



INSPECTION OF LAMBETH LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

JULY 1999

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

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INTRODUCTION

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

2. The inspection was conducted in two stages. An initial review in April 1999 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 has been provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 95 schools. The response rate was 70 per cent.

3. The second stage of the inspection carried out in May 1999 involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to three nursery, fourteen primary, five secondary, and three special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA'S strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money. A further five schools were visited as part of a sample identified by the LEA to illustrate the impact of its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) strategy.

4. This 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 visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to Lambeth schools.

COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENTARY

5. Lambeth LEA serves a diverse multi-ethnic community in the heart of inner London. Its Council and services have been subject to a great deal of searching and often negative public scrutiny. In 1993 the District Auditor published a very critical public interest report on the local authority, outlining detailed criticisms of most aspects of the Council's financial systems and budgetary control. In Autumn 1995, following concerns about the number of Lambeth schools going into special measures in the first two years of the OFSTED cycle, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that the remaining schools should be subject to an accelerated inspection programme.

6. The basis for the LEA's school improvement agenda was therefore established for the new Executive Director of Education on her arrival in March 1996. Every school in Lambeth had a Section 9/10 report by the end of December 1996. Her prime task was to establish an Education Department capable of supporting schools in the urgent need to raise standards for Lambeth children. Her inheritance: poor relationships between the LEA and its schools, characterised by distrust and neglect; a culture of failure and inefficiency evident in a pervasive lack of belief that things could ever improve in Lambeth; inadequate or non-existent systems and procedures which had led a number of schools to seek grant-maintained status in order to escape from the LEA, thereby further exacerbating already strained relationships. The challenge was in the words of one Lambeth headteacher for the LEA 'to reinvent itself'.

7. The inspection team found many signs of improvement. Much of the current Education Department is unrecognisable from those 'days of despair'. The Department has been radically re-structured and virtually the whole senior and middle management teams are new appointments from outside the LEA. Undoubtedly, staff at all levels in the Education Department have worked hard to raise expectations. The Education Development Plan is sound and has been approved for three years. The Information and Communications Technology strategy is ambitious. Primary schools are now comfortable with the use of national averages as their benchmark. Challenging targets have been negotiated and agreed with schools. The rate of improvement, particularly in English, is slightly above the national rate at Key Stage 2 and in GCSE, though much, but not all, of the improvement in the latter is located in the grant-maintained schools

8. The inspection reveals that the LEA is performing effectively in the following areas:
- the work of the assigned advisers in primary schools is expert and highly valued;
 - support for schools in special measures is good;
 - support for literacy is effective;
 - support for target-setting is rigorous and challenging;
 - procedures to monitor and support excluded pupils work well;
 - the work of the Education Welfare Service is effective;
 - support for bilingual pupils is good;
 - support to pupils with SEN is improving;
 - relationships with external agencies are very good.
9. The LEA exercises its functions to ensure that pupils in its schools come to no harm and competently assists other statutory bodies charged with the protection of children. It complies with its legal obligations and has regard to the Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations. The LEA takes reasonable steps to fulfil its statutory requirements, with the exception of headteacher appraisal. Its responsibilities for special educational needs provision and access are adequately met.
10. These improvements have been aided, in no small measure, by the Council's regeneration strategy and the determination of members to tackle outstanding issues.
11. However the improvement achieved is not yet fully embedded for two reasons. Firstly, the Council has yet to establish consistent, efficient and effective financial systems which schools can trust. The management and control of finances in Lambeth have improved greatly since the early 1990s. Nevertheless, there are still significant weaknesses in the quality of financial information available, both within the Education Directorate and in relation to services provided to schools by other Council directorates or contracted services. The weaknesses in the Education Directorate should be addressed by the new financial systems recently put into place. However further work is necessary at the corporate level to ensure other Council systems address the needs of schools. The inaccuracy and late arrival of financial information is a major reason for schools being unable to plan their budgets effectively. Secondly there is a determination on the part of a significant minority of headteachers and governors to hang on to a dependency culture, however ill it has served them in the past. Major shortcomings remain in the following areas:
- both the Council and the Education Directorate have only recently begun to implement systems to overcome the serious weaknesses in strategic financial management;
 - the number of schools with budget deficits and excessive surpluses is too large;
 - attainment in mathematics gives cause for concern;
 - the waste of resources implicit in maintaining the high number of surplus places;
 - poor standards in two of the four maintained secondary schools;
 - the transition from Section 11 to the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, including the allocation of funding to schools and the deployment of specialist staff, has been unsatisfactory.
12. There is no doubting the Council's commitment to implement the government's school improvement agenda in Lambeth. That has involved taking tough decisions.

Inevitably, perhaps, old wounds have been reopened by the plans to reduce surplus places in primary and special needs provision.

13. The determination of members is also reflected in the urgency with which officers seek to maintain the pace of change. They are right to do so, but that urgency often expresses itself in impatience. Few schools are wholly persuaded that the LEA's sometimes coercive tone is always appropriate. Strategies to disseminate good practice are under-developed. The LEA needs to do more to celebrate, in partnership with its schools, what both parties do well. That it does so is imperative. If not it will find it very hard to gain the credit it deserves.

14. The judgement of the inspection team is that the LEA still has some way to go on what the Chair of Education calls 'the long road back to trust'. Much has been achieved and the LEA has made good progress, particularly in primary schools. The will to succeed is strong. Lambeth LEA was in chaos and it is to the great credit of the Executive Director of Education that it is no longer in that state. In order to ensure that its hard-won strengths are maintained, the LEA needs urgently to address the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic Management

A. To improve its financial management, the LEA should:

- Ensure that financial information and charges from other Council departments are transparent, timely, accurate and based on clear agreements.
- Ensure that the implementation of business units and of the new financial management system takes into account the needs of schools.
- Ensure that expenditure on special educational needs is closely monitored and managed.

B. To ensure that schools take responsibility for their own financial management, the LEA should:

- As a matter of urgency and in consultation with schools, improve both the quality and the timing of accounting information for schools.
- Regain control of school deficits by ensuring that all deficits are contingent upon an approved and monitored recovery plan.
- Institute planned visits from link finance officers to support and advise schools, especially in the primary sector, in budget-setting and the planning of their budgets over a three year period.

- Provide considerable additional support to schools during the current financial year in order to establish the effective use of the LRM4 financial package.
- In consultation with schools, reformat the monthly financial monitoring reports to take account of schools' own monitoring needs.

C. To improve management support services to schools, the LEA should:

- Build on the Services to Schools Committee and the customer surveys to demonstrate clearly to schools its willingness to listen to and to act on their views in order to improve services.
- Involve the grant-maintained schools alongside LEA schools in developing good practice in assessing the value for money of management services.
- Ensure that schools fully participate in sickness monitoring procedures and are supported in taking appropriate action to reduce teacher absence.

School Improvement

D. To improve the quality of support to schools, the LEA should:

- Review, in consultation, the provision and entitlement of support to secondary schools provided by the School Improvement & Development Division.
- Liaise more effectively with schools to implement the ICT strategy.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) arrangements and ensure that it is directed to improve the achievement of all minority ethnic groups.

Access

E. To continue to address the number of surplus places, the LEA should:

- Reduce the numbers in the secondary phase.
- Review the number of nursery places and improve planning to ensure that the current over-provision in the south of the borough is not repeated elsewhere.

Special Educational Needs

F. To continue the improvements in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, the LEA should:

- Implement the outcomes of the SEN strategy.
- Bring the Education Psychology Service up to strength and try to ensure stability within the service.
- Make assessment and statementing procedures as transparent and well publicised as possible.
- Continue the good work undertaken by the behaviour support team and ensure that this is publicised amongst schools.

SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

The socio-economic context

15. Lambeth LEA serves a diverse community in inner London. The total population is some 250,000. The borough has some affluent residents but they are in a minority; both adult and youth unemployment are high. Approximately a third of residents are from minority ethnic groups. Just under 10 per cent of Lambeth households are headed by a lone parent, which is the second highest rate in London. Although the Council is the largest employer in Lambeth, a number of national and international organisations have their headquarters in the borough.

The schools and pupils

16. The main figures are given in Appendix 1 Key features include:

- Lambeth has 95 schools. The LEA maintains five nursery, 60 primary, four secondary and seven special schools. Of the schools with Key Stage 1 pupils, 40 have nursery classes. In addition there are 19 grant-maintained (GM) schools (ten primary, six secondary and three special). Several of the grant-maintained secondary schools have introduced partial selection by ability.
- A high proportion of LEA maintained and grant-maintained schools are denominational.
- Over half of Lambeth children of secondary age are educated outside the borough's schools.
- About three per cent of all pupils have a statement of special educational need
- In 1997, 49.3 per cent of primary pupils of statutory school age were eligible for free school meals, and 52.9 per cent of secondary school pupils. These figures are well above national averages in both phases.
- Nursery schools have recently been unified with social services day nurseries under the aegis of the Children's Service.

The Council

17. Lambeth Council consists of 64 members (41 Labour, 18 Liberal Democrat and 5 Conservative). Prior to May 1998 the Council was hung for four years. As part of the strategy to radically improve Lambeth's poor corporate performance, the Chief Executive appointed in April 1995, has recruited an entirely new team of experienced chief officers, including the present Executive Director of Education (EDE).

18. A new Cabinet structure was established in June 1999. However, at the time of the inspection, decision-making with regard to education was still vested in the **Education Committee**. To address specific strategic planning issues, the new Council established four key Task Forces: Special Educational Needs, Primary School Development, Early Years & Childcare and Life-Long Learning. These Task Forces comprise cross-party representatives and other interested parties such as the Diocesan Boards, headteacher and governors.

19. The Council's corporate regeneration strategy is focused on raising overall skill levels and is coordinated by the Chief Executive's Office. The strategy impacts on education through three schemes: Project Vauxhall, a major regeneration scheme led by the Housing department and encompassing a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to build a new secondary school; the Education Business Partnership which is responsible for three major Single Regeneration Budgets (SRB) funded literacy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects and the Confederation for British Teachers/Lambeth Education Action Zone which covers 31 schools and is located in eleven of the most disadvantaged wards in Lambeth. Schools are generally appreciative of the additional support provided by the Council's regeneration schemes. Although it is too early to assess their impact on raising educational standards, the strategy has enabled the LEA to access additional funding and expertise from a range of sources, other than education.

