



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF
CITY OF LEICESTER
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

JUNE 1998

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

CONTENTS	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	2-7
1. THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA	8
Education funding	9
2. THE PERFORMANCE OF LEICESTER SCHOOLS	10-12
3. THE LEA STRATEGY	
Role and priorities	13-14
The Education Development Plan	14-16
Consultation and communication	16-17
Evaluating effectiveness	17
School places and admissions	17-18
Secondary provision	18
Primary provision	18-19
Liaison with other services and agencies	19-20
Budget planning and expenditure	21-22
Statutory responsibilities	22
4. THE MANAGEMENT OF LEA SERVICES	
Services to support school improvement	23-24
Other services to promote access and achievement	24-25
Management support services	25-27
5. LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS, QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS	
Support for development and action planning	28-29
Support for improvement in management	29-30
Support for the use of performance data	30-31
Support for Governing Bodies	31-32
Support for improvement in teaching	32-34
Support for improving standards of literacy	34-36
Support for improvement in numeracy	36-37
Support for pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds	37-38
Support for improvement in attendance	38-39
Support for improvement in behaviour	39-41
Support for Special Educational Needs (SEN)	41-42
Support for schools requiring special measures, with serious weaknesses or causing concern	42-44
APPENDIX 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA	45-46
APPENDIX 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS	47-49
APPENDIX 3: FINANCE	50
APPENDIX 4: AUDIT COMMISSION SURVEY	51

INTRODUCTION

1. The inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the ***Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities***¹, which focuses on the effectiveness of LEA work to support school improvement.

2. The inspection was in two stages. An initial review established a picture of the LEA's context, the performance of its schools, its strategy and the management of services. The initial review was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA; school inspection and audit reports; LEA documentation; and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was completed and returned by 71 schools.

3. The second stage of the inspection involved studies of the effectiveness of aspects of the LEA's work through visits to five secondary schools, nine primary, four junior and three infant schools, and three special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support provided by the LEA contributes to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school and provides value for money.

4. The report draws on material from the initial review, from the school survey and from the school visits, together with evidence relevant to the themes drawn from recent HMI visits to Leicester City schools.

¹ LEA Support for School Improvement: A Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities, London, OFSTED, 1997.

COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commentary

5. Leicester City became a unitary authority in April 1997. The City has a culturally diverse population with relatively high levels of disadvantage and a greater than average number of pupils with special educational needs. Over 35 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. The new authority took over a group of schools which frequently describe their difficulties as having arisen from “a legacy of neglect”. Approximately 25 per cent of the schools have been identified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses or are subject to special measures. The LEA itself has identified several others which are a cause for concern. In many schools the OFSTED reports are highly critical of low standards, poor teaching and weak management. Key Stage 2 and GCSE results are well below national norms, as is attendance. The LEA also inherited a high proportion of surplus places, and spending on education was below SSA (Standard Spending Assessment). The scale of the task facing the new LEA in supporting school improvement would have presented a severe challenge, even to most well established and experienced LEAs.

6. The LEA decided at the outset to concentrate the bulk of its limited advisory support on the schools in special measures or in serious weaknesses. This was in itself an obvious and necessary strategy; which has led to success in a few schools and to the closure of several more. The LEA has also helped schools to engage with national initiatives such as the National Literacy Strategy and this is having a positive effect on raising pupils’ attainment. However, the LEA has not addressed all the weaknesses. Nor have the underlying causes of failure, particularly poor teaching and weak management, been effectively tackled. Its limited success has been hard won, but the LEA lacks the capacity to support and challenge all of its schools, particularly its secondary schools. It lacks expertise in key areas, and it lacks sufficient strategic direction. In our view, it is not capable of performing all of its functions in such a way as to contribute fully to raising standards.

7. The Education Development Plan (EDP) sets out the LEA’s agenda for improvement and in doing so it accurately recognises the main areas for improvement. Many of the intended actions are appropriate but they do not take sufficient account of the local factors which will aid or delay progress. It does not take into account the rich ethnic diversity in the City and it does not address directly some of the underlying causes of the poor performance in many schools, such as the low expectations of teachers. Moreover, the LEA has not defined, in consultation, the relative responsibilities of schools and the Authority. Lacking that, the engagement of schools with the plan cannot be guaranteed, and its potential impact is seriously diminished.

8. The LEA is providing an effective service in the following areas:

- support for literacy;
- support to schools in Special Measures;
- liaison with external agencies;
- support for administrative ICT;
- support for improvement in teaching in primary schools;
- support for numeracy in primary schools;
- support for attendance in primary schools;
- support for pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN).

9. There are weaknesses in the following areas:

- meeting statutory duties in relation to appraisal, appointment of governors, provision for pupils who are out of school, assessment of pupils with SEN;
- consultation and communication with schools;
- challenging schools to set appropriate targets for improvement;
- support for improvement in management;
- support for development planning;
- support for performance data;
- support for improvement in teaching in secondary schools;
- support for numeracy in secondary schools;
- monitoring the achievement of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds;
- support for attendance in secondary schools;
- support for promoting good behaviour;
- monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of services;
- monitoring light touch schools;
- support for competency procedures;
- support for curriculum ICT;
- property services.

10. The support provided by the LEA is better in primary schools than in secondary schools, but it is unsatisfactory overall. All too often the support is uneven in quality and impact and there is a lack of effective systematic monitoring and evaluation of the performance of services at all levels, including by Members.

11. Most schools recognise that the LEA has been on a steep learning curve and that it is improving, but they are now beginning to expect more of the LEA. They believe the LEA has the right priorities but has not won the full confidence of its schools in terms of its strategic leadership and its long term capacity to challenge schools and to deliver consistently good support. As indicated above, we share that scepticism. We have many recommendations to make, which set the LEA a formidable agenda. We do not believe it will be able to implement them unassisted.

Recommendations

A. To meet its statutory responsibilities on the employment of staff in schools, school governance, exclusions and special educational needs, the LEA should:

- i) re-establish appraisal schemes for headteachers;
- ii) take further steps to secure LEA-appointed governors for schools where there are vacancies;
- iii) improve the provision for pupils who are permanently excluded from school;

- iv) ensure that there are no unacceptable delays in carrying out formal assessments of pupils who may warrant a statement of special educational needs.

B. To improve its partnership with schools the LEA should:

- i) agree with schools the respective responsibilities of the Officers, Members and schools, taking account of the School Standards and Framework Act;
- ii) make consultation more effective by involving schools more directly at an early stage in policy formulation;
- iii) secure a consistent, speedy response from all sections of the Department to enquiries from schools.

C. To make its relationships with other services more productive, the LEA should:

- i) improve liaison with Social Services at school level;
- ii) improve liaison with the Leicester Race Equality Council (LREC);
- iii) improve the coherence of community education provision with the statutory provision in schools.

D. To ensure link advisers have a greater impact on school improvement, the LEA should:

- i) engage more directly with schools in the process of identifying strengths and weaknesses in school management and performance, and subsequently in planning to address the weaknesses;
- ii) ensure that link advisers adopt a more active brokering role, bringing departmental resources and external sources more readily into line with school development priorities;
- iii) improve link advisers' management experience and expertise in school improvement;
- iv) align the support provided by advisers more closely with each school's needs;
- v) ensure greater consistency in the quality of support provided by link advisers in areas such as development planning;
- vi) ensure that advisers use LEA and school data more effectively to provide appropriate challenge to schools, especially in relation to the targets they set;
- viii) establish formal systems for monitoring, evaluating and reporting the impact of its services on raising attainments and improving the quality of schools.

E. To improve support for teaching, the LEA should:

- i) provide or broker access to specialist advice for all subjects;
- ii) devise a strategy for helping secondary schools to examine their own approach to teaching numeracy and build effectively on the developments in primary schools
- iii) implement procedures for appraisal;
- iv) devise a strategy to address more directly low teacher expectations;
- v) provide more effective support for competency procedures.

F. To increase the effectiveness of the support to improve management, the LEA should:

- i) facilitate access to advice from staff with suitable senior management experience who can provide appropriate challenge and advice to headteachers;
- ii) require link advisers to give an unequivocal view about the strengths and weaknesses of the management in schools.

G. To improve the effectiveness of governing bodies, the LEA should:

- i) ensure that governor training is more closely matched to governors' needs;
- ii) strengthen its efforts to recruit more governors from ethnic minority groups.

H. In order to improve its support to schools requiring special measures, with serious weaknesses, or causing concern, the LEA should;

- i) set out the criteria for determining schools which are a cause for concern to the LEA and maintain an open dialogue with such schools about their weaknesses;
- ii) establish more rigorous procedures to evaluate the impact of its support;
- iii) set clearer targets for improvement and specify success criteria for those targets;
- iv) improve the graduated withdrawal of support ensuring that ongoing needs are met.

I. To improve its support for attendance and exclusions, the LEA should:

- i) agree the attendance targets it has produced with the schools concerned;
- ii) match more closely the support for improving attendance to the needs of the schools, particularly secondary schools, and ensure greater consistency in quality;
- iii) change its guidance concerning the authorisation of absence for extended holidays to ensure it is consistent with the DfEE's guidance concerning 'exceptional circumstances';
- iv) work more closely with and challenge those schools which have high exclusion rates.

J. To take better account of the ethnic diversity of its population and to promote the attainments of all sections of the community, the LEA should:

- i) improve the monitoring of pupil attainment and progress, including attendance;
- ii) use data to target areas with the greatest need more effectively;
- iii) provide schools with clear guidance in relation to equal opportunities;
- iv) instigate procedures for improved monitoring and reporting of race equality issues including recruitment and the recording and analysis of the incidence of harassment;
- v) provide access to key information from the LEA to interested groups such as the LREC.

K. In order to improve the effectiveness of its support for pupils with SEN, the LEA should:

- i) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its SEN support;
- ii) introduce measures to help moderate schools' judgements about which pupils may need a formal assessment of special educational need;
- iii) support the move toward greater inclusion for pupils with special educational needs by developing a more strategic approach which manages reducing rolls in special schools and makes fuller use of the expertise available in those schools.

L. To improve resource allocation and expenditure, the LEA should:

- i) improve its process for consulting schools each year on the Education Budget so that the process is more transparent and schools understand the basis for decisions taken;
- ii) review its formula for allocating resources for deprivation to mainstream schools, to align it more closely with the needs of schools;

- iii) revise the places factors and their weightings for special schools to ensure these match current and forecast patterns of need and maximise opportunities for inclusion.

M. To improve the effectiveness of its finance support services, the LEA should:

- i) provide all schools with indicative and actual budgets as soon as possible in the planning cycle;
- ii) monitor the progress of school budgets very closely in 1999/2000 to ensure schools in financial difficulty are given appropriate advice at the earliest opportunity.

N. To improve the effectiveness of its personnel services, the LEA should:

- i) introduce a system of performance management to improve staff expertise and promote greater consistency.

O. To provide a better service to schools in relation to property the LEA should:

- i) urgently address the lack of co-ordination within the repairs and maintenance service to schools and introduce performance monitoring.

P. To ensure that arrangements for school admissions are efficient and equitable, the LEA should:

- i) improve its forecasting of school places through closer liaison with Leicestershire County Council;
- ii) review its admissions and appeals documentation to ensure the language used is accessible to all parents;
- iii) monitor admissions and appeals by ethnicity.

SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

12. Leicester City became a unitary authority in April 1997. The city has a culturally diverse population with relatively high levels of disadvantage. Census data indicate that the proportion of the population with higher education qualifications is below the national average and the number of households from social classes 1 and 2 is well below average. Unemployment is falling but remains above the national average at 6.8 per cent. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, particularly in primary schools. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of SEN is above the national average in primary schools and well above in secondary schools. Over 35 per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language. The majority of these children are of Asian heritage but there are small African-Caribbean and dual heritage communities.

13. At the point of disaggregation from the former Leicestershire LEA, Leicester City took responsibility for the education of pupils in the city against a backdrop of falling rolls and with over 7,500 surplus places. The largest proportion of these surplus places (4,500) is in the secondary sector. The LEA has recently had approval for a reorganisation of its secondary schools which seeks not only to reduce the number of surplus places, but also to raise standards across the city schools. Reviews of primary and special schools are also planned. The Council's aim was to improve the pattern of secondary provision by closing six schools, opening a 16-18 school with more than 2000 places, enlarging 14 schools, and removing sixth forms from two schools by September 1999. The Education Department is currently responsible for 87 primary schools, 21 secondary schools and 10 special schools (Service Plan figures). Six of the secondary schools offer sixth form provision. Fifty-four (62 per cent) of the primary schools provide education for pupils from 5-11 years and there are 17 infant schools and 16 junior schools. (Nine of the primary schools and two of the secondary schools are denominational schools.) The LEA was one of the first 12 LEAs to be involved in establishing an Education Action Zone (EAZ), based on 19 schools in the south-western part of the city, in September 1998.

14. Until the recent elections the Labour party had a significant majority in the Council. After the elections the majority was retained but much reduced. A new Leader of the Council and a new Chair of Education took office after the elections. At the start of this inspection the Education Committee comprised 23 members of whom 13 were Members of the Council. The Education Sub-Committee comprised 18 members with delegated responsibility for performance review, consultation, and operational issues.

15. The Education Department is led by a Director, supported by three Assistant Directors who have responsibility respectively for the Resources and School Support Branch, the Pupil and Student Support Branch, and the Quality and Development Branch.

Education funding

16. Since its inception in April 1997, the City Council has not spent above its Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) although it has closed the gap between the SSA and education expenditure, from 2.8 per cent in 1997/8 to 1.5 per cent in 1999/2000.

Year	Expenditure £ million	% difference from SSA
1997/98	117.7	-2.8
1998/99	127.6	-1.7
1999/2000	132.9*	-1.5

Source: LEA

*Original budget comparable to the SSA using the usual LEA inspection definition and not the section 52 definition to enable year on year comparisons to be made.

17. The City Council's approved budget for 1999/2000 was at its capping limit. The Education Committee has budgeted to spend £132.9 million. The Council has been successful at securing capital borrowing approval for 1999/2000: £0.64m from its Annual Capital Guideline and £5.75 million in Supplementary Credit Approval. It will also receive £0.51m from its New Deal allocation. The total projected expenditure on capital for 1999/2000 is £9.8 million.

18. The Council has also had some success in securing grant aid since it began delivering education. In 1998/99 it secured £3.8 million from the Standards Fund including £0.6m for the National Grid for Learning. It received £2.1 million for Section 11 posts and £55,100 for Section 210 posts through a joint arrangement with Leicestershire County Council. The Council has an EAZ, which has attracted additional funding, and it obtains grants from the Single Regeneration Budget and the Childcare Partnership budget.

SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF LEICESTER SCHOOLS

The following summary refers to all maintained schools in Leicester; the information is illustrative. Further details on pupils' attainment are given in Appendix 2.

19. *Attainment on entry to Leicester schools is generally below and often well below national expectations. Compared to schools in similar LEAs, attainment on entry to primary schools is low. It is slightly better, though still low, in secondary schools.*

20. OFSTED inspection reports judged attainment on entry to school to be low in nearly two-thirds of primary schools and to be good in only one-eighth of schools. Attainment on entry to secondary schools was low in over 70 per cent of schools and good in none.

21. *Attainment in Leicester's schools is generally low, being well below national averages at all stages of compulsory education although the difference is more pronounced in primary schools. Attainment is broadly in line with that for its statistical neighbours at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 but below at Key Stage 1 and at GCE Advanced level. The overall rate of improvement from 1995 to 1998 was slightly above the national trend, albeit from a low base. The most significant improvements have been made in English.*

22. In 1998 the pupils' test results at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing, mathematics and science were all well below national averages. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 in reading at Key Stage 1 was 65.8 per cent whereas it was 72.6 per cent for its statistical neighbours and 77.4 per cent nationally. At Key Stage 2 the proportions of pupils gaining Level 4 or higher in mathematics and science were close to the average for its statistical neighbours but below for English.

23. Preliminary Key Stage 2 results for 1999 show an encouraging improvement in English and mathematics with 59.1 per cent and 60.7 per cent of pupils achieving Level 4 and above respectively.

24. At Key Stage 3 the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 or higher in 1998 was in line with that for its statistical neighbours in English, mathematics and science. In English at Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 or higher improved from 41.9 to 57.5

per cent; the gap with national averages has almost halved although progress has been erratic.

25. In the 1998 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-G was well below the national average while that for five or more grades A*-C was below. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C rose by 5.9 per cent which is above the national figure of 3.2 per cent.

26. The LEA has analysed the GCSE results obtained by pupils in 1997. This revealed that results in English and science are relatively good and poor in French. Other analyses commissioned by the LEA show that there are distinct patterns. A study of the 1997 Key Stage 2 results was carried out by the University of Leicester. This revealed that most schools with low free school meal (FSM) percentage or high English as an additional language (EAL) do as well as or better than like schools, while over half of the schools with high FSM percentage did less well than similar schools nationally.

27. The University of London Institute of Education (ULIE) has compared the GCSE results for Leicester City schools with other schools with similar socio-economic characteristics. On this analysis for 1995 to 1997 the results for 48 per cent were in line, five per cent were better while 52 per cent were below or well below the performance in like schools.

28. OFSTED inspection data confirms that attainment is generally below national averages. The LEA has significantly more primary and secondary schools that require some improvement than its statistical neighbours or the average nationally.

29. Twenty-eight of the city's 118 schools are deemed to have serious weaknesses or to require special measures. Eight primary, four secondary and two special schools have been judged to require special measures since 1993. A further 11 primary and 3 secondary schools have been judged to have serious weaknesses. In addition six primary schools have been identified by the LEA as giving cause for concern. This is a high percentage. Only 17 out of 80 primary schools (21 per cent) inspected in Leicester City were rated good or very good in relation to the standards of achievement of their pupils; this compares with 40 per cent for statistical neighbours and 52 per cent for primary schools nationally. At secondary level the comparable percentages are 43 for the LEA, 41 for statistical neighbours and 60 per cent for all secondary schools nationally. The percentage of schools judged to need significant improvement was double that for its statistical neighbours for both primary and secondary schools.

30. The LEA has carried out a thorough analysis of the Section 9/10 inspection reports of schools inspected in the last two years. Raising attainment levels was identified as a key issue in 83 per cent of primary schools and 75 per cent of secondary schools inspected. OFSTED data shows that Leicester City schools have strengths which contribute to raising pupils' achievement but also many weaknesses.

31. There are few identified strengths in primary schools, although the most recent analysis suggests some improvement in the teaching of literacy. Provision for the under-fives is sound and often good but leadership and management is poor in one-third of primary schools. Teachers' expectations were too low in 38 per cent of Key Stage 1 and 51 per cent of Key Stage 2 classes and there were significant weaknesses in teachers' knowledge, understanding and planning.

32. The OFSTED inspection judgements on secondary schools are more positive. Particular strengths are pupils' attitudes to learning, behaviour, relationships, and pupils'

progress in mathematics. The quality of teaching is sound and often good; leadership is also sound. Nevertheless, there is considerable variation between schools in terms of performance, with some successful schools but others which are subject to special measures.

33. Attendance is below the national average in primary and secondary schools. The rate of permanent exclusions is higher than the national average in both primary and secondary schools.

SECTION 3: THE LEA STRATEGY

Role and priorities

34. The LEA recognised the urgent need to raise standards as a major priority from the outset and this theme has been present in all stages of the process leading to the creation of the Education Development Plan (EDP). Schools recognise and agree with the priorities set out in the EDP. However, the LEA has not focused with sufficient clarity and rigour on aspects it identifies as specific to Leicester. These include weaknesses in teaching, management and governance. Though it declares its uniqueness, the LEA does not show sufficient recognition of the ethnic diversity of its population in its strategic planning. The partnership between the LEA and its schools is not yet properly articulated and understood, and the criteria for challenge and intervention from the LEA have not been clearly defined.

35. In 1997 the new Leicester City Council identified four corporate priorities. These were Cultural Diversity, Economic Prosperity, Environmental Quality and Social Justice. From these developed seven corporate programmes, one of which was the raising of educational standards. From that time education has been seen as a key issue and a report to the Policy and Resources Committee in May 1998 on the first year of unitary status described the raising of educational standards as the Council's top priority.

36. At an inaugural conference between the LEA and its schools in May 1997 schools were asked to consider the roles the LEA should play in supporting school improvement. As a result of this conference the LEA adopted two key priorities:

- raising standards and increasing participation;
- improving leadership and management focusing on raising standards.

37. Other key priorities for the LEA to address which were raised at the conference included:

- strengthening teaching, especially in Key Stage 1;
- raising the expectations of teachers;
- improving monitoring and evaluation in schools;
- improving the quality of development planning;
- raising standards, especially in English.

38. These priorities have informed those identified within the EDP but there is little rigorous analysis of progress against them for the first two years.

39. In its 1998/2000 Service Plan the Education Department describes its purposes as:

- Supporting School Improvement;
- Meeting Special Needs;
- Promoting Life-long Learning;
- Enhancing Quality of Life.

These are repeated in the EDP but the connection between the Service Plan and the EDP with this set of 'purposes' is not made sufficiently explicit.

The Education Development Plan

40. Leicester's EDP sets out its agenda in relation to its own analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The plan establishes eight priorities. These are:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- raise standards in literacy;
- raise standards in numeracy;
- raise standards of achievement in ICT and promote its use in teaching and learning;
- improve the achievement of pupils with special educational needs;
- improve the quality of leadership and management;
- promote school improvement and identify, monitor and support schools causing concern;
- increase participation and promote inclusion.

41. The EDP has been approved by the Secretary of State for three years subject to specific conditions. These involve:

- the removal from the EDP of some activities which should be funded through delegation to schools;
- the presentation of analysis of data related to the performance of ethnic minority pupils;
- the need to target activities to particular schools, key stages or groups of pupils, especially in relation to improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising the standards in ICT.

42. The lack of any detailed analysis of data related to the performance of ethnic minorities is a particularly important weakness, given what the plan describes as 'Leicester's unique ethnic, faith and language diversity'. Despite the acknowledgment of the failings in many schools in the city the plan contains relatively little rigorous analysis of some of the underlying causes, such as poor teaching and management.

