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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 used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities* which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.

2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the education department and in other Council departments, and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 87 schools. The response rate was 86 per cent.

3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to one nursery, 14 primary schools, one special and three secondary schools, and one pupil referral unit. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

## COMMENTARY

4. Luton became a unitary authority in 1997, resuming responsibility for education services after a break of 23 years. It faced many challenges. First, the area it serves has a level of socio-economic disadvantage above the national average. Second, it needed to raise standards, which were below national averages for all key stages. Third, several struggling primary schools required urgent and effective support to address management difficulties and poor teaching. Fourth, the borough's special needs provision needed rationalising. In addition, the LEA was faced with building new relationships with schools and delivering a seamless transfer of services.

5. In a number of areas Luton has made progress. Although they remain below national levels, standards in primary schools and the average points scores for 16-year-olds have risen in line with national rates. The LEA has developed an effective system for identifying and supporting primary schools causing concern, and has been effective in removing weak management from many of these schools. During 1998/9, it played a substantial role in helping three primary schools to be removed from special measures. Special needs provision has been rationalised, with reductions in the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs and the number of out-borough placements for pupils in special schools. The number of permanently excluded pupils has fallen sharply. The LEA has established effective links with a wide range of partners.

6. In other areas, the LEA has had less success. There has been little improvement in pupils gaining 5+ GCSEs grade A\*-C, and overall, pupil attainment is too low. Considerable improvement will be required if the government's targets for 2002 are to be achieved. The LEA's Education Development Plan (EDP), setting out the strategy for school improvement, has significant weaknesses. The plan is insufficiently focused. It is not well enough informed by performance and management data, and activities lack definition and are not clearly sequenced. The quality of curriculum advice and support varies, and sometimes has little impact. The dissemination of good practice is underdeveloped and piecemeal. The LEA has also failed to build adequate working relationships with secondary schools.

7. Although the Council is committed to education as its top priority, and every year has provided funding in line with the Standard Spending Assessment, some aspects of the LEA's strategic management are weak. Elected members have made a strong commitment to education by ensuring, each year, that school budgets have been protected. Despite this commitment, the education directorate's strategic planning has not been formally integrated into the corporate planning of the Council. Preparation of LEA plans has also been hampered by inadequate performance data, and by difficulty in recruiting staff to senior management positions. Consultation is extensive, but particularly with secondary schools, is often ineffective. Performance management systems do not make rigorous use of comparative data on cost and performance.

8. Some services are good overall. These include:

- support for governors;
- support for early years education;
- provision of financial advice;
- provision of personnel advice;
- support for attendance;

- support for looked after children; and
- Travellers' education.

9. Elsewhere, there is more variability, and services are more effective in primary than in secondary schools. This is particularly so in the case of the work of school development advisers (SDAs), who are crucial to the LEA's strategy for school improvement. Although they have provided good support to many primary schools, support to others has been weak. Some advisers have also failed to achieve credibility in secondary schools. The collection and analysis of data has recently improved. A number of other functions, on balance, are also performed effectively:

- support for numeracy;
- support for pupils with special educational needs;
- the supply of school places;
- admissions;
- support for welfare and child protection; and
- support for pupils from ethnic minority heritage and English as an additional language.

10. Although some are improving, the following functions are not performed adequately:

- support for school improvement in secondary schools;
- use of data to support target setting;
- support for literacy;
- support for ICT in the curriculum;
- support for ICT in administration;
- support for school management;
- support for capital projects and premises maintenance;
- the provision of education out of school; and
- support for pupil behaviour.

11. Overall, the effectiveness of the support provided has been uneven, and in a number of aspects, insufficient. The LEA's support for primary schools is a balance of strengths and weaknesses. In contrast, support for secondary schools is poor. Although, in some respects, the LEA has done well to establish itself and to accept responsibility for a difficult legacy, there is considerable scope for improvement. The LEA's capacity to support primary schools is illustrated by its success in supporting schools in special measures. In contrast, its capacity to adequately support secondary schools is questionable, and the LEA and the schools need to work more closely together if this is to change. Prompt action is needed both to bring about progress in this area and in response to the report's other recommendations.

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

### **Context**

12. Luton became a unitary authority on 1 April 1997, resuming responsibility for education services after a break of 23 years. Prior to 1997, education was provided by Bedfordshire County Council. Luton is a compact urban borough with a population of 181,000. Socio-economic disadvantage is above the national average, with a quarter of pupils eligible for free school meals.

13. The LEA serves 32,147 pupils aged 5-16+. Over a third of these are of ethnic minority heritage. This is above the figure for similar LEAs and well above the national average. The main ethnic groups include Pakistani/Kashmiri, Bangladeshi, African Caribbean and Indian. About a quarter of pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). Since September 1998, all four year-olds living in Luton have been offered pre-statutory education. Fifty-nine per cent of all three and four-year-olds are attending some form of LEA nursery provision, with about one third of these on the roll of primary schools.

14. The borough has 86 maintained schools, including 12 secondary schools (one 11-18; the rest 11-16), 11 primary schools, 27 junior schools, 27 infant schools, five nurseries, one community nursery and three special schools. Four of the secondary schools and one infant school were formerly grant maintained. Two of these secondary schools are specialist colleges. The LEA also provides a pupil referral unit (PRU) for pupils in Key Stage 4.

15. The proportion of primary and secondary pupils educated in special schools (1.6 per cent) is above the level both nationally and in similar LEAs. The percentage of primary pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is in line with that nationally and in similar LEAs (2.9 per cent). The corresponding figure for secondary pupils is 4.2 per cent. This is slightly above the figure for similar LEAs and nationally. A fifth of pupils have been identified through the Code of Practice as having a special education need.

### **Performance**

16. The LEA's 1999 baseline results indicate that on entry only 26 per cent of Luton's children achieved the Desirable Learning Outcome levels expected in language and literacy. Attainment in literacy at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 has increased slightly faster than the national rate, although it is still well below national averages in Key Stage 1. Improvement at Key Stage 2 has been good and in 1999 attainment was in line with national norms. Standards in numeracy in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 are below national averages. In Key Stage 1 the gap has widened over the last two years.

17. Pupils gaining 5+ GCSE grades A\*-C is well below the national average, and has only improved slightly over the last three years. During the same period, although the average GCSE points score has kept pace with national rates of improvement, it has remained below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving 1+ GCSE grade A\*-G has also improved and is above the national average.

