



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF
LEICESTER CITY
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

MAY 2001

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

CONTENTS	PARAGRAPHS
INTRODUCTION	1-2
COMMENTARY	3-11
SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	
Context	12-14
Performance of schools	15-22
Council and education department structure	23-28
Funding	29-32
The Education Development Plan	33-41
Allocation of resources to priorities	42
Structures for achieving Best Value	43-49
Recommendations	
SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	
Monitoring, challenge, support and intervention	50-58
Performance data	59-62
Support for literacy	63-66
Support for numeracy	67-70
Support for information and communication technology in the curriculum	71-74
Support for schools causing concern	75-79
Support for school management	80-88
Support for governors	89-93
Recommendations	
SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	
Corporate planning	94-101
Liaison with other agencies	102-104
Management support services	105-109
Recommendations	
SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION	
The LEA's Strategy for Special Educational Needs	110-113
Statutory obligations	114-116
Support for school improvement	117-120
Recommendations	

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The Supply of school places	121
Admissions	122
Property management	123-124
Support for pupils educated otherwise than at school	125-130
Children in public care	131
Support to improve behaviour in school	132-134
Support for attendance	135-139
Ethnic minority children	140-143
Measures to combat racism	144-146
Measures to combat social exclusion	147-149
Recommendations	

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. This report details the findings of a short inspection conducted under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the progress made in responding to the findings and recommendations of the first inspection report, which was published in July 1999. The inspection also evaluated progress on implementing and revising the Educational Development Plan and comments on other developments, which have taken place since the original inspection. This inspection takes account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.

2. A small team of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in conjunction with the Audit Commission conducted the inspection. The inspection involved scrutinising documentation, interviewing elected members, the chief executive and senior officers. Discussions were also held with members of the partnership board appointed by the Secretary of State following the first inspection and officers of the school development support agency (SDSA), a company limited by guarantee, funded by the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE). Discussions were also held with the LEA's partners, groups of headteachers and teachers and governors of schools. A questionnaire on LEA support was sent to all schools to which 68 per cent responded. Account was also taken of evidence about the work of the LEA from other divisions within OFSTED, and from evidence gathered by HMI inspecting the Education Action Zone (EAZ).

COMMENTARY

3. The OFSTED report of July 1999 found Leicester City LEA to be in a parlous state. There were few strengths and many weaknesses, particularly in the discharge of functions for school improvement. Strategic management was largely ineffective, and the report indicated that neither schools nor the inspection team had confidence that the LEA as constituted could deliver consistently good support. Few areas of the LEA's work escaped criticism; aspects of planning and support for children with special needs and for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds were reported to be inadequate and along with other areas of access gave cause for concern.

4. Leicester City has made considerable progress since the first inspection. There has been satisfactory progress on most of the recommendations in the report. The implementation of the priorities within the 1999 Education Development Plan (EDP) has been more variable, although it has improved recently. Nevertheless, weaknesses still remain. In some cases this is because there has been insufficient time to remedy them since the first inspection; in others, progress has been slow or plans are in place but have not yet been implemented.

5. Crucially, there has been a significant improvement in the strategic capacity of the LEA, and strategic management is now sound. This has been hard won and owes much to the work of the partnership board, and in particular to the leadership of its chair. A significant factor has been the high quality of leadership provided by the new director of education, who has prioritised what needs to be done and accelerated change. Elected members have made their commitment to education explicit. Spending on education has risen and the 'Leicester Pledge' commits the council to increased spending for the next three years, against a background of declining resources. There is cross-party agreement on education and decision-making has been transparent, quick and effective. Partnership with schools has improved. There is growing confidence in schools in the leadership of the LEA. A shared agenda, with raising standards at its heart, is emerging.

6. Overall, strengths outweigh weaknesses. A large proportion of the functions of the LEA are now performed satisfactorily, and the following are performed well:

- support to schools in the use of performance data;
- support to schools causing concern;
- decision making on education by elected members and the advice they are given by officers;
- the leadership given by senior officers;
- support to literacy;
- support to numeracy in primary schools;
- financial services; and
- personnel services.

7. The following functions remain unsatisfactory:

- strategic planning for special educational needs (SEN);
- building partnerships with local communities;

- liaison with social services at a school level;
- support for pupils educated otherwise than at school;
- measures to combat racism;
- ICT in the curriculum;
- payroll services; and
- property services.

8. The LEA has begun to put measures in place to ensure that priorities for school improvement are effectively implemented. Roles and responsibilities have been clarified. The revised EDP is a marked improvement on its predecessor and links well to other initiatives designed to raise standards. Monitoring and evaluation have been strengthened. Criteria for identifying, challenging and intervening in schools are now explicit and are understood by them. Structural and management change has been undertaken in key services to support school improvement, which have resulted in officers challenging schools more effectively and supporting school management better. Target setting is sound and has improved since the first inspection, owing to the better and more comprehensive analysis of performance and contextual data and its rigorous application.

9. Systems and structures are now in place, which are leading to improvement in the consistency of service delivery. Satisfactory progress has been made in putting in place performance management and staff appraisal. Some key plans and performance targets are incomplete, but there are signs that the work already undertaken is having a positive impact on service standards. The school development support agency (SDSA), in the short time it has been in place has begun accelerated reviews of five services using Best Value principles, and although at a very early stage, there are signs of a growing partnership between the LEA, the SDSA and schools.

10. Weaknesses remain in several areas, which reduce the LEA's capacity to combat social exclusion. A satisfactory start has been made to planning for pupils looked after by the local authority. Support for attendance and support for minority ethnic pupils are now satisfactory. However, provision for pupils educated other than at school, monitoring of racist incidents, and the strategy for inclusion of pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory.

11. The LEA has improved, and it has the professional leadership and the political will to continue to improve. The progress made to date has been considerable but it is not yet sufficient, and in places it is fragile. Appropriate plans and systems are in place, but there has been insufficient time for them to have their full effect.

SECTION ONE: STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

12. There has been little change in the socio-economic context of the LEA since the first inspection in 1999. Leicester City Council continues to serve a culturally diverse population with relatively high levels of disadvantage.

13. At the time of the first inspection the LEA had a high number of surplus places particularly in the secondary sector, and had received approval from the Secretary of State to reorganise its secondary provision. Fifteen 11-16 secondary schools have been reduced to 12 and six 11-18 secondary schools have been reduced to four. This has resulted in a reduction of 3,230 surplus places in the secondary sector. The number of primary schools remains at 87. There remain ten special schools including a school that provides for pupils in hospital. In addition there is an assessment centre attached to an infant school and a diagnostic nursery unit.

14. Sixteen schools in the south-west part of the city are involved in the Education Action Zone (EAZ) established in 1998, and all the secondary schools are involved in the Excellence in Cities initiative which began in schools in September 2000 following acceptance of the bid in July 2000. The city has bid for two additional small EAZs, which will involve a further 18 schools. Since the first inspection there are now three Beacon schools, four specialist colleges and a training school.

Performance of schools

15. In National Curriculum (NC) assessments and at GCSE there has been some improvement in the performance of schools since the first inspection. Performance overall in 2000 remains below the national average for the end of each key stage.

16. In 2000 the percentage of seven-year-olds achieving levels 2 or above in the NC test results is below the national averages, but overall since 1998 it has increased at above the national rate. The percentage of 11-year-olds achieving levels 4 or above in the NC tests in English and mathematics is well below the national average and in science it is below. Nevertheless, with the exception of English, where improvement is in line with national rate, performance has improved faster than nationally.

17. In 2000 the percentage of 14-year-olds achieving levels 5 and above in the NC tests is below the national averages. There has been some fluctuation in performance at GCSE since 1998. In 1999 results rose in all categories. However, in 2000 they fell again and overall they are well below the national average at 5 or more A*-C and below in all other categories. The average points score rose by 7 percentage points from 1995 to 1999; however, it fell by 3.8 points in 2000.

18. OFSTED's analysis of performance data shows that pupils in the city's schools make progress between Key Stage 1 and 2 at well above the national rate and between Key Stage 2 and 3 and Key Stage 3 and 4 above the national rate.

19. OFSTED inspection evidence shows that the percentage of primary schools judged to be 'very good' or 'good' is below average for similar LEAs and well below the national average. The percentage of secondary schools in these categories is broadly in line with similar LEAs but below the national average. However, the percentage of primary schools that have improved since the first inspection was higher in Leicester than nationally and in similar LEAs. Only six secondary schools have been inspected for a second time. This is too small a sample on which to judge trends.