43. The LEA has set out the required actions to address the EDP priorities, and schools generally know what the priorities are. However, the LEA has not yet engaged schools sufficiently in the discussion about the respective responsibilities implicit in the EDP. In addition schools are insufficiently clear about the LEA's strategy to address aspects such as low expectations, which require a greater degree of direct challenge to schools about their practices.

44. The LEA is still developing its relationship with schools, but after two years the basis of the partnership remains undefined. A good start was made to early discussions about the respective responsibilities within a partnership involving the schools, the Education Department and the LEA, but these responsibilities have not been formally agreed and schools remain uncertain about the exact role of the LEA.

45. The LEA has successfully completed several required plans within the expected timescale despite having a limited number of personnel to carry out this work. The Behaviour Support Plan has been approved by the Education Committee and the Secretary of State. It was based on a survey of views which showed support for behaviour to be an important weakness in the LEA. It clearly sets out a strategy for bringing about improvements and actions to support the aims are included. The first phase of the plan will be in place in September 1999, although timings are not clear from the plan. Members' approval of the extra funding needed to implement the plan shows their commitment to it.

46. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has produced an Early Years Development and Childcare Plan 1999-2000. It has also been approved by the Secretary of State. The audit of parents' views showed a demand for more childcare. The plan proposes to balance the creation of new sustainable places with support for existing good quality provision. Other priorities are to support providers to continue to raise quality standards, to build better support structures for providers and to help local communities to make childcare bids. Suitable plans are set out for achieving these priorities. Leicester is to receive additional funding to expand places for three-year-olds over the next three years.

47. The Leicester Children's Services Plan was drawn up by the Social Services Department, the Education Department, Leicestershire Health Authority and Voluntary Action Leicester. The plan makes clear the strategy for Children's Services in Leicester, and was recognised as an example of good practice by the Department of Health and the Social Exclusion Unit. It places children's needs at the centre of all activity. Its aims include improving opportunities for socially excluded children. It identifies a number of common themes, a range of information to assist planning, details of current services and a number of detailed and measurable action plans for the future. The Service Standards Unit is responsible for monitoring standards, quality of service and assisting with development of good practice.

48. The LEA was late in seeking nominations for the School Organisation Committee. However, the schedule for the completion of the School Organisation Plan is reported to be on target.

49. The LEA is in the process of implementing a major review of secondary education aimed at raising standards and removing surplus places. It has also initiated major reviews of primary schools, special schools and youth and community. In starting these reviews, the LEA has shown a willingness to undertake a root and branch audit of its provision but there has been a lack of realism about how quickly these reviews could be achieved, and at what cost.

50. The compressed timescale for the implementation of the secondary reorganisation presented a significant challenge to the LEA. The LEA has achieved much but the full implications of this reorganisation were not fully anticipated, especially in terms of its impact on those schools which will receive pupils from closing schools, and the long term impact on parental preferences.

51. The timescales for the other reviews have been subject to some revision leading to uncertainty at all levels. Over four-fifths of the schools visited did not have full confidence in the LEA's handling of school reviews, although some headteachers expressed the view that the LEA had learned lessons from the secondary review. The review of special educational provision has been delayed owing to the need to develop a behaviour support strategy for schools and to cope with the situation where two out of the three schools for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) are in special measures. This has increased uncertainty in special schools at a time of falling rolls. The review of community education is seen as increasingly urgent by many schools, not least because of dissatisfaction on budget issues, but also because of the lack of coherence in planning and policy between the different sections of the LEA responsible for community education and statutory provision in mainstream settings.

52. The LEA made a successful bid to establish an EAZ from September 1998, in conjunction with a range of partners. The Zone is appropriately targeted at a disadvantaged area where standards in the schools are lower than the city average. It aims to bring about improvements by programmes which support teachers, parents and pupils although its work

is still at an early stage of development. The implications and potential impact of the EAZ are poorly developed through the EDP.

Consultation and communication

53. There are weaknesses in consultation and communication. Consultation concerning the EDP was satisfactory overall. There are, however, weaknesses in the consultative procedures for key strategies such as the secondary reorganisation review, and communications are too often poor.

54. The LEA uses a range of consultative procedures and groups. These have worked well for agreeing the priorities which are set out in the EDP. Consequently, most schools judge that the priorities are the right ones. A weakness is that schools' representatives have been too little involved in working groups to formulate the detail of the plan.

55. There was general consensus that something needed to be done about the poor performance and large number of surplus places in some secondary schools, but flaws in the consultation and communication between the LEA and its schools have highlighted weaknesses in the partnership and caused particular problems for some schools. Whilst schools designated for closure have been well consulted on the whole, some schools which are to remain open have not been fully consulted or provided with full and timely information.

56. There is also scope for further improvement with the LEA's consultation, for example, in relation to the education budget. While schools indicate that there is annual consultation on funding for schools, some feel that decisions have been made in advance of consultation. There is a need to make the process more transparent and open so that schools understand the complexities involved in generating the budget each year and the basis for decisions taken.

57. The visits made to schools suggest that there is a high incidence of unacceptable delay in responding to headteachers and governing bodies; too frequently there is no reply at all. This unsatisfactory situation spans a range of LEA services including admissions and school places, premises, finance and letters sent directly to the Director.

Evaluating effectiveness

58. The strategy for monitoring and evaluating much of the work of the Department is poor. There is a lack of oversight by Members of the impact of the Department on raising attainment.

59. There has been some useful evaluation of the process and impact of the LEA's work to bring schools out of Special Measures. This has involved scrutiny of OFSTED reports and HMI monitoring visits to determine where the LEA has made the greatest impact and what it needs to do to improve further its support for these schools. The results of this evaluation have been reported to the Education Committee.

60. Beyond this there is very little rigorous evaluation of the work of the Department, and the role of the Education Committee in monitoring the performance of the Education Department is under-developed. The Department has not routinely set objectives which are quantifiable in terms of improvements in standards and quality in schools and is, therefore, unable to measure its impact. Significant committee reports such as one presented in March 1999 on standards of attainment in Leicester schools the previous year do not give a clear indication of the impact of the LEA in supporting schools and there is insufficient consideration of the cost effectiveness of any contribution by the LEA. As a

result the committee is not yet able to consider the issues surrounding 'Best Value' in relation to the services provided by the Education Department.

School places and admissions

61. Although the LEA has made substantial progress with its rules and arrangements for managing places and admissions, it has had difficulty forecasting the demand for school places particularly for secondary provision. The LEA has, however, introduced a number of positive developments that will benefit schools in the medium term by reducing the time spent on administration. Admissions to secondary schools are now managed centrally and there are plans for primary admissions to be handled centrally next year. A preference system has been introduced for both sectors, as have objective rules for admission. However there is insufficient information kept on the access to admissions of the various ethnic groups in the City.

62. There is scope for further improvement which would promote equal access to admission arrangements. The LEA does not routinely provide translations of admissions forms and information into common additional languages so that parents are better able to understand their role in the process and make informed decisions. Admissions and appeals are not monitored by ethnicity or by area. Such information would assist the LEA to shape its admissions service to community needs.

Secondary provision

63. The LEA has acted decisively to reduce substantially the number of surplus places in the City's secondary schools. Approval for the LEA's review of secondary school provision by the Secretary of State was received in January of this year leaving six months to implement wide-ranging proposals involving more than 20 secondary schools. The size of the task that the LEA was facing in the time available was challenging both in scope and complexity requiring meticulous planning. There are beneficial outcomes from the review. For example it will result in the removal of 3,982 surplus places. Reliance on temporary classrooms, which is high, will also be reduced. A £15 million capital programme is being drawn up to address future accommodation needs. The staff assimilation process has largely been completed on time although the LEA did not play as active a part as it could in helping to match staff to new posts.

64. However, schools are anxious about arrangements for the start of the 1999/2000 academic year. Evidence from school visits demonstrates that forecasting, planning, and communication with the schools affected has not been as good as it should have been, leaving some schools concerned about their ability to accommodate additional pupils. This can be explained in part by pressure on county schools close to the city boundaries resulting in greater demand in the city's schools than had been predicted. The introduction of parental preference and the removal of the guarantee of a place in the catchment area of each school also contributed much to the LEA's difficulties in updating schools about their numbers for September 1999.

Primary provision

65. The LEA is experiencing twin problems of over capacity and demand. Following a recent audit, 12 per cent of primary schools had more than 25 per cent of places unfilled. At the same time 15 per cent of primary schools had 10 per cent more pupils than places. District Audit also reported scope to remove at least 1,150 places and expressed a concern that temporary classrooms supported 3,400 places

66. The LEA is aware of the problems and is planning to review provision on an incremental basis with implementation likely to extend to a period of up to ten years. Early rounds of consultation with schools have opened up debate on the configuration of its 87 primary schools. No proposals have as yet emerged. There is concern in schools that the review was started but its impetus and focus have not been sustained. The LEA needs to communicate more effectively to schools where it is with the review and share details of the content and timescale of the review's future stages.

Liaison with other services and agencies

67. The LEA has established a wide range of productive partnerships with other agencies. There are some shortcomings in what is reasonably effective liaison at a strategic level. Liaison between Education and Social Services has improved and is good at a strategic level, but is still too often weak at school level. Liaison between community education and other educational work is also weak.

68. Liaison with other agencies is generally productive. The agencies involved include the Leicestershire Training and Enterprise Council, the Leicestershire and Rutland Health Care Trust, the Leicestershire Constabulary, Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland Careers and Guidance Service, as well as a number of voluntary organisations. In the main there are effective contacts at a strategic level and with schools.

69. Several initiatives include the involvement of a variety of partners. For example, a wide range of interests are represented on the Leicester Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. All of those already mentioned, as well as others, such as local universities, the Leicester Chamber of Commerce, the Leicester City Football Club and the Prince's Trust, are involved in the new EAZ.

70. The EAZ has made a reasonable start but is at an early stage of development. It has yet to make effective use of the partnerships. There has been some duplication of effort, for example the EAZ set up a group on work related learning which replicates the structure set up by the City Cluster. The work by the 'Best Practice' team has been of mixed quality so far.

71. The Training and Enterprise Council, which from 1 April incorporated the Leicestershire Education Business Partnership, is involved in a number of different initiatives. For example, it part funds a school effectiveness project which, with help from local higher education providers, aims to improve leadership and management. Other examples include setting up a project to develop "Investors in People" in schools throughout the City, and a project which provides mentors from business for secondary schools with low attendance levels. The Leicester City Cluster is highly valued by secondary schools.

72. There is a history of good relationships with the Health Care Trust and its predecessor. Every school is supported by a named doctor and nurse. Health professionals have contributed to the Behaviour Support Plan and the Early Years Development and Childcare Plan.

73. Similarly the LEA has good relationships with the Leicestershire Constabulary at strategic and school levels. Local officers work to support schools across a wide range of areas including drugs prevention, combating non-school attendance, bullying and racial incidents. The constabulary is represented on the Education Action Zone Forum and is involved in other projects.

74. The local SACRE is well supported by officers from the LEA. It fulfils its duties and is about to review the agreed syllabus for religious education.

75. The developing partnership with the local universities has enabled the professional development course programme to be extended and many schools value the wider dimension offered as a result of this partnership.

76. The Education Officer of the Leicester Race Equality Council meets regularly with the Director, visits and advises a number of schools and liaises closely with LEA officers. However, this partnership is not as productive as it needs to be, mainly because of the limited range of data collected by the LEA in relation to race equality issues.