Education Funding

20. In the past, Lambeth Council has spent well above its Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) on education. However, expenditure has decreased steeply since 1996/97 as a percentage of SSA (Exhibit 1). Councillors have now undertaken to protect schools' budgets from 1999/00 for three years and to fund Education in line with SSA. Capital expenditure on schools has increased markedly since 1996/97 from £710,000 to a projected £9.3 million in 1999/00, due primarily to New Deal for Schools monies.

Exhibit 1

	SSA for Education £m	Net expenditure on education £m	Expenditure as % of SSA
1994/95	114.6	129.4	112.9(+12.9%)
1995/96	102.1	109.5	107.2 (+7.2%)
1996/97	100.8	112.7	111.8 (+11.8%)
1997/98	98.3	107.2	109.0 (+9.0%)
1998/99	105.1	108.0	102.7 (+2.7%)
1999/00	111.4	112.1 ¹	100.6 (+0.6%)

Source: LEA

¹ including spending in education on premature retirement/voluntary severance and insurance which is held outside the education cash limit.

SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS

21. Attainment on entry to infant and primary schools inspected in Lambeth is generally below national averages in most schools.

- However the 1997 baseline assessment data collected by the LEA indicated that 84 per cent and 75 per cent of five year olds were achieving most elements of the desirable outcomes in English and mathematics respectively. The LEA's own evaluation of the 1997 scheme suggests inconsistencies in the judgements made in schools, particularly in mathematics. In view of the concerns about the validity of the data, the LEA has appointed an independent consultant to evaluate the 1998 data.

22. Attainment remains below national averages at all the key stages, with the exception of the percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE A*-G grades where it is slightly below.

- In 1998 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in the Key Stage 2 English tests was 56.4 per cent, whereas nationally the proportion was 64.1 per cent.
- In 1998 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in the Key Stage 2 mathematics test was 49.6 per cent, whereas nationally the proportion was 57.9 per cent.
- In 1998 the proportion of pupils gaining 5+ At-C grades at GCSE was 28.8 per cent, whereas nationally it was 46.3 per cent.
- In 1998 the proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A*-G grades at GCSE was 85.6 per cent, whereas nationally it was 87.5 per cent.

23. The overall rate of improvement in attainment is slightly above the national rate at Key Stage 2.

- Lambeth's rate of improvement in the Key Stage 2 English tests between 1995 and 1998 was 19 per cent, which was above the national rate of 16 per cent. Lambeth's rate of improvement in the Key Stage 2 mathematics tests between 1995 and 1998 was 15 per cent, which was only just above the national rate of 14 per cent.
- In 1998, Lambeth was ranked 135th of 150 LEAs for the performance of its schools in the Key Stage 2 English, mathematics and science tests.

24. The rate of improvement in GCSE attainment is above the national rate.

- The proportion of pupils gaining 5+ At-C at GCSE in Lambeth rose by 6.8 per cent between 1994 and 1998; it rose nationally by 3.0 per cent. Pupils in GM schools performed better than pupils in LEA-maintained schools.
- The proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A*~G at GCSE in Lambeth rose by 19.4 per cent between 1994 and 1998; it rose nationally by 1.9 per cent.
- Average point scores rose from 25.2 in 1994 to 32.1 in 1998.

25. Attendance rates in primary schools have remained below the national average of 93.9 per cent. Levels of unauthorised absence have fallen since 1995 to 1.4 per cent in 1997 which is still above the national figure of 0.5 per cent. Attendance rates in secondary schools have improved since 1995 from 86.7 to 89.3 per cent. Levels of unauthorised absence have fallen since 1995 to 1.8 per cent.

26. Permanent exclusions in primary schools at 0.6 per 1000 pupils were above the national rate of 0.4 per 1000 pupils in primary schools. The rate of permanent exclusion of boys (7.6 per 1000) in Lambeth secondary schools was above the national rate. However this was almost matched by the number of girls 6.3 per 1000 which is well above the national rate of 1.3.

27. Overall Lambeth schools were judged unfavourably against national figures for standards of achievement, quality of education, ethos and efficiency. In Autumn 1995 following concerns about the number of schools judged to require special measures, HMCI decided that Lambeth schools should be subject to an accelerated inspection programme. Consequently all Lambeth schools were inspected by the end of December 1996. The average grade for the quality of teaching was below the national average in primary, but was broadly similar in secondary schools. Good teaching in Key Stage 3 exceeded the national level but there was also more poor teaching in both Key Stages 3 and 4 than found nationally.

28. Fourteen schools in Lambeth have been judged to require special measures; two special, 10 primary and two secondary schools. Five primary, one secondary and two special schools have since come out of special measures and a further three schools (two primary, one secondary) have closed. Since September 1997 only one primary school has been identified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses.

SECTION 3: THE LEA STRATEGY

■ The LEA strives to provide effective leadership for education in Lambeth. However, its emerging success in meeting the government's agenda for school improvement is undermined by the Directorate's inability to secure an effective partnership with all its schools. Consultation and communication between schools and the LEA need to be improved.

■ The management and control of finances in Lambeth have improved greatly since the early 1990s. Nevertheless, there are still significant weaknesses in the quality of financial information available.

■ The lack of urgency with which the LEA has tackled the issue of surplus places in previous years has wasted resources and added to the difficulty of raising standards.

■ Admissions arrangements have been kept under review and the LEA has improved procedures in line with District Audit recommendations.

■ The LEA enjoys very good relationships with external agencies, particularly the Police.

■ There is a need to improve relationships to ensure that Social Services deliver a better standard of support to schools and pupils.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Background

29. During the late 1980s and early 1990s Lambeth Council was publicly identified as a financial shambles and consistently failed to keep its spending within budget. In 1993 the District Auditor published a lengthy and extremely critical public interest report on a local authority and his annual management letters made detailed criticisms of most aspects of the Council's financial systems and budgetary control. Changes in political control in 1994 led the Council to begin tackling the major issues by appointing a new Chief Executive. However, the District Auditor published a further public interest report in 1997 which emphasised that despite the work done to improve the Council's financial position, problems of overspending were still serious and inflated by the need to recoup previous years' overspending.

Budget planning and expenditure

30. Inevitably much of the planning in Lambeth has been focussed on the need to control spending. The financial control systems put in place are primarily aimed at improving financial management at the centre. In 1997/98 the Council moved towards a four year financial strategy and the establishment of business units aimed at improving financial accountability. Monthly financial monitoring of all Council

services was introduced - for the first time - in 1997. This requires Directorates to produce a summary of expenditure against budget at business unit level which contributes to a Council-wide report to senior members. There is also a quarterly report to each service committee.

31. Lambeth is an authority that devolves responsibility to its Directorates to manage and monitor their budgets. Despite the fact that the education budget was in deficit until 1998/99 and the department completed no general schools budget outturn (Section 122) reports for the DfEE until April 1999, the District Auditor's management letters did not identify any specific problems in the Education Directorate. The information provided for the inspection by the Education Directorate showed that substantial efforts have been made to break down and review expenditure but it is clear that there is still some distance to go before reliable financial information systems are in place. Areas of concern include inconsistent financial information over time, inadequate supporting information for external audit purposes, failure to meet statutory and audit deadlines, the extent of school deficit balances and the effectiveness of support for reducing these.

32. In 1997/98, Lambeth LEA's average expenditure per pupil in LEA schools was much higher than that of similar authorities (referred to as statistical neighbours) and considerably higher than the average for English LEAs (Exhibit 2). Lambeth's expenditure was particularly high for pupils under 5 (29% higher than the average for its statistical neighbours).

Exhibit 2: Expenditure per pupil in LEA schools 1997/98

	Lambeth	Statistical neighbours average	London boroughs average	England average
Pupils under 5	3,707	2,874	2,604	2,083
Primary pupils 5 and over	2,830	2,230	2,092	1,746
Secondary pupils under 16	3,343	2,976	2,745	2,365
Secondary pupils 16 and over	4,135	4,029	3,708	3,308

Source: Local Authorities performance indicators, Audit Commission, 1999

33. The LEA delegated 90.1 percent of the potential schools budget (PSB) of £55,392,000 to its schools in 1997/98. This was a slightly lower level of delegation than the average for its statistical neighbours (91.0%) as well as the average for all English LEAs (90.6%). However there was additional devolution outside the PSB which increased the purchasing powers of schools.

34. The Local Management of Schools (LMS) and Local Management of Special Schools (LMSS) schemes used between 1996/97 and 1998/99 have remained substantially the same with some adjustments to take account of additional

delegation. Compared to other Authorities, the 1997/98 LMS formula awarded relatively more funding on the basis of small schools-related items to primary schools and more to secondary schools in relation to premises-related factors. This suggests the continuing influence of historic costs in resourcing schools. The schemes of delegation are reviewed with schools every year and the LEA had taken some account of schools' views, for example in returning maternity leave cover to a central cost in 1998/99.

35. The 1999/00 Fair Funding arrangements are similar to those in 1998/99 though the LEA has removed some of the factors, simplified others and limited the allocations based on small school and premises-related elements. Consultation with schools through the Fair Funding group was generally felt by secondary schools to have been successful, but less so by primary schools.

Education Directorate financial management

36. A primary aim of the Resources Division created in early 1997 was to establish a firm financial footing for the Education Directorate as a whole. Although much has been done, the concerns mentioned earlier in the report show that this has yet to be achieved. Since 1996/97 an overspend of £4.4million on the Education budget has been reduced in 1998/99; central management and administration costs have been substantially reduced; and levels of delegation have been increased. However, other areas of spending such as corporate recharges and special educational needs require investigation. Changes in reporting practice have made it difficult to make comparisons with the past. For example in 1999/00 estimated expenditure against SSA was increased by including some devolved corporate spending in education that had previously been excluded. Clearly the LEA needs to continue to improve its financial management information and ensure that charges from other Council departments are transparent and based on clear agreements.

37. In order to improve financial accounting within the Council, service directorates including Education introduced an ORACLE electronic financial system in April 1999. This allows automatic reconciliation of spending to business unit budgets and will eventually support electronic links to school systems. The LEA should ensure that the new financial systems take full account of the needs of schools. The implementation of 16 business units with devolved financial responsibility also began in April 1999. There has been a programme of training and internal audit 'health checks' to help business unit managers manage their budgets. However it is too early to assess whether these changes have had a positive effect on aligning financial and management responsibilities.

