided an appropriate and comprehensive range of literacy courses for different audiences; in particular, training of nursery nurses, classroom assistants and their Year teacher, and that for the teachers of booster classes, has been well received. Thirty five per cent of literacy co-ordinators regularly attend the termly network group meetings.

27. In addition to insufficient progress in raising levels of attainment, the LEA faces a number of problems related to the management of the literacy strategy:

- in February 2000, the LEA's analysis showed half of the primary schools did not have a literacy action plan. This has now reduced to 13;
- some schools are insufficiently challenged by their targets and others have unreasonable expectations placed upon them;
- at the end of December 1999, there were 45 schools whose proposed targets were judged to be insufficiently challenging. A review of the position, carried out during this inspection identified 17 schools whose targets were still regarded by the LEA as inappropriate;
- an analysis of the 1999 Key Stage 2 results indicate that some schools who have received intensive support have made varying progress and others, from whom it has been withdrawn, have slipped;
- the rationale behind the deployment of intensive support is misguided. Support is not being targeted at those most in need. More than 80 per cent of pupils in 2 of the 31 primary schools receiving intensive support this year, achieved level 4 in the 1999 Key Stage 2 tests and a further four intensive support schools exceeded their 2000 target a year early;
- data provided by the LEA indicates only 55 per cent of schools are monitoring the delivery of the literacy hour in classrooms;
- the 2002 literacy target is extremely challenging and to many schools, unrealistic. This, itself, is frustrating progress, with schools being cajoled into setting targets which they strongly believe are unattainable irrespective of the support provided.

28. There is a stark contrast in the attitude of headteachers and staff towards the implementation of the literacy strategy, compared to the co-operation and enthusiasm displayed in the implementation of the numeracy strategy. Variations in the national strategies themselves do not account for this divergence.

Recommendation:

In order to raise pupils' attainment in literacy:

- review the management of the implementation of the literacy strategy in detailed consultation with schools. This review should focus on:
 - the management of the literacy strategy;
 - the challenge and support required to enable schools to set appropriate targets;
 - the identification of intensive support schools and support provided.

EDP PRIORITY 2

TO IMPROVE THE STANDARDS OF ATTAINMENT IN NUMERACY AT KEY STAGES 1, 2 AND 3

29. Standards in numeracy are improving, albeit from a low base. At Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving at least level 2 in mathematics is well below national averages, with a slower rate of improvement in the last year than achieved nationally. However, there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of Key Stage 2 pupils achieving level 4 in mathematics which, at 61.7 per cent in 1999, remains below the national average, but represents a slightly faster rate of improvement than found nationally. At Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 in mathematics is well below the national average. However, the overall rate of improvement in the last five years is marked, 14.9 percentage points compared with a national rate of 4.1 percentage points.

30. The LEA has set a target of 75 per cent of Key Stage 2 pupils achieving at least level 4 in mathematics in 2002. Forty seven per cent of primary schools either equalled or exceeded their Year 2000 target in 1999 which suggests the aggregated schools' target for Year 2000 of 63.2 per cent of pupils to achieve level 4 is attainable. Recent progress, if maintained, would suggest that the LEA's challenging target for Year 2002 could be met.

31. Very good progress has been made in the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy although the lack of interim targets makes it difficult to evaluate accurately progress made on the individual actions specified within the EDP. Less progress than might have been expected has been made on supporting schools in Key Stage 3 owing to insufficient secondary expertise; this has been remedied, in part, by buying support from a neighbouring LEA.

32. The numeracy team is knowledgeable, committed, effective, well organised and very well led. The enthusiasm with which team members go about their work was highlighted by headteachers as a major factor contributing to the success of their work in schools. The team visited all primary schools to assist them with their numeracy audit and all schools have produced a numeracy action plan.

33. Much effective preparatory work was undertaken by the numeracy team to ease schools effortlessly into the National Numeracy Strategy. Training was of high quality and well received. Schools have been categorised for varying levels of support and are clear about the level and type of support they can expect to receive. Support for intensive schools has been negotiated with individual headteachers and carefully targeted. Leading mathematics teachers are well managed and effective: this is a strength of the numeracy provision.

34. A good range of training opportunities is provided for schools that complement the National Numeracy Strategy and there are plans for these to be extended in April to focus on aspects of mathematics that schools' audits identify as weaknesses. There is excellent support for the termly network meetings which 90 per cent of numeracy co-ordinators regularly attend.

EDP PRIORITY 3

TO SUPPORT AND IMPROVE SCHOOLS WHICH ARE IN SPECIAL MEASURES, HAVE SERIOUS WEAKNESSES, OR ARE OTHERWISE OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO THE LEA

35. At the time of this inspection, 9 schools were identified by OFSTED as requiring special measures and 21 as having serious weaknesses. At the time of the previous inspection, 11 schools were identified by OFSTED as requiring special measures: 6 of these have closed, 4 have been removed from special measures and the one remaining school is planned for closure. Two schools have required special measures for more than two years: one no longer does and the other is scheduled to close.

36. Good progress has been made in supporting and improving schools identified by OFSTED as requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses. Support has been targeted at those areas requiring improvement, particularly school management, to successfully remove them from special measures and improve them to the point where they no longer require additional support. Either this, or schools have been closed.

37. Although recent progress has been made in identifying schools causing concern, the system is not yet effective or secure. Since September 1999, schools have been formally categorised as 'light touch', 'additional support' or 'requiring formal intervention'; the latter category has not been used since the last inspection of the LEA. Those requiring 'additional support' are further sub-divided according to specific need, attracting differentiated additional support in cash or kind from the LEA, or from another provider, brokered by the LEA on request. The level and nature of support are negotiated on a school by school basis: headteachers, in both the school survey and in focus groups, unequivocally and unanimously praised the support provided.

38. However, the proportion of schools identified by OFSTED as requiring special measures remains stubbornly above the national average. A range of sensible measures has been introduced to improve the early identification of difficulties. These include: quantitative, single-page position statements; termly round-table multi-disciplinary meetings; weekly school improvement meetings with the CEO and senior managers, and personal invitations to headteachers and chairs of governors to discuss issues with the deputy CEO. The thoroughness, lateral thinking and consultation that characterise these measures are a welcome improvement on previous practice. Nevertheless, systematic and consistent identification of difficulties has not yet been achieved and the LEA continues to have difficulty supporting necessary improvements in schools, particularly those where there are chronic attainment, staffing, budgetary, pupil mobility and attendance issues. The target to reduce the number of schools identified by OFSTED as requiring special measures by half, over the lifetime of the EDP, is not on schedule.