77. Liaison between Education and Social Services has improved and is good at senior management level. The two services undertake joint planning, with, for example, good input from Education into the Children's Services Plan. Procedures have been set up for liaison between service managers, including protocols for liaison over looked after children and casework, but more improvements are needed at school level, where schools report that liaison is still uneven and weak in many cases.

78. Liaison between community education and other educational work is not effective enough. For example, community education work is not sufficiently supportive of and coherent with other work in the Department such as early years. Some headteachers report wasting valuable time trying to get advice and answers to queries as a result of the lack of an integrated approach between these sections of the LEA.

Budget planning and expenditure

79. In 1998/99 the LEA delegated 89 per cent of the Potential Schools Budget to schools. In 1999/2000 79.3 per cent of its Local Schools Budget was delegated, which includes an increase in delegation to schools of 5.7 per cent. This was deemed insufficient by the Secretary of State.

80. The gap between the resources available to the Council in its first year and the costs of maintaining provision amounted to £17 million. The LEA responded by reducing spending on services other than education by 7 per cent and on the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB) by 1.5 per cent. The LEA has since increased the ASB in 1998/99 by 2 per cent in real terms and a further one per cent in 1999/2000. The increase in the ASB in 1999/2000 was accompanied by large increases in the cost of some services to schools.

81. The LEA consulted schools adequately on Fair Funding in 1998/99. Further delegation for repairs and maintenance was introduced in April 1999. From April 2000 funding for school meals will also be delegated to secondary schools but will be optional for primary or special schools. The LEA intends to delegate funding for its services other than those managed by the Education Department in April 2000.

82. The Local Management of Schools (LMS) scheme adopted from the County Council, though clear and accessible, is not sufficiently aligned to the current and future needs of the

city's schools. For example, the LEA allocates resources for social deprivation on the basis of free school meals within the scheme. There is concern in some schools that uptake of free school meals does not correlate well with levels of deprivation and their impact on children's learning and achievement. The LEA recognises the need to improve its formula for deprivation, although no timetable has been set for this work.

83. Funding from the small schools' protection factor, while appropriately targeted on many schools, has been propping up the budgets of others with falling rolls and with large numbers of surplus places. A positive outcome of the review of secondary provision is that fewer schools will qualify for this factor. There is scope to amend this factor to ensure support for schools with falling rolls is not provided indefinitely and encourages school improvement.

84. Formula funding for special schools also requires review in order to maximise opportunities for inclusion. In particular, place factors and their weightings should be reviewed to ensure they are also closely aligned to current and forecasted patterns of need.

85. There is room for considerable improvement in the timeliness of school budget information, which is sent to schools in March each year. This is too late to enable them to plan for the new financial year and to consider options for buying LEA services.

86. The number of schools recording a deficit of greater than 2.5 percent decreased from 11 to 8 in 1998/99 and schools with surpluses greater than 5 per cent also reduced from 35 to 11. The LEA needs to monitor the progress with primary and secondary school budgets very closely in 1999/2000 and intervene where necessary to ensure any unnecessary deterioration in the position is avoided.

Statutory responsibilities

87. The LEA meets its statutory duties or takes reasonable steps to meet them in most areas. However, there are the following deficiencies:

- headteacher appraisal is not functioning;
- there has been inadequate action on vacancies for LEA-appointed governors, including schools in special measures;
- inadequate provision for many pupils who are out of school, including some pupils in Key Stage 1;
- schools are not receiving sufficient support in the assessment of pupils with special educational needs as a result of the shortage of educational psychologists' time.

SECTION 4: THE MANAGEMENT OF LEA SERVICES

Services to support school improvement

88. *The Quality and Development Branch has achieved partial success in leading the LEA strategy for school improvement but the support is not always matched well to the needs of the school. Although the link adviser support to some schools is effective, challenging schools to raise standards is rarely a feature of the relationship. It has yet to secure a full range of appropriate expertise across the advisory team and some link advisers have insufficient senior management experience to enable them to fulfil their role with schools.*

89. The LEA's strategy for school improvement rests primarily within the Quality and Development Branch under an Assistant Director. Its priorities and objectives are set out clearly in its annual 'Programme of Support' publication, are well understood and are generally supported by schools. The branch's monitoring and support functions are still evolving. Monitoring procedures have yet to be implemented fully, although pilot projects have been undertaken. Few schools understand how the branch proposes to monitor school effectiveness and the criteria to be used are not widely known. The branch has had to react speedily to the high proportion of schools with serious weaknesses, or in need of special measures. This has delayed some of the developmental work which is needed and, as a result, the branch is not as effective in its quality assurance role as it aspires to be. Most schools recognise the scale of the challenge facing the branch and believe it to be making strenuous efforts to improve its work with them.

90. The staffing structure has changed, with additional staff appointed in each of the last two years. Two Education Officers were seconded to run schools in 1998/99, one of them a key line manager in the branch. The pace of change has meant that the branch did not run at its full staffing complement of 22.5 fte, with an estimated 18 fte advisers in post during 1998/99. An establishment of 25.5 is planned for 1999/2000. Currently this is a small team to deal with the wide-ranging needs in schools. Some projects and priority timescales have slipped as officers and advisers have been under considerable pressure to meet the wide range of commitments the branch has. Staff in the branch are hard-pressed and key roles have not been filled, or officers have been diverted to other duties, preventing the branch from providing effective support, in line with its stated aims, for all schools.

91. There are designated advisers for English, Numeracy, ICT (appointed in early 1999), RE, Early Years, Family and Community and SEN and advisers with primary and secondary management remits. Some of these posts are grant-funded. The authority does not set out to trade extensively, preferring to focus its energies and resources on its key objectives to remediate failure in schools and to raise pupil attainment. The Education Development Plan indicates that £1,230,000 will be allocated to meeting the school improvement priorities in 1999/2000 and that activities worth £254,000 will be funded through buy-back from schools.

92. The lack of advice for developing IT in the curriculum represented the most significant concern in schools, although this has now been addressed by the appointment of an adviser. The absence of advice has had a deleterious effect on many schools' capacity to develop. Provision of advice on the early years and on assessment has been effectively targeted in schools. There are few instances of LEA officers acting as a broker for a school to assist in finding curriculum expertise beyond the LEA team, a particular issue for secondary schools. There is an annual course programme from which schools can purchase places and this is the principal source of income. Most schools have welcomed the recently published course programme and many plan to make extensive use of it.

93. Schools' entitlement to link adviser support (the main activity of the branch) is clearly set out. This covers the link role, headteacher appointments and in-post support and pre- and post-inspection support. It is supplemented by additional time for schools designated as requiring extra support. Not all schools receive their core entitlement due to the pressing needs of others. In one school, recently removed from special measures, where support needs are still high less than four hours link adviser core time was spent in the school in the previous year.

94. The branch has operated effectively by facilitating a range of network groups to bring professional interests together but it has not secured coverage of the full curriculum for all phases. Successful examples include groups for: literacy and numeracy co-ordinators; assessment co-ordinators; headteachers; newly qualified teachers; some subject leaders and for schools in difficulty.

95. There are no formal mechanisms established to review the effectiveness of the branch's operation against its declared targets. Reports to Members deal with aspects of the branch's effectiveness and there has been some good use made of external reports and evaluations. There is much to do if the branch is to meet the new performance framework for local authorities in April 2000. Members of the branch have a monthly supervision meeting with their line manager to discuss targets and priorities. This has been effective in dealing with the considerable demands made of staff but has not placed their performance or development needs in the context of a regular appraisal cycle. Plans exist to implement the Council's Employee Review Programme.

Other services to promote access and achievement

96. The Pupil and Student Support Branch and the Resources and School Support Branch provide a range of services in support of school improvement. The services vary in effectiveness and quality and there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of their performance. The rate of statutory assessment for pupils with special educational needs has improved significantly.

97. The Pupil and Student Support Branch of the Education Department, under an Assistant Director and three third tier officers, carries responsibility for several services related to special educational needs, welfare and access. Two curriculum advisers, responsible to the Assistant Director for quality and development, are also involved in whole school development for special educational needs and staff training.

98. The Principal Educational Psychologist is responsible for a team which includes two bilingual teachers. The key function of this service is to work in partnership with schools, teachers, parents and others in preventative work to promote good practice and resolve difficulties. A second key function is to assist the LEA in meeting its statutory duties with regard to assessing pupils with special educational needs.

99. The Educational Psychology Service has two specialist senior educational psychologists for sensory impairment and speech and language difficulties. Although steps have been taken to address the shortages, a senior educational psychologist post remains vacant at the present time and there are vacancies for other educational psychologists within the team. As a result, insufficient educational psychologist time has been available to some mainstream schools.

100. The Head of the Special Needs Teaching Service is responsible for four teams of specialist teachers, ranging from those working with visually impaired, hearing impaired, learning and autism support and a pre-school team. The service is piloting service level

agreements with schools to provide a minimum of two half-hour sessions per term and has introduced some evaluation by schools. The support for individual pupils provided by the service is effective but it is not sufficiently well targeted to make best use of the limited resources.

101. The Education Officer (Special Needs) is responsible for the Special Education Service and Multicultural Services. A further third tier officer the Education Officer (Pupils), is responsible for education welfare, as well as education otherwise/exclusions. A significant proportion of the Special Education Service time is taken up with the management of statutory assessment of children's special educational needs, the drafting and issuing of statements and arrangement of school placements. The service has responded to 11 appeals lodged with the SEN tribunal and seven have been heard so far this year. In five of these the LEA's case was upheld. This service has improved the rate of statutory assessment significantly from 62 per cent to 90 per cent achieved within 18 weeks.

Management support services

102. The services provided by the LEA to support the management of schools are variable in quality. There is justifiable concern in schools about the service for repairs and maintenance, which lacks coordination and requires significant improvement.

103. Financial services to schools are low in cost per pupil and are, on the whole, providing schools with the support that they need. All schools have their own chequebooks. Those schools visited gave positive accounts of a reduction in errors in coding, reliable reconciliation, and improvements in the way budget intentions are recorded. School budget statements are clear. The service's responsiveness to requests for advice is generally good and the expertise of staff is valued. There is comprehensive guidance on financial systems and procedures. Associated training is provided and appreciated.

104. The school bursar service is well regarded, although schools are concerned that it is over-extended and would benefit from more open and early exchange of information with them. Financial benchmarking information is not routinely provided and would be of value to schools. Although support for schools in deficit is provided on request, a more proactive approach will be needed in future years to ensure schools at risk of deficit are encouraged to make efficient and effective use of resources.

105. Support for personnel issues, although low in cost per pupil, has been good in places, unsatisfactory in others. There are a number of positive aspects. About 50 per cent is centrally retained and targeted to schools with significant need. All statutory employment functions are being fulfilled. The budget for premature retirement costs is effectively managed. With the exception of equal opportunities schools have access to a comprehensive set of model policies. Advice to schools on less challenging issues has generally been sound.