Resources for special educational needs

38. Although the poor quality of historical financial information makes comparisons over time difficult, spending on special educational needs remains comparatively high in Lambeth, despite recent reviews to rationalise provision.

39. Comparisons based on the 1997/98 Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) estimates (Appendix 4.2) and on the Audit Commission costing analysis (Appendix 4.3) show that Lambeth spent more than similar LEAs on provision for special educational needs (SEN) in 1997/98 and 1998/99. General Schools Budget (GSB) estimates show that the amount spent centrally on SEN has reduced since 1996/97 as funding has been increasingly devolved to schools. Although its statistical profile shows that Lambeth has higher proportions of pupils with special educational needs than similar authorities, there is nevertheless a need to continue to monitor expenditure in this area and manage it in line with the emerging SEN strategy

40. The Education Directorate has taken action, not before time, to control expenditure on special educational needs by reducing placements in out-borough special schools, linking budget planning to projections of the improved statementing rate, and ensuring that statements clearly describe the support to which the pupil is entitled. The Directorate is renegotiating the contract for home to school transport to reduce costs which are recognised to be disproportionately high for Education. However, it is as yet too early to assess the impact of these measures on expenditure which will need to be closely monitored.

41. In 1997/98 total net expenditure on SEN amounted to 28.8 per cent of the general schools budget in Lambeth, compared with an average of 17.7 per cent in its statistical neighbours and 14.2 per cent nationally. The 1999/00 Fair Funding budget statement shows that special education expenditure makes up 36.8 per cent of the cost of LEA activities within the Local Schools Budget.

Financial management in schools

42. For the 1999/00 financial year, a pack with budget-setting information on disk was sent to schools in January and final formula-based budgets were sent to schools at the end of February 1999, a month earlier than in previous years. The schools visited felt that the quality and timing of the information had improved, though late notification of change and credits make budget planning difficult. Last minute changes in policy and errors in the allocation of Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant for 1999/00 have left many schools feeling confused and resentful.

Exhibit 3

		1997/98			1998/99 (projected)		
		>5% surplus	In deficit	>2.5% deficit	>5% surplus	In deficit	>2.5% deficit
Primary	Number	20	18	9	29	18	12
	% of all	33%	30%	15%	48%	32%	20%
Secondary	Number	2	0	0	2	0	0
	% of all	50%	0	0	50%	0	0
Special	Number	3	2	1	1	2	1
	% of all	43%	29%	14%	14%	29%	14%

Excludes all Grant Maintained schools.

43. Recent internal audit reports paint an alarming picture of ineffective budgetary control and poor financial management in Lambeth schools. At the end of 1998/99 13 LEA schools (12 primary, 1 special) had deficit budgets of more than 2.5% compared to 10 at the end of 1997/98. Simultaneously, the number of schools with surpluses of more than 5% increased from 25 in 1997/98 to 32 in 1998/99 (Exhibit 3). Although the LEA contacts those schools with deficits and helps them to produce a deficit reduction plan, school visits showed that this intervention is not always effective in persuading schools to take responsibility for controlling their spending. The inaccurate financial information available gives some schools a ready excuse for inadequate financial management. The present level of deficit budgeting demands urgent action by the LEA. Agreement to a deficit budget should be contingent in every case upon an agreed recovery plan that is fully monitored in the light of changing numbers in roll. Financial information for schools must be improved and schools supported in managing budget planning in times of change.

44. The Education Directorate has recently set up multi-disciplinary action groups of finance, human resources and advisory personnel to support schools with problems. This a positive move.

45. Schools and the Education Directorate business unit budget holders complete monthly monitoring returns which go to the corporate finance department. The completion of monthly returns by schools began in 1998/99 with the decision that as many financial transactions as possible should take place at school level. Evidence from the school visits suggests that although these returns may be useful to the local authority, they do not help schools to monitor their own finances and require considerable administrative input.

46. The Education Directorate has almost completed installation of, and training on LRM4, a SIMS finance package for schools which is intended to provide accurate

management monitoring information in a standard form. Unfortunately its implementation was undertaken on a very tight time scale and early indications are that many schools are not convinced of its effectiveness. Such an implementation exercise is inevitably disruptive, but it is clear that schools need increased training and support if the exercise is to be a success. Only three of the 15 LEA schools visited were using LRM4 confidently. Most resented the enormous investment of administrative time required to enter the data and complained that it had disrupted their end of year routines and preparations for the 1999/00 financial year. A majority of schools felt forced to maintain manual records alongside the electronic ones and a minority were strongly opposed to using the new system.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

47. As stated earlier following the accelerated inspection programme, the Executive Director of Education (EDE) on appointment in March 1996 embarked on a radical overhaul of the Education Department. All senior and middle managers posts were subject to review and a completely new team was appointed to the Directorate. The inspection service was disbanded and a substantive Head of School Improvement and Development was appointed in April 1998 to complete the Directorate team.

48. The Chair of Education characterises the LEA's journey since the elections in May 1998 as 'the long road back to trust' with the Education Development Plan (EDP) as the route map. Lambeth's EDP was approved by the Secretary of State for three years subject to annual monitoring and review. The LEA's priorities set out in the EDP are:

- to raise standards in nursery and primary schools, including special schools with primary age pupils;
- to raise standards in secondary schools and special schools with secondary age pupils;
- to raise standards of literacy and to meet Lambeth's target of 80 per cent of pupils reaching Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 by 2002;
- to raise standards of numeracy and to meet Lambeth's target of 75 per cent of pupils reaching Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 4 by 2002;
- to improve the standards of pupil attainment, the quality of teaching and the quality of education to such an extent that the remaining schools in special measures are removed from these by July 1999, or close, and to ensure their sustainable improvement;
- to challenge and support schools identified by the LEA, or through OFSTED inspection, as having serious weaknesses or causing concern in order to secure the removal of such weaknesses within one year;

- to improve the quality of management in schools at senior and management levels;
- to improve the quality of teaching in all schools.

49. The EDP is sound and derives from a thorough audit of schools' strengths and weaknesses. It is cross-referenced to a number of associated plans which meet statutory requirements such as the Early Years and Childcare Development and the Behaviour Support Plan. Priorities reflect the national agenda appropriate in respect of primary schools and will need to be pursued rigorously if the LEA is to meet the challenging Key Stage 2 literacy and numeracy targets it has agreed with the Government. However the priorities for secondary school take sufficient account of the diverse range of maintained and grant-maintained schools, whose individual needs differ significantly. Little reference is made to special schools.

50. The most significant weakness, however, lies not in the priorities but in the lack of commitment to and understanding of the EDP by schools. A majority of headteachers demonstrate a worrying detachment from the EDP process; consultation was sought but few participated in any meaningful way. One headteacher new to the LEA was surprised at the absence of any joint development planning by heads and officers. Awareness of the EDP priorities among governors was also poor. In contrast schools in special measures or those with weaknesses were aware of the EDP priorities.

51. Much has changed in Lambeth since the EDP was submitted: for example two of the Council's Task Forces (Primary and SEN) have completed their remit and statutory proposals to reduce surplus places and match provision more closely to need have been published. The LEA now has a better picture of the scale of the task and the resources required to turn round schools, particularly secondary schools, causing concern. Strategies to support improving, but not yet effective schools need further consideration. Strategies to celebrate and disseminate practice are under-developed. If the EDP is to have any impact in delivering the Government's School Improvement agenda in Lambeth, it will require more communication on both sides. The EDP acknowledges that a better, more constructive dialogue is essential if schools and the LEA are to deliver the published in the EDP.

School places

52. The LEA rightly acknowledges in recent Education Committee reports that it has been a poor performer in the strategic management of surplus places since 1990. Since May 1998 members and officers have worked hard to redress past inaction and neglect. They have paid a high price in terms of the LEA's relationship with some primary schools, in particular.

53. By the secondary phase only 50 per cent of Lambeth's pupils remain in Lambeth secondary schools. This has contributed to the high number of surplus places in the LEA's maintained secondary schools. Levels of surplus in the grant-maintained secondary schools are much lower and the majority of the grant-maintained secondaries are over-subscribed. The LEA hopes that if agreed, a PFI bid would enable it to close one of its secondary schools and to re-build it as a smaller entity. The LEA plans to undertake a strategic review of secondary places once the six grant-maintained secondary schools return to the LEA as voluntary or foundation schools in September 1999.

54. In 1998, there were 21.8 per cent surplus places in the LEA's maintained primary schools. This has now been reduced to 16 per cent through amalgamations and revisions to standard number but this figure is still high. In January 1998, two-thirds of the LEA's maintained primary schools had surplus places and in 10 of these the level exceeded 25 per cent. This was, however, an improvement on 1997 when 15 schools had surpluses of 25 per cent or more. Demographic trends have increased surpluses in the north of the borough whilst demand for places has grown in the south. The situation is made more complex because there is a gradual withdrawal of pupils from maintained primary education in Lambeth as the children proceed through Key Stages 1 and 2.

55. In summer 1998 the recently elected Education Committee instigated a Primary Development Strategy task group with a priority to address surplus places. The group began its work in Autumn 1998 and determined principles which would be taken into account in arriving at reorganisation proposals. These included a preference for two-form entry primary schools, the need to raise standards and financial factors. Whilst they have, in the main, acknowledged that the LEA must remove surplus places, schools - whether named in proposals or not - have been unhappy with the accompanying consultation and communication strategies. This was commented upon in 16 of the schools visited by HMI. The proposals were modified following the initial consultation. Instead of feeling positive about this, these schools perceive the changes to reveal the impracticality of the original suggestions.

56. The pursuit of the Primary Development Strategy while necessary, has undoubtedly lowered morale. The rumour and uncertainty associated with the development of proposals to remove surplus places has led to staffing difficulties in some schools and the loss of pupils as their parents seek more secure places.

57. At the end of the inspection, the LEA announced a review of nursery provision. Given the concerns expressed by primary and nursery schools alike about the over-provision in some parts of the borough the review is timely.