18. Attendance in Luton primary schools is better than in similar LEAs but below the national average. In secondary schools, it is above both similar LEAs and the national

average. Permanent exclusions in primary schools are in line with the national average. In secondary schools, the level of permanent exclusions has fallen sharply over the last three years and is now well below the national average and similar LEAs.

## Funding

19. Since 1997, Luton has been committed to education as its top priority, and every year has provided funding at the level indicated in the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA). In its first year, this meant Luton providing £3m more than would have been available from Bedfordshire, which also funded education at SSA.

20. To maintain education spending at SSA over the last two years, the Council has needed to find £8m of efficiency savings from other Council departments. In each of the past three years, schools have received increases in delegated funding:

1997/98	8.62%
1998/99	3.70%
1999/2000	11.56%*

\* including items delegated for the first time under Fair Funding

21. Funding for schools compares favourably with similar LEAs:

<b>1999-2000 LEA BUDGETS</b>					
	<i>% LSB delegated</i>	<i>Gross Individual Schools Budget (ISB) Primary per pupil (£)</i>	<i>Gross ISB Secondary per pupil (£)</i>	<i>Gross ISB Special per pupil (£)</i>	<i>Total net spending on schools per pupil (£)</i>
Luton	81.4	1687	2552	6374*	2659
Statistical Neighbours Average	81.7	1640	2418	8832	2531
Unitary Authorities Average	81.9	1599	2399	9596	2467
England Average	82.4	1682	2449	8364	2588

\* This is consistent with the types of Special school which Luton LEA maintains.

22. Over each of the past three years, the LEA has expanded the capital budget for education. This currently includes £3.79m to remodel special schools to meet the requirements of the LEA policies for special educational needs (SEN). Luton has a corporate budget of some £1.5m for capital repair and maintenance. Education projects gained £750,000 from this source in 1999/2000.

23. In the estimates for the 1999/2000 financial year, the LEA contribution to programmes supported through the Standards Fund was the highest among unitary authorities at £104 per pupil. Following further allocations and adjustments, the total Standards Fund budget



for the year is £6.23m, including an Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Grant (EMTAG) of £2.3m.

24. The LEA consults extensively with schools and other parties as part of the annual budget setting process. The Council's early decision to again fund education at SSA has allowed the LEA to inform schools in good time of their likely budgets for 2000/01.

25. In each of the first two years, the LEA's centrally-held budget was underspent. Savings amounted to £2.259m in 1997/8 and £1.911m in 1998/9. The savings arose from success in the LEA's strategy for resourcing of children with SEN, a prudently cautious approach to budget setting in the authority's first two years, and the LEA's failure to recruit key staff. As funds were made available, benefits from the savings were passed directly on to schools, either as enhancements to delegated budgets, or to the capital programme.

26. In 1999/2000, the amount recharged to the education department for services from other Council departments is £1.52m. Around a quarter of this is being paid by schools from their delegated budgets for which satisfactory service level agreements (SLAs) are in place. There are also SLAs for services provided to the education department, but some of these are poorly developed.

### **Council structure**

27. The Council consists of 48 members (36 Labour, nine Liberal Democrat and three Conservative). The education committee is one of 12 Council committees. It has 15 elected members and meets six times a year.

28. Two sub-committees (quality and performance, and the partnership forum) and a joint negotiation and consultative committee are supported by eight other committees, panels, forums and steering groups. There are also a number of advisory groups with representation from headteachers and other stakeholders. There is scope for rationalising these groups, thereby reducing the heavy demands on time of those involved.

29. The Council has only recently begun to consider its response to *Modernising Local Government* and put a new structure in place from May 2000.

30. The education directorate has three divisions; learning and achievement, planning and resources, and pupils and parents. An assistant director heads each division. The director of education and the three assistant directors make up the directorate senior management team (SMT).

### **The Education Development Plan**

31. Luton's Education Development Plan (EDP) reflects the LEA's intention to make 'achievement and access a reality for all pupils, students and learners within the borough'. The plan has three year approval from the DfEE and was implemented from April 1999. It does have, however, significant weaknesses.

32. The EDP includes six priorities:

- \* raising attainment and expectation;

- \* restoring morale and the confidence of staff, to raise the quality of teaching and share good practice;
- \* realising the potential for effective leadership;
- \* responding to schools which are a cause for concern;
- \* recruiting and retaining high quality staff;
- \* recognising, valuing and actively involving the wider community in the learning process.

33. These priorities are vaguely worded and the activities set out in pursuit of them sometimes lack adequate definition. A strong emphasis is placed on particular issues facing the borough, including the promotion of more inclusive education. The plan appropriately recognises the low standards achieved by many of Luton's pupils, and targets under-performance of particular groups. Links are made with other statutory plans, for example Early Years. Although good reference is made to the outcomes of recent OFSTED school reports to justify the plan, it is not otherwise underpinned by adequate performance data (see paragraph 50). Success criteria and timescales are often imprecise and proposed actions are poorly sequenced.

34. Targets for 2000 were set at low levels and those for KS2 English and GCSE were virtually met in 1999. Most of the targets for 2002 are much more demanding, and considerable improvement will be required if these are to be achieved. At Key Stage 2, attainment in mathematics at Level 4 and above will need to rise from 61.5 per cent in 1999 to 74 per cent. To achieve the 2002 target for five GCSEs A\*-C, the percentage of pupils achieving this level will need to rise from 36 per cent in 1999 to 45 per cent.

35. Another major weakness of the EDP is that it is not seen by most secondary schools as relevant in helping to bring about school improvement. In the school survey, secondary schools indicated that the clarity of the LEA's strategy for school improvement was poor. In a third of all schools visited, the EDP had made no impact on their planning. Although consultation on the EDP was reasonably extensive, it was only partly effective. The section outlining the LEA's strategy to support schools causing concern is weak, but this has been more clearly expressed in more recent documentation.

36. The LEA has carried out its own review and evaluation of the implementation of the EDP. This shows that reasonable progress has been made on implementing the six priorities, and that where they exist, proposed timescales are being met. Where progress has been limited, this has been due to staffing difficulties. Recently improved data on pupil/school performance is now enabling the LEA to review and focus the EDP priorities more precisely, and following further consultation, to tailor activities and actions more closely to the needs of schools and pupils.