20. At the time of the first inspection 14 of the city's schools were deemed to have serious weaknesses and a further 14 required special measures. The LEA is successfully tackling this issue. Now, only one school requires special measures although seven remain with serious weaknesses.

21. Attendance rates in primary schools (92.5 per cent) are below levels in similar LEAs and well below national levels. Although there was some improvement from 1998 to 1999, it was below similar LEAs and nationally. Attendance in secondary schools in 1999 (90.1 per cent) was also lower than in similar LEAs and nationally. Improvements from 1998 were marginal and below the rate in similar LEAs and nationally.

22. Permanent exclusions in primary schools have remained slightly above the rate in similar LEAs and nationally. In secondary schools they have reduced at well above the national rate and are below similar LEAs but well above the national level.

Council and education department structure

23. Since the first inspection there have been significant changes to the political management arrangements in the city. Following intervention by the Secretary of State, the Leicester City partnership board was established in Spring 2000, and the SDSA was established in October 2000. The management structure of the education department has been reorganised since the appointment of the new director in May 2000.

24. In response to the modernising agenda for local government, a cabinet is in place with a lead member for education and lifelong learning. A cross-party scrutiny committee is in place, along with mechanisms for updating the leader and key elected members on educational issues. Strategy and policy development is considered by the cabinet lead for education and the scrutiny cross-party spokespersons, prior to leader's briefings and submission to the cabinet.

25. The Leicester City partnership board includes the chair, a well-known academic, elected members of the city council, including the leader, the director of education, representatives from schools and further education in the city and external representatives. The board defines its role as:

- monitoring the work of the education department, in particular the implementation of the consultants' report (undertaken at the request of the

Secretary of State following the first inspection), the OFSTED action plan and the EDP;

- providing wise counsel and critical friendship to the education department and the LEA;
- scope, support and evaluate the work of the SDSA and development groups; and
- providing specific advice in areas where it has competence and the LEA has a need.

26. There are regular meetings between the chief executive and the chair of the partnership board and presentations to the director's board. These provide opportunities for corporate action to take place. For example, the relocation of lifelong learning and community development into education, accelerated reviews of services to schools which are corporately managed and joint work in a variety of areas such as looked after children and asylum seekers.

27. A key recommendation by consultants was that schools would benefit from assistance to become more assertive and confident in their purchase of services from the LEA and any external providers, and in expectations of themselves. The SDSA has been established for two years, funded by the DfEE at £250,000 per year. Its role is to be an advocate and catalyst for school improvement and to promote high standards of teaching and learning in the city. Three members of the partnership board, the chair, the director of education and a headteacher of a Leicester school have been appointed as directors of the SDSA. In the first instance the SDSA's priorities are to:

- work with schools and school development groups to help them identify their needs, and aspirations, share good practice and build the capacity of schools to improve; and
- broker and quality assure services and stimulate the LEA services to be more effective.

28. Education is one of seven directorates, with a director who reports to the chief executive. Three assistant directors are responsible respectively for policy and resources, standards and effectiveness and lifelong learning. Lifelong learning and community development has been appropriately consolidated into education (with the transfer of staff from arts and leisure) following a review by external consultants in April 2000. The head of standards and effectiveness was appointed at the beginning of September 2000; a consultant strategy adviser has been employed until senior appointments have been made. A key change since the first inspection has been the restructuring of the inspection and advice service within the new standards and effectiveness division. A head of standards manages standards inspectors, a school assessment and data officer and the ethnic minority achievement support team. A head of school effectiveness manages support for literacy, numeracy, curriculum advisers and Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiatives. These senior posts have been advertised recently. Pupil and student support has been brought into the standard and effectiveness division. An initiatives group includes representatives of the SDSA, EAZ and EiC.

Funding

29. Leicester's education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) per pupil in 2000/01 was higher than the national average and averages for similar LEAs (unitary authorities and statistical neighbours).

30. In 1997 education spend was only 97.2 per cent of SSA. This has increased steadily to 99.7 per cent in 2000 and will be one hundred and one per cent in 2001/02. The future funding increases in schools budgets of four per cent in real terms over the next three years is explicit in the 'Leicester Pledge'. This is being achieved through reviews and cuts in other services.

31. Delegated funding is £2,338 per pupil. This is below average for similar LEAs of £2,446 and reflects delegation of 81.2 per cent compared to the average of 84.4 per cent. There are plans to increase delegation in 2001/02 to over 85 per cent, in line with the DfEE target, mainly through the delegation of funding for pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Centrally retained expenditure on SEN is well above similar LEAs and national averages at £214 per pupil, compared to £147 and £157 respectively.

32. The LEA has increased its own capital spend on education and secured considerable New Deal funding. The main focus is the secondary school programme of £26m over four years on improvements and implementing the recent reorganisation.

The Educational Development Plan

33. The first inspection criticised the EDP for being insufficiently focused on issues specific to Leicester. These included weaknesses in teaching, management and governance and insufficient recognition of the ethnic diversity of the population in strategic planning. The partnership between the LEA and the schools had not been clearly articulated and understood. In addition there was:

- a lack of clarity in the target setting process;
- insufficient information on the achievement of different groups of pupils, in particular ethnic groups;
- generality in the activities related to under-performance, in particular to the way schools would be challenged and intervention would take place in schools causing concern; and
- a lack of costing for the plan.

34. As a result of these deficiencies the report recommended that partnership with schools needed to improve through the agreement with schools of the respective responsibilities of the officers, members and schools. It also recommended that consultation should involve schools more directly at an early stage in policy formation.

35. While satisfactory progress has been made on addressing almost all these weaknesses, it was initially constrained by a lack of strategic coherence. There had been monitoring of the original EDP, but little work had taken place to evaluate the impact of the actions using the success criteria within the plan. Recommendations set by OFSTED, by consultants and the DfEE following the OFSTED inspection had not been placed into a coherent strategic overview for school improvement. In September 2000, following the reorganisation of the Department and the appointment of key senior staff a report on progress on the implementation of the EDP was produced. This

evaluation has been used as the basis for the revised EDP, which incorporates the recommendations within the OFSTED action plan; the priorities set by the consultants and the DfEE.

36. The evaluation conducted by the LEA in summer 2000 on the progress made in implementing the 1999 EDP was unequivocal.

- Progress on improving teaching and learning had been unsatisfactory.
- Progress on literacy and numeracy had been satisfactory with some good features.
- Progress on raising standards in ICT had been poor.
- Improving the achievement of pupils with SEN had been unsatisfactory overall.
- Improvements to the quality of leadership and management had been satisfactory.
- The identification, monitoring and support to schools causing concern had been good.
- Participation and promotion of inclusion had been satisfactory overall.

37. The revised EDP is a significant improvement. It has the same priorities as the first, but the audit of performance and contextual data is more comprehensive and activities are better focused on the needs of schools. In general, activities are clear and designed to lead to improvement. They do, in addition, cover the recommendations from the first inspection. There are strengths, for example in literacy and numeracy. However, in ICT too little attention is paid to weaknesses in curricular support and the identification and targeting of the weakest schools, and the needs of minority ethnic pupils are insufficiently considered across the priorities. The revised EDP incorporates other initiatives, which are at an early stage of development, for example EiC and the EAZ. Links with these initiatives are explicit; their impact on targets is considered, along with their contribution to individual activities within the priorities.

38. Monitoring and evaluation have been strengthened, success criteria are, where possible, measurable and a range of mechanisms is in place, which ensure that responsibilities for implementation are very clear. Some weaknesses remain; for example, the sequencing of activities and the allocation of resources are insufficiently precise.

39. Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support are now defined clearly within the plan. These areas are discussed in more detail in the next section of the report. However, the EDP sets out criteria for the identification of school performance, LEA and school responsibilities are explicit and levels of support provided to categories of school have been defined.

40. Consultation and communication on the revision are satisfactory. Schools are aware of the changes and agree with the revision. In the school survey, schools rate the LEA's strategy for school improvement in the EDP between satisfactory and good overall and just below average for LEAs surveyed so far. Consultation on the EDP is rated better than satisfactory but below average for LEAs surveyed so far. However, headteachers interviewed indicate that consultation has improved since September 2000.