Education otherwise than at school

58. The LEA makes good provision for the education of pupils otherwise than at school. A review by external consultants last year identified issues regarding the monitoring of progress which have since been dealt with by the requirement for regular reports to a central management committee. All pupils, where appropriate, are following accredited courses. Provision includes two Pupil Referral Units catering for excluded pupils and offering 20 primary and 84 secondary full-time places. Four voluntary organisations provide additional places for pupils out of school. Other services include Kings College Hospital which caters for pregnant school girls and an advisory teacher catering for Traveller children and their parents based at a primary school in the south of the borough.

Admissions

59. Admissions arrangements have been kept under review and the LEA has improved procedures in line with district audit recommendations. There is a membership list for an admissions forum which was due to meet for the first time in May 1999. Planning is under way for the setting up of a local School Organisation Committee.

60. Grant-Maintained schools are now included in the separate phase brochures for primary and secondary sectors. There are appropriate procedures for appeals which last year numbered 40 in the primary sector and one in secondary.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

61. Following the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), Lambeth inherited a pattern of special schools provision which did not specifically meet the needs of local pupils. Prior to the appointment of the EDE in 1996, there had been an almost continuous programme of SEN reviews but few decisions actually implemented. To date, the LEA has closed three residential special schools and its primary school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Despite these closures, further changes are still required.

62. As a deliberate strategy the new directorate did not initiate a review at first, wanting instead to establish staff and systems and to demonstrate competence. The most recent strategic review was driven by a members' Task Force established in October 1998. Proposals were published for consultation in January 1999.

63. The development and changes in SEN strategy are appropriate and indicate that the LEA has sought to achieve maximum consensus. The LEA is seeking to provide more inclusive provision, more closely matched to the needs of its pupils, including a smaller number of better quality special schools (two of which have previously required special measures and three of which are grant maintained). In practice, however, the LEA faces a difficult agenda: provision is still poorly matched

to needs and in need of reform. The LEA has a higher proportion of pupils in special schools and a higher proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs than any comparable authority. Awareness of the SEN reorganisation strategy varies amongst mainstream schools but none claim detailed knowledge or involvement.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

Liaison with headteachers and governors

64. Arrangements for consultation with headteachers have changed recently. Past relations between the LEA and its grant-maintained sector were not warm. Since April 1999, the Headteachers' Council has been reconstituted to include all heads of maintained and grant-maintained schools. The Headteachers' Council meets at least termly and has access to senior officers who are typically invited to attend the second half of the meeting. Officers of the Governors' Forum also meet with the authority on a regular basis; these arrangements are well regarded by governors in the schools visited. As outlined earlier in this report, the consultation on the EDP, the Primary review and the concerns expressed about the quality of financial management systems all raise serious questions about the effectiveness of the LEA's consultation arrangements and communication with its schools.

Liaison with other services and agencies

65. Although the LEA recognises the need for good liaison with other local authority departments such as Social Services and with the Health Authority, this has not yet been secured. Whilst schools feel that their working relationships with local health authority personnel have improved, no such gains can be claimed for the work of Social Services. Schools feel that local child protection procedures are very good but they do not have the same confidence in the support which they receive from Social Services. The school survey shows most schools rate liaison with Social Services as unsatisfactory; complaints range from a lack of response to phone calls to non-attendance of social service staff at case conferences. These are matters which the Chief Executive has in hand.

66. In contrast, liaison with external agencies is very good. Relationships with the Police are now excellent and there is good liaison on Youth Justice matters and in relation to pupils educated otherwise than at school. Schools are increasingly benefiting from the LEA's collaboration with CfBT and partners in the EAZ, Focus TEC, the business community and the local FE College. The work of the Education Business Partnership is effective. Of particular note has been the LEA's involvement in the Eagle Project in conjunction with St John's College, Cambridge to raise aspirations for higher education and expand horizons; this is having a positive impact in secondary schools across the LEA.

Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness

67. Procedures for members to monitor the effectiveness of schools are thorough and well-established in Lambeth. The cross-party procedures developed by members and officers to manage receipt of inspection reports during the accelerated programme remain in place under the terms of reference of the Schools Standards Forum (SSF). This is a key sub-committee of the Education Committee. It is anticipated that these arrangements will be incorporated into the new Cabinet structures. In addition to member involvement, the EDE chairs a School Improvement Monitoring Group (SIMG) which adopts a cross-departmental approach to monitoring the progress of schools causing concern. Both the SSF and SIMG are involved in monitoring and evaluating the EDP.

68. The Department's monitoring and evaluation of its own services, their effectiveness and value for money does not yet fully involve schools and other stakeholders. Although a good start has been made in changing the somewhat defensive culture of the past by the use of MORI polls, questionnaires and internal audits, there is little evidence of services taking criticism well and responding appropriately. On occasion officers adopt a coercive tone which is wholly inappropriate in their dealings with schools. As a consequence too much of the Directorate's time is spent in apologising for failing to respond courteously, accurately or in a timely manner to earlier queries and requests for information and action. A joint headteacher-officer Services to Schools Committee was set up by the Headteacher's Council two years ago. The group sent out a customer satisfaction survey covering all the LEA services to schools in March 1999 to which 28 out of 95 schools responded. Clearly this level of response is disappointing, reflects poorly on schools and raises serious issues about how committed schools are to helping the Directorate to effect change.

STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

69. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its statutory requirements with the exception of headteacher appraisal. Although action has been taken to control school budget deficits, a number of schools are still overspending.

SECTION 4: THE MANAGEMENT OF LEA SERVICES

The School Improvement and Development Division (SIDD)

■ *The LEA provides high quality advisory support to schools particularly in the area of target-setting, literacy and in supporting schools to become more self-evaluating. The work of assigned advisers is increasingly effective and well-regarded particularly by primary schools. Secondary schools are less positive. The LEA 's appropriate focus on schools causing concern is not seen as equitable; some schools receive more support than others regardless of need.*

70. The establishment of the School Improvement and Development Division (SIDD) in March 1998 completed the re-structuring of the inspection and advisory services which the EDE had initiated as part of a radical overhaul of the Education Department. The division comprises the Advisory team, Research and Information Unit, the Education Business Partnership, the Governor Support and Training Team and the recently established Professional Development Centre. The division is managed by an Assistant Director, who has been in post since April 1998. She is also charged with overall responsibility for the delivery of the EDP and liaison with the EAZ. As a consequence the principal functions of the individual teams within SIDD reflect the priorities and action plans identified in the EDP. With the exception of the secondary adviser who heads the EBP and the literacy adviser, all other senior members of the division were newly appointed in the past 18 months and held senior management posts prior to their appointment.

71. The **Advisory Team** was formed in April 1998. All primary schools get a minimum of half a day per term of advice from one of six assigned advisers. Some schools receive more coverage depending on need. The team operates in the spirit of intervention in inverse proportion to success and has until now worked almost exclusively in maintained schools. The arrangements for secondary and special schools differ. Secondary schools do not have assigned advisers, although a part-time secondary adviser works almost exclusively in one of the four maintained secondary schools. Special schools have the services of two SEN consultants employed on a contractual basis by SIDD.

72. Generally the support provided to primary schools is focused on raising standards and delivering the EDP. The assigned advisers are competent, experienced practitioners who are well-regarded by schools. A good feature is the follow-up visits conducted by advisers after centrally-run courses, such as the recent target-setting conference. This strategy has been effective in embedding improvements in schools. The team works hard to ensure that schools derive the maximum benefit from the training for both the national Literacy and Numeracy strategy. Another positive development is the role of advisers working alongside headteachers to model classroom observation strategies. Two school advisers work alongside teachers in primary schools on ICT. The deployment of nursery school

headteachers to work in primary schools on assessment procedures has also been of value. These creative approaches have been effective in helping schools become more confident in self-evaluation.

73. Part of the work of SIDD in supporting schools causing concern is increasingly discharged by consultants appointed on a contractual basis and working to a specification typically set out by the Head of SIDD. Not all schools are clear about these arrangements in terms of expectations, coverage and feedback. It is not always clear whether assigned advisers are monitoring schools to the LEA's agenda or tackling issues arising from school priorities.

74. The **Research and Information Unit** is a strength of the LEA. It provides both the Education Directorate and schools with a comprehensive range of performance data to aid target-setting and strategic planning. The service is well regarded by schools and was one of the few services graded above satisfactory in the school survey.

75. The **Education Business Partnership** is an effective organisation. It links schools with the business community and supplies them with valuable services. Its location within SIDD gives it a high profile and reflects the authority's strategic view that the whole community is a resource that needs to be drawn on in the endeavour to raise standards of achievement in schools. A number of schools have benefited from schemes arranged through the EBP, such as the provision of business mentors for headteachers and family literacy. The maintained secondary schools in particular are appreciative of business and college links, access to external funding and the development of the work-related curriculum.

76. The **Governor Support and Training Team** has recently been formed and established as part of SIDD. There are separate services for governor support and for governor training and development. Overall, the quality of the services provided ranges from good to unsatisfactory. There has been considerable recent change as the service moves from providing mainly clerking and secretarial help to full management support requiring improved liaison with other LEA services, for which an SLA might be appropriate. However, these developments are only just beginning and real progress can only be made after the appointment of a permanent head of service.

The Learning Development and Community Services Division

■ ***There have been dramatic improvements in aspects of SEN services in recent years. There is still, however, some way to go in winning the full confidence and trust of schools. The instability in the staffing of the Education Psychology Service (EPS) gives cause for concern.***

77. The key services in Lambeth which support pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are the Education Psychology Service (EPS) and the SEN section. The EDP identified 1137 pupils with statements in Lambeth schools and a further 167 placed out of borough. It is the SEN Sections' responsibility to meet the LEA's statutory duties, having regard to the Code of Practice. It has made dramatic improvements in the completion of statements within regulated timescales; from a low point of 1.8% in 1995/6 to 87.2% so far this year. These leaps in performance coincided with the reorganisation of the section into four service teams and the management of a "special teacher buy back service". The section has a sound development plan. It also has specific quantifiable performance targets which have been met or exceeded. An SEN panel is now expected to ensure transparency and consistency in relation to assessments and statements of provision. In addition, behaviour support teachers based at Pupil Referral Unit (PRUs) are available to work alongside teachers in mainstream schools. Teachers are also available to give additional literacy support in relation to SEN. Nevertheless, the school survey indicates a considerable degree of dissatisfaction with the LEA's assessment of SEN, its provision and review of statements and, overall, its meeting of special educational needs. However the evidence of school visits rightly paints a more positive picture.