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

37. The overall allocation of resources to priorities and activities, although imperfect, is improving. The LEA has begun to shift resources to support pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, reflecting the priority it attaches to inclusive education. It has also directed resources, for example, to improve support in Early Years, to improve support for pupils with ethnic minority heritage (through EMTAG) and to assist teacher recruitment. A review of the funding formula for schools was recently completed and, from April 2000, funding

allocations to schools have been more closely aligned to the costs of delivering each key stage.

38. Luton is making progress toward the introduction of the statutory requirement for Best Value. A Best Value team started work in September 1999. It has conducted briefings for staff on the process, and is working toward the production of the Council's Best Value Performance Plan. The education directorate has identified services to be reviewed during 2000/01 and the officers to lead these reviews have been nominated. The directorate's management team already reviews the performance of each unit or team on an annual cycle. The work of each unit is reviewed against expected outcomes and suggestions for improvement are discussed. These quality assurance reviews have identified issues of consistency and coherence, but no attempt has yet been made to compare costs and performance of services with other LEAs.

**Recommendations:**

**In order to improve the strategy for school improvement the LEA should:**

- review the EDP to tighten the focus of the priorities; take account of the more detailed data now available; address weaknesses in sequencing of actions and success criteria; and better address the needs of secondary schools;
- introduce more-rigorous systems of performance management which are consistent with the principles of Best Value and sufficiently transparent to allow stakeholders to obtain an informed view of service quality.

## **SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Implications of other functions**

39. The Council's commitment to education as its number one priority, and its protection of the education budget, are major contributions to promoting school improvement (see paragraphs 20 and 73). The lack of an appropriate working partnership with secondary schools is, however, a considerable obstacle to LEA support for school improvement (see paragraph 79).

40. While functions to support pupils with SEN are carried out generally satisfactorily, the lack of LEA monitoring of how schools spend their delegated SEN funds is not encouraging improvement in the quality of education and achievements of these pupils (see paragraph 93). The learning support service generally provides good support, and that provided by the services for the hearing and visually impaired is consistently high. All these services are contributing to raising pupil attainment (see paragraph 95).

41. Arrangements relating to pupil access to education are having mixed effects on school improvement. Mergers between infant and junior schools have helped to improve standards. In contrast, the LEA has been slow to complete some of the building alterations and refurbishments needed to accommodate pupils with SEN in mainstream schools (see paragraph 87). It has also been less successful than it had hoped with applications for funding from the New Deal for Schools (see paragraph 99). Although support for attendance is good and the number of pupils educated out of school has been sharply reduced, support for many pupils with behavioural difficulties is unsatisfactory (see paragraphs 103, 106 and 110). Lack of LEA monitoring of how schools use their allocations of the EMTAG is not encouraging improvement in the quality of education and achievements of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds (see paragraphs 117).

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

42. The learning and achievement division (which includes the advisory service) has played an important role in helping poor performing primary schools to improve (see paragraph 66). This has been achieved through a range of strategies and reflects the LEA's willingness to take radical and effective steps in these situations to secure school improvement. Appropriate LEA intervention in schools has included targeted support, secondment of staff and the removal of delegated powers.

43. The effectiveness of the advisory service to support school improvement on a broader front is being undermined by the LEA's inability to recruit key personnel. The posts of literacy and numeracy strategy managers are currently vacant, and are being filled by the principal adviser and the senior adviser (lifelong learning). The result is overload and, in the case of the principal adviser, insufficient time to focus on the training, development and performance management needs of his team, as outlined in the service plan (see paragraphs 51 and 58).

44. SDAs have a key role in monitoring, challenging, supporting and intervening in schools. SDAs were appointed in September 1999 when the role of attached advisers was modified to reflect the new Code of Practice on LEA/school relationships. All schools now receive a minimum entitlement of a half-day visit each term. The agenda for the visits are

set by the principal adviser and focus on school improvement issues. Operation of the current SDA model is not sufficiently flexible to take account of schools' differing needs and there is insufficient emphasis on data analysis in supporting better-performing schools.

45. The quality of monitoring by School Development Assistants (SDAs) varies, and in many secondary schools they have yet to establish credibility. The most effective SDAs provide schools with critical analyses, and their notes of visit identify clear action points for future development. Others offer little that helps a school to move forward. Better access to performance and management data has recently enhanced the LEA's monitoring capability. SDAs have made little use of the data and this has limited their knowledge of schools and hampered their effectiveness in supporting school development planning.

46. Individual schools identified as having problems are reviewed regularly by SDAs, the school improvement group (SIG) and the LEA's SMT (see paragraph 67). SIG is attended by officers from various services within the education department and provides an opportunity to signal and discuss concerns about particular schools. There is also additional monitoring of schools causing concern through officers' attendance at governing body meetings and other visits to schools.

47. Schools are free to decide whether or not to buy curriculum support from the LEA, and the secondary schools have chosen not to have support. Many courses provided have been well received, but other advice and support has varied too widely in quality and impact. Schools reported curriculum support to be good for personal, social, health and religious education but inadequate in ICT. In some areas, for example science, the LEA has overcome gaps in staffing by successfully adopting a brokerage role, and buying in support from other providers. Additional support is provided for any school causing concern following approval by SMT. Although the LEA has appointed and deployed three advanced skills teachers (ASTs) and some local teachers have been involved in delivering LEA courses, dissemination of good practice is underdeveloped and piecemeal. Music services are highly regarded by schools.

### **Use of data to support target setting**

48. A lack of performance data has hampered the LEA in both its planning for school improvement and its monitoring of schools. This has been addressed during the last year and much progress has been made. Allocation of schools to groups, based on free school meal indicators, has allowed comparisons between schools of similar types. Work is just beginning on value-added analysis and the LEA is sensibly seeking to identify coasting schools. Recent improvement in the data available has allowed the LEA to focus attention on pupil performance by ethnic group. Timelines, to identify when different types of data can be made available to schools, are also being prepared.

49. Although the LEA now provides a wide range of performance data to schools, it has had varying success in helping schools to use this data to set targets and monitor their own progress. SDAs have not had an opportunity to discuss the recent improvements in the LEA's data collection and analysis capability, and few are making sufficient use of data in their work with schools.

50. Only a third of the schools visited were making effective use of LEA data to inform the setting of targets. Target setting is also frequently confused with forecasting. At the time of

the inspection, schools were beginning to set targets for pupils from different minority ethnic groups. Half the schools where ethnic minority issues were a focus for the inspection reported difficulties in this area, and would have welcomed better guidance.