41. The target setting process is sound and has improved since the first inspection. This is a result of the better and more comprehensive analysis of performance and contextual data being undertaken by the LEA and its more rigorous application by standards inspectors. Primary and secondary headteachers confirm that the process has had more rigour and challenge this year. Targets were raised for the year 2000 at Key Stage 2 as a result of progress made in 1999. Results fell below the re-adjusted targets in English by two per cent but were met in mathematics. In the secondary schools there was a shortfall of four per cent against targets in the 5 or more A*-C GCSE category, although schools exceeded the 1 or more A*-G category by one per cent and the average points score by 3.4 per cent. Analysis has taken place to identify why attainment at 5 or more A*-C declined this year. The reasons are inconclusive, but are thought to relate to the recent and significant reorganisation of secondary schools. The six worst performing secondary schools have been targeted for additional support. Targets for permanent exclusions for the year 2000 were not achieved. Targets for attendance were achieved in the primary sector, but attendance was slightly below the target set in the secondary sector.

Allocation of resources to priorities

42. The first OFSTED report had two recommendations: to improve resource allocation and expenditure and both have been achieved. Consultation with schools on the budget is now sound. Documents sent to schools are clear and timely and the LEA works closely with headteachers through the fair funding reference group. Schools now receive earlier notification of their budget shares. Final consultation is underway with schools on the details of delegation of SEN funding from April 2001, and on proposals for a managed transition in changes to the formula. Consultants have reviewed the formula, and following further detailed consultation with schools, changes will be made in 2002. This is an appropriate timetable and will include changes to the special schools formula.

Structures for achieving Best Value

43. Following the first inspection, the Secretary of State required the education department to put in place systems for integrated performance management and staff performance appraisal. Satisfactory progress has been made on implementing both these demands and work is on target to be completed by the end of March 2001.

44. A corporate framework, systems for performance management, business planning and staff appraisal are well established through the departments performance management framework. This defines the relationships, which exist between strategic plans, departmental plans, the OFSTED action plan, business plans and targets set for individual staff. When this work is complete, a hierarchy of monitoring will link every individual's performance to the Best Value Performance Plan. All education department staff will have targets agreed by March 2001 and the first review meetings will take place in July 2001. Within the time available since the first inspection, this represents satisfactory progress. At the time of this inspection the process, some key plans and performance targets were incomplete, so the full impact could not be judged. However, there are positive signs that the process is becoming embedded in practice and has the potential to drive a cycle of continuous improvement.

45. The auditor issued a qualified opinion on the first Best Value Performance Plan requiring improved performance information and the need to embed performance management across the council. The education department was required to improve performance indicator information within the plan. All are now being implemented. The council has well-established procedures for its Best Value review programme. This comprises around seven reviews a year of crosscutting themes most of which include some aspect of education. A review of services to children is scheduled within the next year. It will be led by social services, and will include the work of units within education, mainly those supporting pupils directly. The scope and timing of this review will be crucial as it needs to support the development of an overarching social inclusion strategy.

46. The first inspection highlighted some poor services provided to schools and the Secretary of State required that at least four be subject to accelerated review to secure improved services for schools. This was to involve the newly created SDSA in brokerage and quality monitoring. Reviews of five services, using Best Value principles, are near completion. They are: catering, governor training, long-term sickness, curriculum services and property. Schools have been consulted and involved in these reviews. Some of these accelerated reviews will require changes to structures, services and processes in several corporate departments. For example, in property and catering services accountability is unacceptably complex and involves up to four departments as clients or 'gatekeepers'. The reviews, although not yet complete, have already contributed to a cultural change in those corporate services that indirectly support schools, and are having a positive effect overall.

47. The school survey completed in September 2000 found that schools rated services around satisfactory overall. In some services, views polarised at the extremes of good or poor. Four months later, during this inspection, headteachers report improvements in almost all services. They also express growing confidence in the LEA's capacity to improve: a conclusion confirmed by this inspection.

48. The consultant's report, which followed the first inspection, highlighted the need to develop schools as 'assertive clients with high expectations of themselves, of the LEA and any external service providers.' Improved consultation procedures and partnership, for example, through the fair funding reference group, have supported this. The SDSA has a crucial role to play in helping schools develop procurement skills, in stimulating LEA services to improve and in providing external challenge to Best Value reviews. Liaison with development groups will identify whether further accelerated reviews, of either traded or core LEA services to schools, are necessary. The SDSA has begun to broker support for schools and co-ordinate the needs of the groups.

49. There is of course a danger that schools will simply transfer their dependency from the LEA to the SDSA. This has been recognised by the LEA and the SDSA. Discussions have begun between the standards and effectiveness division and the SDSA to clarify relationships and protocols. Clarity will be vital as success in the future will depend on the capacity of the LEA to challenge schools, to help them to become autonomous and self-evaluating institutions, and on the SDSA to develop in schools, individually and collectively, their procurement capacity. Schools indicate growing confidence in the SDSA and its officers and there is evidence of a developing partnership between schools, the SDSA and the LEA. Nevertheless, the SDSA has been staffed only since October 2000. A corporate plan is in place although this does not constitute a detailed business plan, which addresses how the SDSA will survive

once DfEE funding has been removed. Developments are at an early stage and further consolidation is needed.

Recommendations

In order to improve planning for school improvement:

- the needs of minority ethnic pupils should be more fully embedded in all strands of the EDP; and
- further work should be done to clarify the roles and relationships between the Education Department, the SDSA, and schools.

SECTION 2: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Monitoring, challenge intervention and support

50. The first inspection was particularly critical of this aspect of the LEA's work and seven recommendations were made for improvement. A further two recommendations were added by consultants, and an additional one by the Minister of State for Education. The recommendations can be summarised as:

- improving the identification of strengths and weaknesses in schools;
- aligning support more closely to the performance and needs of schools;
- improving the expertise of the link inspectors (now called standards inspectors);
- putting in place performance management to improve the management and consistency of officers' work; and
- developing a brokerage role for the link inspectors.

51. The LEA's approach to monitoring, challenge, intervention and support is now sound, although the changes that have been made have yet to be fully implemented. Senior staff have still to be appointed, and it is too early to judge the impact of the changes on standards in schools overall. Intervention in schools requiring special measures and with serious weaknesses is effective and progress on the implementation of the recommendations has been good, particularly since September.

52. The LEA's policy for school improvement is clearly laid out in the revised EDP, has appropriate aims and principles and is within the spirit of the Code of Practice for LEA-school relationships. Schools understand the policy and agree with the approach the LEA has adopted. Schools are placed in six categories. Criteria for categorisation are clear and appropriate and are based on an analysis of standards and trends over time, the quality of education, and the quality of management and efficiency.

53. At present, all schools receive a minimum of three one-day visits a year from their standards inspector. This does not include preparatory and reporting time. This is to provide the service with a common baseline on every school and to develop a consistent approach across the newly constituted standards inspectors. However, the intention must be to differentiate these visits in the future. Additional support is allocated according to the category in which a school is placed.

54. Schools in the first four categories are given a high level of support; defined through an action plan and tailored to the needs of the school. High level support is co-ordinated by a cross-departmental senior management review group and includes additional literacy, numeracy and standards inspector support. Category five and six schools receive medium and low-level support respectively, which is negotiated between the headteacher and the school's standards inspector. Evaluation of impact is to be undertaken by standards inspectors and for schools causing concern by the departmental management team. In the interviews conducted as part of this inspection, all primary headteachers knew, and agreed, the category their school was in and the judgement made on the quality of the management of the school. Some secondary headteachers were less clear.

55. Monitoring and challenge to schools are now undertaken systematically by standards inspectors to an agreed agenda. A joint review took place during the autumn term, in association with the headteacher, of each school's performance in meeting its targets and aims. These were said to be challenging and helpful by headteachers. The visits also included data analysis and agreeing and setting targets. The second and third visits are tailored to challenge and support schools on the implementation of priorities within the school development plan. Visits include some lesson observation particularly of literacy and numeracy and monitoring of other aspects of the school's work, for example support to newly qualified teachers. Schools receive a report following each visit, and an annual report, which draws on the evidence collected throughout the year. Reports of visits have been trialled against an agreed framework, and although there is some variation in their quality, schools have found those following autumn visits useful. New senior appointments have yet to be made and discussion has yet to take place internally to agree precisely what deployment will include. This is appropriate as developments have taken place quickly and the support role of the SDSA is only beginning to emerge.

56. Improving the expertise of the inspectors linked to schools was a recommendation within the first report. There was limited progress up to May 2000. However, since that time good progress has been made. The standard and effectiveness division has been reorganised, a head of service has been appointed, and new posts have been created within the management structure. Detailed and appropriate job descriptions have been prepared for officers at all levels and existing personnel have had to apply for posts within the new arrangements. This has resulted in some turnover of staff and a rationalisation of expertise within the service. Inspectors are now focussed on the phase related to their experience, although subject and aspect responsibilities are cross phase. Special schools have a standard inspector with Special Educational Needs expertise. Where gaps have been identified in the expertise within the service, consultants have been employed to fill them.