78. The Education Psychology Service is presently below strength and hit by a high turnover of staff. Eight schools visited were concerned about the difficulties in getting statutory assessment undertaken and only one was satisfied with the availability of assessment. In at least one instance assessments were repeated because of the changeover of Education Psychologist (EP) and in a similar situation a pupil had seen three different EPs between July and April.

The Resources Division

Management support services are provided to schools under service level agreements (SLAs), however services are primarily reactive and demand-led. Although managers are aware of the need to move towards more strategic and proactive planning, their ability to do so has been limited by the many competing demands made on their small teams by national and LEA initiatives in addition to the needs of schools. Although some progress has been made in clarifying the responsibilities of schools and their entitlement to services, the needs of schools are not taken into account sufficiently when determining service priorities.

79. The management support services offered by Lambeth LEA are provided by teams which are now all located in the **Resources Division** of the Education Directorate. A range of management support services are offered to schools under service level agreements (SLAs) covering finance, human resources, property and provision advice and administrative Information Technology (IT) support. Catering, transport and cleaning are provided by Team Lambeth. Take-up by LEA schools is

over 85% for the SLAs for finance, human resources and IT, while about three-quarters of LEA schools buy property and provision advice. Voluntary-aided schools are less likely to buy into the SLAs for human resources and property since they have some support from the diocese. Information on the services to be provided, but not their cost, was circulated to schools with the budget-setting pack in February 1999.

80. The management support service teams have all undergone extensive restructuring over the past three years. The managers of the schools finance team, the human resources team and the property and provision team have been in post less than two years. The size of the teams has been reduced significantly as part of the drive to restructure and rationalise the central administration of the LEA. Although the service managers all stated their intention to move towards more proactive, customer-focused planning, it is clear that services are predominantly reactive, leading to a lack of equitable support for schools. Furthermore the demands of reorganising the Education Directorate and of responding to national initiatives have often taken precedence over the core service to schools. Though the schools visited confirmed that the quality of the finance and human resources services to schools has improved as a result of the new management appointments, officers working with schools are hard-pressed to meet the demands made on their time.

81. Past experience of the lack of response to requests for support has had a lasting effect on schools' expectations of LEA services. No grant-maintained school has considered buying services from the LEA for this reason. In 1999/00 the SLAs offered included, for the first time, fairly detailed descriptions of the entitlement and responsibilities of those schools which bought the service. This represents an improvement over previous years and should offer a better basis for schools to utilise and monitor the services received. At present few maintained schools have an objective or systematic basis for evaluating value for money of services though many make subjective judgements. The LEA provides information on alternative service providers in relation to payroll services and approved contractors for minor repair works. There is considerable scope for involving the grant-maintained schools in advising the LEA and other schools on assessing value for money and recommending alternative service providers.

82. Responses to the schools survey suggested that LEA primary schools in particular were dissatisfied with the services provided, especially finance, payroll, personnel support and advice, and grounds maintenance. All were rated below the average for schools in the other LEAs surveyed, falling between satisfactory and unsatisfactory. The three LEA secondary schools which gave their views were more positive than the average for schools in the LEAs surveyed about personnel support and support for the maintenance and improvement of school accommodation (falling between satisfactory and good).

Finance:

■ *Although their responses to the school survey suggested dissatisfaction with finance support, visits to schools made clear that this dissatisfaction focused on the poor quality financial information provided centrally rather than on the support from the schools' link finance officers who were well-regarded. There was also agreement that the service had improved recently. However few LEA schools are able to monitor their budgets effectively and this is reflected in the high number with either deficits or surpluses. No LEA school plans its spending over a three-year timescale.*

83. Headteachers of maintained and grant-maintained schools have major concerns about the inaccuracy and lateness of much financial information which makes it impossible for them to plan and monitor their spending. This includes poor, inaccurate and late information on staff costs from the LEA payroll; late notification of additional end of year charges, for example from the payroll 'sink' account, insurance or school meals; and cheque payments from unnamed sources without supporting documentation. Although the number of late charges had reportedly decreased recently, no maintained school felt able to plan its finances beyond the current year.

84. Nevertheless, schools are generally positive about their link finance officers who are responsive and have a good knowledge of the school's needs, though all agreed they were overstretched and their time had to be booked in advance.

85. Information to schools has improved recently, particularly with the 'Finance Matters' newsletter and the content and timing of the budget pack.

Human Resources:

■ *Schools had mixed reactions to the service received from the Human Resources team. Schools agreed that senior staff and the manager provided good advice and effective casework support but some more junior staff were ill-in formed and slow to respond to requests. The service is primarily reactive though the aim is to become more proactive in future.*

■ *Schools felt that the service was understaffed to meet the additional demands made by LEA restructuring and the proposed reorganisations under the Primary School Development Strategy and SEN review as well as maintaining support to schools.*

■ *The LEA has responded effectively to schools' concerns about payroll services.*

86. The Human Resources SLA for schools includes advice on personnel issues from named officers through school visits and a telephone helpline. Since the appointment of the present manager in 1997, disciplinary and capability procedures have been reviewed, a newsletter for schools and governors has been started and a series of briefing papers for governors has been circulated. Considerable additional support is directed towards schools undergoing reorganisation and those in special measures or causing concern. The small senior team has faced heavy demands for casework as schools have begun to confront staff management issues.

87. Most schools visited reported that the quality of personnel guidance and advice circulated had improved and that the service had become more professional over the last two years. However, although casework and support from senior members of the human resources team is generally effective, advice from some more junior staff is less good and some schools complained of delays and slow responses to their requests. A number of schools which had undergone reorganisation felt they had had insufficient human resources support and attributed this to understaffing. There is currently no collated personnel guidance, though all schools have copies of procedures on discipline, grievance, sickness management, capability and complaints.

88. Departmental statistics and school visits show that teacher absence levels were high in some schools. In one school, the headteacher had to cope with so much staff absenteeism that plans to interview teachers on their return to work were unworkable because of the numbers involved. It is not clear how extensive a concern this is in Lambeth as a number of schools fail to complete the sickness monitoring forms requested by the LEA. Human Resources has recently purchased a new management information system to enable detailed monitoring of sickness levels.

89. The local authority payroll has been problematic for a number of years. Despite LEA attempts to improve the quality of payroll information for schools the responsibility for its accuracy was not clearly apportioned between Corporate finance, Education finance and the Education human resources team, making it difficult to trace and tackle problems. Many of the schools visited described the inaccurate and tardy information received. The Education Directorate recognised these problems and responded appropriately by providing schools with information and the option of buying in the service from an external provider in 1999/00. About half the schools visited had chosen the external provider and all were positive about the cost and quality of the service obtained. However, the schools which had remained with the LEA payroll also reported recent improvements.

IT support:

■ ***Schools were positive about support for administrative IT and saw it as good value for money.***

90. The LEA schools visited were universally positive about the quality and responsiveness of the technical support provided. They appreciated the accessibility of the officers through their mobile phones, but recognised that they were very over-stretched.

Property and provision:

■ ***Most schools were positive about the advice provided by the property and provision team. However many schools had experienced the negative effects of delays and mismanagement of LEA-led building or maintenance projects. There was little evidence that day to day management had changed under the new consultants although the proportion of the capital budget spent has increased significantly. The service has a long way to go in developing a systematic basis for prioritising capital expenditure and making this transparent for schools.***

91. The major part of the work of the Education property and provision service is focused on capital schemes and the planning of school places. The team also provides a premises and equipment maintenance service to schools. Most responsibility for day to day repairs and maintenance had already been delegated to schools before the advent of Fair Funding.

92. Systems for prioritising school repairs and maintenance have been unsatisfactory in the past. However action is currently being taken to survey schools and to carry out inspection visits twice a year. It is as yet too early to judge the success of this both in improving the condition of the stock and in supporting schools with their increased responsibilities under Fair Funding. Although capital spending has increased, the basis for the allocation of capital schemes was not clear to headteachers and many schools described having had to lobby for funds.

93. The condition of the schools visited suggested that the LEA is generally fulfilling its statutory duties and emergency support is excellent. Schools had had recent health and safety visits when safety film was put over accessible windows and direction signing was improved. However there was no evidence of schools having yet received the Health and Safety Handbook which the LEA has recently commissioned, as part of a major review of Health and Safety by external consultants.

94. Schools, especially caretakers or premises managers, were generally positive about the property and provision service and particularly its manager who was seen as understanding and supportive. However, headteachers often had little direct contact with the service and reported not receiving feedback from survey visits of accommodation. Furthermore, despite the recent engagement of consultants to manage the capital programme and maximise spending, there is not yet any reported improvement in the management of capital schemes and the rights and responsibilities of school staff and headteachers remain unclear.

SECTION 5: LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS

Improvement in the schools visited

■ *The inspection team made judgements about the improvements since the last OFS TED inspection and the effectiveness of the LEA's contribution in two nursery, 10 primary, three secondary and one special school. Twelve schools had made sound progress in addressing the issues identified in inspection reports; four had made unsatisfactory progress. The LEA 's overall contribution to improvement was satisfactory in six schools, unsatisfactory in eight and poor in two schools which needed to make substantial improvements.*

Support for target-setting

■ *The LEA provides a comprehensive range of performance data to schools. Guidance to support the use of performance data in target-setting is thorough. The service is well regarded by schools and was one of a few services graded above satisfactory in the School Survey.*

95. Although Lambeth's Key Stage 2 targets are challenging, evidence from the visits to schools indicates that most primary schools feel the targets derive from a rigorous and useful dialogue between schools and their assigned advisers. Schools are well supported in this task by the comprehensive range of performance data produced by the Research and Information Unit based in SIDD. Advice to schools on the use of this data to raise standards is useful and appreciated. Schools are provided with a wide range of data for use in target-setting, including reports on Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 and end of Key Stage test results. Much of this and additional data on finances, staffing and attendance is included in individual School Profiles which headteachers and governors receive annually. The use of performance data to set targets to raise standards was a focus of visits to 16 schools. Most primary and nursery schools have used the information to focus more clearly on individual pupils' attainment; this complements the approaches recommended by the literacy consultants. Good use is also made of benchmark data provided by assigned advisers. Courses on target-setting are also highly valued.