### **Support for literacy**

51. Support for literacy is unsatisfactory, although it is improving. The LEA's strategic management of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) has been constrained by difficulties in recruiting a suitable strategy manager. This is apparent in the failure of the LEA to maintain its literacy steering group and in weak strategic planning, which lacks precision and detail. A number of projects are being recommended to schools in addition to the NLS. This is resulting in some confusion, and current guidance to schools is inadequate. Consultants are now in place, and recent appointments have made appropriate links with support for pupils with EAL. Mechanisms for sharing good practice are developing, but slowly. The LEA has no literacy centre, and there is no regular literacy newsletter. Regular network meetings are valued by literacy co-ordinators.

52. Overall, despite the inadequacies, schools are making good progress. Literacy targets for the year 2000 were not based on detailed data and have already been met by many schools. The LEA's data analysis has improved over the last year, and targets recently agreed with schools should be more challenging. SDAs have begun to monitor the implementation of the NLS in schools, and have received appropriate training to enable them to fulfil this role. Where it has occurred, joint observation of teaching, with SDAs supporting senior managers, has been helpful.

53. Twelve primary schools were visited where support for literacy was a focus for inspection. There was some variation in the extent to which attainment in literacy in these schools was rising. In four schools the trend was one of improvement, while in seven, standards were either fluctuating or static. In one, standards were dropping. Three of the 12 schools had not fully implemented the National Literacy Strategy, and in one of these this had constrained the quality of teaching.

54. The LEA's support to literacy in the primary schools is too varied. It was good in two, satisfactory in six, and unsatisfactory in four of the schools visited. Where it was good, training had been well received, consultants had given demonstration lessons and support had been well targeted at weaknesses. In general, the work of the literacy consultants was well regarded. In the schools where support was unsatisfactory, it had made too little impact on raising standards.

55. In three secondary schools and one special school visited, staff had attended literacy training but thought it of limited value. Two of the schools had run literacy summer schools and two had appointed literacy co-ordinators. One had begun to develop co-ordinated approaches to literacy across the curriculum. The LEA's contribution to these developments has been limited.

### **Support for numeracy**

56. The National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) has been appropriately introduced, but there are a number of weaknesses within the overall management of the strategy. These need urgent attention in order that momentum can be maintained.

57. Standards in numeracy in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 are below national averages. In Key Stage 1 the gap has widened over the last two years. The LEA target for Key Stage 2 for the year 2000 was almost reached in 1999, and a number of schools exceeded their targets. Data on which targets were set was incomplete, and targets lacked challenge.

58. As with literacy, strategic planning and management of the NNS have been constrained by the inability of the authority to appoint a suitable strategy manager. Currently, the adviser with responsibility for lifelong learning is managing the work, but is doing so along with a range of other demanding responsibilities. As a result, the LEA's strategy is not underpinned by coherent, detailed planning. There is no steering group to co-ordinate the management of the strategy, and opportunities for sharing good practice are underdeveloped. A numeracy centre has not yet been established. However, leading teachers have been identified and their expertise has been well-used in initial training.

59. Numeracy consultants are in place and have been appropriately deployed. They have regular meetings with their line manager but they have not been observed working in schools. Very little monitoring of the implementation of the strategy in schools has taken place so far.

60. Thirteen primary schools were visited where support for numeracy was inspected. In ten of the schools, standards were improving, while in the remaining three they were either static or fluctuating. Six of the schools had received support as part of the National Numeracy Project (NNP), and in those schools standards were going up. All the schools receiving intensive support were making progress.

61. Introductory training is generally well regarded, and consultants are reported to have provided satisfactory support in schools. Those schools visited which had been involved in the NNP report that the transition to the NNS has been seamless. Some numeracy co-ordinators had attended network meetings, but others were unaware of these. Communication by the LEA of its medium term strategy for numeracy is unsatisfactory.

62. The secondary schools have been reluctant to buy in LEA numeracy support. Heads of mathematics departments were invited to training on the NNS but only one from the three secondary schools visited had attended. A special school had found the training very helpful. Curriculum meetings, which take place termly, are valued. In one school, the SDA had advised on target setting and observed mathematics lessons. It was too early to judge the impact of a numeracy summer school.

### **Support for ICT**

63. Overall, the level and quality of support for ICT have been poor and the EDP, rightly, identifies developing the use of ICT to support learning and teaching as an objective. Although there are signs of improvement, there is still a long way to go. In the school survey, all aspects of LEA support for ICT were rated as less than satisfactory by both primary and secondary schools. In 11 of the 19 schools visited, the LEA's support was judged unsatisfactory.

64. After consulting schools, the LEA took the decision in 1997 not to appoint an ICT adviser, leaving schools to continue receiving support from Bedfordshire. Following the

launch of the National Grid for Learning (NGfL), an adviser was appointed. Curriculum support from Luton has, however, been slow to develop. Schools have sometimes received conflicting advice from the two LEAs, particularly over hardware and the support available for equipment which schools have purchased. The absence of any written curricular guidelines is also a continuing weakness.

65. There is considerable discontent over the LEA's approach to NGfL. Schools have received no feedback on their ICT development plans, and poor communication has resulted in unease over the allocation of NGfL funding. Many schools have delayed their New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training, in the hope that the picture in terms of support available will become clearer. Projects set up by the LEA have had mixed success. The LEA has recently seconded an advisory teacher to improve the support available to primary schools. Secondary schools have been reluctant to buy-in LEA advice and support.

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

66. The LEA has an effective system in place for identifying and supporting schools that are causing concern. Although not all schools are aware of the criteria by which schools are identified, these are clear and the support systems are working well in the primary sector. The LEA has a good track record in removing weak management, and five headteachers are currently seconded to support those schools where management difficulties have been identified. During 1998/9, the LEA also played a substantial role in helping remove three primary schools from special measures. It has also provided good additional support to the two schools still subject to special measures, and a third with serious weaknesses. In the school survey, support for schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses was rated as good.

67. Schools requiring additional support are discussed both at fortnightly meetings of SDAs and at monthly meetings of SIG. Progress is monitored by SIG, SMT and the Council's quality and performance sub-committee. In most cases where support has been provided, the quality of management and teaching has improved and standards have risen. In two primary schools, support had not been particularly effective. In secondary schools, there has been limited intervention and one school, where an OFSTED report had highlighted major concerns, has only recently been identified by the LEA as causing concern.