57. Performance management within the standards and effectiveness division is developing, but is still unsatisfactory. The objectives for the division are now defined in the revised EDP. This document was completed during the course of the inspection and understandably had not been translated into either a detailed service plan or detailed personal objectives for inspectors and curriculum consultants. A new system of appraisal has been introduced but is awaiting senior appointments, and agreement on personal objectives before it can become operational. Line managers have received some training on their role and professional development needs will be identified as part of the appraisal process.

58. Satisfactory progress has been made on the recommendation to improve the consistency of the work of standards inspectors. A team handbook sets out the administrative arrangements for the division. The standards inspectors and curriculum advisers have undertaken training, related to challenge and support. This was helpful in ensuring a consistent approach to the visits made to schools in the autumn term. Newly appointed members of the team speak highly of the formal induction they have received. Paired school visits and written reports have been undertaken, and the work of inspectors in schools has been observed by senior colleagues. Senior officers within the department visit schools and receive direct feedback on the management and quality of support. These visits are valued by primary headteachers.

Performance data

59. The first inspection recommended that link inspectors use LEA and school data more effectively to provide appropriate challenge to schools, especially in relation to targets set. In addition, consultants recommended that the LEA should get external support for the development and use by professionals and schools of performance and ethnic monitoring data.

60. This area of the LEA's work is now good, and good progress has been made in implementing the recommendations. Baseline assessment is in place. Booklets have been produced for all key stages with performance data analysed by gender, ethnicity and trends in performance, which are locally benchmarked. Secondary schools have an interactive package and in addition they are given predictions for GCSE, value-added information and subject residuals. All secondary schools have been trained in its use. Individual pupil data is in place and data is being collected on the most able pupils. Analysis by ethnicity by subject is to be provided.

61. In-service training has taken place on the use of data for senior managers within schools and for assessment co-ordinators in primary and secondary schools. Standards inspectors have also received training on the use of data to help them monitor schools and challenge the targets they are setting. There has been some training for special schools. The National Foundation for Educational Research have been contracted to carry out Year 4 tests, a pilot project has been introduced on transition data and an evaluation of use of data in primary schools has been undertaken. Key Stage 2 information is now provided for transfer on disk and on an individual pupil basis

62. Plans in the revised EDP to improve the analysis and use of data to help schools improve their development planning and self-review are appropriate.

Support for literacy

63. The first inspection found support for literacy to be effective. Support remains effective, and satisfactory progress has been made in implementing the activities within the EDP.

64. The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) is being implemented effectively. The LEA's capacity to analyse pupil performance in depth has improved since the first inspection and resources are better targeted at areas of underachievement, such as writing. There is also a more rigorous approach to setting literacy targets. Literacy standards are rising at a faster level than the national rate of improvement. The current targets for 2001 are being revised to provide more challenge to school. Schools that have had intensive support are making good progress.

65. Following the re-organisation of the standards and effectiveness division the NLS is managed by an external consultant, a standards inspector and a team leader who covers both literacy and numeracy. The team leader has a heavy workload and the post of literacy manager has recently been advertised nationally. This appointment, when

made, should provide the strategy with additional focus. There are two literacy consultants and ten leading literacy teachers who have had appropriate training. There has been appropriate training for standards inspectors, literacy consultants and members of the ethnic minority and Traveller achievement grant (EMTAG) team on data analysis. In-service training has been well received by teachers, support for lesson planning has been valued, and teaching has been helped through demonstration lessons and lesson observation. Recent training in grammar for writing was well received in schools.

66. The strategies in the revised EDP are well defined and appropriate. Plans to move the NLS into the secondary sector are being implemented and the appointment of Key Stage 3 consultant is expected in the near future. There are meetings of the heads of English departments in secondary schools to begin to introduce the strategy.

Support for numeracy

67. The first report found that support to numeracy was effective in primary schools but recommended that help should be given to secondary schools to examine their own approaches to the teaching of numeracy. The situation in primary schools remains much as it did in the first inspection and the priorities within the EDP have been implemented. Some progress has been made in the secondary schools although the recommendation has not been fully met.

68. The National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) is being effectively implemented up to Key Stage 2 and plans are in place for its continuation into Key Stage 3. As with literacy, the improved analysis of performance data is leading to better targeting of resources at identified areas of underachievement and a more rigorous approach to target setting. The current targets for 2001 are being revised. The schools that had intensive support last year are making progress at a rate faster than those that did not.

69. The literacy and numeracy managers and consultants act as a unified team. They provide a wide range of support. Training programmes have been well received. Support is rated highly by primary schools but less so by secondary schools.

70. The revised EDP identifies appropriate actions and the action plans are clear and detailed. Following the appointment of a literacy team leader, the numeracy team leader will have more time to concentrate on the continuing development of these strategies. Plans to move the NNS into the secondary sector are already in place and an appointment for a Key Stage 3 consultant is expected in the near future. Key issues for improving numeracy have been identified and a group of ten secondary schools is working on strategies aimed at effective teaching, building on good practice in primary schools. The group is expected to produce a report in Spring 2001, which will disseminate good practice to all secondary schools. This initiative needs to involve all schools and to be given a high priority.

Support for ICT in the curriculum

71. The first inspection was critical of the strategy for ICT and the lack of specialist support to improve curricular and administrative provision.

72. Little progress has been made and overall support for ICT in the curriculum is poor. There is neither a coherent strategy in place which addresses the need to raise

standards of ICT in Leicester schools nor has support been targeted at those schools where teaching and learning is weakest. The various strands of policy are beginning to come together but this emerging vision has not been shared with schools. For most of the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) development period, the LEA had neither curricular support nor the capacity to challenge schools on their standards in ICT. An adviser has just been appointed. The LEA's Intranet is at a very early stage of development. It is not surprising, therefore, that schools in the school survey judge support to be poor.

73. Better progress has been made on the implementation of NGfL. Schools were given guidance on preparing ICT development plans and New Opportunities Fund training, although a number of the primary headteachers interviewed considered that guidance had been inadequate. Primary headteachers expressed concerns that the burden on themselves and their ICT co-ordinators had been too heavy. Secondary headteachers were more positive and viewed the implementation of the NGfL as a success.

74. Although the revised EDP targets raising standards of achievement in ICT and promoting its use in teaching and learning, most of the activities are concentrated on the further development of content and access to the Internet. The plan fails to give a high enough priority to raising standards across the curriculum or to sharing good practice in teaching and learning. Plans for developing the Intranet include accessing curriculum materials from the city's galleries, libraries and museums. Links with the local universities are being established including involvement with the national Space Science Centre. The timetable for placing curriculum content on the LEA website is a demanding one and the new curriculum adviser has responsibilities for its development, enhancing teachers' skills and professional capabilities and for work in individual schools. This will be a heavy workload.

Support for schools causing concern

75. The first inspection reported that support to improve schools causing concern was generally satisfactory. It recommended that criteria should be set out for identifying these schools; that more rigorous procedures were needed to evaluate the impact of support; that targets for improvement should be defined and success criteria clarified, and that support should be withdrawn gradually from schools thereby ensuring that ongoing needs are met.

76. Good progress has been made on implementing the recommendations. The LEA's overall approach to identifying and supporting schools causing concern is sound and the work undertaken with schools once they have been identified is good. The LEA has produced a clear policy with explicit criteria for identifying and supporting schools causing concern. Standards inspectors have made a good start in opening a dialogue with all schools on the monitoring and improvement agenda, but headteachers of schools recently removed from special measures and with serious weaknesses are unclear into which category their schools have been placed.

77. The number of schools requiring special measures and with serious weaknesses has fallen significantly since the first inspection. The LEA now has one school requiring special measures and seven schools with serious weaknesses. The LEA has identified

seventeen schools as a cause for concern with a further two having their delegated budget removed. There is one fresh start school.

78. The LEA has put in place a range of measures to evaluate the effectiveness of its support. Monitoring reports and commentaries on action plans are rigorous. Standards inspectors liaise with schools, co-ordinate support and help monitor progress. Support to these schools is provided across services and is co-ordinated at a head of service level. Schools produce action plans against which support is allocated. All contacts with schools are recorded and a formal report on progress is made to the head of standards every four weeks. School files provide good evidence of the rigour of the LEA's approach and the improved analysis of data has helped in setting targets and measuring success.