EDP PRIORITY 4

TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION

39. Of the 12 activities to promote social inclusion listed under Priority 4, five are analysed later in this report under progress on implementing recommendations D,E,F,G and K of the previous report. The remaining seven activities are to:

- provide additional support for schools with exceptionally high mobility rates;
- provide educational and family support for Traveller children;
- promote the educational attainment of looked-after children;
- provide support to refugee pupils at isolated linguistic groups;
- provide support for black and bilingual pupils in special schools;
- develop closer partnerships with parents;
- provide a programme of training in the area of child protection.

40. Satisfactory progress has been made in most areas with the exception of the activities related to children who are looked-after, and child protection training.

41. The current levels of attainment of all looked-after children are not known. A manual exercise was conducted in summer 1999 to find the levels of attainment of those pupils who were leaving in Year 11: only 14 per cent of pupils attained one A*-G pass at GCSE/GNVQ level. This is a very poor level of performance. Despite having a team, the Manchester teaching service, devoted to meeting the educational needs of children who are looked-after, the Council's knowledge of the educational performance of these children in national tests is incomplete. The LEA is not giving sufficiently urgent and focused attention to meeting their educational needs. Because baseline data is not in place, target setting is arbitrary. In December 1998, the LEA's Behaviour Support Plan set a target of 15 per cent of looked after children achieving one GCSE/GNVQ, by April 1999 that target had increased to 50 per cent in the EDP reflecting the national target recommended by the DfEE. Despite the secondment of a social work team manager between the departments with a task to encourage the identification of a designated teacher in each school to support these children, fewer than half of the schools have allocated such a responsibility.

42. Each school should also have a trained designated teacher to advise on child protection matters and incidents. The LEA, in line with its responsibilities to the area child protection committee, should have full details of the staff and their levels of training. This is a minimal requirement. The LEA's knowledge of the level of training of designated teachers in schools has not been up dated since 1997, despite it being an EDP priority. This being the case, an important part of the city's child protection system is insecure.

43. Overall, in the seven activities examined to promote social inclusion, the LEA is making satisfactory progress in five, and unsatisfactory, or poor, progress in two.

EDP PRIORITY 5

TO IMPROVE THE STANDARDS OF ATTAINMENT ACHIEVED BY THE END OF KEY STAGE 4

44. The first inspection reported that the LEA makes less contribution to the improvement of its secondary schools than to its primary schools. It also reported that the work of the inspection and advisory service was not always closely targeted to need, nor did it consistently challenge schools about difficult issues. The LEA has since focused upon improving end of Key Stage 4 standards of attainment as a priority of the EDP.

45. Standards are rising, from a low base, at faster than the national rates. Improvements are evident in the proportion of students gaining GCSE passes and in pupils entering structured learning and employment. These indicators should be viewed in the knowledge that seven per cent of Year 11 pupils are removed from school rolls and do not feature in the exam results.

46. The LEA's targeted action is to ensure that all schools have access to high quality performance data, and that they are assisted in the development of an appropriately broad Key Stage 4 curriculum which includes vocational pathways leading to relevant and nationally accredited qualifications. In addition, the LEA plans to develop partnership work, to support teachers in improving teaching quality.

47. The LEA's plans are well considered and appropriate. Resultant action and progress are satisfactory and impacting upon schools. The LEA has provided schools with high quality statistical data which complements the autumn package and that which the schools may have themselves produced. Senior school improvement officers work with schools reviewing progress made towards achieving the targets set for 2002, and examining the rigour of analysis informing targets set for 2001. However, the LEA does not have an individual pupil database through which the progress of individuals could be tracked, monitored and evaluated.

EDP PRIORITY 6

TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

48. At the time of the previous inspection the support for management was found to be most effective in the good schools where it was least needed. The LEA proposes to raise the quality of leadership and management by providing training and guidance and supporting schools' senior managers in attending national leadership training courses. Additionally, the LEA has provided support for its school managers to develop the skills and expertise necessary to carry out school self-evaluation which it regards as a vital ingredient in school improvement, although the pace of this element of their work is modest.

49. Purposeful and effective efforts are being made by the LEA to support school management in order to promote improvement.

50. Appropriately, the LEA is supporting senior managers on the National Professional Qualification for Headship, the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers and the OFSTED self-evaluation courses. However, the LEA also recognises the necessity to provide support greater than that resulting from the OFSTED course which is focused primarily on preparation for inspection, in order that senior staff develop the full range of necessary skills and competences. The courses for prospective deputy headteachers and those for newly appointed deputies are reported to be of excellent quality. Schools' senior managers have appreciated a series of short courses resulting from an analysis of their needs. The work of the governing body had not been covered sufficiently to enable participants to feel confident in their dealings with governors.

51. The work of the Manchester school improvement service (MSIS) in monitoring, evaluating and supporting school leadership and management is valued. Joint lesson observations have been carried out by headteachers and the school's senior school improvement officer in order to help school managers develop the skills and expertise necessary for self evaluation. These officers also evaluate the quality and progress of schools during their regular monitoring visits. Although the system of reporting has been refined and amended the reports remain too variable and include insufficient reference to, or evaluation of, the quality of management and leadership.

52. The LEA's earlier inspection report indicated that there were weaknesses in the training and support for governors. There has been improvement in the range and quality of training opportunities provided for governors, but too little emphasis in the training programme is placed upon some of the important aspects of governors' work, such as understanding performance data, setting targets or supporting the improvement of schools more generally.

EDP PRIORITY 7

TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF CREATIVITY AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING MOTIVATION AND SELF ESTEEM, ACHIEVEMENT AND EXCELLENCE

53. When the LEA was inspected previously, there was general agreement by schools that training and support in music, dance, drama and physical education were of high quality.

54. The LEA's strategy to build upon this existing strength is clear and appropriate. Support for schools is first class. The effective work is being extended successfully. A strong link has been forged with the Leeds LEA in the Creative Arts Partnership in Education. The quality of work being undertaken as part of this project by Manchester LEA and its secondary schools is recognised nationally.

55. Excellence in Cities complements the LEA's progress on this priority. It is underpinning the identification and support for gifted pupils. In addition, schools are being supported to help pupils to develop higher aspirations and understand more fully the contribution which they are able to make to their communities.