### **Support for governors**

68. Support for governors is good. The package of support and training available is highly valued and represents good value for money. Arrangements for briefing governors are effective. The system of having a representative of the director of education at governing body meetings is helpful, although does not always represent good use of staff time. Difficulties have been experienced in recruiting candidates for LEA-nominated governors and there are a number of vacancies.

### **Support for school management**

69. A coherent training strategy to support school managers is only just developing and the LEA is currently working to improve the presentation, coherence and accreditation of courses. Support for primary headteachers and deputies is varied, although rated by



schools as satisfactory. Regular meetings for primary deputy headteachers are particularly useful. The LEA also supports the national programmes for aspiring and serving headteachers, the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH).

70. The training needs of teachers are identified through questionnaires, scrutiny of inspection reports and feedback from SDAs. The LEA provides courses under the banner of the Luton Training Development Initiative. Most of these are targeted at primary schools. The LEA has received OFSTED accreditation to train schools in self-evaluation, and the take up of the LEA's first tranche of courses in the autumn was high. However, in the schools visited, there was little evidence that self-evaluation was having an impact.

71. Induction and mentoring arrangements for headteachers and deputies vary in quality, partly because of difficulties in identifying trained mentors. Two of the headteachers visited had found induction useful. Arrangements for headteacher appraisal also vary, and many headteachers have received no formal appraisal during the past year. Acting headteachers perform well but opportunities to discuss their professional development needs are inadequate.

72. Only a quarter of secondary schools have been willing to buy management support from the LEA, arguing that it lacks the necessary expertise, and preferring to use other providers. The LEA has recently tried to address this issue by working more closely with the Chilterns training group. LEA advisers have also recently begun playing a greater role in supporting secondary heads of departments through Luton curriculum network meetings. Support for newly qualified teachers is satisfactory.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **In order to improve support for school improvement the LEA should:**

- define new and more appropriate strategies, discussed and agreed with secondary schools to provide a more effective model for monitoring, support, challenge and intervention for these schools;
- develop a differentiated model for monitoring by SDAs with a much greater emphasis on data analysis in supporting better-performing schools;
- improve the consistency of the quality of monitoring by SDAs through better training and clearer guidance on producing records of visits;
- fill gaps in curriculum support through further liaison with other providers and development of a more systematic approach to sharing good practice between schools;
- continue to improve the performance data collected and provided for schools; and provide more guidance for schools on how this might be used to set more appropriate targets and monitor performance;
- improve strategic management to support literacy by the appointment of a full time literacy manager, re-establish a literacy steering group and carry out plans

to set up a literacy centre. In addition, schools should be given clear guidance on how to incorporate other literacy strategies into the NLS and how to integrate these into practice;

- improve strategic management to support numeracy by the appointment of a full time numeracy manager, establishing a detailed numeracy plan, setting up a numeracy steering group and carrying out plans to set up a numeracy centre;
- set a tight timescale to support ICT by producing a strategy to improve the overall support for ICT in schools; and improve communication with schools regarding NGfL and NOF training;
- make schools more aware of the approaches and criteria used to identify schools causing concern;
- improve support for new headteachers (including acting headteachers) to support school management by ensuring that all headteachers are allocated a mentor and given the opportunity to participate in an extended period of induction.

## **SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

### **Corporate Planning**

73. The Council has identified activities and commitments for the next four years and produced a broad statement of its values and objectives. Although it is committed to education as its number one priority, it has not translated this commitment into a corporate plan setting out priorities in sufficient detail to provide an effective framework for service planning and resource allocation. This lack of a corporate policy constrains the borough's budget setting process, and the development of Best Value planning. It also means that the education directorate's strategic planning is not formally integrated into the Council's corporate planning and financial strategy. Although there is a strategic plan for education setting out goals and priorities, nothing similar exists for the other areas of the Council.

74. Members receive appropriately detailed advice and information to help them make informed decisions. The traditional committee structure does not facilitate cross-departmental strategic planning or member cross-committee working, encouraging each committee to focus on its own work. Members have provided good support for the LEA's policy of promoting and encouraging inclusive education.

75. There are a number of weaknesses in the LEA's detailed strategic planning, referred to elsewhere in this report. These include a lack of focus in the EDP, a lack of overall strategies for literacy, numeracy and ICT, a lack of consistent quality in monitoring schools, and weaknesses in target setting and in challenging schools to improve. Strategic planning for SEN and for support to pupils from minority ethnic heritages is much clearer. Service plans are well structured and linked to the overall departmental strategy, although they are weakened by not being underpinned by performance and management data. The LEA recognises this and intends that the coming year's plans should be more robust.

76. Strategies for multi-agency working are still developing. Inter-agency planning at a strategic level is good, but follow-up action to support individual pupils with behavioural difficulties is sometimes inadequate. Links with social services to support Looked-after children are good. Specific initiatives like the Early Years and Childcare Partnership have also been effective. The LEA has established links with a wide range of partners. There are strong links with local colleges, the local university, the local education business partnership, the careers service and health agencies and authorities. Some partners also contribute to the workings of the authority through participation in the partnership forum. The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) provides a helpful forum for discussion on issues relating to equality.

77. The education directorate has produced and consulted on a useful four year plan, which makes reference to the EDP and other statutory plans. It has also produced a service action plan for 1999-2000, which focuses on implementation of the EDP, the behaviour support plan (BSP), EMTAG, equal opportunities and other strategies and identifies key tasks.

78. The LEA has too many consultative groups and working parties, and considerable scope for rationalisation. Task groups often have no clear timeline, briefs are not always clear and outcomes are not always clearly communicated. The groups also make excessive demands on headteacher and officer time.

79. Most primary schools visited are content with their relationship with the LEA, and feel that the LEA achieves the right balance between involvement, information, consultation, autonomy and intervention. They also feel that the partnership between schools and the LEA is effective and that their views are listened to. Secondary schools are far less content, and the lack of an appropriate working partnership with the secondary sector is a major weakness.

### **Support for school infrastructure**

80. Luton offers a wide range of management support services to schools, covering personnel, finance, catering, cleaning and building, and grounds maintenance. Funding for these services is delegated to schools as required by the fair funding legislation. Each service is subject to a written service level agreement, although often pricing does not accurately reflect the actual cost of delivery to schools.