106. Visits to schools by inspectors revealed many examples of good personnel practice. However, there is a lack of readily available knowledge and some staff do not have sufficient expertise on more complex matters. The LEA has not provided effective support to schools in relation to matters of competency. Other concerns relate to the service's speed of response, which schools indicate is variable. The service is developing a database on sickness absence to assist it to help schools deal with sickness absence at the right time. The service is also developing a system to improve its early identification and monitoring of schools needing support. These developments are appropriate and should be accompanied by the introduction of a performance management system, which encourages staff development and facilitates continuous improvement.

107. The Council estimates that 15 per cent of schools require extensive repair and maintenance but no schools require serious repair. Funding from New Deal in 1999/2000 will enable the LEA to give priority to the three schools in greatest need. Condition surveys have been undertaken for secondary schools although these have not yet been extended to primary and special schools.

108. There is considerable scope for improving the customer care of the Council's service for repair and maintenance to its schools, which is managed by the Town Clerk's department. The operation of single 'gateway' for referral by schools has resulted in frustration as work is allocated too slowly. Schools are unclear about the responsibilities of individual staff and about the management arrangements in operation. They are also unaware of the basis for assigning priorities for different work and are not kept in touch with progress. The service lacks co-ordination and there has been an absence of performance monitoring.

109. Funds for non-capital repairs and maintenance were delegated to schools in April 1999. The Council has set up a project board of headteachers to review buy-back arrangements and inform capital strategy. Another in-house group has been established with the aim of improving coordination of the Asset Management. These arrangements are necessary and need to be given a high priority if they are to succeed. Specific and immediate improvements are required. Any review should ensure that schools can access the property service they require without unreasonable delay, receive the advice they require to a suitable standard and are kept informed of progress.

110. The LEA has made some progress with its ICT development although there remains a substantial agenda which is unaddressed. Support for hardware and software for administrative ICT is generally good.

111. The absence of a clear and comprehensive strategy for ICT and the lack of dedicated officers to co-ordinate and improve the service for curriculum and admin ICT has had a negative impact on schools. The LEA does not have an Intranet and does not communicate electronically with schools. No information is kept on the ICT competency of staff in schools and as a consequence training is not always tailored to the needs of school staff.

SECTION 5: LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS, QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Support for development and action planning

112. *Whilst development planning in schools is sound or better the LEA's contribution to school planning for improvement is unsatisfactory overall because of the inconsistent nature of the contribution it has made. This reflects a lack of expertise in some link advisers and inconsistent support in schools with similar needs and entitlements. Schools feel well supported, but this is often in ways that are not taking them forward either by challenging assumptions or bringing a rigorous approach to scrutinising plans and strategies for development. Feedback to schools too rarely includes a detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of their strategic approach to school improvement.*

113. The contribution made by the LEA to school planning for improvement was inspected in all 24 schools visited. Pre-inspection support was effective in 11 of the 15 schools inspected since the LEA was established. In four schools the LEA's contribution was either non-existent or of limited usefulness. Post-inspection planning was supported in most schools, although some schools that had received satisfactory reports received little or no post-inspection planning support.

114. Development planning in schools is never less than satisfactory. In nine schools (six primary and three secondary) it was judged to be good or better. In most schools the planning was undertaken by the school with only limited input from the link adviser. However in four schools where the Section 10 reports indicated weaknesses in the school's capacity to plan for improvement, the link adviser proved effective in helping these schools to improve their planning.

115. Primary schools rely more heavily on the link adviser's input to their planning, although in a third of primary schools the link adviser did not make an effective input to all aspects of planning and monitoring. Their strongest contribution was to support schools in developing their strategies for improvement. In four schools this aspect of the LEA's work was ineffective, owing largely to a lack of relevant expertise on the part of the link adviser. The strategy for improvement was proving effective in one school but no attempt was made to take the school further forward in its strategic development. Almost half of the primary schools received little or no advice on the process of planning and a third of schools were not supported in monitoring the implementation of their plans. The focus of the LEA has, rightly, been on supporting planning in schools with the greatest needs. Nevertheless in some of the schools that were no longer deemed to require special measures or to have serious weaknesses there was no follow-up on the part of the LEA to ensure that the school's action planning was still on course.

116. Development planning in secondary schools is at least satisfactory in all schools inspected. Secondary schools received less support, and found that which they received less useful than their primary counterparts. Two out of the three schools that received pre-inspection support found it useful, but only one school had received consistent support for planning, strategic development and monitoring the implementation of its plans. The capacity of link advisers to make an effective contribution to the strategic planning and development of secondary schools is limited. Helpful support has been given on a subject specific basis and to middle management, but little effective contribution has been made to whole school planning. There is little evidence of link advisers challenging secondary schools and taking them forward in their understanding of the processes of planning for school improvement.

117. Some recent and helpful work has been undertaken by the LEA in providing more detailed guidance on alternative models of school development planning that draws upon good practice in schools. This has been well received in special schools. It has been placed in a suggested framework of school improvement planning with good advice given on the relationship between school management and development plans and the means by which these can be drawn together in a concise and targeted document. The timing of this advice means that it came too late for many schools that had already embarked on their planning for 1999/2000 and thus is unlikely to have a major impact until 2000/2001.

Support for improvement in management

118. The LEA's support for improving management has strengths and weaknesses but, because of its variability, it is unsatisfactory overall. It is generally better in primary than secondary schools.

119. The LEA identified the need to provide support for school management as an early priority and it was discussed at the first heads' conference. This theme has formed a continuous strand of the LEA's work since that time and it is reflected as a priority to improve the quality of leadership and management in the EDP.

120. The programme of support for management is set out in an LEA booklet for senior managers and governors. The LEA supports heads in several national developments such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship and Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers, and a pool of experienced headteachers has been contracted to work part-time over two years as consultant headteachers and mentors. The LEA is supporting 24 schools in preparing for Investors in People (IIP) status and the Quality and Development Branch is working in partnership with the University of Leicester to run a Leading and Managing Schools for Excellence (LAMSE) project involving 20 schools. These are all examples of useful initiatives which are having a positive impact on those schools involved.

121. A central plank of the LEA's influence on senior management is through the link adviser. All schools are given a core entitlement of link adviser time which includes time for analysis of test/exam data, analysis of the SDP, support for target setting, support to improve planning, collection and monitoring of data and attendance at governing body meetings. The support of the link adviser is often valued in schools but is too variable in both the quality and the amount of advice offered. In over half of the schools the support offered did not include any evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses or the headteacher's performance and there are too many instances of headteachers having to make repeated requests for support from different sections of the Education Department. In only a few schools did the link adviser act effectively to align departmental resources and services to meet pressing school needs.

122. In the most successful examples of the work of the link adviser a high level of support was offered by experienced officers which enabled schools to plan their own school improvement strategies. In these schools the link adviser was meticulous in scrutinising the school's plans brought in other sections of the branch and the department in line with the school's needs and was prepared to give unequivocal feedback on the school's progress. Examples of this, differentiated according to need, were found in schools identified for both intensive support and a light touch. However, in over a quarter of schools the support provided by the link adviser, whilst useful within its scope, was ineffective in dealing with the management issues faced by the headteacher and often reflected a lack of management expertise on the part of the advisers. This is, again, a particular concern in secondary schools.

123. Criticisms were made by a number of recently appointed headteachers who found management courses lacked differentiation and challenge, although most were able to access highly quality training through the HEADLAMP and NPQH/LPSH initiatives. Headteacher mentoring has proved effective for some new headteachers but only where a mentor was appointed and took the role seriously. In cases where the mentor left the authority, or one was not appointed, no action was taken by the LEA to provide another mentor. Too many headteachers, in either their first headship or in a new school, were left with insufficient support by the LEA. The LEA has had a significant number of new headteachers but nevertheless this is a poor picture. One school understated the case by describing this state of affairs as “risky”.

124. In special schools support by the LEA for developing management skills has varied with the needs of individual schools. More time and energy has rightly been given to schools with the greatest assessed needs, such as those in special measures. Whilst this is understandable, there is a feeling that good leadership is assumed and not always recognised and acknowledged by the LEA.

125. Appraisal for headteachers has yet to be developed. This is a fundamental weakness in an LEA that has expressed concerns about the quality of management in its schools.

Support for the use of performance data

126. The LEA provides some useful performance data to schools but the range of data is limited and the LEA has not been effective in helping all schools to use the data to set challenging targets for their pupils.

127. The LEA has, appropriately, established a policy of 'opening up' data by providing some comparative data such as that for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results which enable schools to evaluate their own performance and to compare their performance with similar schools. Key Stage 3 results are collected by the LEA and distributed to all secondary schools and Key Stage 4 results are compared to national benchmarks. An analysis of subject residual information for GCSE results has highlighted which subjects were under-performing overall in Leicester schools. The LEA is working to improve the exchange of assessment information between the phases by introducing a common Key Stage 2/3 transfer document this year for the present Year 6 pupils. It has also recommended the Signposts Baseline Assessment Scheme for primary schools and provided some useful assessment training and guidance on the use of baseline assessments.

128. The LEA has, then, made a start and it has undoubtedly improved schools' understanding about the usefulness of assessment data. There is more it could do, however. The LEA does not provide any value added data for schools and, although there is some analysis of the performance of boys and girls, the LEA does not undertake a full analysis of the performance of different ethnic groups in individual schools. Data is available for the 1998 NC tests and GCSE examinations but only for those schools where there was Section 11 support. This partial data demonstrated a marked difference in performance between ethnic groups. Indian and Pakistani pupils (by far the largest ethnic minority groups) achieved close to national norms, while small cohorts of African Caribbean and dual heritage pupils achieved well below national norms. This information has not been fed back to schools and is not informing the distribution of resources or stimulating improved analysis by the schools themselves. For instance, one school with a significant proportion of pupils from mixed parentage, had not analysed their results, received no Section 11 support and the matter had not been discussed with the link adviser.

129. Conferences and courses on target-setting for heads and governors have been provided by the LEA and guidance is provided for headteachers through documentation and the link adviser visits. Statutory targets set by schools were agreed between the LEA and the schools. Nearly all schools report that they have discussed the process of target setting with their link adviser but there was little convincing evidence that these discussions introduced an appropriate degree of challenge in the targets which were agreed. There is clear evidence that the LEA has itself set inappropriately low Key Stage 2 targets for numeracy for the year 2000. Moreover, an analysis of the targets set by schools shows that nearly one-quarter of the LEA's primary schools have set targets for the year 2000, in either English or mathematics or both, which are actually lower than the results achieved by those schools in 1998. Despite this, no schools were identified as setting unchallenging targets in the LEA's EDP submission.

Support for Governing Bodies

130. The LEA is not fulfilling its statutory duties and there is a high number of governor vacancies including a high proportion of LEA ones. Support for governing bodies is unsatisfactory overall and communication on specific issues relating to a school is poor.

131. OFSTED inspections show that too many Leicester schools are governed weakly. The EDP highlights that leadership and management were identified as key issues in 90 per cent of primary schools in the last two years, one of the frequently identified reasons being the role of governors.

132. The overall position is still unsatisfactory and the LEA is not effective in tackling the situation that it inherited. There were frequent references to a culture of apathy to explain the high number of vacancies. In May 1999 there were 238 vacancies on governing bodies and 40 per cent were designated as LEA appointments. There were multiple vacancies in seven schools judged to require special measures or to have serious weaknesses; in these schools an opportunity is being missed to strengthen the governing body and provide more effective leadership to the school. Many of the LEA vacancies are long-standing. There is also concern in some schools about poor attendance by LEA governors and a lack of involvement in working groups.