EDP PRIORITY 8

TO IMPROVE THE PROVISION AND THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN SCHOOLS TO ENHANCE MANAGEMENT, IMPROVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND TO RAISE STANDARDS OF ATTAINMENT IN ICT AND ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

56. The development of ICT in schools has more weaknesses than strengths. In the primary sector, ICT development plans are sound and the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) programme has been introduced in a timely fashion, but support to the schools in implementing the plans has been insufficient. In the secondary sector, there is a lack of a vision shared between schools and the LEA on the way forward for ICT investment.

57. The EDP outlines the LEA priorities for development of ICT resources in schools and the training and support that it will provide to schools in development of their use of ICT, both in the curriculum and to assist school management. The LEA Plan for ICT for 1998-2002 sets out in more detail the plans for achieving the EDP targets.

58. The infrastructure funded through the NGfL programme will have been completed in 130 primary and special schools by April 2000 and in the remaining schools during 2000-1. The programme has been largely delivered on time, but the level of technical support and training provided for primary schools after installation has been weak, thus reducing their use of the equipment.

59. There is a lack of a clear shared vision for ICT investment in secondary schools. A variety of factors have influenced this including uncertainties about secondary school reorganisation, the need to develop a solution to integrate three city learning centres into the investment, and the pace of technical developments in communications. Responsibilities for implementing the strategy are not clearly assigned between the LEA and secondary schools. Technical support for ICT has been fragmented between a range of inhouse staff and external contractors. Administrative and curriculum ICT developments are not sufficiently well integrated.

60. The LEA has positive plans for developing the use of ICT within the curriculum. Training programmes have been held on the use of ICT to improve literacy and numeracy. The Manchester Grid, cyberschool and the MSIS website are being developed.

Recommendation:

In order to improve ICT development:

- review the level of support that primary schools need to effectively use their resources;
- develop a shared vision of an investment strategy between secondary schools and the LEA;

- improve the linkages between the support provided for administrative and curriculum ICT developments.

EXCELLENCE IN CITIES (EiC)

61. From the outset, the LEA has ensured that its secondary schools have been fully involved, not only as beneficiaries, but as decision-makers in the process of establishing the Excellence in Manchester strategy. Excellence in Manchester is overseen by the chair of the strategy group, who is the headteacher of one of the high schools, and the partnership co-ordinator, an LEA officer. Together they evaluate schools' plans and visit schools in order to assess whether the conditions of the project are being met and, increasingly as the strategy develops, its quality and effect. Schools have welcomed this refreshing approach and regard it, together with the strategy itself, as important in establishing the mutual trust, respect and honesty between the LEA and schools. The result is that the high schools are the leaders in developing support for their pupils that, without the Excellence in Cities strategy, would have been impossible. Each high school has received a sum in the region of £65,000 in 1999/2000. This will increase substantially in future.

62. The LEA has ensured that the partners' roles are clear and well understood. It is supporting them effectively, co-ordinating the work, disseminating information, and facilitating development of the initiative. The LEA has also ensured that there is coherence between the project's aims and the EDP. The actions of both are focused clearly on raising standards and finding ways of working successfully with pupils who are not keen attenders or learners.

63. Through the initiative, the LEA is actively supporting the establishment of a coherent pattern of provision for disaffected secondary school pupils. The overall approach is based on the establishment of Learning Support Units in all the high schools and the appointment of learning mentors for those pupils who need them. The LEA already has a good model for its Learning Support Units in one of its high schools. The intention is that schools identify their own needs and extract practices from the model that would best suit their own circumstances. In addition, two city learning centres are due to open in September 2000. Each will be an independent building on the site of one of the city's high schools. While these are seen as valuable resources which may provide benefits to the schools whose sites they share, a number of headteachers express concern about their value because their use by other schools will necessitate complex organisational arrangements. Otherwise, schools are working effectively in six clusters to plan and implement the strategy and share good practice. Headteachers were convinced that members of their local communities are beginning to take interest in the developments and share the aspirations for the proposed developments. Benefits of Excellence in Manchester are seen in many aspects of improvement in the secondary school curriculum and the support offered to pupils.

64. It is too early to judge the impact of the project on standards or quality. However, Excellence in Manchester is viewed most positively by officers and headteachers whose prognosis for the outcomes are positive.

EDUCATION ACTION ZONES (EAZs)

65. There are currently two Education Action Zones (EAZs): the East Manchester EAZ which began work with its 17 schools in January 2000, and the Wythenshawe EAZ which becomes fully operational in April 2000 and will work with 23 schools. The directors of the EAZs recognise that many of the objectives of the Excellence in Manchester project coincide with those of the EAZs. The EAZs' early plans were modified in order to prevent duplication and to achieve a complementary service.

66. The necessary close co-operation and collaboration are beginning to develop: the LEA works effectively with the EAZs and has begun to invite the directors to the 'round table discussions' during which the schools within the EAZs are discussed. The LEA is also sharing school data with the EAZ forum in order to keep them abreast of developments. The LEA welcomes the EAZs and regards them as another initiative through which school improvement can result. The LEA's leadership has shown a strong commitment to enabling the EAZs to be successful. However, the need to work co-operatively and in partnership with the EAZs is not yet recognised by some sections within the LEA.

67. It is too early to evaluate the impact of the EAZs. Monitoring is currently being carried out by the Manchester Metropolitan University and the EAZs will carry out their own evaluations in the summer term. While schools understand how the EAZs will complement their work and welcome such support, they feel that its impact will be less considerable than that provided through other means because of schools having only limited control over the initiative. Concern was also expressed that some schools in need of additional support are not able to access it because of the exclusivity of the EAZ projects.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION A OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A BETTER-DEFINED AND MORE PRODUCTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS SCHOOLS, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) *develop A Joint Vision for Education in Manchester so that it sets out clearly the reciprocal responsibilities of the schools and LEA and defines the basis for LEA intervention in schools including those which fail to improve, in the light of the proposed new Code of Practice;*
- (ii) *encourage its schools to respond more readily to its efforts to consult and inform them.*

68. At the time of the previous inspection, the LEA had recently published a *Joint Vision for Education in Manchester* that set out the aspirations for the LEA. However, it was clear that much needed to be done to give further definition to what was meant by partnership and to implement an appropriate strategy to fulfil *The Joint Vision*. There was evidence of poor communication with schools and attempts at consultation by the LEA elicited only a modest response.