96. Lambeth has designed its own baseline scheme which has been accredited by Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA); only two schools use alternative schemes. However, the diagnostic use of baseline assessment is under-developed. This is due in part to concerns felt by R&I about the validity of the data. In response the Head of R&I has taken appropriate action and is seeking external verification of the results for 1998 by the Institute of Education, before he is prepared to use the data as a tool for measuring value-added. Nursery headteachers have also been working alongside their primary colleagues in an advisory capacity. This has been a good initiative for all involved in managing progression from early years through Key Stage 1

Support for literacy

■ ***Support for literacy is a strength of the LEA. The management of both the National Literacy Project (NLP) and the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) has been effective and is having a positive impact on standards.***

97. Pupils in Lambeth's schools consistently achieve standards in English which are below national averages. The borough also has a high proportions of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Improving literacy standards is therefore an urgent priority. This is recognised in the EDP which has set the challenging target of 80% of pupils reaching level 4 by 2002. This is above the suggested range of 71 -76%.

98. The LEA has been involved in the National Literacy Project (NLP) from its inception. Nineteen primary schools participated in 1996-8. According to LEA data, results in the first cohort of schools showed a 15% rise in pupils gaining Level 4+ over the two years of the project compared to a 10% rise nationally.

99. A further 22 primary schools have now received intensive support under the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in 1998/9; 60% of Lambeth's primary schools will have received such support by the end of the academic year. Teachers and support staff at these schools have received appropriate training, consultants have provided additional support, and each school has an attached consultant who monitors progress regularly. Staff at non-intensive schools have received standard training and have also had access to additional training sessions available to all schools.

100. The management of both the NLP and NLS in Lambeth has been good. Relations with schools are good. The LEA has recently produced a detailed, thorough Phonics Action Plan which is well matched to identified, local needs. There is a good Literacy Action Plan and the EDP outlines an appropriate programme with clearly defined success criteria. The adviser for literacy and the consultants are very able, well qualified and appropriately experienced. The role of assigned advisers has been appropriately identified. Headteachers are enthusiastic about the NLS but the quality of coordination at school level is variable.

101. Implementation of the strategy in primary schools has been good. According to the LEA, 38 of the 41 schools involved to date have implemented the strategy satisfactorily. Three schools have not done so, mainly for staffing reasons. This positive picture is reflected in the evidence of Inspectors' visits to ten primary schools. In all the schools, there was evidence of satisfactory or better teaching including, for example, improved planning, confident delivery, an increased range of work, an appropriate focus on spelling and punctuation, the use of a wider vocabulary and the appropriate use of phonics. Staff have generally welcomed the NLS training and have found it useful. Consultants have been supportive with well-targeted advice, often in response to schools' requests. Assigned advisers have offered additional support by monitoring and providing guidance.

102. The LEA is involved in the Key Stage 3 literacy pilot project run jointly with Southwark LEA. In all four of the maintained secondary schools, this has involved staff training, the development of a whole-school literacy action plan, the creation of a Year 7 curriculum and a focus on pupils achieving less than Level 4. It is too early to assess the impact of this work to date. Firstly, two schools have delayed the full implementation of the pilot until September 1999 owing to staffing difficulties. Secondly, pupils were tested at the start of the pilot in September 1998 in the other two schools. They will be tested again in June 1999. At the time of writing, these results are not available. However, all staff have been positive about the training and are optimistic about outcomes.

103. The LEA is also involved in other generally successful literacy initiatives. Summer literacy schools in 1998 produced very promising improvements in pupils' results in National Foundation for Educational Research tests and the scheme is due to be extended in 1999. The Family Literacy Programme is being extended with staff reporting that 'early evaluation shows excellent outcomes for individual parents and children in terms of progress, developing confidence, recruitment and attendance'. The National Year of Reading has been marked by a range of events in schools and libraries and the LEA has actively encouraged schools to apply for the Primary Quality Mark for their work in literacy and numeracy.

Support for numeracy

■ ***Attainment in mathematics in Lambeth schools gives cause for concern. The recent appointment of a Numeracy Manager and her team in readiness for the National Numeracy Strategy is welcome. Substantial support and specialist expertise, including support for mathematics in Key Stage 3 and 4, will be needed to enable schools to fulfil their targets.***

104. Attainment in mathematics is below national averages in all stages of compulsory education. In 1998, only 49% of pupils achieved Level 4+ at Key Stage 2; the target for 2000 is 63 % rising to 75% by 2002 . This is challenging by any measure and an uphill task for Lambeth schools. There has been no specialist maths adviser in post for a number of years owing to difficulties in recruitment. The LEA has only recently appointed an adviser for numeracy and two consultants. This suggests an increased commitment, which is clearly needed if the authority is to meet its published targets.

105. Eight of the schools visited had already embarked on the National Numeracy Strategy in advance of the LEA and had introduced aspects of the strategy in their teaching and organisation of numeracy. Attendance at the first NNS training session held by the LEA was poor, with six of the 22 heads absent. Amongst a minority of those actually attending, a mix of heads, maths coordinators and SENCOs, timekeeping and attention to the proceedings were unsatisfactory. Parents and

governors would rightly expect staff from these schools to demonstrate a more committed approach to raising standards in mathematics.

106. Support for the teaching of numeracy was generally rated poor to unsatisfactory in the schools survey which was commissioned prior to the appointment of the current numeracy team. Nine of the schools visited had either had no LEA support, or thought that what they had had was poor or inappropriate. In one case, the school had asked for numeracy INSET for classroom assistants but had been given training on mental maths. In several of these schools, OFSTED reports had specifically referred to weaknesses in mathematics, but the schools had subsequently been unsupported in their attempts to respond to the identified weaknesses. The maintained secondary schools felt the lack of a secondary maths specialist and the absence of arrangements for specialist networking between schools. In contrast, four primary schools had had effective and useful LEA support.

Support for Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

■ ***Overall, whilst the LEA has successfully sought and obtained agreement from its schools to act as managing agent for the National Grid for Learning (NGfL), communication needs to be better to improve efficacy. The criteria for selection on to the different phases of the project and the allocation of resources are not sufficiently clear to schools. Teachers welcome the LEA's (ICT) development plan and the support given to developing their own plans but the LEA needs to use schools' plans more effectively to manage the NGfL and Integrated Learning Systems (ILS) better. The well intentioned plans of the LEA need to build more closely on the schools' individual needs and successes.***

107. The LEA is using a mixture of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and NGfL funding to develop an ambitious ICT strategy which is sound with some good features. It identifies a number of objectives covering a comprehensive set of aspects of ICT, with a clear focus on raising attainment. A good example of this is the focus on the implementation of an integrated learning system (ILS) in every Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 class in the Borough, aimed at raising standards of literacy and numeracy. The National Grid for Learning (NGfL) and other local and national ICT projects are appropriately addressed, and should the plan be implemented fully, it would meet the objectives set out in the NGfL national strategy. The development plan would benefit from better overall coordination with one person accountable for the strategy. At present it is sometimes unclear who is responsible for specific activities and how the impact of the plan will be measured.

108. The LEA's strategy is led by the ICT Development Service. There is an overall service manager supported by two managers specialising in school administration and in the curriculum. They are helped by an advisory teacher. The implementation of the plan in its first year has had mixed success. This is borne out by the evidence of visits to four secondary, six primary and one special school. Among the secondary schools

visited, one has had considerable ICT support from the LEA, including the provision of hardware, software and staff training; initiatives were well coordinated. However, in two of the other secondaries, LEA support has been inadequate. Despite their best efforts, the LEA has been unable to recruit an ICT secondary consultant. There has been insufficient advice on the deployment of ICT across the curriculum and training has fallen short of needs. A complaint from three of the four schools is that LEA training has had too much of a primary focus. LEA communication with these schools has also been inadequate. In one of them, the head of department did not know where the schools sits in the strategic programme of implementation of NGfL. In the fourth school, there was little evidence that the LEA was working adequately with the school to identify and address its significant needs. The LEA needs to identify and communicate more clearly, its longer-term plans including what it is able to support and the training it is able to deliver.

109. There were many positive features in the visits to primary schools. Schools appreciated the helpful advice from LEA staff and consultants; training was good and the Lambeth scheme of work helpful. Technical support for administrative staff, such as introducing pupil profile software and optical mark readers for registers, was also useful. Some significant deficiencies were also noted. Here too, the key problem has been poor communication with some schools. For example, in one school, following its publication of reorganisation proposals, the LEA neither made clear, nor discussed adequately with the school, its ICT plans for that school. This has led to uncertainty and delays in providing pupils with appropriate ICT.

Support for schools causing concern

■ ***Support to schools in special measures is effective. The LEA has identified a further 11 schools as causing concern; progress in raising standards in these schools is variable.***

110. The accelerated inspection programme which was completed in December 1996 set an agenda for the LEA. Thereafter improving standards in schools in special measures was a priority which the LEA sought successfully to address. Fourteen LEA maintained schools in Lambeth have been judged to require special measures since 1993; two secondary, 10 primary and two special schools. Subsequently, one secondary and two of the primary schools were closed; eight of the schools (two special, five primary and one secondary) are deemed to no longer to require special measures.

111. Two schools which were formerly in special measures were visited as part of our sample. In the past the LEA support for schools in special measures varied greatly but since the establishment of the SIDD, the contribution of the LEA has been more effective. This was evident in one primary school which had recently come out of special measures. The contribution of the assigned adviser had been particularly focussed on supporting the newly appointed headteacher and staff to

take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating classroom performance. Using the additional resources available through the school's participation in the Lambeth/CfBT Education Action Zone, consultants had worked on improving standards in literacy and numeracy by working alongside teachers in classrooms; the coordinator had been funded to attend a Numeracy Strategy course at South Bank University; an After-School Club had been sponsored targeted at Black Caribbean pupils. A course attended by the headteacher and coordinators on 'joined up target-setting' which made the link between setting targets for individual pupils, class and whole school targets was cited as instrumental in helping to raise standards. As a consequence the school anticipates a ten per cent rise in Key Stage 2 scores this year.