79. The LEA still has work to do on ensuring that exit strategies are in place for schools as they move out of the concern category. There has been no systematic approach in the past and the policy is not explicit about transition plans. Only two headteachers interviewed were in schools with exit plans. In one school, the plan, produced in partnership with the LEA, was good and gave details of school self-review and target setting, capacity for improvement, monitoring progress and established a clear vision for the future.

Support for school management

80. The first inspection recommended that in order to increase the effectiveness of support to management the LEA should facilitate access to advice from staff with suitable senior management experience, and require link advisers to give an unequivocal view about the strengths and weaknesses of the management of schools. Progress on the recommendation has been satisfactory, and despite some weaknesses support for leadership and management is satisfactory overall.

81. Inspection data shows that weaknesses in management and leadership remain an issue in too many Leicester schools. OFSTED reports show significant improvement in the most recent inspections but schools in the LEA are still significantly weaker than in similar LEAs and nationally in the key areas of clear educational direction, monitoring teaching and curriculum development, development planning, professional development of staff, and value for money.

82. As part of its response to the recommendations, the LEA has strengthened the expertise of its standards inspectors in terms of suitable senior management experience and through the SDSA it has begun to compile a list of suitable consultants who can provide support to senior managers in schools. These measures have improved schools' access to support from suitably qualified and experienced personnel. The note of visit format used by standards inspectors has been modified to include a section requiring a judgement about the quality of leadership and management. However, in the forms seen there is too much inconsistency to be certain that unequivocal judgements are being formed and communicated to all headteachers and chairs of governors. Discussions with headteachers indicate that the LEA has signalled strongly its intentions to challenge school managers through this mechanism and that some standards inspectors have already begun to do so effectively.

83. The revised EDP addresses the need to improve the quality of leadership and management through six activities. The actions taken in support of the EDP priority on management have, in the main, been appropriate and successful. These include provision of useful performance data to improve target setting, guidance on headship appointment, and draft guidance on school improvement planning. The LEA has also improved support on competency issues, provided training on school self evaluation, developed mentoring of new headteachers, and used the national professional qualification for headteachers and leadership programme for serving headteachers initiatives to support school managers.

84. Progress on the recommendations, and on the implementation of the activities within the EDP to improve the quality of teaching has been uneven but is satisfactory overall. The LEA recognises that some shortcomings remain.

85. The first inspection found that support for teaching was sound in primary schools but weak in secondary schools. The report recommended that the LEA should provide or broker access to specialist advice for all subjects, devise a strategy to address more directly low teacher expectations, and provide more effective support for competency procedures. In addition, the EDP established the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning through seven activities.

86. The recent LEA profile shows that the quality of teaching is broadly in line with the national picture for primary schools but there are relative weaknesses at secondary level. However, analysis of the most recent OFSTED reports suggests that the picture is improving

87. The LEA has successfully supported improvements in the quality of teaching and raised expectations in primary schools through the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In the secondary sector three Beacon schools and four specialist colleges have been established and work is underway with the EAZ best practice team to disseminate successful approaches. The SDSA is compiling a list of providers to complement the LEA's subject support for schools and to meet the recommendation related to brokering advice. Support for competency procedures has been improved and is now more efficient.

88. A major plank in the LEA's approach to supporting improvements in secondary teaching is the Excellence in Cities initiative. Importantly, the initiative represents a more strategic approach to raising expectations. It sets demanding targets for improved achievement through six strands of activity, including the establishment of two small EAZs and the use of learning mentors. The need to challenge higher attaining pupils through effective teaching is being addressed through the EiC initiative and through the LEA's professional development programme.

Support for governors

89. The first inspection recommended that the effectiveness of governing bodies should be improved by securing LEA appointments in schools with vacancies, strengthening efforts to recruit more governors from the minority ethnic groups and ensuring that governor training more closely matches needs.

90. Support to governors is now satisfactory, and progress on meeting the recommendations has been good. Appropriate strategies for improvement are set out in the post-OFSTED action plan and the revised EDP.

91. The governor support team (GST) has produced well-structured training material, termly newsletters and a free telephone helpline. The director briefs chairs of governors each term. The GST gives support to the independent city of Leicester governors association. For the first time, an external provider has been used for performance management training. A clerking service is available and a well structured on-line, support service is being developed.

92. The LEA is responding, with some success, to the vacancy problems highlighted in the first report. Vacancies are still high but have been reduced from 19 to 13 per cent in the last four months. Of the new governors, 30 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. A new process for the appointment of LEA governors has helped schools with long-term vacancy problems.

93. The SDSA has included governor support in its first proposals for accelerated review. The GST has assessed its own capacity and competencies and these are accounted for in the SDSA's plans. The LEA team intends to concentrate its training programme around core competencies and bespoke courses to governing bodies or groups of governors and the SDSA will broker other training. The prime aim of both the GST and the SDSA is to build on the leadership capacity of governors to be effective in the strategic management of schools. Given the progress that has been made since the first inspection, there is clearly the capacity for further improvement based on the partnership between the GST and the SDSA.

Recommendations

To further improve the monitoring, challenge, intervention and support provided to schools:

- continue the work being undertaken to determine the deployment of standards inspectors and the time they spend in schools;
- carry out the intention to put in place a service plan which defines in more detail how the activities and actions within the EDP will be implemented at a service level, and how they will be sequenced. Ensure that officers with responsibilities for activities within the EDP link their personal objectives to those in the service plan; and
- standards inspectors should provide an unequivocal view about the quality of management and leadership following visits to all schools, and this should be routinely communicated to the chair of governors.

In order to improve support for numeracy:

- continue the work begun to develop a strategy for helping secondary schools to examine their own approaches to teaching numeracy, which builds effectively on the developments in primary schools.

In order to improve support for ICT in the curriculum:

- the LEA should develop a strategy, and improve the way in which ICT can be used to raise achievement across the curriculum in all schools; and
- identify those schools where ICT is weakest and target support to help them improve.

To further improve the support to schools causing concern:

- ensure that the category in which a school has been placed is made explicit to the school (including the governors); and
- ensure that schools which no longer require special measures or have serious weaknesses have transition plans in order that their progress is sustained.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

94. The first inspection recommended that the LEA's partnership with schools needed to improve, responsibilities of the officers, members and schools needed clarification and consultation needed to be more effective. In addition, consultants recommended that leadership in education should be improved. Liaison with social services at a school level should improve, community education should be more coherently linked with school provision and partnership should be built with communities to raise expectations. The LEA has made good progress in implementing these recommendations, and strategic management is now satisfactory overall. Some particular strengths have emerged since the first inspection although in some areas, for example social inclusion, and strategic planning for SEN progress has been limited and there is still much to do. Overall, there has been insufficient time for planning to have been fully implemented or to have had an impact on schools.

95. A particular strength is the commitment of the council to education. The first report indicated that raising standards was a high priority. This priority is now explicit. Spending on education has risen over the last three years and now meets the SSA.

96. Strategic planning for education has improved. The recently revised EDP sets out clearly the LEA's strategy for school improvement, and makes links to other strategies for education and to the corporate strategies of the council. At the time of the first inspection there were weaknesses in several areas, which reduced the LEA's capacity to improve standards and to combat social exclusion. The LEA has responded to the recommendations related to these weaknesses and in many areas progress has been satisfactory or better. Since the arrival of the director of education action has been prioritised and a coherent programme for raising standards is emerging. The LEA recognises that in social inclusion it has not established sufficient coherence in its approach and has begun working towards that goal. Weaknesses also remain in important areas such as monitoring racist incidents and the strategy for inclusion of pupils with special educational needs.

97. The need for a comprehensive overview of the strategic direction of the education service has been recognised, and a draft education strategic plan has been produced for the period 2001 to March 2002. This is a timely and potentially important statement of the LEA's intentions, timelines for their implementation and indicators for their success. It identifies all the key policies and strategies for education and where they are located, but makes insufficient connection between those aspects of the LEA strategy which relate to social inclusion. At the time of the inspection, the plan was incomplete and had not been subject to consultation.

98. The recommendation to improve leadership has been met. Leadership is now good. Elected members and the chief executive have a clear vision for raising standards in education. That vision is expressed in the revised EDP and the emphasis given to education in the priorities of the council. Members and the chief executive have been helped by the challenge and support provided by the partnership board and in particular by the high expectations and energy of its chair. Members are now given

clear advice on policy formation by officers and are provided with improving data to inform the decision-taking process. There is cross-party agreement on education priorities, and vital decisions on education, for example, to reorganise the standard and effectiveness division have been taken quickly and efficiently.