69. Very good progress has been made on the implementation of this recommendation following the appointment of a new Chief Education Officer in December 1998. He has worked hard to create a positive and effective partnership between the LEA and its schools characterised by openness, honesty, trust and transparency. The CEO has been successful: headteachers consider significant progress has been made. However, they report that a small minority of officers still attempt to maintain the controlling culture which so alienated headteachers in the past.

70. Following the earlier inspection, working parties were set up to make the *Joint Vision* a more manageable document; a revised version will be published later this month. In the meantime, two documents, the *Strategic Framework until 2002* and the LEA's *Strategic Plan 1999-2000*, set out concisely the key responsibilities of both schools and the LEA in raising levels of attainment.

71. Since September 1999, the LEA has set out its protocol for intervention in schools in inverse proportion to the schools' success, in line with the 'Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations'. Some schools, which were used to flexible and arbitrary levels of support on demand, are finding the new regime difficult to accept, but the LEA is right to follow this principle. Schools are being consulted about the use of the three days currently set aside for each school for monitoring purposes. The school status form provides a useful tool for the LEA to monitor performance and identify schools causing concern, but schools are unclear as to the triggers that would activate intervention strategies.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION B OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE BETTER CO-ORDINATION AND MORE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS OVERALL STRATEGY, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) locate the responsibility for co-ordinating all the services that directly contribute to school improvement in one senior post;*
- (ii) continue to improve the quality of its planning for school improvement (see paragraphs 14 – 21 above)*

72. At the time of the previous inspection the school improvement division was divided between inspection and advice. This presented difficulties in the deployment of staff from the two arms of the service. A tension existed between supporting schools with greatest need and schools' belief that they had an entitlement to a particular resource. A lack of definition of roles made it difficult for the services to determine the level of resources deployed to schools. The services were operating in a climate of conflicting and unreasonable expectations.

73. Although significant structural changes have occurred since the earlier inspection, some schools have yet to understand the new role identified for LEAs. The DfEE specified that a condition for the approval of the LEA's post OFSTED Action Plan was the restructuring of the inspection and advisory service which resulted in a reorganisation of the two services to create the Manchester school improvement service (MSIS) operative from September 1999. The new service was specifically designed to reflect the Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations, to provide challenge and support to schools and, fundamentally, to deliver the priorities identified in the EDP. The MSIS has a flat management structure with the single head of service reporting to the Deputy Chief Education Officer (DCEO). The remit of the DCEO has been broadened to encompass an overview of all the services, including those related to SEN, that contribute directly to school improvement. This amounts to good progress.

74. Appropriate steps were taken to consult schools on changes through the Inspection and advisory services consultation group, with a membership of nine headteachers, written communication and meetings. Despite this, a significant number of headteachers remain disgruntled about the new arrangements. Some schools have found it difficult to accept that support should be provided in inverse proportion to success; others have been critical of the change in the roles of inspectors and advisers to school improvement officers, claiming that some lack the appropriate experience and expertise to undertake their new role. Efforts have been made in MSIS to train inspectors in their new responsibilities and to bring a consistency of approach to their work and its quality. There is an effective system for monitoring the quality of work of school improvement officers including the scrutiny of school visit reports and observation of officers during their work in schools by senior MSIS staff. The LEA has been swift to deal with a small number of competency issues within MSIS when they have arisen.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION C OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO ASSIST SCHOOLS IN RAISING ATTAINMENT, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) ensure that the performance data it sends to schools is fully explained, does not duplicate the work of national bodies and includes an analysis of attainment by ethnicity;*
- (ii) provide further and improved guidance and advice on the use of performance data in target-setting;*
- (iii) ensure that the work of the Inspection and Advisory Service is more closely targeted to need and that it consistently challenges schools about difficult issues (see Priority 3, paragraphs 35 – 38 above);*
- (iv) design training on the National Literacy Strategy on the basis of a secure needs analysis and make clear the intended relationship between the National Literacy Strategy and other elements in the LEA's literacy strategy (see Priority 1, paragraphs 22 – 28 above).*

75. At the time of the last inspection significant shortcomings were identified in the provision of performance data to schools and arrangements for target setting. The LEA provided an analysis of GCSE results by gender and subject, but unaccompanied by text and without adequate material for benchmarking. There was no analysis by ethnicity despite the high proportion of ethnic minority pupils within the LEA. Schools did not understand what was required of them in terms of target setting. Moreover, the LEA had not formed a clear view of what it meant to set targets that were "realistic but challenging".

76. Overall, good progress has been made on the recommendation. A new, small research and statistics team has been formed to lead developments in this area. Headteachers value the advice provided by the team, which they find responsive to their needs. Schools now each receive a useful one page profile summarising their performance, attainment targets, data on attendance, exclusions and finance. The profile also includes details of schools' statistical neighbours which is helpful when benchmarking performance. However, headteachers reported that the profile often includes errors.

77. There has been some improvement in the provision of performance data, which schools now consider satisfactory. Some progress has also been made in the analysis of performance by ethnicity. Owing to an imminent change in the categorisation of ethnicity (for the 2001 census), the LEA has, understandably but mistakenly, been reluctant to require all schools to collect and provide pupil ethnic data. All pupil data is to be analysed by ethnicity from summer 2000. The LEA has published the results of the work that clearly identifies groups of high and low attaining pupils but there is no strategy, as yet, to tackle specific groups of underachievers.

78. Effective training has been provided for target setting for headteachers. Good guidance was provided to school improvement officers to aid their target setting visits

to schools in October 1999. This was helpful and comprehensive and resulted in a more coherent approach being adopted throughout the LEA in setting the 2001 targets.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION D OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO MEET ITS STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES TO PROVIDE EDUCATION FOR PUPILS WHO HAVE NO SCHOOL PLACE

the LEA should examine why, given the large numbers of surplus places available, 141 excluded pupils currently have no school place and ensure that education otherwise than at school is provided for all pupils who have no school place. If this entails setting up a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), this should not be as a replacement for the current provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD).

79. At the time of the last inspection provision for pupils out of school was seriously deficient. The LEA was unable to say what educational provision was being made for 140 pupils who were permanently excluded.