112. Only one primary school in Lambeth has been identified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses since September 1997, but this figure belies a significant minority of schools with shortcomings reported in their Section 9 and 10 reports. Schools did not appear to have the resources within to secure improvement, nor were their requests for support answered in any systematic way. Schools report that the extent of these problems has only been acknowledged by the LEA in any formal sense in the past 18 months, as a result of the LEA's first involvement in the National Literacy Project and secondly, when the newly appointed team of advisers visited all schools during the Summer term in 1998. Up until that point, schools in difficulties felt isolated and unsupported, coinciding as it did with the radical restructuring of the Education Department, particularly the inspection service.

113. As a consequence of the more rigorous approach adopted by the SIDD and in anticipation of the requirements of the Schools Standards & Framework Act, the LEA has notified the governing bodies of a further 11 schools that aspects of their performance are causing concern to the LEA. Four of the primary and two of the secondary schools were visited as part of this inspection. All of the schools have an Action Group and are regularly monitored by members of the SIDD and the School Improvement Monitoring Group chaired by the EDE.

114. Support for schools causing concern varies considerably and is generally more effective in primary than in secondary schools. As yet improvement is not secure in any of the primary schools owing in part to the continuing uncertainty about the outcomes of the primary reorganisation proposals in three out of the four schools. In the fourth school, following a poorly managed amalgamation some years earlier which had precipitated a staffing crisis in the school, the situation has only been resolved with the appointment of a substantive and experienced headteacher this Easter. The two maintained secondary schools are characterised by high numbers of surplus places in both schools, inadequate accommodation which is no longer fit for purpose, high levels of staff turnover and absenteeism and major concerns about the standards of attainment. Despite an enormous investment of resources and support in one of the secondary schools, the situation in both of the secondary schools remains extremely fragile.

Support for pupils with special educational needs

■ ***There are pockets of good practice in the support for pupils with SEN. There is also evidence that the provision and quality of support is on an upward trend. The work of the SEN consultants is generally effective.***

115. The inspection focussed on support for pupils with SEN in eleven schools. Additionally, GM schools were visited where SEN issues were discussed. In eight of the eleven schools pupils with SEN were making at least satisfactory progress and for half of these progress was good.

116. Some improvements and successes are clearly attributable to the LEA; others are due to the self help of schools where they had shown themselves to be adept purchasers and managers of services — whether purchased from the LEA or elsewhere. Schools which had bought time from behaviour support teachers who visit from the pupil referral units, were generally pleased with the quality of service and its impact. Those who sought help from the SEN support team were similarly well satisfied.

117. The lack of an LEA inspector or adviser for SEN is still a subject of consternation amongst some schools. However, the alternative sources of support and advice made available by the LEA are effective. The EPS give advice on IEPs, the selection of resources, behaviour management and in-service training. Schools may also purchase the support provided by two SEN consultants whose services the LEA purchases from an inspection agency. Views on the success of this strategy diverge. All the maintained secondary schools and five of the primary schools visited valued the expert advice and excellent training provided by the consultants. These have fed into improvements in writing IEPs, setting targets for pupils and managing pupil behaviour. Where the use of consultants has been less successful in the case of two primary and one special school there have been communication difficulties between schools and the SIDD concerning expectations and the levels of support available.

Support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds

■ ***Support for bilingual pupils in schools is generally good. The EDP focus on strategies to raise the achievement of under-attaining groups of pupils is welcome.***

■ ***The transition from Section 11 funding to the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) has caused concern for a number of schools. Lambeth, in common with other LEAs, has not been helped by the tight timescale set by government for the implementation of the EMAG.***

118. As a requirement of the EDP, the LEA has identified support for under-performing groups as a major initiative. The LEA's Research & Information Unit provides a breakdown of Key Stage and GCSE results by ethnicity. There are serious concerns about the under-performance of Black Caribbean boys, children of Portuguese heritage and white working class boys and girls. Once bilingual pupils achieve fluency, they outperform all other groups. Other initiatives to raise the attainment of pupils from minority ethnic groups are funded by the Lambeth/CfBT EAZ including two research projects: one focussed on Year 3 and Year 8 to develop strategies to raise the achievement of target groups of pupils. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these projects.

119. Support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds was a focus of the visits to two nursery, thirteen primary and five secondary schools. Generally the arrangements for the support of bilingual pupils are good and pupils make satisfactory progress in the acquisition of English language fluency. The stronger focus on literacy and numeracy is evident in most schools and this is beginning to challenge the previously compartmentalised approaches to language and literacy teaching.

120. Much of this good work has been undermined by the difficulties that the LEA has faced in managing the transition from Section 11 funded support for minority ethnic pupils to the new wider remit for raising attainment encompassed in the EMAG. Last year, the LEA advised schools that it intended to make all Section 11 funded staff redundant and delegate the new EMAG monies to schools so that they could make their own arrangements with some retention centrally for monitoring purposes. Redundancy notices were reportedly issued to staff at the end of the Autumn term. These were subsequently withdrawn in March 1999 and staff were allocated to schools with limited consultation.

121. All schools received an allocation of EMAG greater than the resources received under Section 11. However, a number of schools were advised incorrectly that under the wider remit of EMAG, their allocation would be increased significantly, only to have this reduced one month later. One grant-maintained school was informed by the LEA that their allocation would be in the region of £22000 and planned accordingly, only to learn subsequently that their allocation was in fact £6000. One primary school spent considerable time and effort explaining the figures to prove to officers that their allocation of £33000 must be a mistake; eventually the error was detected and the actual sum allocated was £5000.

122. A small number of schools had managed to secure alternative arrangements: some staff joined the establishment of grant maintained schools and avoided the current situation; another school persuaded the LEA to delegate monies but not staff and they have been able to use their EMAG funding creatively to buy curriculum resources and fund additional teaching assistants. These are exceptions; some schools are unhappy about the advice given by the LEA and the position they find

themselves in with regard to staff they had no part in appointing. However the recent appointment, during the inspection, of a consultant to act as Head of EMAG has been welcomed. Those schools who have had personal contact with the postholder have been reassured by his understanding and expertise.

Support to improve behaviour and reduce exclusions

■ ***Procedures to monitor and support excluded pupils is a strength of the LEA.***

■ ***Behaviour and discipline in schools have improved dramatically as a consequence of the work of the LEA in partnership with schools.***

123. Both the EDP and the Behaviour Support Plan have the reduction of exclusion as a priority. The LEA aims to reduce permanent exclusions from Lambeth schools by 20% by the year 2001-2. The LEA has a central panel (REPOS) review of the education of pupils out of school which collects data on all excluded pupils including Lambeth residents who attend out borough schools. Thirteen out of the 17 recorded permanent exclusions of Lambeth pupils in Autumn 1998 and 16 out of 29 in Spring 1999 were from schools out of borough. New placements are organised for these pupils and are monitored. The REPOS panel has clear guidelines, is well managed and works well. It collects data scrupulously and checks it in order to identify trends and issues. The Behaviour Support Plan aims to 'prevent difficulties, and support children and young people who are experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties'. It is linked to the EDP and multi agency plans such as the Children Services Plan and the Early Years & Childcare Development Plan. All schools are involved and it is reported that many have requested "health checks" on their behaviour policies and arrangements from the LEA specialists who operate out of the PRUs. The LEA plans to make good use of in-house expertise to run courses and provide in-school training.

124. Eight of the schools visited make significant use of the LEA's behaviour support services and six of these rate them highly. The secondary sector particularly values their contribution, saying that it is appropriate to needs, with staff who are "efficient, knowledgeable, flexible and helpful". Support in reintegrating pupils following exclusion is judged by schools to be excellent. Input from behaviour management staff has enabled schools to deal with behaviour issues so that they are no longer a problem and as a result, exclusions have been reduced. Primary schools also have a high regard for the outreach services of the Pupil Referral Unit and for the training in assertive discipline and other behaviour management approaches that have been provided.

Support to improve school attendance

■ ***The Education Welfare Service is now more effective in contributing to improved levels of attendance in schools. The impact is already measureable at secondary level.***

125. The support provided by the LEA's Education Welfare Service contributes to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties. Up to date, detailed and specific guidance is in place covering all of the relevant statutory duties. Between 1995 and 1998, levels of attendance in secondary schools have risen consistently but remained static in primary schools. Although in line with statistical neighbours, levels of attendance remain below national averages and unauthorised absence is above or well above national averages. The successful attainment of the targets set for individual schools and the LEA would bring Lambeth into line with the national averages.

126. The Education Welfare Service is well organised and is getting to grips with attendance issues. The service has produced a model Whole School Attendance Policy that clearly sets out the mutual responsibilities of the LEA and schools, and provides excellent guidance on school policies and statutory responsibilities, all of which the service fulfils. In the light of thorough consultation with schools its title and role has been significantly altered from the Education Social Work Service, which neither the LEA nor the schools believed met their respective needs, to the Education Welfare Service which is single mindedly focused in supporting schools in improving the rates of attendance of pupils. The refocused and reinvigorated service has a clear planning process, agreed attendance and unauthorised absence targets with schools and makes good use of financial and staffing resources to meet schools needs.

127. Two maintained secondary schools have had good support from the service in their active work to improve attendance. The setting of individual school and collective LEA targets for attendance and unauthorized absence which forecast year on year improvement, enable straightforward monitoring and evaluation of the service.

SECTION 6: LEA SUPPORT TO IMPROVE TEACHING

Support for teaching

■ ***Support for teaching is concentrated almost exclusively on literacy and numeracy. Support for other curriculum subjects is not a priority. Support for newly-qualified teachers (NQTs) is variable in schools.***

128. The arrangements for supporting teachers in Lambeth are closely aligned to the agenda envisaged in the School Standards and Framework Act. The small team of advisers in SIDD is focused on supporting schools in inverse proportion to their success whilst attempting to maintain a minimum entitlement to all schools. This modus operandi assumes self-monitoring schools and much of SIDDs energy has been directed into trying to move schools towards this position. Improving the quality of teaching is rightly seen as the responsibility of headteachers and subject coordinators in the first instance. The LEA has more work to do in persuading a substantial number of headteachers and governors of the benefits of the government's approach. Seven schools felt that they did not agree with the government's approach and felt it did not take account of their circumstances as improving, but not yet effective schools.

129. Secondary schools are critical of the very limited amount of secondary advisory capacity in the SIDD. Whilst both secondary and primary schools are pleased to have specialist numeracy and literacy support, schools regret the lack of other subject specialists at the centre. A range of external providers are used: one school draws largely on members of the team that conducted their OFSTED inspection, whilst others are using former LEA personnel for example, who are now working as consultants.