99. The education department is well and purposefully led by the director of education. Significant progress has been made since his appointment in May 2000 and his work is regularly monitored by the chief executive and elected members. The quality of leadership given by senior managers is generally sound. Standards and effectiveness is well led. Senior officers have benefited from the improved focus provided by the director and the expertise and challenge of the partnership board. The demanding and time-consuming involvement of the chair of the board has been crucial in developing the strategic capacity of the LEA. As the LEA improves its capacity, the partnership board appropriately expects to change the focus of its role towards monitoring and evaluation.

100. Partnership with schools has improved, and this recommendation has been satisfactorily met. This is confirmed by the headteachers interviewed as part of this inspection and in the school improvement plan where the responsibilities of the LEA and schools are explicit, particularly schools causing the LEA concern. Similarly the EiC plan makes the respective roles of the schools and the LEA explicit. The plan has clear principles and objectives; actions are derived from the LEA's audit of need. The plan makes appropriate links with other developments. Outcomes within the plan reflect the additional resources that are being targeted at raising achievement, the reduction of exclusion and improving attendance. Secondary headteachers interviewed as part of this inspection were complimentary about the partnership with the LEA in the planning process.

101. Progress has been made on improving consultation. It is now sound although some weaknesses remain to be resolved. The education department has developed a strategic approach to consultation and partnership with schools, which, while not working fully has allowed schools to participate in policy formation at an earlier stage. Headteachers indicate that their views are taken into account and acted upon. However, there are still some areas where the LEA's intentions have not been clearly enough communicated with all schools, for example in relation to the category they have been placed in by standards inspectors. Nevertheless, considerable progress has been made and the LEA is attempting to balance the need to consult with overburdening bureaucracy. Rightly, the LEA is putting together a consultative forum. This is a clearing house for consultation and communication – it will define when and with whom consultation and communication take place.

Liaison with other agencies

102. Interviews with representatives from other local authority services and scrutiny of plans indicates that planning for cross-cutting initiatives which require education to work strategically with other council services is satisfactory, for example, with social services through the quality protects management action plan (QPMAP). There is, in addition, an emerging coherence within the planning for education through links between the priorities and activities within the EDP, EiC and the work undertaken in partnership by the Education Action Zone and the local authority. There are reported to be good links between education, arts and libraries and a post-16 group has been established on which the LEA has representation.

103. Action has been taken which has the potential to improve the quality of lifelong learning and community education, and to improve coherence across all aspects of educational provision at a community level. Lifelong learning and community education provision was reviewed by consultants and reported on in June 2000. It is, appropriately, to be moved into the education department in April 2000. Cluster groups are to be established which overlap with school development groups. Community learning forums are to be established, to plan for, and represent the needs of the communities and learners within them. Schools will form part of each forum and will have a voice in the arrangement for each area. Forums will be established in summer 2001. The management of provision will be on a cluster rather than institutional basis. Schools and the LEA's partners are cautiously optimistic about the plan, although it will need to be implemented before it is possible to judge its impact.

104. The recommendation to improve liaison with social services at a school level has not been met and remains unsatisfactory. Headteachers overall, indicate that it is variable and depends on the individual officer concerned. Guidance on working with social services has been produced for schools but has not yet been circulated. However, it seems likely that the issue will remain unresolved until education and social services work together with schools to develop and implement an appropriate strategy for social inclusion into which support for pupils and families can be targeted.

Management support services

105. Information and agreements set out charges for each traded service although service standards are insufficiently developed with schools. This has been recognised and plans are in place to link standards with performance management arrangements and the ongoing scrutiny of all services by schools and the SDSA. This scrutiny will inform Best Value reviews and will result in further accelerated reviews of any service schools indicate is impeding their core work. Buyback boards, which represent schools purchasing in-house property and catering are to be rationalised into one client 'schools procurement board' serviced by the SDSA, which will further develop service standards and performance monitoring by schools.

106. **Schools payroll** transferred from Leicestershire County Council to the City Council in February 2000. There was considerable failure to pay staff accurately and to code the correct schools, despite prior planning and risk analysis. The chief financial officer has taken action that is leading to improvement. The payroll service, however, remains unsatisfactory and headteachers interviewed during the inspection indicate that

if improvements are not secured quickly the SDSA will be asked to broker alternative provision.

107. **Financial support to schools** has improved and is satisfactory with some good features. The two recommendations from the first inspection have been met. Following consultation, schools will be provided with data in January, which will allow them to calculate their own indicative budgets. Schools received notification of their final budget allocations earlier last year, owing to streamlining of processes and budget making in the council. School budgets are closely monitored, particularly those of schools in deficit, and appropriate advice is now given on budget planning. Comparative financial information, together with a newsletter, is presented to schools and valued by them. The LEA withdrew delegation to four schools. Financial support to these schools has been managed in liaison with standards inspectors and delegation has now been returned to two of them.

108. **Personnel services to schools** have met the recommendation to provide more effective support for competence procedures and this is now a satisfactory service with some good features. Ethnic monitoring of recruitment is underway. There is close monitoring of all disciplinary casework in schools and advice and guidance on all procedures for headteachers is in place. Standards inspectors are briefed on personnel issues to provide concerted support and challenge to schools. Schools regard this service highly. The service has piloted the departmental appraisal system and is monitoring its introduction across other services.

109. **Administrative ICT** is sound and includes technical and training support for finance, and assessment modules of the schools' management software. However, effective communication between schools and the LEA is limited by the fact that only 50 per cent of schools have e-mail. An appropriate infrastructure is in place for the collection and analysis of data and in preparation for the pupil level census to be conducted in 2002.

Recommendations

In order to maintain the good progress made on strategic management:

- establish a clear and coherent strategy for social inclusion which sets out what is to be achieved and how, and relates to the wider council and community.

To make relationships with other services more productive:

- improve liaison with social services at a school level.

In order to secure a reliable payroll service for schools:

- monitor closely the actions being undertaken to ensure they lead to high quality support.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The LEA's strategy for SEN

110. The first inspection recommended that the LEA should move toward greater inclusion by developing a more strategic approach, which managed reducing rolls in special schools and made fuller use of the expertise available in those schools. The EDP deals with improving the achievement of pupils with SEN and sets out activities designed to develop strategies to encourage greater parental/carer involvement.

111. Progress in this area is unsatisfactory. There is no clear strategy to promote and manage greater inclusion and this reflects a weakness in strategic management. The LEA recognises that major improvements are needed in SEN and is now pulling together strands of action, which will enable it to establish a coherent strategy in the future. A structural reorganisation has clarified and improved responsibilities and the LEA now has the capacity to make suitable progress in the future.

112. There has been a reduction in the number of new statements produced. A total of 181 were issued in the year ending December 2000 compared to 204 for the previous year and 376 for the year before that. However, Leicester still has more pupils with a statement of SEN than any other similar LEA and more places in special schools. The number of places is reducing but not in a structured way. In the school survey strategic aspects related to SEN are rated poorly.

113. However, a number of important actions have recently been taken. The LEA's commitment to more inclusive education has been clearly set out in the Leicester special education needs policy, which was sent to schools in November 2000. An outline timetable of the authority's proposed SEN strategy, although very basic, was sent out at the same time. This included proposals for delegating the funding for statements of SEN in mainstream schools, which is planned to be implemented in April 2001, and the production of draft guidance for schools on 'Meeting Individual Needs'. Similar guidance for parents, in collaboration with the parent partnership scheme, is also planned. An audit of pupils' needs in special and mainstream schools is underway, and following cabinet approval in November 2000, for consultation to proceed with special school headteachers on future patterns of provision, consultants have met with headteachers to help assess options for the future. A target for increasing the proportion of pupils with statements attending mainstream schools has been set.

Statutory obligations

114. The first report recommended that in order to meet its statutory responsibilities on SEN the LEA should ensure that there are no unacceptable delays in carrying out formal assessments of pupils who may warrant a statement of SEN. The EDP sets out actions to develop more effective procedures for the identification and assessment of pupils' special educational needs.

115. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its statutory responsibilities with regard to SEN. Progress has been made on the recommendation although the LEA does not monitor the speed with which it agrees formal assessments

116. The LEA used Standards Fund money appropriately to help to establish a parent partnership scheme in collaboration with Voluntary Action Leicester, and this is reported to be improving the access of parents and carers to the assessment process. The LEA has also established a SEN management reference group, which is used to make decisions about formal assessments and statements and has headteacher representation. Schools have greater involvement in the decision-making process about which pupils should proceed to formal assessment and which are eventually given a statement of SEN. 'Meeting Individual Needs' is about to be distributed to schools and will replace the previous 1994 Leicestershire guidance about referrals for assessment. The new guidance provides useful indicators about pupils' needs to help schools determine whether a formal assessment is required.