80. The LEA identified the 140 pupils from the previous inspection report and ensured alternative provision was made for the vast majority. It established a sophisticated database, monitoring pupils by placement, school, gender, ethnicity, reason for exclusion and SEN. It hastily implemented a full range of PRUs across all key stages and retained its EBD special school provision. There were many teething problems, but monitoring of these developments is good. There are positive signs that the PRUs are becoming a valued part of the overall pattern of provision which promotes social inclusion. The LEA has been imaginative in implementing a programme of additional payment schemes to enhance re-integration and contracting out its Key Stage 4 PRU provision to a voluntary provider with expertise in this field.

81. Progress has been fast, more than sufficient, and is sustainable. A sound basis of good quality management information and provision across all key stages will ensure that the previous failures will not be repeated.

82. Some teething problems remain and there are some contra indicators. The LEA has made a significant financial commitment to this programme and its sustainability depends on that financial commitment remaining. Service standards are written but not yet in place. There is concern regarding the capacity of PRUs to meet demand. A waiting list exists for the Key Stage 2 PRU which, itself, does not operate on a full time basis. This contrasts with the fledgling attempt to use the PRUs as a preventative resource. The new management in this field has shown itself to be versatile, vigorous and willing to share the front-line when things are not going to plan: this is reflected in the progress made and shows a capacity for future positive development.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION E OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO PUT IN PLACE CO-ORDINATED SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF IMPROVING PUPILS' BEHAVIOUR AND REDUCING THE NUMBERS OF EXCLUSIONS, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) produce a Behaviour Support Plan which ensures that prevention of difficult behaviour receives due emphasis and seeks to reduce the number of pupils who are excluded;*
- (ii) decide, on the basis of an analysis of need, what range of intervention strategies are needed, put them in place and ensure that schools are aware of what support is available and how referrals should be made;*
- (iii) ensure that particular institutions for pupils with special educational needs are not confronted by too great a range of needs. Pupils with statements for emotional and behavioural difficulties, for example, should not normally be placed in a Pupil Referral Unit.*

83. The last inspection found a chaotic set of re-organisation proposals regarding services for pupils with EBD. Such proposals had developed over a two year period and many questions were raised regarding their potential outcome including the abandonment of all EBD day school provision and the education welfare service.

84. After the publication of the report, the previous proposals were swiftly abandoned.

85. The LEA has implemented its statutory duty to provide a Behaviour Support Plan. The Plan itself has a number of weaknesses but is a product of its time (December 1998). The pace of change has been so rapid since its publication that, in its current state, it is out of date and largely irrelevant. It is scheduled for revision by December 2000.

86. The LEA has reduced the headline indicator of numbers of permanent exclusions beyond expectations, and at a faster rate than nationally. It has put in place a sensible, but only modestly altered, system of school provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has abandoned plans to replace EBD schools with PRUs, and has established parallel provision. EBD schools are admitting pupils with significantly more complex difficulties than previously and there have been some frank exchanges between the schools and the LEA regarding this. Such discussions are ultimately leading to improvements in provision and relationships.

87. The LEA has removed its outreach support service from the EBD school system and placed it under single management in the newly established attendance and behaviour support service. The re-organisation coincided with the recommended audit of need and the necessary prioritisation of provision created dissatisfaction in primary schools. Confidence is not fully restored and the allocation of the team's resources remains inconsistent and opaque. This team of 13.5 teachers provides a pupil-based, peripatetic pupil and teacher support service to

pupils on Stage 3 of the Code of Practice or those with statements. It works in primary and secondary schools, to strict timescales, based on individual behaviour plans and outcomes. Owing to the inertia of previous practice, this short term model of intervention, sharply focused on outcomes, is not always welcome, but does offer better value. The service is also developing a number of imaginative schemes for those pupils whose needs do not suit this model of provision.

88. Progress in the headline area of this work has been good and is likely to be sustained. However, detailed work remains to be done. Primary schools expressed dissatisfaction through the school survey regarding support for improving pupils' behaviour and the multiple, mainstream-based initiatives are having little impact on reducing demand for segregated provision. EBD day schools have unacceptably high levels of unauthorised absence, particularly of looked after children. Overall, therefore, progress on implementing this recommendation has a balance of strengths and weaknesses.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION F OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO PROMOTE BETTER ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) further improve its guidance to schools and ensure that better use is made of attendance data in order to target support more effectively;*
- (ii) systematically investigate, and bring to an end, the practice of some secondary schools of removing pupils with poor attendance from the school roll.*

89. The last inspection found that attendance data was rudimentary and not used to target resources. Attendance rates were not improving. The education welfare service, responsible for supporting schools in improving attendance, was insecure about its future. No overall guidance had been provided to schools. Serious concern was expressed about the practice of secondary school pupils being removed from the roll of their schools due to long term non-attendance, thus influencing published examination data in Year 11.

90. Pupil attendance remains well below statistical neighbours' and national averages. Unauthorised absence of pupils is double the national average but less than statistical neighbours. Despite modest, incremental improvements taking place year on year, the LEA is not likely to meet its attendance targets published in its EDP.

91. In January 2000, the LEA circulated excellent guidance to schools entitled Attendance Matters. This is a model document which also advises on practical strategies for schools to improve attendance, although it has been published too recently to have made an impact. There has been very recent guidance on the use of data to drive improvement, but it is too early to judge whether this is having an impact. Education welfare officers are now based in secondary schools but they are still not deployed on the principle of intervention in inverse proportion to success and whilst discussion takes place about the identification of the variables which would influence staff deployment, attendance remains stubbornly low.

92. Progress in supporting improvement in attendance has been at a modest pace and remains characterised by the judgement of the previous inspection report: that services are running hard to stand still. Incremental progress is being made in improving attendance and reducing unauthorised absence, but this LEA is still a long way off the national pace.

93. The LEA has successfully and systematically investigated the practice of some secondary schools of removing pupils with poor attendance from the school roll. No changes were implemented in 1998/9 whilst sensitive discussions took place with high schools in an attempt to eradicate this illegal practice: however, the level of prevalence was exposed. Manchester high schools have been illegally removing approximately 300 persistent, non-attending pupils (7.5 per cent of the Year 11 population) from school rolls prior to the January headcount date for at least the last two years, and probably longer.

94. This practice has a significant impact on the reported levels of attainment of pupils in Year 11, inflating all the LEA's GCSE indicators. Figures which describe the proportion of pupils gaining GCSEs in Manchester were unsound in 1997/8, 1998/9 and will be in 1999/2000. This is because the practice, at the schools' end, has been allowed to continue and has been legitimised by the LEA creating a central register for such pupils, numbering at least 282. These pupils have received little or no educational provision in 1999/2000 and are no longer on a school roll.