81. The education personnel unit provides a good quality, comprehensive personnel service to schools. In particular, it supports schools through the process of re-organisation, gives advice on competency issues, and supports under-performing staff to move on. Most schools have high regard for this advice and support. Some schools have found difficulty in recruiting suitably experienced and qualified staff, particularly in senior posts. These recruitment difficulties are recognised in the EDP, and the LEA has received a grant through the Standards Fund to help develop a recruitment strategy. The co-ordinated approach is starting to show signs of success. The LEA has already helped to reduce the number of vacancies in schools, has initiated pooling arrangements, and assisted recruitment in some shortage subjects.

82. The LMS finance unit provides high quality advice and guidance on the management of school budgets. It supplies financial and budget information, monitors school expenditure, and works constructively with schools that are likely to incur a deficit. The unit has developed satisfactory recovery plans with five schools that have deficit budgets, and is providing additional support with financial planning to seven others with projected deficits. The internal audit service also provides a sound service. Payroll and creditor services have been unsatisfactory, with instances of inaccuracies and coding errors. Schools report that these services have improved in the last year.

83. The LEA has been slow to exploit the strategic development of ICT networks to assist schools. Research has not been conducted into schools' needs, and the LEA has shown little capacity to give a lead to schools on how, for example, the internet might be used to enhance access to, and dissemination of, information.

84. Some progress has been made. The installation of the Luton wide area network (WAN) was successfully completed in December. This enables electronic transfer of management and administrative information between schools, the LEA and partners. Eventually, schools will be able to use the WAN to obtain filtered access to the internet and a wide range of other educational services. Some schools are already making effective use of the system, although others have yet to recognise its value.

85. Schools report varied support from building and property services. Schools visited reported experiences ranging from slow responses to repeated requests for maintenance

work to high standards in the way major building projects were conducted and completed. In the school survey, primary schools rated property and building services between poor and satisfactory. Secondary schools rated the services between poor and very poor. The property department has been responsible for organising the condition surveys required as part of the Asset Management Plan (AMP). These surveys have been carried out, but schools have yet to see the results.

86. The LEA, through the housing department, provides a client service for both cleaning and grounds maintenance. Council direct service organisations offer contractor services. The school and welfare catering division of the education directorate provides school meals under contract. The cost of all these services has been fully delegated to schools from April 2000.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve strategic management the LEA should:**

- produce a corporate plan to improve links between education and other directorates;
- improve communication and consultation with schools on strategic matters, including the number and terms of reference of consultative groups. New ways should be explored to establish partnerships with secondary schools;
- improve strategic approaches to the development of ICT systems to ensure that best use is made of what has been installed, to build the confidence of schools in the coherence of plans for the future.

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

### **Strategy**

87. Luton has a clear strategy for the management of Special Education Needs (SEN). The EDP and other policy documents define the LEA's intention to develop inclusive provision and provide support for individual learners, especially those with SEN in mainstream schools. The LEA is seeking to reduce the number of statements and provide training for teachers on positive behaviour management. A strong commitment from LEA officers and members is driving these developments. In many respects the LEA has been successful in implementing its strategy. The number of statements has reduced, and there has been a substantial reduction in the number of in-borough special school placements, and a drop in the number of pupils attending expensive out-of-borough independent special schools. This has allowed funding to be added to mainstream school budgets to support pupils with more complex learning difficulties. Schools are not yet clear about the way in which the change will be managed incrementally, and are concerned that preparation and training for teachers is not sufficiently in place. In a small number of schools, building adaptations are needed to improve access for pupils, but these have not taken place.

88. Part of the LEA strategy is the reorganisation of special schools to cater for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. The intention is to create primary and secondary special schools. The proposals have been subject to detailed consultation and have been approved by the Secretary of State. An officer for special school reorganisation has recently been appointed. Heads of special schools have been fully involved in discussion of the planned developments. The special schools support the reorganisation proposals, although there is some uncertainty regarding their readiness to teach pupils with complex and severe learning difficulties, and their possible outreach role in supporting mainstream schools.

### **Statutory responsibilities**

89. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its statutory responsibilities with regard to SEN. For example, the rate of the completion of draft statements within 18 weeks is now much improved. Nearly three-quarters of statutory assessments are completed on time. Considerable progress has also been made in dealing with a backlog of assessments.

90. Termly school consultation meetings (SCMs) provide good opportunities to discuss and review the needs of individual pupils. A moderation group, with headteacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) representation, gives good advice on appropriate deployment of resources. A statutory provision and assessment group makes appropriate recommendations on pupil placements.

91. Parents are well informed about their rights. A clear and helpful folder has been produced which explains the assessment process, the time-scale involved and the key personnel who can provide information about different services and provision.

### **SEN functions and value for money**

92. The implementation of the LEA's strategy for SEN has brought expenditure under control, and is beginning to redistribute funds to support the inclusion policy. The LEA has

made good progress in this area and is providing value for money. Comparative information on spending on SEN indicates that Luton spends below average for all unitary authorities, and below average on the educational psychology service. Spending remains high on out-of-borough special schools to support pupils with severe learning difficulties.

93. The allocation of funding to schools to support pupils with SEN is transparent and is clearly understood by schools. Schools receive guidance that outlines how they should deploy delegated funds. SDAs are required to check that schools spend their funds appropriately, although none of the schools visited were aware of this and no monitoring had taken place.

94. The support provided for SENCOs is well regarded by schools. The LEA has established networks to share good practice and informs SENCOs of the budget allocated to their schools for SEN. Guidance on the Code of Practice is generally helpful.

95. Educational psychologists provide good support, although in four of the schools visited, long term illness had affected the range of support offered. The limited staffing of this service means that there is no contingency to fill gaps when they occur. The learning support service provides good follow up on issues identified at SCMs and has provided some useful in-service training. A small number of schools complained that the service was difficult to contact. Support from the services for pupils who are hearing and visually impaired has been consistently good. The LEA has recently addressed gaps in specialist provision, for example to support pupils with autism.

96. The adviser with responsibility for SEN is the SDA for the special schools and generally provides good advice and guidance.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve support for pupils with SEN the LEA should:**

- make explicit plans to develop support for pupils with SEN and layout clearly the steps to be taken to achieve greater inclusion and communicate them to schools;
- give appropriate support to special school staff in managing the transitional phase of special school re-organisation, so that they are clear about their future roles;
- improve monitoring of provision for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools to ensure that funding is used effectively.

## **SECTION 5: ACCESS**

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

97. The School Organisation Committee (SOC) agreed the School Organisation Plan in September 1999. There are currently 11 per cent surplus places in primary schools and these are projected to rise to 16 per cent by 2004. The current 6.5 per cent of surplus places in secondary schools is projected to fall to less than two per cent over the same period. The plan identifies those areas of the town where the largest projected surpluses exist and need to be removed. The LEA class size plan has been approved and progress is being made with its implementation.