133. There is a small Governor Support Unit that is over-stretched to meet the needs. This is recognised by the LEA and some enhancement is proposed to provide better support for schools causing concern and to combat the current under-representation of governors from ethnic minority groupings. The quality of advice from this unit is well regarded generally. There is a comprehensive governor training programme but it is not based sufficiently on an audit of need; in 1998/9 approximately half of the scheduled training events were cancelled.

134. Communications to governors on general issues are sound and include regular newsletters and Director's meetings. However, they are often poor for specific issues relating to individual schools including secondary reorganisation issues. Consultations with governors on issues such as the EDP have been satisfactory in most respects but have relied too much on ad hoc arrangements and procedures. An example of this was the recent introduction of delegated funds for repairs and maintenance of school properties. The governors of special schools felt that they were not given sufficient time to explore options and alternatives, so they felt constrained to buy back into LEA services.

135. A Governors' Association has been formed recently, as a result of an LEA initiative, but only one-fifth of the LEA's schools subscribe to it. The executive has no representative from schools causing concern; given that this group of schools is allocated 50 per cent of LEA advisory support, this is a major shortcoming.

136. The Audit Commission surveyed 18 LEAs. The information and advice to Leicester school governing bodies was rated as poor and equal to the lowest score in the sample.

Support for improvement in teaching

137. *The LEA's support for teaching has strengths and weaknesses; it is sound overall in primary schools but weak in secondary schools.*

138. The EDP identifies the improvement in the quality of teaching as the first priority. OFSTED reports confirm the need to improve substantially the quality of teaching in nearly half the primary and in a quarter of the secondary schools. Also, in 86 per cent of the primary schools inspected in the last two years, improving teaching was identified as a key issue. Teacher expectations for junior-aged pupils were too low in half the schools and this is very much higher than normally found. The EDP does not state explicitly the LEA strategy for remedying this unsatisfactory state of affairs.

139. A major strategy for improving the quality of teaching is through the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) and support for schools causing concern. It is therefore sensible that overall direction for these aspects has been made the responsibility of the Education Officer for School Improvement, although this places a very substantial level of responsibility on that post. The LEA strategy works better in primary than secondary schools where it is limited by gaps in subject expertise in the small advisory service. The LEA has not established a full pattern of networks which could potentially compensate for these gaps; this is recognised by the LEA but developments are at an early stage. Support for ICT varies from good to poor but improvements are planned as part of the NGfL initiative. In practice, the link adviser attached to each school is the key figure but the support these advisers offer varies in effectiveness.

140. The LEA's contribution has been effective in three-quarters of the primary schools visited. Its contribution has been mainly through its literacy and numeracy initiatives and several schools report that this is leading to improving teaching across the curriculum, particularly with regard to planning and the pace of lessons. Much advisory help in the schools visited has, appropriately, been channelled to schools which had weak teaching. This was very successful in one school where the link adviser also monitored and advised on teaching, including the foundation subjects; on the other hand poor support was given in a school judged to require special measures.

141. In the five secondary schools visited the support was unsatisfactory overall: in three schools there was too little support and in two schools there were too many weaknesses in the quality of the support. The LEA is not taking sufficient steps to raise teachers' expectations, disseminate good practice or to help schools identify effective trainers.

142. Significantly, despite the high number of failing schools and weak teaching identified by OFSTED inspections, the LEA has not offered leadership to schools in challenging unsatisfactory and weak teaching. It has not encouraged schools to identify poor teachers or to pursue capability procedures with sufficient rigour.

143. The LEA induction of newly qualified teachers (NQT) needs strengthening. Individual elements of the course are well regarded, but it does not form a cohesive package. Support is improving, partly due to the increased Standards Fund resources being made available, and the mentor training provided by the university is rated highly. However, the courses provided for the newly qualified teachers are less successful. A number of participants criticised the courses for being pitched at too low a level and sometimes duplicating the content of their initial teacher training courses.

Support for improving standards of literacy

144. The LEA is providing good support for promoting attainment in literacy and this is regarded by schools as one of the most successful of its initiatives. After some initial problems, the support has settled down to provide a sound service which is appropriately targeted and makes good use of its resources. Little evaluation has been undertaken thus far of the full strategy although a training module for co-ordinators is planned for the autumn term. Schools which are not the focus of intensive support from the LEA, and some which are, have had little or no feedback from the LEA with regard to the targets set by the school for literacy. In some schools this has meant that the targets do not represent sufficient challenge to raise attainment.

145. Improving standards of literacy was a major priority for the new authority in 1997. The LEA has set a very challenging target of 76 per cent of all pupils reaching Level 4 in the tests for 11-year-olds by 2002. This is within the indicative range set by the DfEE and represents a 22 per cent improvement on the 1998 figure of 54 per cent. In 1998, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 was well below the national percentage although, encouragingly, early indications are that the 1999 results show a 5 per cent improvement on the previous year. Attainment by seven-year-olds in both reading and writing was also well below the national average, although there was an improvement of over 5 per cent in writing in 1998, with 73 per cent of 7-year olds reaching Level 2. Attainment by 14-year-olds in Leicester City was below the national average in 1998 with 57.5 per cent reaching Level 5, though this represented an improvement of 15 percentage points over the previous year.

146. The LEA's support for literacy was an inspection theme in 14 schools: 11 primary schools and three secondary schools. In all schools the degree of support provided by the LEA was judged to be sufficient to meet the needs of the school and in nine schools was good or better. The LEA's contribution was effective in all but one school, where the LEA failed to take sufficient account of the work already undertaken by the school on developing its approach to literacy. In seven schools the LEA was judged to have made a very effective contribution. In all schools the provision made for improving literacy had improved since the original Section 10 inspection of the school. In schools that admit Reception children in the summer term, these children miss a large proportion of the National Literacy Strategy as a result of remaining in the nursery and not beginning this programme. This impedes the drive to raise standards of attainment.

147. The establishment of a steering group for literacy which brings together a wide range of partners and stakeholders has proved an effective means of ensuring that projects focused on literacy, for children and for adults, are developed in a coherent and targeted manner. An important objective for the LEA is to link the implementation of the NLS to its objective to improve the quality of teaching across the authority. In most primary schools visited this objective was met, with teachers drawing on their experience from implementing the Literacy Hour to improve the pace and planning of their lessons.

148. The LEA was allocated 1.5 literacy consultants through the Standards Fund and supplemented this to enable two full-time consultants, one with Early Years experience, to be appointed. They have worked principally with the 29 intensive support schools (eight of which were part of the pilot project) and have achieved high levels of school and teacher contact. The feedback from schools on both the training and the in-school support is largely positive. These schools have been able to access a variety of support, some finding demonstration lessons for staff particularly effective, whilst others drew upon the audit and monitoring expertise of the consultants to develop their own school monitoring procedures. Two schools felt that the consultants had adopted too narrow a focus to be fully effective. In both schools this was due to the consultant monitoring the school's work against the LEA interpretation of the strategy rather than providing feedback about the school's progress in improving teaching and standards of literacy.

149. Schools that did not receive intensive support have also made good progress in implementing the Literacy Hour, whilst secondary schools have been supported by the consultants in raising awareness of teachers and through visits to primary schools. 'Light touch' schools have generally found the five-day course for co-ordinators very helpful. One school purchased an additional place on the course in the autumn term and enabled both key stage co-ordinators to attend with the literacy co-ordinator, helping the development of literacy and its monitoring to be placed firmly in the school's management structure. The subject network group, which is facilitated by the LEA, meets after school and has proved

an effective means of networking experience and expertise between schools during the early stages of the implementation of the NLS.

150. All the staff funded under Section 11 (now Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant) and those involved in the Special Educational Needs Teaching services took part in the initial training and close links have been maintained between these targeted services and the mainstream work of the Literacy Strategy. This was particularly effective in one secondary school where targeted support for pupils with English as an additional language built upon the school's literacy strategy. This school has also drawn upon the EAZ Best Practice team in extending the range of teaching and learning styles.

151. The literacy action plan draws together several strands of activity to promote literacy across the City. These include six Summer Schools, four Family Literacy Projects and the establishment of an LEA Literacy Centre in the same location as the Multi-Cultural Service. These initiatives have been well-supported by the Library Service, and the Library Service for Education; local adult/FE providers through the Keeping Up With The Kids scheme; Higher Education with training for Family Reading Group leaders and accreditation for specialist teaching assistants and their mentors.

152. Little guidance has been issued to schools on how to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the literacy strategy, although this is scheduled for the autumn term training programme. The outcomes of school-based evaluation will be needed to inform the setting of targets for literacy. Thus far, there has been no feedback from the LEA to schools over the targets set. In some of the schools visited this meant that targets were not sufficiently challenging, as they were based largely on teacher predictions and took no account of the difference the Literacy Strategy could make.

Support for improvement in numeracy

153. *The LEA's support is at least sound in primary schools but weak in secondary schools. The numeracy targets agreed between the LEA and schools do not show sufficient challenge.*

154. The results of National Curriculum mathematics test results are well below national averages overall and consistently just below the average for the LEA's statistical neighbours. Compared to 1997 the results at Key Stage 2 and 3 declined while those at Key Stage 1 improved. However, early indications are that the 1999 Key Stage 2 results will show a substantial improvement on those for 1998.

155. Significantly, the aggregated average of published school targets for 2000 actually exceeds the target set by the LEA in its EDP by 3.5 per cent. It is difficult to accept, therefore, that the LEA target represents a satisfactory level of challenge to schools. This argument is reinforced by the fact that the preliminary Key Stage 2 results for 1999 indicate that the schools will exceed the LEA's year 2000 target this year.

156. The quality of LEA support for numeracy work in primary schools visited during the inspection was sound and often good. Thirteen schools participated in a pilot numeracy initiative in 1998/9. This has provided a sound basis for the current implementation of the NNS. The LEA numeracy team has been strengthened by the appointment of two experienced consultants; this support is valued by the schools. A detailed plan is in place for the NNS and extends the new approaches to teaching and learning to the early years but not to Key Stage 3. The LEA supported one summer school in 1998 and plans two further schools in summer 1999. This initiative is welcomed by schools.

157. The Language Support Service (LSS) analysed the results from minority ethnic groups in targeted schools in the 1998 Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests. This partial analysis reveals that average performance in mathematics was over eight percentage points below that in English, a bigger gap than observed nationally or for the LEA as a whole. Historically there has been little support for numeracy but it is appropriate that the EDP commits the LEA to involving all LSS staff in the NNS.

158. Support in secondary schools has been weak, owing in part to the fact that there was no adviser for mathematics for two years. An appointment was recently made. The LEA was unsuccessful in its bid for a Key Stage 3 numeracy project. It has not yet formulated a clear alternative strategy and this is an omission in the EDP.

159. Numeracy was a focus for attention in 12 of the primary schools and all five secondary schools visited. The level of support was appropriate in all the primary schools but was insufficient to meet the need in three of the five secondary schools. The LEA support was also more effective in primary schools: in four schools it was good or very good in quality, while in five others it was sound. In secondary schools the support was ineffective in three of the five schools, mainly as a result of insufficient expertise, but links are improving through the recently appointed consultants.