130. LEA support for teaching has been effective in two schools that have recently come out of special measures,. In one of these, the school judges the LEA's support for key curriculum areas and in developing self-evaluation to have been key in moving the school forward. In the other, detailed training on lesson observation, support in the classroom to teachers from the Learning Support team and the Raising Achievement Project (RAP) key worker and good support on work-related learning have been very helpful to the school.

131. Induction for NQTs is school-based and variable in quality and quantity. Some schools buy into induction arrangements in neighbouring boroughs. In one school, NQTs are observed by the head and both deputies and given feedback. Another had enjoyed useful observation and feedback from the school's link adviser. Two schools have large numbers of NQTs and serious concerns about their own capacity to induct them. Neither of these schools thinks that the Literacy, Numeracy or IT training takes sufficient account of the needs of inexperienced teachers.

132. Six schools, including several of the more effective, regretted the lack of networking arrangements for teachers within the borough. Morale among teachers in the schools visited was generally low; staff absence is a concern in some and many no longer feel part of an LEA. The LEA maintains no curriculum networks, and opportunities for teachers to share good practice and ideas are very limited.

SECTION 7: LEA SUPPORT TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOLS

■ *Support to headteachers and other senior managers is variable. While most headteachers are keen to develop self-evaluation skills, a small number are not wholly persuaded of this approach and continue to resist it.*

■ *The major weakness in the LEA'S support to headteachers and governors is in the area of financial management; this impacts adversely on the management and efficiency of schools.*

Support for headteachers

133. Support to headteachers is a focus of the EDP and one of the main strands in the LEA's school improvement agenda. Following the accelerated inspection programme and the subsequent re-structuring of the Education Department, supporting headteachers and governors to become self-managing was an explicit priority. The LEA funded a series of courses on self-evaluation and the use of target-setting, and instituted a programme of joint visits by assigned advisers to improve headteachers' skills in monitoring classroom performance. This approach has continued following the establishment of the SIDD. As a new team, in May 1998 the advisers conducted an audit based on short visits to all the maintained schools in Lambeth. The audit revealed a significant number of schools without school development plans, a worrying culture of dependency and a failure in a significant minority of schools to manage budgets efficiently.

134. Schools in the survey graded the LEA's support to heads and senior managers as unsatisfactory, although the grades for school self-evaluation, development planning and target-setting were closer to satisfactory. Evidence from visits to 21 schools as part of this inspection do not support the survey results. Generally primary, nursery and special schools are broadly satisfied by the level of support provided to headteachers. There is evidence of the LEA providing increased opportunities for headteachers to participate in business mentoring, induction, courses geared to self-evaluation. Schools who have been in special measures particularly value the LEA's support and interventions; schools with serious weaknesses are less positive. Paradoxically heads and governors of the maintained schools which are comparatively more effective are the most negative about the perceived lack of LEA support. Government policies on intervention in inverse proportions are not well received by some headteachers; secondary schools in particular feel they would benefit from having assigned advisers.

Support for governors

135. Support for governors was a focus on visits to twelve schools. In five, support was judged to have been satisfactory and in one, it was good. However, in the remaining six, support was judged to be unsatisfactory. In the school survey,

schools consider governor support for information and advice to be satisfactory although slightly below the average for all schools so far surveyed. Primary schools generally consider support to be satisfactory for governing body constitution and appointments but secondary schools rate this support unsatisfactory and the lowest of all LEAs so far surveyed.

136. Overall, this points to some inconsistencies in the quality of support governors receive. Governor Services has recently been moved to the School Improvement and Development Division in response to the LEA's desire to encourage and train governors to be more active in promoting school improvement. Links are also being established between governor support officers and assigned advisers.

APPENDIX I CONTEXT OF THE LEA

(a) Characteristics of the pupil population

Indicator	Date	Source	LEA	National
1. Number of pupils in LEA area of compulsory school age	Jan 1998	LEA	27,641	
Numbers on roll	Jan 1997			
2. Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals				
i. primary			49.3	22.8
ii. secondary			52.9	18.2
3. Percentage of pupils living in households with parents/carers				
(i) with Higher Educational qualifications	1991	Census	21.6	13.5
(ii) in Social Class 1 and 2	1991	Census	23.0	31.0
4. Ethnic Minorities in population aged 5-15. Percentage of ethnic group:	1991	ONS Census of population		
Asian			1.5	0.5
Bangladesh			1.6	0.8
Black African			10.3	0.6
Black Caribbean			17.4	1.1
Black Other			6.7	0.8
Chinese			2.1	0.4
Indian			2.8	2.7
Other			4.8	1.1
Pakistani			1.5	2.1
5. Percentage of pupils:				
(i) with a statement of SEN				
primary	1997	DfEE	3.1	2.6
secondary	1997	DfEE	4.7	3.9
(ii) attending special school				
primary	1997	DfEE	1.3	1.1
secondary	1997	DfEE	2.7	1.6
6. Participation in education:				
(i) % pupils under 5 on the roll of a maintained school	1996/97	LEA	39	60
(ii) % pupils aged 16 remaining in full time education.	1996/97		70	69.7

(b) Organisation of schools

Types of school

Nursery schools	5
Infants schools	8
Junior schools	8
Infants and Junior schools	54
Middle schools	0
Secondary schools 11-16	7
11-18	3
Special schools	10
Pupil Referral Units	2

Surplus places

% Surplus	Year	LEA	National
Primary	1998	21.8	9.5
Secondary	1998	38.8	11.5

Pupil/teacher ratio

	Year	LEA	National
Primary	1997	19.8	23.4
Secondary	1997	15.0	16.7

Source: DfEE

Class size Rate per 1000 classes

Size of class	Year	LEA	National
31 or more KS1	1997	87.3	289.6
KS2	1997	72.4	379.0
36 or more KS2	1997	0.0	22.9
32 or more KS2	1997	0.0	35.0

Source: DfEE

c) Finance

Indicator	Source	Year	LEA	National
% expenditure in relation to standard spending assessment	CIPFA	1997/98	109%	-
Funding per pupil: £ per pupil Primary 4-6 7-10	CIPFA	1997/98	1934 1692	1282 1238
£ per pupil Secondary 11-13 14-15 16+	CIPFA	1997/98	2182 2455 2120	1649 1996 1744
Aggregated schools budget: £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1997/98	2325 3035 10,558	1548 2801 12,757
General schools budget: £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1997/98	2856 3720 16,705	2090 2801 12,757
Potential schools budget: Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1997/98	? ? ?	? ? ?

APPENDIX 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS PUPILS' ATTAINMENT

The analysis draws on data provided by the LEA, the DfEE and OFSTED. Figures for maintained schools are compared with national averages.

PRIMARY PHASE

	Year	% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above					
		Teacher Assessment			Tasks/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1997	75	80	-5			
	1996	75	81	-6			
English (reading)	1997	75	80	-5	77	80	-3
	1998	74	80	-6	74	80	-6
English (writing)	1997	72	77	-5	74	80	-6
	1998	71	78	-7	74	81	-7
Mathematics	1997	80	84	-4	81	84	-3
	1998	80	85	-5	80	84	-4
Science	1997	83	85	-2			
	1998	80	86	-6			

Source: DfEE

2. Attainment at age 11 (KEY STAGE 2)

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 4 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1997	54.6	62.6	-8	51.9	62.5	-10.6
	1996	53.8	64.2	-10.4	56.4	64.1	-7.7
Mathematics	1997	55.6	63.3	-7.7	51.9	61.3	-9.4
	1998	54.9	64.2	-9.3	48.6	57.9	-9.3
Science	1996	58.6	68.6	-10	56.6	68.1	-11.5
	1998	59.8	70.4	-10.6	59.8	68.6	-8.8

Source: DfEE

Attainment at age 14 (KEY STAGE 3)

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 5 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
	1997	46	60	-14	45	57	-12
	1998	47	61	-15	49	64	-15
	1997	52	63	-11	39	60	-21
	1998	43	63	-20	31	59	-28
	1997	46	62	-16	40	60	-20
	1998	44	61	-17	35	56	-21

Source: DfEE

Attainment at age 16 GCSE results

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
1 A*-G	1995	87.8	91.9	-4
	1996	89.5	92.2	-2.7
	1997	94.1	92.3	1.8
	1998	94.2	93.4	0.8
5 A*-C	1995	23.2	43.5	-20.3
	1996	25.1	44.5	-19.4
	1997	28.6	45.1	-16.5
	1998	28.8	46.3	-17.5
5 A*-G	1995	74.5	85.7	-11.2
	1996	74.6	86.1	-11.5
	1997	80.9	86.4	-5.5
	1998	85.6	87.5	-1.9

Pupils aged 15 at the beginning of the school year and on the roll in January of that year

Source: DfEE

AVERAGE POINT SCORES

APS	Year	LEA	National	Difference
	1994	25.2	33.5	-8.3
	1995	29.3	34.6	-5.3
	1996	28.9	35.0	-6.1
	1997	30.3	35.6	-5.3
	1998	32.3		

Vocational qualifications of 16 year olds

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries	1994	94.2	87.9	+6.3
Pass entries	1995	81.1	85.3	-4.2
Pass entries	1996	95.4	79.2	+16.2
Pass entries	1997	98.1	80.1	+18.0

Attainment at age 18

A level results

Average point score per pupil

Number entered	Year	LEA	National	Difference
2 or more	1995	3.4	15.9	-12.5
	1996	14.8	16.8	-2.0
	1997	10.5	17.1	-6.6
	1998	15.1	17.5	-2.4
Less than 2	1995	0.0	2.7	-2.7
	1996	4.7	2.7	-2.0
	1997	4.1	2.7	+1.4
	1998	4.8	2.8	+2.0

Source: DfEE

Vocational qualifications of 16 to 18 year olds

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries	1997	71.0	75.4	-4.4
Pass entries	1997	69.0	68.9	+0.1

Source: DfEE

Attendance

	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Attendance in Primary schools	1996	92.0	93.4	-1.4
	1997	92.1	93.9	-1.8
Attendance in Secondary schools	1996	88.6	90.5	-1.9
	1997	89.3	90.9	-1.6

Source: DfEE

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