

INSPECTION OF  
KINGSTON UPON THAMES  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

July 1998

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 LEA work to support school improvement. In addition to the standard themes, the inspection covered LEA support for bilingual pupils in primary and secondary schools; support for pupils with speech and language impairment in primary, secondary and special schools; and support for information technology in primary and secondary schools.
2. The inspection was in two stages. An initial review, carried out in March 1 998, established a picture of the LEA's context, the performance of its schools, its strategy and the management of services. The initial review was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA; school inspection and audit reports; documentation; and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education and Leisure Services Directorate and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, in October 1 997, a survey seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was sent to all 44 LEA-maintained schools, to which 40 responses were received, a response rate of 91 per cent.
3. The second stage of the inspection, carried out in June 1 998, involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 22 schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support provided by the LEA contributes to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school and provides value for money.
4. 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 HM~ visits to Kingston schools.

July 1998

\* *LEA support for School Improvement: A Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities*, London, OFSTED, 1997.

## COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is a small, relatively affluent outer London borough. Within the authority there are many successful schools and, overall, pupils' standards of achievements are above national norms, although there is wide variation in standards between the schools. The pupil population is rising and, partly owing to the reputation of some schools for success, the LEA takes in significant numbers of secondary-age pupils from neighbouring authorities. The increase in pupil numbers and the cross-borough movements of pupils present a significant challenge to the LEA.
6. The LEA has a range of services which provide generally effective and well regarded support to schools. However, the ability of the LEA to provide effective support to raise standards in schools has been impeded over the past three years. Between 1995 and 1996, no permanent Director was in post. The quality of leadership and planning suffered as a result, and the relationships between the LEA and schools were impaired by budget reductions. At the same time, the loss of key LEA staff, such as inspectors for English and mathematics, left the LEA poorly placed for involvement in major national initiatives.
7. The effects of these difficulties continued to be apparent during the inspection. In October 1997, a survey questionnaire was sent to all schools in the LEA to ascertain their views on a number of aspects of the authority's work. The responses were relatively adverse, in that little of the support provided by the LEA was, at that stage, considered better than adequate and the extent to which the LEA consulted, listened and communicated with schools was viewed as less than adequate. This response, in part, reflected schools' disquiet at the annual budget settlement for education for the financial year 1997-98 and, in part, the reduction in, and disruption to, the support to schools, which resulted from the loss of some central posts, particularly in the Inspection and Advisory Service.
8. Nevertheless, the views expressed by schools at that stage were broadly fair. Until 1997, the LEA lacked a school improvement strategy, had not defined a clear role for itself in relation to schools and was well behind other LEAs in the provision of performance data and in its support for literacy and numeracy. At the same time, the LEA had no up-to-date policy for special educational needs, and the co-ordination of services supporting pupils with special educational needs left much to be desired.
9. Over the last year, the LEA has made significant progress in addressing these weaknesses. It has formulated a clear strategy, articulated its priorities and greatly improved its planning. Consultation with schools is now good, and the schools visited had revised their view of the LEA. The schools were generally improving and the LEA was making worthwhile contribution to that improvement in the great majority of cases.
10. Central to the LEA's contribution to school improvement was the work of the link inspector. That role is increasingly well understood and consistently performed

and, over the years, inspectors have been successful in improving the quality of teaching. Where particular sorts of expertise are not available in a small LEA, inspectors increasingly offer helpful advice to schools on where it can be acquired elsewhere.

11. An inspector for English and literacy has recently been appointed, and improvements have been made in the support for raising standards of literacy. The analysis and provision of performance data to schools and support for early years have also improved. Less progress has been made on numeracy and some aspects of special educational needs. An inspector for mathematics and numeracy has been appointed and will be in post shortly.

12. Overall, then, this is an LEA which is beginning to respond strongly to the national agenda, and to improve as a result. The task now is to consolidate that improvement, building upon a relationship with schools that has recently been transformed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**A. *In order to build on the recent improvement in the relationship between the LEA and schools, the LEA should:***

- (i) ensure headteachers and governors are fully consulted on all strategic plans and major budget decisions, particularly at the level of members, so that greater account is taken of the needs and concerns of schools;
- (ii) maintain a regular cycle of reviews of services with the involvement of headteachers and governors.

**B. *In order to ensure that the education budget is able to cope with future pressures, the Council should:***

- (i) develop a longer-term strategic approach as intended by the Service Opportunities Exercise.