95. The LEA calls this list the Manchester Young Adult Vocational Scheme. The 'Scheme' constitutes each pupil being invited for interview in March/April 2000 with a view to being offered a 10-week extended work experience/life skills programme during May/July 2000. The scheme has merit, and is imaginative, but its timing is wrong. At the time of writing it is not known what the take-up of this scheme will be: but in summer months, when all their peers are on study leave, doing exams and leaving school, unpaid work experience is unlikely to attract the majority of the 282, who did not attend school in the first place.

96. Since the inspection report exposed this practice, the LEA has done too little, too late, for this cohort of 282 pupils and the 300 off-rolled pupils in 1998/9.

Recommendations:

In order to promote improved attendance and reductions in unauthorised absence:

- target support according to the principle of intervening in inverse proportion to the success of the school: use the guidance in Attendance Matters to target groups within schools;
- in relation to those pupils currently listed as being part of the Manchester Young Adult Vocational Scheme:
 - monitor the take-up of the Scheme during the interview phase;
 - monitor attendance on the 10 weeks of the Scheme;
 - monitor the ultimate outcome for pupils;
 - report the findings.
- urgently develop the concept of the scheme so that it is in place to offer full-time, alternative, educational provision for next year's cohort of pupils with effect from the first day of the school year.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION G OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO PROVIDE BETTER FOR THE LARGE RANGE OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS CURRENTLY NOT EFFECTIVELY MET, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) improve the speed and effectiveness of assessment procedures;*
- (ii) decide on the range of special educational needs provision and services it wishes and can afford and move quickly toward that model;*
- (iii) prepare proposals for a re-organisation of schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.*

97. The last inspection found that only 5 per cent of statutory assessments were completed within the advisory timescale. Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) was moving forward, but without an overall strategy or an agreed pattern towards which the LEA was striving, and without quantified targets for development. As a result, there was uncertainty amongst schools, particularly special schools, as to their roles with respect to SEN, and little prospect of the LEA being able to evaluate its progress towards any agreed goals.

98. The LEA has made improvements to the process of issuing and reviewing statements, through the establishment of the case work service and the increasing use of computerised systems. A combination of administrative delay and late provision of medical, social services and educational psychology advice mean that six out of ten statements still take longer than the required 18 week period to be issued although, taking into account the provisions to except delays in medical and social services advice from statutory performance indicators, 63 per cent are now issued within the SEN Code of Practice guidelines. Nevertheless, this performance remains unsatisfactory.

99. The LEA has drafted a special educational needs strategy document, with the support of an external consultant, which sets out principles, objectives and an action plan. The document is not able to set out a desired model of provision as this is dependent on the outcomes of the LEA's current dialogue with mainstream schools regarding the development of their capacity to meet a wide range of special needs and of an audit of current provision and needs which has made little progress to date.

100. The strategy's action plan sets out how improvements will be prepared for, or made to, many aspects of the LEA's provision for SEN. However, the plan is only for one year, and, current until April 2000, has virtually expired. Future developments are unclear. Existing initiatives which have arisen in addition to the published strategy are generally coherent with the LEA's move toward the greater inclusion of pupils with SEN; these are not drawn into the overall planning and their inter-relationships are not made explicit. In support of the strategy, the LEA has established a number of working groups. The LEA has begun other schemes associated with the strategy, such as the further training of special educational needs co-ordinators. Significant and valuable initiatives, such as the re-organisation

of the outreach service for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are taking place alongside the published strategy. A further plan is to be launched in Summer term 2000.

101. The strategy to provide a centrally based learning support service has continued and now serves eight clusters of schools. Feedback from existing recipients is positive but, to date, less than half the schools receive this service. On 10 January 2000, the LEA significantly changed its strategy of centrally employing the majority of the staff and, sensibly, will now be devolving the funds to schools. However, it remains unclear how the funding for the other half of the schools will be found: currently pupils in half of the city's schools receive a service to which pupils in the other half have no access. This position will be maintained for three years, if not longer. Such intervention is not in inverse proportion to the needs of pupils and schools: it is arbitrary and inequitable and does not serve more than half the population of SEN pupils for up to three years of their primary schooling.

102. The LEA has consulted appropriately on the future of MLD special school provision. Ministerial approval has been granted for the amalgamation of two of the four MLD special schools with effect from September 2000 bringing the overall level of provision closer into line with need and demand.

Recommendations:

In order to continue to improve its strategy and performance to support pupils with SEN:

- increase the proportion of statements produced within the time limit, and in particular, liaise with the medical officer to address the problem of parents failing to attend medical appointments;
- improve the quality of strategic planning by:
 - proceeding urgently with the audit of current special educational needs and provision;
 - agree the desired pattern of provision with all interested parties;
 - develop a longer term rolling plan for SEN development with quantified targets;
- in full consultation with primary schools:
 - swiftly and fully implement the learning support service strategy or, if resources do not allow, target it in proportion to need across the city;
 - minimise LEA, and maximise school, management of the scheme.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION H OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE TRANSPARENCY IN THE ALLOCATION OF EDUCATION RESOURCES, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) review the information it provides to schools and the way that it consults them as part of the budget-setting process;*
- (ii) pursue benchmarking of the cost of central services in Manchester in comparison with other LEAs;*
- (iii) use the improved quality of information on the comparative cost of individual central services as part of the Education Committee's decision-taking process.*

103. The inspection report identified that the budget process in Manchester lacked clarity in the presentation of information on resources and in the alignment of funding with priorities in relation to education. The budget process tended to roll forward patterns of expenditure rather than subject them to rigorous review.

104. The LEA has increased the extent of consultation with schools for the 2000-1 budget round. Discussions have been held on emerging budget thinking in meetings with primary and secondary heads. A Fair Funding strategy group was set up in the autumn of 1998 and a funding formula review group in July 1999. Members of the departmental management team have discussed funding issues in visits to all schools.

105. The ability of schools to plan their budgets has been considerably improved by the education department's three year budget and service strategy which was published in November 1999. The Council has agreed to spend at least at the level of education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) and to ring fence the education budget, providing a greater degree of stability and certainty in education funding. The plan identifies priorities for increased education resources, targets for increased delegation of resources, a need to restructure the department and stronger links to other corporate priorities. The combination of the consultation and planning processes is having a positive impact on the transparency and quality of the resource allocation process.