Support for pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds

160. Support for bi-lingual pupils is well regarded in schools. Pupils with English as an additional language make sound progress in acquiring language skills. There is a marked difference in performance between ethnic groups; support for raising achievement is not adequately informed by an analysis of data.

161. The Multicultural Education Service (MES) has approximately 143 fte staff. At present the Language Support Service comprises 139 fte staff organised in four projects according to geographical areas. Staff in the service include language support teachers, bilingual assistants and home-school liaison workers. The focus of the Service is predominantly English as an additional language.

162. Currently the service is centrally funded, although the resource centre has a small income. There are no service level agreements, but there are annual agreements for each school. With the introduction of Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) a major structural review is being undertaken and monies are now devolved to schools. Consultations are taking place with schools but, in this transitional year, all but two schools have agreed to buy back the services. There is no formal system of appraisal; project teachers monitor the work of support teachers.

163. The LEA has analysed the proportion of pupils attaining at the five language levels. These demonstrate that pupils benefiting from targeted support have made sound progress in acquiring English language skills. The perception in most schools is that the EMAG provision for ethnic minority groups in the city is good. The positive ethos in schools visited supports the view that schools work hard to foster good relationships between all groups.

164. The LEA identifies that its "unique diversity" requires a specific response in the EDP but it fails to provide an adequate one. There is a separate plan which was prepared for the successful bid for the EMAG but key elements have not been incorporated into the EDP. The EMAG plan is sound overall but it is based on historical allocations to schools rather than current need. There has been wide consultation on the plan but weaknesses remain: there are no clearly understood criteria for allocating resources and line management issues have not been satisfactorily resolved.

165. A resource centre provides resources, loans artefacts and provides some INSET. This is well regarded by the schools. However, there is little guidance provided by the LEA on curriculum and teaching strategies in relation to ethnic diversity and the dissemination of good practice is unsatisfactory.

166. Ethnic monitoring is weak. The collection of performance data is at an early stage; incidences of racial harassment in schools are not routinely recorded and collected; not all schools have Equal Opportunity policies. Ethnic minority groups are under-represented on governing bodies and in the senior management team of the Education Department, but the situation regarding teachers in mainstream schools is not known.

Support for improvement in attendance

167. Most primary schools are being provided with effective support on attendance. Support for secondary schools is uneven; too often it is either insufficient or not effective enough or both. The service now has a useful set of data which has been analysed and used to classify schools in order to target support more accurately.

168. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) is located within the Pupil and Student Support branch of the Education Department. The service spends 85 per cent of its time on attendance, reflecting the scale of the problem. In addition, the service acts for the LEA in relation to child protection, youth justice and child employment. It also carries out home visits in cases of permanent exclusions and when parents choose to educate their children at home.

169. Attendance in primary and secondary schools is below the national average. Unauthorised absence is average in primary schools but well above the national average in secondary schools. Authorised absence is well above average in primary schools and above average in secondary schools. Overall attendance levels have improved slightly at primary level but fallen back at secondary level over the last year, although almost half the schools have improved their rates of attendance.

170. Data from schools have been collected since the LEA was set up. They are now being carefully analysed and used to classify schools. This is a promising development enabling closer monitoring and more accurate targeting of support to take place. The data have also been used to produce targets for individual schools, but these have not yet been agreed with the schools.

171. Additional support has been provided for schools where attendance is a particular concern by using the Standards Fund, the LEA Schools in Difficulties Fund, or by realigning the service's usual resources. The service has undertaken initiatives to promote attendance, such as activity based work in the summer holidays to support and engage pupils who have particular difficulties.

172. Three-quarters of the primary schools visited in connection with the inspection have received effective help in improving attendance. This has resulted in a general improvement in attendance, with a few schools being enabled to raise levels significantly. In a few cases the service provided was unsatisfactory but has improved greatly over the last few months; in two schools support from the EWS is still insufficient and ineffective.

173. The attendance of particular pupils in some primary schools suffers because of extended holidays of more than two weeks during term time. In accordance with LEA

guidance, these absences are counted as authorised as long as there is a fixed return date. However, the LEA guidance does not mention that extended leave for holidays during term time should only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

174. The general picture is less positive in secondary schools. Although two of the five schools visited have received an appropriate amount of support, in one case enabling attendance levels to improve significantly, this was not so in the other three schools. These schools have made some improvements, for example by adopting a new attendance policy and in one case by employing their own attendance officer. However, the service provided by the LEA has been either insufficient or not effective enough or both. Problems include a slow response to referrals, reluctance to pursue court proceedings, and insufficient emphasis on the importance of contacting parents on the first day of absence. The service has not always provided schools with any significant analysis of or advice on the school's own procedures.

Support for improvement in behaviour

175. The support provided by the LEA to promote good behaviour is weak, and the high level of exclusions from schools is linked to this. The LEA recognises that considerable improvement is needed and has responded by prioritising the implementation of its Behaviour Support Plan. Provision for education other than at school for permanently excluded pupils is inadequate.

176. Support for behaviour, exclusions and alternative provision is located within the Pupil and Student Support Branch of the Education Department. Support for behaviour is included in one of the priorities in the EDP, and is clearly an area of concern within the LEA. A recent audit undertaken in connection with the proposed review of special educational needs showed concern about managing behaviour to be the most significant issue. The AC school survey also indicates that support for behaviour is regarded as unsatisfactory. OFSTED inspections judge behaviour to be unsatisfactory in a relatively high proportion of schools. Additionally, the level of permanent exclusions is above the national average in both secondary and primary schools and the level of fixed term exclusions is also high. The LEA has responded by prioritising the implementation of its recently produced Behaviour Support Plan and providing a support service which comes fully into operation in September. Council members have agreed to provide the necessary funding.

177. At the point of setting up the new LEA, little support for behaviour was available to schools, and schools had received little training in behaviour management. There have been some limited recent improvements. The Educational Psychology Service has been augmented, the special needs service now includes two experts in behaviour management and all staff within the service have received relevant training. The two services have worked together to provide intensive individually tailored support to some schools in particular need. The Student Support Service provides some ancillary support for pupils at risk of exclusion. The information received from schools concerning pupils deemed to have problematic behaviour is still not accurate or consistent.

178. The LEA has established procedures for exclusions which have recently been updated. A database has recently been set up and there are plans to improve this, so that, for instance, records can be shared more easily with social services. Data on exclusions are analysed, but only shared with schools in difficulties. Exclusion rates are higher for white, black and dual heritage pupils than for other groups.

179. The Student Support Service provides education otherwise than at school for permanently excluded pupils. A range of provision is available, but at present 78 per cent of

pupils receive less than ten hours tuition a week, which is inadequate. Plans are being made to increase the amount of tuition provided. The aim is to return pupils to full-time education as soon as possible, and there are procedures to assist with this. However, during the last year only 17 per cent of pupils were reintegrated into school. The Behaviour Support Plan envisages changes to the provision; the Behaviour Support strategy is designed to minimise exclusion and to promote increased inclusion. Schools in general approve of the strategies outlined in the plan, but it is not clear how the plan is being implemented or how schools are being chosen for involvement. Communication with schools over this is weak.

180. Five mainstream schools were visited where support for behaviour was a particular theme. Two have been successful in improving behaviour and reducing exclusions. In one, behaviour has deteriorated and in the other schools there has been insufficient improvement in either pupils' behaviour or the rate of exclusions.

181. In all five schools the LEA has given less support than is required and, overall, the support given has not been sufficiently effective. The LEA has not sufficiently challenged individual school's exclusion rates, even where rates are very high. In the schools where behaviour remains unsatisfactory or is deteriorating, insufficient or no support has been provided to prevent pupils from being excluded or to help staff with management of pupils.

182. In one secondary school, the LEA has provided a range of effective support for pupils at Key Stage 4 who are at risk of exclusion. This includes the very successful Fire Break project, which is a City Cluster initiative. In this school, the Student Support Service has also provided support to pupils who were being reintegrated following exclusion from another school. However, support for pupils at Key Stage 3 is limited; several of the recent exclusions from this particular school are of Key Stage 3 pupils.

183. Liaison between Social Services and Education over looked-after children is covered by an agreed protocol. This is being followed but the lack of a common database hampers liaison between the two departments. In accordance with national guidance, Social Services is introducing a new system. At present, Social Services provides Education with a list of all looked-after children. Although the full list has not been updated regularly, all such children who are excluded or a cause for concern are known to Education. The two departments have made a successful Standards Fund bid with a focus on helping secondary age looked-after children to improve their attainment.

184. Liaison between the two departments over child protection is satisfactory. There are clear procedures which have recently been revised as well as an information booklet for teachers and other adults. The City Area Child Protection Committee has recently been set up. Training has been provided in the past, but there has been a hiatus this year while the new committee was being set up. The LEA recognises the need to recommence training.

Support for Special Educational Needs (SEN)

185. Support for pupils with statements of special educational need is sound or better. Support for pupils at earlier stages of the Code of Practice is more variable and sometimes unsatisfactory. There is a lack of clarity about the basis of funding to schools for SEN and strategic planning for SEN is weak.

186. The LEA maintains a range of specialist schools and support services for pupils with special educational needs. The needs of pupils in special schools are generally well met, as are those with statements of special educational needs in mainstream schools, although the use of a historical funding formula does not adequately address the complexity of needs

experienced by some pupils. With the exception of pupils with behavioural difficulties, the LEA's support to pupils with significant learning difficulties is well regarded in schools. In the main the advice and support to schools are sufficiently expert and effective. The main weaknesses of the existing arrangements surround the lack of effective monitoring of the quality and impact of the support provided to pupils in mainstream settings and special schools, and the poor communication reported by schools between some services such as the educational psychology service and the special needs teaching service.

187. The LEA has increased dramatically the speed with which it processes statements of special educational needs but schools report that there are still unacceptable delays in progressing toward a formal assessment of special educational need because of the shortage of educational psychologists' time available to mainstream schools. There are no guidance or criteria provided to schools which might serve to help moderate judgements about which pupils should be put forward for formal assessment and there are differing perceptions in schools about the role of the special needs support services in respect of moderating such judgements. This results in a lack of consistency between schools about which pupils need a statement and it raises concerns about the equity of provision.

188. Support for special schools has varied in intensity and impact. It has generally been effective where schools have been in difficulties. Link advisers have been involved in giving useful advice on curriculum development, observing teaching, providing training and generally supporting on management issues. Special school headteachers are very positive about the LEA's willingness to take account of their needs in training on the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies but more generally they do not feel that the LEA can provide subject specialist advisers with expertise in translating their knowledge and skills for work with pupils with special educational needs.

189. Special schools, in particular, express some concern about the delay to the special educational needs review initiated by the LEA and they are, rightly, critical of the consultation arrangements in the initial stages of the special needs review. The EDP commits the LEA to promoting greater inclusion for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools and some special schools have already experienced falling rolls, especially where they are reliant on pupils from outside the LEA. Despite this there is no clear strategy to meet the training implications for mainstream schools of greater levels of inclusion, and no specific proposals to use the expertise of special school staff in an outreach function in support of those schools.