Support for school improvement

117. The first inspection recommended that the LEA should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its SEN support, and introduce measures to help moderate schools' judgements about which pupils may need a formal assessment. The EDP appropriately identifies improving training for SEN co-ordinators (SENCOs), monitoring and developing staff skills, and securing the training of support assistants and teachers of pupils with low incidence disabilities as priorities.

118. Headteachers interviewed and schools surveyed rated the learning support services positively compared to other LEAs. The provision of learning support services, support for SENCOs, and guidance on producing individual education plans were all judged above average. The provision of behaviour support services was judged to be significantly above average.

119. The LEA has recently reorganised those support services which provide SEN support to pupils and schools. A single service includes behaviour support, hearing impairment, learning and autism support, pre-school, and visual impairment. The structure appropriately covers a full range of provision, including support for pupils with behavioural difficulties and pre-exclusion support workers. It is a well managed with good procedures to monitor and evaluate effectiveness. Evaluation of the impact of support on pupil attainment is not as well developed, except in the sensory services, but suitable attempts are being made to remedy this. The developing procedures for performance management within this branch contribute to the rigour with which the effectiveness of the services is measured and improved. A recently appointed standards inspector (SEN) will contribute to future evaluations of the impact of the various services.

120. Progress on implementing EDP activities is unsatisfactory. The LEA conducted its own evaluation of progress in Autumn 2000 and concluded that progress was unsatisfactory overall. Professional development for SENCOs has been well received by schools and has proceeded in line with planning. The revised EDP contains fewer activities and tackles directly the weaknesses that remain in the area of training and supporting schools to improve to raise standards.

Recommendations

In order to improve the effectiveness of support for pupils with special educational needs:

- a detailed strategy for promoting the inclusion of pupils with SEN should be developed.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The supply of school places

121. The recommendations in the first inspection to improve liaison with Leicestershire County Council and forecasting have been met. Work on this function is now sound and is based on a coherent strategy which is set out in the school organisation plan. The impact of school reviews on demographics and forecasting are closely monitored. The major secondary review reduced surplus places to 5 per cent. In the primary sector there are 14 per cent surplus places and 17 primary schools have over 25 per cent surplus places. There are appropriate plans to reduce this.

Admissions

122. The recommendation in the first inspection to ensure that arrangements for school admissions are efficient and equitable has been met. The admissions and appeals documents have been translated into the main community languages and appeals are monitored more closely and by ethnicity. Following a high level of secondary appeals in 1999 there has been a 29 per cent reduction in 2000. The demarcation of secondary school priority areas meets the current demographic needs of the city. However, the need to keep this under constant review is not recognised in the school organisation plan.

Property management

123. Property management was unsatisfactory in the first inspection, which recommended that the LEA address urgently a lack of service co-ordination and introduce performance monitoring. Unsatisfactory progress has been made on service co-ordination although service monitoring is now in place. A review of the service, which includes both asset management and premises support, is underway. Although incomplete, it has identified the need to streamline the council's corporate property function, currently spread over several departments. Internal communication has improved, but it remains inefficient and confuses accountability. The review plans to identify a range of alternative and better providers, and to consult with schools before implementing change. Schools interviewed as part of this inspection are confident that this process will lead to improvement.

124. Property contracts are systematically monitored. Capital contracts and service delivery are benchmarked against other councils'. Schools receive clear information about works on site and satisfaction surveys of schools involved in the big secondary capital programme are mainly positive.

Support for pupils educated otherwise than at school

125. The first report recommended that provision for pupils permanently excluded from school should improve. The LEA is making sound progress in implementing this recommendation, although provision overall remains unsatisfactory. Nevertheless,

plans which are in place are beginning to have an impact and there is potential for further improvement.

126. At the time of the first inspection, 78 per cent of permanently excluded pupils received less than ten hours provision each week. Pre-vocational packages in further education were used for excluded Year 11 pupils, but planning was *ad hoc*. Only 17 per cent of permanently excluded pupils were reintegrated back into school.

127. In December 1999 the student support service amalgamated with the special needs teaching service under a new head of service who oversees the behaviour support service, the pupil support service and services for learning and autism support and sensory support. A new appointment was made in July 2000 to manage student support, after considerable staffing disruption over a long period of time. The new managers have made substantial progress over a short space of time and the service is making a major contribution to the EiC initiative, although it is too soon to see the new working practices impacting on outcomes.

128. A multi-agency reintegration group now meets fortnightly and a co-ordinated and streamlined approach is offered to support pupils in danger of permanent exclusion, those on long fixed term exclusions and those permanently excluded. The group is made up of representatives from almost all the pupil services and includes education welfare and educational psychologists. When a decision has been taken about an excluded pupil by the reintegration group, negotiation takes place with the pupil's newly designated school, and the level of support required to enable the pupil to return to lessons is agreed. While this support is continuing, sometimes for a considerable amount of time, the pupil remains on the roll of the support service, not the school. This explains, in part, the lack in progress in reducing the reintegration time since the last report.

129. Much of the work of the student support service is focussed on avoiding permanent exclusion, through its Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 initiatives, and by helping reintegrate pupils into school after a permanent exclusion. The assessment and reintegration centre opened in November 2000 for the assessment and integration of primary pupils. The service has an appropriate target to provide all permanently excluded pupils with full-time education provision by July 2002.

130. All permanently excluded pupils who are able to access the programme now receive a minimum of 10 hours of support, and in July 2001 90 per cent of permanently excluded pupils are to receive between 12.5 and 17.5 hours of education. The average time to achieve reintegration has decreased slightly and reintegration has increased to 25.5 per cent, including pupils working in school with support.

Children in public care

131. This function was not covered in the first inspection. The strategy outlined in the EDP is appropriate and is linked to the well-structured QPMAP. Targets for the attainment for these children have been arbitrary in the past, as the LEA did not hold accurate baseline data on their achievements. This has now improved. An advisory teacher was appointed in September 1999 following consultation between education and social services, and a further appointment is to be made funded by social services.

All schools have a designated co-ordinator in place and personal education plans are in place for children. A secure database has been established containing personal, ethnic, attainment, attendance, exclusion, custody and SEN details. This is being used as part of the monitoring and target setting processes. Targets set for achievement in 2001 and 2002 lack ambition.

Support to improve behaviour in school

132. The first inspection report was highly critical of the LEA's support to improve behaviour. The EDP had a priority to develop strategies to improve behaviour, including staff training, to promote positive behaviour and, in a minority of schools, including special schools, to manage pupil disruption, conflict, aggression and challenging behaviour and ensure the safety of pupils and staff. The revised EDP is more realistic in its aspiration to develop policies and guidance to schools in managing problem behaviour.

133. The LEA has made satisfactory progress in implementing the EDP priority although it is too early to tell whether the improved provision will have an appropriate impact on outcomes in schools. There has been a reduction in exclusions in the secondary sector over recent years, but not in the primary sector.

134. A wide range of training is offered and take-up by schools has been high. Schools in the school survey rate support for improving pupils' behaviour as satisfactory; this is an improvement from the previous inspection. Headteachers interviewed were positive about the work that has recently taken place with disaffected pupils, the quality of training provided and the support given to schools causing concern.

Support for attendance

135. The first inspection recommended agreeing attendance targets with schools; matching support for improving attendance more closely to the needs of schools, particularly secondary schools; ensuring greater consistency in the quality of support; changing guidance concerning the authorisation of absence for extended holidays to ensure it is consistent with the DfEE's guidance concerning 'exceptional circumstances'; and working more closely with and challenging those schools which have high exclusion rates. The priorities within the EDP are appropriate and have been amended in the revision to take account of new initiatives such as EiC and progress to date. Outcomes, laid out as success criteria, are appropriate.

136. Good progress has been made in implementing all the recommendations and support to schools is now satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, there is no room for complacency as attendance figures are still low when compared to national averages and poor attendance is endemic in some schools. Attendance targets are being set for all schools for the first time this academic year at an annual service review meeting between a member of the school's senior management team, the school's education welfare officer (EWO) and a senior EWO. Targets for the 80 per cent of schools that have gone through the process have been copied to standards inspectors. In 1999/2000, the LEA achieved its target for attendance in primary schools but was slightly below its secondary target. However, nine out of the 16 secondary schools have

attendance figures above 92 per cent for this academic year. Joint work with the police on truancy sweeps has been successful in the city centre and is now being extended to the suburbs.