106. Financial indicators for 1999/2000 show high strategic management costs and low levels of delegation. The majority of the high strategic management costs related to coding of £3.4 million of expenditure that would, in many other authorities, have been coded to other budget headings; other elements related to central expenditure which was excessive. The LEA delegates 77.4 per cent of the Local Schools Budget compared to an average of 82 per cent among metropolitan authorities. Central administration costs are £126 per pupil compared with an average for metropolitan authorities of £51 and other strategic costs are £101 per pupil compared with an average of £58.

107. Strategic management costs were £10.9 million in 1999/00 and will be reduced to £4 million in 2000/01. Only £109,000 of this reduction relates to savings

and almost all of the reduction is a correct redistribution of expenditure to other budget headings.

108. Schools will gain from the additional £3.6 million of strategic management costs which will be delegated in 2000/01. Of this, £2.2 million relates to the costs of central services delegated under Fair Funding. The remaining £1.4 million represents new resources for schools acquired primarily from the transfer of the share of central contingency into the school budgets. The expenditure plans for 2000/01, which are currently being finalised, will reduce the central administration costs to £58 per pupil, below the Government targets of £65 per pupil, and increasing the percentage of the LSB delegated to 81.9 per cent. The LEA's three year budget strategy aims to reduce central administration costs further to £54 per pupil, and increase the level of delegation to 83.5 per cent by 20002/03.

109. The LEA did not meet its timetable for delivery of changes to the funding formula for schools. Key principles for the review of the formula were agreed in September 1999 and the review is expected to report in July 2000. Schools feel concerned, however, that what they see as necessary changes have been delayed as a result. Some important changes are, however, being delivered for 2000/01 through an additional £1.5 million being delegated to primary budgets and the reduction of the clawback which has in the past impacted very severely on the budgets of schools with falling rolls.

110. Progress on benchmarking the costs of services has also been limited and as a result schools and the LEA do not have a clear view on the comparative cost of services. Benchmarking work on home to school transport has been completed and some comparative work has been done with the Core Cities Group. Information is being sought from other LEAs on the costs of services to be delegated in 2000/01.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION I OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) continue to work with schools to eliminate budget deficits;*
- (ii) give a high priority to the swift implementation of the surplus places proposals and, following this, review its admission arrangements for secondary schools;*
- (iii) review the current staff re-deployment policies to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible to allow necessary school re-organisation to be carried out effectively.*

111. In 1996/97 over half of Manchester's schools had a budget deficit. The overall net cumulative deficit of £6.2 million was substantially greater than any other LEA. In May 1997 Manchester had 11 per cent surplus places in the primary phase and 23 per cent surplus places in the secondary phase. A combination of school deficits and surplus places had impeded the raising of standards in some Manchester schools. The last inspection questioned whether the LEA's staff redeployment procedures would be sufficiently flexible to permit a radical re-organisation plan to be undertaken effectively.

112. The net cumulative deficit had decreased to £2.3 million by the end of the financial year 1998/99: a net surplus of £2.0m is projected for the end of 1999/2000. Within the deficit at 1998/99 were 72 schools whose deficits amounted to £6.8m, of which £3.9m was in respect of closed schools, or those planned for closure. The Council decided, in February 2000, to write off closed schools' deficits, offering up to £5.0m of public monies from Council reserves for this purpose. This has been a high price to pay for previous failings.

113. The corrective strategy adopted by the Council and the LEA's officers has been robust. The LEA now provides good support to schools with deficits. Those schools are required to submit spending plans for three financial years – these are amended if unsatisfactory, and monitored for compliance. The LEA's action is projected to produce a net cumulative surplus at March 2000, a year in advance of the target date.

114. Seven remaining primary schools have projected deficits of over £50,000 each, and four secondary schools have projected deficits of more than 5 per cent of their budgets at March 2000. This remains an unsatisfactory position in each of these schools.

115. A report to the education committee in May 1998 established a target of reducing surplus places to between 5-8 per cent by March 2001. The re-organisation has, so far, involved closing 17 schools, opening 7 new schools, and re-modelling 11 schools. If further closure/amalgamation proposals are approved by Ministers, the re-organisation will result in the successful reduction of surplus places to 8.9 per cent in the primary phase and 4.1 per cent in the secondary phase. At October 1999 ten

primary schools (not identified for major action) had more than 25 per cent surplus places: their position remains unsatisfactory.

116. By July 1999, the new redeployment arrangements had resulted in over 400 staff being redeployed, and each “new” school (that is, the school emerging when existing schools are amalgamated) fully staffed prior to re-opening. The redeployment agreements included “no compulsory redundancies” provisions. The cost of the redeployment programme in 1999/2000 is estimated at £565,000, including severance and premature retirement costs. At February 2000, two teaching staff, seven full time support staff and seven part-time support staff remained in LEA-funded supernumerary posts. This is a better outcome than was expected, although the provision has inhibited the introduction of staff from elsewhere into new schools.

117. The Schools Admissions policy, approved by the Council in February 2000, will replace a primary/high school link scheme in order to take account of recent legislation, and the DfEE's Code of Practice on Admissions. It will change the criteria for admissions when schools are over-subscribed.

118. Some parents have expressed concern about the loss of the primary/secondary link approach, the quality of consultation and the transparency of decision-making. However, admissions policies for secondary schools must balance a range of competing interests. The LEA has consulted widely and at length to produce a policy that is in line with other LEAs, and gives appropriate prominence to parental preference. The new policy is sound. It takes account of the Code of Practice and recent judgements and gives proper weight to parental preference.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION J OF THE 1998 REPORT

TO PROMOTE VALUE FOR MONEY AND CHOICE FOR SCHOOLS IN THE USE OF RESOURCES, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) develop a programme of further delegation or devolution to schools of the resources for a range of management, premises, curriculum support and training services, offering schools a choice as to whether they buy the services from the LEA or elsewhere;*
- (ii) where services continue to be provided by the LEA, produce a simple service agreement specifying the level of services to be provided;*
- (iii) carry out a detailed investigation with schools about ways to improve the quality of the property maintenance service.*

119. The last inspection report identified that schools were generally unaware of the costs of the services they consumed and were therefore not in a position to make judgements about value for money obtained. Services were not clearly specified. There was a high level of dissatisfaction with the grounds and building maintenance service. Concern was expressed about unsatisfactory periods between repairs and action, unsatisfactory standards of workmanship and invoices substantially exceeding original estimates without explanation.