98. The LEA has already successfully implemented several mergers of infant and junior schools to improve standards and remove surplus places. It is currently completing the suitability and sufficiency survey as part of the Asset Management Plan (AMP). This will allow it to review school capacity numbers, and to set about removing remaining surplus places to ensure best use of resources.

99. Preparation of the AMP has been overseen by a working group, which includes representatives from all the school sectors. The condition survey stage of the plan was due to be completed by December 1999, but has fallen behind schedule. The LEA has not been as successful as it had hoped with applications for funding from the New Deal for Schools, but a bid for round four has been prepared, and those schools to be included have been informed. Failure to report back to schools on the results of the condition survey has meant that the process of decision making has lacked transparency.

### **Admissions**

100. Although admissions arrangements are broadly effective, those for the admission of four and five-year-olds into primary schools are confused and lacking in coherence. As a result, schools are required to adjust the allocation of children, teachers and support staff to classes on a termly basis. The LEA is currently consulting on a proposal to co-ordinate the administration of infant admissions centrally. Admissions appeals in relation to primary education have increased from 49 in 1997/98 to 65 in 1998/99, and look set to rise again in the current year.

101. In April 2000, the LEA launched an initiative called Flying Start, to help raise achievement in Early Years. The scheme will offer full time provision for all four-year-olds and part-time provision for all three-year-olds. It is planned to begin in eight schools in 2000/01 and extend across the borough in subsequent years. The extension of this programme is intended to reduce many anomalies in admission arrangements in infant and primary schools. The LEA has also established an admissions forum to co-ordinate admissions to local schools. This involves all local admissions authorities, parents and governors, as well as headteachers and trade union representatives.

102. Transfer between infant and junior schools at the end of Key Stage 1 runs smoothly and most transfers from junior to high schools are administered efficiently. The number of appeals in relation to places at the county high schools has risen from nine in 1997/98 to 47 in 1998/99. A further 196 appeals were heard in relation to places at the five voluntary aided and foundation schools, of which 42 were allowed. The number of appeals is rising



because of the varying popularity of high schools. Five to six per cent of children transfer out of Luton schools at the end of Year 6 (age 11) and a further number transfer to middle schools in neighbouring LEAs at the end of Year 4. The LEA has commissioned some useful research into this pupil movement.

### **Provision of education out of school**

103. Provision for pupils out of school is improving, but is not satisfactory. The LEA has taken clear actions over the last three years to reduce considerably the number of children out of school, especially at secondary level. Nevertheless, the overall provision lacks cohesion and lines of management and accountability are unclear. A PRU has recently been established for pupils in Key Stage 4, and a panel including headteacher representation has been established to manage its admissions. At the time of the inspection, the unit was being expected to admit pupils who have widely varying needs, and staff were unprepared for the volatile nature of the pupil population. Part time provision at the unit is inadequate. The status of this provision is unclear and management responsibilities have not been properly defined. The LEA's aim for 20-25 hours of tuition for all pupils by 2001 looks unlikely to be achieved.

104. Appropriate provision for Key Stages 1 and 2 is being developed at a new unit based in a primary school. This arrangement is flexible, and pupils attend for a limited period of time. Pupils remain on the roll of their mainstream school and receive part time support from staff in the unit. This is a positive and helpful development.

105. Co-ordination of home tutors is poorly developed. Contact between tutors and the pupil referral unit are informal, although some effective use is being made of the unit's resources.

### **Attendance**

106. The education welfare service provides good, well focused and effective support to primary schools. Support to secondary schools is less effective, although special schools indicated that the quality of support had recently improved.

107. In schools serving areas with a high proportion of minority ethnic pupils, rates of attendance and unauthorised absence are affected by parents taking children away on extended holidays abroad. The LEA has produced helpful guidance material and draft letters to assist schools in addressing this issue. It has also begun discussions with community leaders in recognition that a wider collaborative approach is needed.

108. Guidance on the procedures to be followed by schools in cases where pupils are removed from registers is weak. The LEA was able to identify the whereabouts of named pupils that had recently left various schools. Nevertheless, schools themselves were unclear about what action to take when a pupil left, including whether to inform the LEA.

### **Behaviour support**

109. Permanent exclusions have fallen sharply over the last three years and are now well below the national average. There is, however, a lack of data on fixed term exclusions and

it is unclear how many pupils with behaviour problems also have other special educational needs. A panel, with headteacher representation, advises on excluded pupil placements.

110. Support for pupils with behavioural difficulties is often ineffective. The Behaviour Support Plan appropriately sets out the support available to schools in the context of promoting inclusion, and reducing the number of pupils who need special school placements. Although the plan's proposals are feasible, the strategies for their implementation are too vague. The service plan of the behaviour and tuition service has appropriate priorities and is more specific.

111. Behaviour support in Luton appears expensive when compared to national averages and similar LEAs. However, Luton has no special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and only occasional use of out-borough specialist provision. This means that higher levels of support are required in mainstream schools.

112. The effectiveness of the behaviour support team is mixed. In five schools, support for individual pupils and help in constructing and implementing a whole school behaviour policy had been good. In one, counselling and anger management support had been effective. The other schools visited were critical of the support given to pupils with the most severe problems. Learning support assistants and class teachers felt ill-equipped to deal with these pupils. In three schools, liaison between services supporting individual pupils was inadequate.

113. Fourteen schools have received money from the LEA to pilot approaches to improving behaviour. At the time of the inspection, little guidance had been provided on how the money might be used, and plans for sharing good practice were still being developed.

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

114. Apart from concerns regarding the monitoring of pupils' removal from registers (see paragraph 106 to 108, the LEA meets statutory requirements in relation to child protection and welfare. A Health and Safety at Work document meets statutory requirements relating to this area, with a nominated officer having responsibility for implementation and monitoring. Schools receive positive and supportive responses when they invite visits by the health and safety officer. However, there is a general lack of awareness of any written guidance on aspects of safety relating to specific curriculum areas, offsite or hazardous activities, or substances which may be harmful to health.

### **Looked-after children**

115. The LEA is working well with the social services department both at a strategic and at a practical level to raise achievement for Looked-after children. All of these pupils are discussed at SCMs and detailed data sheets have been piloted with schools to gather information about progress. The pupils receive priority consideration if they are referred to the moderation group. Multi-agency training is being organised to raise awareness amongst teachers and social workers with regard to their differing roles. Additional forms of inter-agency communication are planned, which include newsletters. There are no Looked-after children who are permanently excluded.