**C. *In order to improve its own efficiency and effectiveness as an organisation, the LEA should:***

- (i) develop its performance measures to provide more information on expenditure and value for money, including comparisons with other authorities.

**D. *In order to improve on the effectiveness of inspectors, the LEA should:***

- (i) ensure that the role of the link inspector is precisely defined so that schools know what support they are entitled to receive and that there is a more systematic approach to reporting back to headteachers and governors.

**E. In order to improve the quality of support to schools, the LEA should:**

- (i) enable all schools to implement effective strategies for improving standards in literacy and numeracy;
- (ii) focus on raising standards of achievement in information technology by improving curriculum planning and the quality of teaching and learning;
- (iii) arrange for schools to have information on, and access to, good quality advice and training on subjects and on school management, available from sources other than the LEA;
- (iv) extend the range of performance data currently provided to schools and give schools clear guidance on how to use it to set challenging targets.

**F. In order to improve the support for pupils with special educational needs, the LEA should:**

- (i)** update its policy for special educational needs to ensure that it reflects the present needs of the Borough following the recent significant changes to its services and provision;
- (ii) give renewed attention to the strategic planning of the services for pupils with special educational needs;
- (iii) ensure pre-school children with speech and language impairments are identified early, and set clear criteria for the placement of, and the support for, pupils in the speech and language units.

**G. In order to improve support for pupils with behavioural difficulties, the LEA should:**

- (i) ensure that the key issues for action identified in the recent inspection reports on the two pupil referral units are addressed.

## SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

### *Socio-economic context*

13. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is a small outer London borough with a population of 142,000. Based on the factors which determine the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for education, it is the second most prosperous in London, and the 45th most prosperous out of 150 LEAs nationally. The percentage of adults with higher educational qualifications is well above the national average and is broadly similar to its statistical neighbours<sup>1</sup>. There is a higher percentage of children in high social class households than is the case nationally. This figure is also slightly higher than that of its statistical neighbours. Unemployment is low by national averages and falling. Across the Borough there is significant variation between wards in levels of disadvantage.

### *Pupils and schools*

14. Kingston has 19,908 pupils in 51 maintained schools. Analysis of the socioeconomic make up of the school population is complicated by the fact that over 20 per cent of the intake to secondary schools comes from outside the Borough. However, the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in primary and secondary schools was below the national average. At the time of the 1991 Census, almost 14 per cent of the school population in Kingston were from minority ethnic groups compared to a national figure of 10 per cent. The largest minority ethnic groups are Indian, Pakistani, Korean, Chinese and Tamil.

15. The percentage of pupils attending special schools with primary and secondary provision is similar to national averages for LEAs. Fifteen per cent of the secondary school population in the Borough attend independent schools compared to a national average of eight per cent. In 1996, 86 per cent of pupils who had attended maintained schools in the Borough remained in full-time education after the age of 16; this is well above the national figure of 70 per cent. Indeed, the proportion staying on in the Borough's maintained school sixth forms is 62 per cent, more than double the national average of 28 per cent at the end of 1996.

16. School provision in the Borough is organised on a 5-11 and an 11-18 basis. There is one nursery school in Kingston and 37 schools which offer a primary curriculum: eight of these are infant schools, eight are junior schools and the remainder are 5-11 primary schools. Nineteen of these 37 schools have nursery units. Of the schools offering the primary curriculum, 14 schools are voluntary aided and one is grant-maintained (GM).

17. There are ten maintained secondary schools in the Borough. Five are GM.

<sup>1</sup> OFSTED has developed statistical neighbours to enable comparisons to be made with similar LEAs on a 'like for like' basis and for these to sit alongside comparisons in relation to national averages.

and five are LEA-maintained schools. Eight of the ten schools are single sex: four are girls' schools (three LEA, one GM) and four are boys' schools (one LEA, three GM). Two schools select all their pupils by reference to ability. This is assessed by two tests: one a verbal and the other a non-verbal reasoning test. These two schools are both single sex: one is a girls' school (LEA) and the other a boys' school (GM). Another school (GM) selects about 13 per cent of its intake on general ability and a further school (GM) will select up to 10 per cent of its intake on the basis of general ability from September 1998. The remaining six schools are non-selective. Four of the GM secondary schools attained their status in 1993 and the fifth in 1996. All ten secondary schools in Kingston provide post-16 education. Six of these schools have 100 pupils or fewer in their sixth forms.