120. Substantial progress has been made on the specification and costing of services where resources are being delegated, although the process started considerably later than was desirable. As a result, schools had limited time to make informed purchasing decisions for 2000/01.

121. During 1999 work on the production of service costs and specifications accelerated. Schools will now have a much clearer view than before about the services they receive and their cost, but the late timing of the information they receive means that they are less able to be informed purchasers. Benchmarking information is not available locally on the comparative costs of services.

122. Service level agreements (SLAs) have sensibly been agreed for a period of just one year and this will give schools the opportunity to review them for the next financial year. The Fair Funding strategy group has a programme to deliver improved information to inform schools' purchasing decisions for the 2001/02 budget year. Each service area will produce further draft SLAs with the aim of increasing differentiation of services, incorporating customer feedback and developing consortium arrangements for groups of schools.

123. Since the last inspection, the DfEE has developed requirements for Asset Management Planning processes. The LEA has carried out property condition surveys and has made very positive progress in improving property management systems within education. It has developed sound computer systems which can store the range of property information necessary to prioritise investment in improving the condition of buildings. Suitability surveys are programmed to take place between May and June 2000, initially on a pilot basis. Improvements are

imminent in the quality of property information available to schools, which will assist schools with their own asset management planning.

124. The LEA faces substantial problems in attracting sufficient investment to tackle a legacy of disrepair and backlog from past inadequate investment.

125. Problems have been exacerbated by the unwillingness in the past to face difficult decisions on surplus places. There is now, however, a positive will to tackle the issues. Substantial investment has taken place and will continue to do so. Decisions taken on surplus place removal and the information from asset management systems is allowing capital and revenue expenditure to be more effectively invested.

PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATION K OF THE 1998 REPORT

IN RELATION TO THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO OVERCOME EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE, THE LEA SHOULD:

- (i) develop a clear resource plan for the changes that it wishes to make over the next three to five years;*
- (ii) review the formula for the allocation of resources to mainstream schools to overcome educational disadvantage.*

126. The last inspection report identified that few schools were able clearly to identify the element within their budget which is intended to fund support for special educational needs. The LMS scheme allocated £5.95 million in 1997/98 as “anti-poverty” funding. Schools were not clear on what these resources were intended to be used for. They did not account, even in the most general way, for their spending on SEN. Surplus places and deficit budgets in many schools added to the lack of clarity as schools used much of this resource as part of their general attempts to escape from deficit positions.

127. Some action has been taken to start to review resources in this area as part of the work of the formula funding group and the development of the three year education strategic plan. The key funding issues have not yet been resolved.

128. Changes have not been made to the formula for delegation of resources to schools and £6.6 million is still identified as “anti-poverty funding” allocated on the basis of the number of pupils with free school meals. The formula funding working group is examining the use of resources within the funding formula for special educational needs and needs arising from social exclusion. The group will report by July 2000 with the intention to implement changes in 2000/01. The use of these resources by schools is not routinely monitored.

129. The inspection also identified the lack of a clear resource plan for changes in service provision envisaged for support to pupils with special needs. Support services were being developed for pupils and integration was being developed in mainstream schools without a clear identification of the future financial implications. The future balance of funding between special school and independent placements, central support services and delegated/devolved resources to schools had not been identified. This position remains largely unchanged. The SEN strategy group has done some work on review of services and the three year budget and service strategy has started to develop processes for budget review. Two special schools have been amalgamated and resources have been transferred into the learning support service. There is still, however, a lack of clarity on future resource allocation in this area.

Recommendations:

In order to improve the distribution and use of resources available to meet special needs and to overcome educational disadvantage:

- develop a clear resource plan for the changes to be made over the next three to five years;
- review the basis on which resources are delegated to schools;
- improve the monitoring of the use of these resources.

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to improve the quality of planning for school improvement the EDP should be reviewed, in full consultation with schools, to:

- take into account new initiatives such as Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones;
- include targets for ethnic minority pupils determined from an analysis of the attainment of all pupils, and include clear action to raise the levels of achievement of underachieving groups;
- provide support to schools to raise standards of attainment at Key Stage 3;
- ensure that all activity plans have clear, time-limited actions, focussed on appropriate groups of pupils and schools, and success criteria which are measurable and attainable;
- ensure rigorous reporting of progress to an agreed format.

In order to raise pupils' attainment in literacy:

- review the management of the implementation of the literacy strategy in detailed consultation with schools. This review should focus on:
 - the management of the literacy strategy;
 - the challenge and support required to enable schools to set appropriate targets;
 - the identification of intensive support schools and support provided.

In order to improve ICT development:

- review the level of support that primary schools need to effectively use their resources;
- develop a shared vision of an investment strategy between secondary schools and the LEA;
- improve the linkages between the support provided for administrative and curriculum ICT developments.

In order to promote improved attendance and reductions in unauthorised absence:

- target support according to the principle of intervening in inverse proportion to the success of the school: use the guidance in Attendance Matters to target groups within schools;

- in relation to those pupils currently listed as being part of the Manchester Young Adult Vocational Scheme:
 - monitor the take-up of the Scheme during the interview phase;
 - monitor attendance on the 10 weeks of the Scheme;
 - monitor the ultimate outcome for pupils;
 - report the findings.
- urgently develop the concept of the scheme so that it is in place to offer full-time, alternative, educational provision for next year's cohort of pupils with effect from the first day of the school year.

In order to continue to improve its strategy and performance to support pupils with SEN:

- increase the proportion of statements produced within the time limit, and in particular, liaise with the medical officer to address the problem of parents failing to attend medical appointments;
- improve the quality of strategic planning by:
 - proceeding urgently with the audit of current special educational needs and provision;
 - agree the desired pattern of provision with all interested parties;
 - develop a longer term rolling plan for SEN development with quantified targets;
- in full consultation with primary schools:
 - swiftly and fully implement the learning support strategy or, if resources do not allow, target it in proportion to need across the city;
 - minimise LEA, and maximise school, management of the scheme.

In order to improve the distribution and use of resources available to meet special needs and to overcome educational disadvantage:

- develop a clear resource plan for the changes to be made over the next three to five years;
- review the basis on which resources are delegated to schools;
- improve the monitoring of the use of these resources.

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