## **Ethnic minority children**

116. Overall support to minority ethnic pupils has been satisfactory, although changes to management arrangements have resulted in limited progress recently. Strategic planning for support to minority ethnic pupils is good. Data on the achievement of pupils from different minority groups has improved over the last year. Priorities within the current EMTAG sensibly target groups where there is underachievement. Recent appointments to the central team have appropriately prioritised support for Afro-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils, whose underachievement is greatest.

117. The LEA currently does not monitor how schools use their EMTAG allocations. Proposals for the re-allocation of funding to meet new EMTAG requirements were being consulted on during the inspection weeks. The LEA might have shown more leadership in defining its preferred options to schools, although this was addressed in later discussions

118. Central support has reduced over the past few months. Few training opportunities have been provided for teachers, and the good resources held in the multi-cultural centre have been unavailable. Meetings for language co-ordinators have been maintained and there has been some good training for support teachers on the NLS.

119. Although a working party has been established to prepare guidance on racial issues, developments in this area have been slow. This is in part due to difficulties in the appointment of an officer with responsibility for equal opportunities. An external consultant has drafted an equal opportunities policy, and there has been a limited amount of work in ten schools. Only one of the schools visited was aware of the LEA's work in this area. The LEA does not monitor racist incidents, but has begun consulting in response to the outcomes of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry.

120. The Traveller education service was formed in April 1999. It is well managed and well regarded by schools. Priorities are clear, and focus on raising attainment and improving attendance. The service is well informed and has set targets for attainment and attendance for pupils in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. Deployment is appropriate and a service level agreement is being developed with schools. Relationships with other Council departments are good.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve access the LEA should:**

- increase the transparency of decision making on capital funding by accelerating the preparation of the AMP and tell schools the outcome of the condition surveys;
- develop clear policy on admissions to the pupil referral unit to improve provision for pupils educated out of school, and clarify the role of the home tuition service and define its management structure;
- give schools clear guidance on the circumstances under which children may be removed from registers, and the procedures to be followed. A database of all

such pupils should be established and updated regularly to ensure that destinations of pupils are known;

- include behaviour support in strategic planning for inclusion; provide training for schools to develop expertise to deal with pupils with severe problems and give more leadership to schools in setting up projects and managing them;
- take steps to ensure that schools have up-to-date written guidance on aspects of safety in curriculum areas, on outdoor and hazardous activities and on control of substances harmful to health;
- provide guidance to schools on appropriate ways to deploy the EMTAG, and improve monitoring to ensure that schools are using the funding appropriately. Additional advice and training should be given to schools on setting targets for pupils from minority ethnic groups;
- monitor racist incidents in schools.

## **APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

In order to improve the strategy for school improvement:

- review the EDP to tighten the focus of the priorities; take account of the more detailed data now available; address weaknesses in sequencing of actions and success criteria; and better address the needs of secondary schools;
- introduce more-rigorous systems of performance management which are consistent with the principles of Best Value and sufficiently transparent to allow stakeholders to obtain an informed view of service quality.

### ***In order to improve support for school improvement the LEA should:***

- define new and more appropriate strategies, discussed and agreed with secondary schools, to provide a more effective model for monitoring, support, challenge and intervention for these schools;
- develop a differentiated model for monitoring by SDAs, with a much greater emphasis on data analysis in supporting better-performing schools;
- improve the consistency of the quality of monitoring by SDAs through better training and clearer guidance on producing records of visits;
- fill gaps in curriculum support through further liaison with other providers and development of a more systematic approach to sharing good practice between schools;
- continue to improve the performance data collected and provided for schools; and provide guidance for schools on how this might be used to set more appropriate targets and monitor performance;
- improve strategic management to support literacy by the appointment of a full time literacy manager, re-establish a literacy steering group and carry out plans to set up a literacy centre. In addition, schools should be given clear guidance on how to incorporate other literacy strategies into the NLS and how to integrate these into practice;
- improve strategic management to support numeracy by the appointment of a full time numeracy manager, establishing a detailed numeracy plan, setting-up a numeracy steering group and carrying out plans to set up a numeracy centre;
- set a tight time scale to support ICT by producing a strategy to improve the overall support for ICT in schools; and improve communication with schools regarding NGfL and NOF training;

- make schools more aware of the approaches and criteria used to identify schools causing concern;
- improve support for new headteachers (including acting headteachers) to support school management by ensuring that all headteachers are allocated a mentor and given the opportunity to participate in an extended period of induction.

***In order to improve strategic management the LEA should:***

- produce a corporate plan to improve links between education and other directorates;
- improve communication and consultation with schools on strategic matters, including the number and terms of reference of consultative groups. New ways should be explored to establish partnerships with secondary schools;
- improve the strategic approaches to the development of ICT systems to ensure that best use is made of what has been installed, to build the confidence of schools in the coherence of plans for the future.

***In order to improve support for pupils with SEN the LEA should:***

- make explicit plans to develop support for pupils with SEN and layout clearly the steps to be taken to achieve greater inclusion and communicate them to schools;
- give appropriate support to special school staff in managing the transitional phase of special school re-organisation, so that they are clear about their future roles;
- improve monitoring of provision for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools to ensure that funding is used effectively.

***In order to improve access the LEA should:***

- increase the transparency of decision making on capital funding by accelerating the preparation of the AMP and tell schools the outcome of the condition surveys;
- develop a clear policy on admissions to the pupil referral unit to improve provision for pupils educated out of school, and clarify the role of the home tuition service and define its management structure;
- give schools clear guidance on the circumstances under which children may be removed from registers, and the procedures to be followed. A database of all such pupils should be established and updated regularly to ensure that destinations of pupils are known;
- include behaviour support in strategic planning for inclusion; provide training for schools to develop expertise to deal with pupils with severe problems; and give more leadership to schools in setting up projects and managing them;

- take steps to ensure that schools have up-to-date written guidance on aspects of safety in curriculum areas, on outdoor and hazardous activities and on control of substances harmful to health;
- provide guidance to schools on appropriate ways to deploy the EMTAG, and improve monitoring to ensure that schools are using the funding appropriately. Additional advice and training should be given to schools on setting targets for pupils from minority ethnic groups;
- monitor racist incidents in schools.

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