Support for schools requiring special measures, with serious weaknesses or causing concern

190. *The LEA has faced a considerable challenge in supporting schools requiring special measures, with serious weakness or causing concern because of the number of schools involved. The LEA's support for special measures schools is generally effective and it has good systems in place to monitor their progress. There are weaknesses in the ongoing support for schools which have recently been subject to special measures and there are no secure mechanisms to identify schools at risk of becoming subject to special measures or serious weaknesses. The criteria for designation of schools of concern to the LEA are not clearly defined.*

191. The LEA estimates that 50 per cent of its adviser resources are directed to supporting those 25 per cent of schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses. This is a sensible approach given the scale of the problem and the LEA is aiming to halve the number of such schools by 2001. Since the LEA was established 11 schools have been made subject to special measures and 13 identified as having serious weaknesses. A further five schools in the city also remain subject to special measures having been identified under the previous LEA. The secondary reorganisation will close five of the schools which are either special measures or serious weaknesses schools and the LEA has successfully helped five out of special measures.

192. The overall support provided by the LEA to schools in these categories has been effective, particularly in relation to special measures schools where 24 out of 29 HMI monitoring visits considered the LEA support to be at least satisfactory, and it was good in 15 cases. As part of this inspection HMI visited seven schools which are, or have been, in one of the categories of concern. In these schools, judgements about the continued effectiveness of the LEA's support were more variable and ranged from excellent to very poor. Where the support was good the link adviser was proactive in coordinating LEA support and the mentoring of the headteacher was meticulous and detailed in terms of planning for improvement. In the majority of cases there were weaknesses in the LEA's support. In two schools these surrounded the lack of ongoing support once the school had been taken out of special measures, despite substantial needs remaining. In two other cases the weaknesses were related to lack of sufficient help to address staffing problems and a lack of a co-ordinated response from different sections of the LEA.

193. Schools which fall into the categories of special measures or serious weaknesses, or which have been identified by the LEA as causing concern, are visited each half term by the link adviser whose role is to co-ordinate the programme of support for the school, drawing on resources from across the department. The LEA provides good guidance on action planning for these schools and the link adviser draws up a termly monitoring sheet for the implementation of the school's action plan. The main focus of advice is, appropriately, in relation to helping the schools to improve their own monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

194. A system of providing written reports to the governing body on the progress of the school has recently been introduced and officers consider the overall progress of the special measures and serious weakness schools at a termly panel meeting of officers. Headteachers are not invited to these meetings. The meetings consider written reports on the schools and decide what further action the LEA needs to take in the light of the link adviser and HMI monitoring visits. The most recent reports relate well to the key issues and they provide reasonable detail about the school's progress but they do not evaluate the impact of the LEA. The LEA does analyse HMI monitoring letters to establish its own effectiveness in supporting special measures schools. Given the level of resources which are put into this area of the LEA's work the lack of evaluation is a significant weakness. In

the case of one school which has received substantial support, the targets set with the LEA at intervals were not sufficiently explicit to allow progress to be measured accurately. Consequently the school has not improved as much as it should.

195. Termly reports are provided to Members in relation to schools with serious weaknesses and in special measures but, again, these do not give a sufficiently clear picture about the LEA's effectiveness or the costs to the LEA of supporting these schools. There is a recognition that in the past there was too great a reliance on informal and anecdotal evidence about important features such as the quality of management in the LEA's schools and it was only through OFSTED reports that the LEA learned of the severity of some problems. A system of early warning indicators is now being developed to help the LEA to identify schools causing concern or which are a potential for concern. This is a positive development but clear criteria have not yet been established or agreed with schools and it is not being made sufficiently clear to individual schools whether the LEA has concerns about them and what these might be. A greater degree of openness and straight talking between the link advisers and the schools is necessary to make this work effectively.

APPENDIX 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

a) Characteristics of the pupil population:

Indicator	Date	Source	LEA	National
Number of pupils in LEA area of compulsory school age	1999	LEA	44,682	-
Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals:	1997	DfEE	31.9	22.8
Primary	1997	DfEE	24.2	18.2
Secondary				
Percentage of pupils living in households with parents/carers:				
(i) With Higher Educational qualifications	1991	ONS Census	9.4	13.5
(ii) In Social Class 1 & 2	1991	ONS Census	18.0	31.0
Ethnic Groups in population aged 5-15. Percentage of ethnic group:				
Asian	1991	ONS Census	1.3	0.5
Bangladesh	1991	ONS Census	0.7	0.8
Black African	1991	ONS Census	0.4	0.6
Black Caribbean	1991	ONS Census	1.4	1.1
Black Other	1991	ONS Census	1.7	0.8
Chinese	1991	ONS Census	0.3	0.4
Indian	1991	ONS Census	31.1	2.7
Other	1991	ONS Census	2.4	1.1
Pakistani	1991	ONS Census	1.6	2.1
White	1991	ONS Census	59.1	89.9
Percentage of pupils:				
(i) With a statement of SEN				
Primary	1997	DfEE	3.2	2.6
Secondary	1997	DfEE	5.7	3.9
(ii) Attending special school				
Primary	1997	DfEE	1.3	1.1
Secondary	1997	DfEE	2.5	1.6
Participation in education:				
(i) % pupils under 5 on roll in maintained schools	1997	Audit Commission	81%	60%
(ii) % pupils aged 16 remaining in full-time education	1998	LEA	72.4%	69.3%

b) Organisation of schools

Number of:	
Infant schools	17
Junior schools	16
Primary schools	54
Secondary 11-16 schools	15
Secondary 11-18 schools	6
Special schools	10

* As at June 1999

c) Pupil / teacher ratios

	Year	LEA	National
Primary	1997	22.9	23.4
Secondary	1997	16.6	16.7

d) Class size

Rate per 1,000 classes

Size of class	Year	LEA	National
31 or more	KS1	1999	289.6
	KS2	1999	379.0
36 or more	KS1	1999	22.9
	KS2	1999	35.0

Source: DfEE

APPENDIX 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS

(a) Pupils' attainment

i) Attainment at age 7 (KS1)

% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above							
		Teacher Assessment			Tests		
Year		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1997	66.1	80.4	-14.4	N/A	N/A	N/A
	1998	71.5	81.4	-9.9	N/A	N/A	N/A
English (Reading)	1997	66.6	80.1	-13.5	66.5	80.1	-13.6
	1998	70.8	80.8	-9.9	69.5	80.1	-10.6
English (Writing)	1997	63.2	77.5	-14.3	67.2	80.4	-13.3
	1998	69.2	78.9	-9.8	72.9	81.4	-8.5
Mathematics	1997	74.7	84.2	-9.5	74.4	83.7	-9.3
	1998	77.9	85.6	-7.6	77.1	84.8	-7.8
Science	1997	74.9	85.5	-10.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
	1998	78.0	86.5	-8.5	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: DfEE

ii) Attainment at age 11 (KS2)

% of pupils achieving Level 4 or above							
		Teacher Assessment			Tests		
Year		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1997	48.8	63.4	-14.5	52.7	63.2	-10.6
	1998	52.8	65.3	-12.5	54.8	64.8	-10.0
Mathematics	1997	52.9	64.1	-11.2	54.5	62.0	-7.5
	1998	55.3	65.3	-10.0	48.5	58.5	-10.0
Science	1997	56.6	69.5	-12.9	59.7	68.8	-9.1
	1998	61.6	71.6	-9.9	60.6	69.3	-8.7

Source: DfEE

iii) Attainment at age 14 (KS3)

% of pupils achieving Level 5 or above							
		Teacher Assessment			Tests		
Year		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1997	49.7	60.2	-10.5	42.5	56.6	-14.2
	1998	50.4	62.5	-12.1	56.7	65.2	-8.5
Mathematics	1997	54.6	64.0	-9.4	52.4	60.7	-8.3
	1998	53.3	63.9	-10.7	48.3	59.9	-11.6
Science	1997	49.8	62.2	-12.4	51.0	60.8	-9.8
	1998	51.8	62.4	-10.6	44.3	56.5	-12.3

Source: DfEE

iv) Attainment at age 16: GCSE results in maintained schools

<i>Level achieved</i>	<i>Year</i>	% of pupils		
		<i>LEA</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Difference</i>
1 A* - G	1996	91.5	93.9	-2.4
	1997	91.1	94.0	-2.9
	1998	92.2	95.2	-2.9
5 A* - C	1996	31.8	42.6	-10.7
	1997	33.7	43.3	-9.5
	1998	35.7	44.7	-8.9
5 A* - G	1996	81.1	88.1	-6.9
	1997	83.0	88.5	-5.5
	1998	82.4	89.8	-7.4
Average point score	1996	29.1	35.0	-6.0
	1997	30.1	35.6	-5.5
	1998	30.7	36.8	-6.1

Source: DfEE

Pupils aged 15 at the beginning of the school year and on the roll in January of that year: 1997 data includes GNVQ equivalents.

v) Vocational Qualifications in maintained schools

<i>Level achieved</i>	<i>Year</i>	% of pupils		
		<i>LEA</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Pass entries	1996	68.0	79.2	-11.2
Pass entries	1997	81.9	80.1	1.8
Pass entries	1998	79.7	77.3	2.4

b) Attendance

		% of pupil sessions	
	Year	LEA	National
Attendance in primary schools	1996	91.0	93.4
	1997	91.8	93.9
	1998	92.3	93.8
Attendance in secondary schools	1996	88.0	90.5
	1997	89.2	90.9
	1998	88.1	90.8
Authorised absence in primary schools	1996	8.5	6.0
	1997	7.7	5.6
	1998	6.9	5.7
Authorised absence in secondary schools	1996	9.7	8.4
	1997	8.7	8.1
	1998	8.3	7.9
Unauthorised absence in primary schools	1996	0.5	0.5
	1997	0.5	0.5
	1998	0.8	0.5
Unauthorised absence in secondary schools	1996	2.4	1.0
	1997	2.0	1.0
	1998	3.6	1.1

APPENDIX 3

(a) Finance

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>LEA</i>	<i>National</i>
% expenditure in relation to standard spending assessment	LEA	1999/2000	98.5	
Funding per pupil: ASB £ per pupil Primary 0-4 5-6 7-9 10	CIPFA	1998/99	1255 1279 1221 1241	1355 1258 1214 1246
£ per pupil Secondary ASB 11 12-13 14 15 16	CIPFA	1998/99	1659 1662 1887 2001 2551	1641 1670 1982 2101 2493
Aggregated Schools Budget £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1998/99	1531 2159 9055	1663 2276 7713
General Schools Budget £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1998/99	2372 2976 13398	2273 2984 12201
Potential Schools Budget £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1998/99	1763 2392 9307	1792 2389 8930
Capital expenditure £ per pupil	CIPFA	1998/99	24	131

Expenditure per pupil in LEA schools 1997/98	Leicester City	Average of statistical neighbours	Average of Unitaries	Average of all English LEAs
Pupils under-5	2,312	2,161	1,879	2,083
Primary pupils 5 and over	1,626	1,680	1,627	1,746
Secondary pupils under 16	2,277	2,361	2,253	2,365
Secondary pupils 16 and over	3,038	3,073	3,343	3,308

Source: Local Authorities Performance Indicators, The Audit Commission 1999

(b) Surplus places

% surplus	Year	LEA	National
Primary	1997/98	10.3	9.5
Secondary	1997/98	17.5	11.5