137. In 1999 the education welfare service (EWS) consulted schools on the project, 'Tackling Truancy Together'. This has resulted in a new formula which allocates resources to need, rather than the *ad hoc* arrangement that was in place. The EWS has a rigorous and challenging monitoring system to identify schools with problems of non-attendance, and plans are in place to improve the data provided to schools. Following the first inspection the LEA funded four attendance support assistants to help schools, and EWOs are now based on site in secondary schools.

138. To share good practice and to ensure consistency of approach there are regular service meetings. The principal EWO also attends a fortnightly reintegration meeting to ensure a consistent approach to welfare issues across the LEA's divisions. All schools now use some form of electronic arrangement for recording attendance and headteachers confirm that monitoring by the EWOs is more regular and much more challenging than in the past. Schools, in the school survey, rate the quality of support for promoting a high level of pupil attendance just above satisfactory, but interviews with headteachers confirm that it is getting better. Additional officer posts have ensured that absences are covered and the educational welfare service has been involved in training EiC learning mentors.

139. In October 2000, the LEA revised its policy and practice guide to schools to make it consistent with DfEE guidance on extended pupil holidays abroad. The guidance informs schools on a wide range of attendance and welfare issues.

Support for minority ethnic pupils

140. Good progress has been made on the recommendation to provide schools with guidance in relation to equal opportunities. However, the recommendation to use data to target areas of greatest need has been less well implemented. Nevertheless, support for minority ethnic pupils is sound overall. This is confirmed by schools' responses in the school survey and in interviews conducted as part of this inspection.

141. Targets set for Black, Bangladeshi and Black-dual heritage pupils for 2000 were too low. There has been a significant improvement in the data provided to schools, analysed by gender and ethnicity and includes data on attendance and exclusion. Standards inspectors have focused on the standards and progress of different ethnic groups on their visits to schools and the targets set for 2001 should be more realistic. EMTAG funding is devolved to schools on a 60:40 split which takes account of the number of pupils with English as an additional language and performance in a Key Stage. This allocation is to be reviewed in April 2001.

142. Support has been re-focused on achievement and there has been an increase in the delegation of resources to schools. The central team has been reduced and appropriately relocated in the standards and effectiveness division. The centrality of raising standards for ethnic minority pupils has been recognised by this move, and through the co-operative working which is developing across the division. There is, in

addition, greater incorporation of ethnic minority issues in the revised EDP although there is more work to be done in this area.

143. Evidence from headteachers suggests that the quality of support teachers provided by the LEA is variable, and many schools have opted to employ their own. New capability procedures have been developed and the central team has begun to monitor quality through lesson observations. However, there is no monitoring by the central team of the use schools not purchasing support from the LEA make of devolved funding.

Measures to combat racism

144. Up until May 2000 the LEA made slow progress in responding to the recommendations to improve the monitoring and reporting of race equality issues, and to provide access to key information to interested groups such as the Leicester race equality council (LREC). Since that time much has improved and progress has been made. The LEA recognises that there is still much to do. Recruitment monitoring is now in place and an officer from the LREC has been seconded to the LEA to audit the work of the department and a draft education department racial equality action plan has now been produced. The LEA is now committed to fully involving representatives of ethnic minority groups and the LREC in its consultation and communication processes and this was confirmed in interviews conducted as part of this inspection. However, communication was perceived to be weak. Systems are not in place to record racial incidents in schools, although consultation is currently taking place to agree an approach for the future.

145. The 'Young, Gifted and Equal' handbook lays out racial equality standards in education, has been disseminated to all schools and is supported by the LREC. The publication has attracted national acclaim and provides clear guidance to schools. Teachers providing support to minority ethnic pupils in schools identify this handbook as an important influence on their work and are complimentary about the LEA's initiative. Support to schools to develop good practice based on 'Young Gifted and Equal' is planned to start in autumn 2001.

146. The race equality education in Leicester group was established to move the LEA forward around the time of the first inspection. This group still meets and represents parents, teachers, governors and young people as well as the LEA.

Measures to combat social exclusion

147. At the time of the last inspection there were weaknesses in several areas, which reduced the LEA's capacity to help combat social exclusion. The LEA's responses to these weaknesses are dealt with elsewhere in this report. In many areas progress has been satisfactory or better. The EDP deals with increasing participation and promoting social inclusion and there are many examples where the LEA has worked successfully in this area. Nevertheless, weaknesses still remain in important areas, such as the monitoring of racist incidents and the lack of a strategy for inclusion for pupils with special educational needs.

148. A clear policy steer for addressing the inclusion agenda has been established by the partnership board, which has set out a draft definition for social inclusion. The

board has also set up a working group, which is helping to establish a vision for social inclusion in the city. It intends to map management, funding, organisations and activity in Leicester in order to move toward a more integrated strategy. The new lifelong learning and community development division has been set up with a clear brief support inclusion by widen participation in education

149. However, the LEA has not satisfactorily established sufficient coherence in its approach to reducing social exclusion. It is working toward this goal but recognises that it still has some way to go.

Recommendations

To improve the education property function, the property review should ensure that:

- there are radical changes to council structures, which streamline responsibilities for educational asset management, resource allocation and service provision; and
- proposals secure effective premises support for schools to develop their delegated responsibility.

To improve support provided to pupils educated otherwise than in school:

- monitor the effect new working practices have on the outcomes of reintegration time and on the proportion of permanently excluded pupils reintegrated into school.

To take better account of the ethnic diversity of its population and to promote the attainments of minority ethnic pupils:

- improve the quality and consistency of support teachers provided by the LEA, or help schools to secure alternative arrangements; and
- monitor the use of EMTAG funding where schools do not purchase support centrally.

To improve measures to combat racism:

- immediately put in place with schools guidance and procedures for the recording and analysis of the incidence of racial harassment; and
- improve communications with different communities.

APPENDIX

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve planning for school improvement:

- the needs of minority ethnic pupils should be more fully embedded in all strands of the EDP; and
- further work should be done to clarify the roles and relationships between the Education Department, the SDSA, and schools.

To further improve the monitoring, challenge, intervention and support provided to schools:

- continue the work being undertaken to determine the deployment of standards inspectors and the time they spend in schools;
- carry out the intention to put in place a detailed service plan which defines how the priorities and actions within the EDP will be implemented, and ensure that this is supported by detailed personal objectives and plans for individual officers; and
- standards inspectors should provide an unequivocal view about the quality of management and leadership following visits to all schools, and this should be routinely communicated to the chair of governors.

In order to improve support for numeracy:

- continue the work begun to develop a strategy for helping secondary schools to examine their own approaches to teaching numeracy, which builds effectively on the developments in primary schools.

In order to improve support for ICT in the curriculum:

- the LEA should develop a strategy, and improve the way in which ICT can be used to raise achievement across the curriculum in all schools; and
- identify those schools where ICT is weakest and target support to help them improve.

To further improve the support to schools causing concern:

- ensure that the category in which a school has been placed is made explicit to the school (including the governors); and
- ensure that schools which no longer require special measures or have serious weaknesses have transitional plans in order that their progress is sustained.

In order to maintain the good progress made on strategic management:

- establish a clear and coherent strategy for social inclusion which sets out what is to be achieved and how, and relates to the wider council and community.

To make relationships with other services more productive:

- improve liaison with social services at a school level.

In order to secure a reliable payroll service for schools:

- monitor closely the actions being undertaken to ensure they lead to high quality support.

In order to improve the effectiveness of support for pupils with special educational needs:

- a detailed strategy for promoting the inclusion of pupils with SEN should be developed.

To improve the education property function, the property review should ensure that:

- there are radical changes to council structures, which streamline responsibilities for educational asset management, resource allocation and service provision; and
- proposals secure effective premises support for schools to develop their delegated responsibility.

To improve support provided to pupils educated otherwise than in school:

- monitor the effect new working practices have on the outcomes of reintegration time and on the proportion of permanently excluded pupils reintegrated into school.

To take better account of the ethnic diversity of its population and to promote the attainments of minority ethnic pupils:

- improve the quality and consistency of support teachers provided by the LEA, or help schools to secure alternative arrangements; and
- monitor the use of EMTAG funding where schools do not purchase support centrally.

To improve measures to combat racism:

- immediately put in place with schools guidance and procedures for the recording and analysis of the incidence of racial harassment; and
- improve communications with different communities.

© Crown copyright 2001

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

Tel: 020 7421 6800

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

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

Leicester City Council
Marlborough House
38 Welford Road
LEICESTER LE3 8RF

www.ofsted.gov.uk