18. Some provision for pupils with special educational needs is made in three special schools; two are LEA-maintained and one is GM. Each one specialises in an identifiable area of need: moderate learning difficulties; severe learning difficulties; and physical disabilities. In addition, there are eight units linked to mainstream schools: four for pupils with speech and language impairments; one for pupils with hearing impairments; one for children under five with autism; and two for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are two pupil referral units in the Borough; both cater for secondary age pupils.

### ***Education funding***

19. The table shows Kingston LEA's expenditure on education in relation to its Standard Spending Assessment (SSA). Although in 1998-99 Kingston spends in excess of its SSA, the percentage by which expenditure exceeds SSA has fallen steadily over the last three years.

#### **Expenditure in relation to SSA**

	SSA for Education	Net expenditure on Education	Expenditure as a % of SSA
1995-96	£45.852m	£47.186m	102.9
1996-97	£47.066m	£47.798m	101.6
1997-98	£47.228m	£47.625m	100.8
1998-99	£50.913m	£51.063m	100.3

20. In spite of spending above SSA, the Authority's expenditure per pupil in LEA schools in 1996-97 (the most recent year for which comparative data are available) was low in comparison with the LEA's statistical neighbours and in comparison with other outer London boroughs for all age groups except under fives. This is explained by the fact that Kingston has the second lowest SSA per pupil of any London borough and some 8 per cent below the average for outer London boroughs.



### Expenditure per pupil in LEA schools: 1996-97

	Kingston	Statistical neighbours average	Outer London average
Pupils under 5	£2454	£2225	£2301
Primary pupils 5 & over	£1722	£1923	£1864
Secondary pupils under 16	£2282	£2575	£2539
Secondary pupils 16 & over	£3321	£3508	£3514

Source: *Local Authority Performance Indicators, Audit Commission 1998*

21. In 1 997-98, Kingston delegated 90.0 per cent of the Potential Schools Budget to schools, close to the average for outer London boroughs.

22. Other funding has been secured for education through successful bids with partners for SRB, GEST (now the Standards Fund), School Renewal Challenge Fund, New Deal for Schools, European Funding, the Lottery and Section 11.

#### ***The Council, the LEA and the Education Department***

23. Prior to the local elections in May 1998, the Council consisted of 25 Liberal Democrat, 17 Conservative, 7 Labour councillors and one vacancy. The election resulted in a change from Liberal Democrat control to no overall control with the Conservatives forming an administration as the group with the largest number of councillors. The Council now comprises 21 Conservative, 19 Liberal Democrat and 10 Labour councillors.

24. Up to May 1998, the Education and Leisure Services (ELS) Committee was one of the three strategic committees of the Council; it met five or six times a year. The others were Policy and Resources, and Community Services. The remainder of the Council's work was carried out through seven Neighbourhood Committees.

25. From May 1998, the service structure of the Directorate has been reorganised into three larger service groups. An outline of this new structure are provided in paragraph 30. The roles of the separate services have remained essentially the same and this inspection reports on the work and effectiveness of services as they operated prior to May 1 998.

26. Education and Leisure Services is one of six directorates in the Borough. From 1 996 to May 1 998, it was organised into eight service areas of which four were primarily concerned with schools (see chart below). These were Personal Education Services, Inspection and Advisory Service, Policy and Development, and Education Finance and CCT. The other four functions were concerned with Community Adult Education and Training, Sports and Recreation, Youth Service,

and Cultural Services. This last service, in addition to its broader remit, was also responsible for the school music service and the school library service; it continues to be responsible for

27. Personal Education Services had responsibility for the educational needs of individual pupils, students and parents. From May 1 998, this service area has undergone major reorganisation, both losing and gaining service areas, to become the Planning, Resources and Management Services Group (see chart below).

28. The Inspection and Advisory Service worked with schools on school improvement, monitoring and review, school development planning, OFSTED inspection support and had a training function for teachers. The service also incorporated the work of the Kingsdowne Professional Development Centre and the Kingston Information and Technology Service, and was responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Kingston Education Business Partnership. From 1 998, the Inspection and Advisory Service has been enlarged and included in new Educational Achievement Group.

29. Policy and Development contributed to the development of strategic thinking across the ELS Directorate and provided support for the Director in the management of policy initiatives. Education Finance continues to perform a number of financial functions under a service level agreement from the Director of Finance. From May 1998, both of these have been included in the new Planning, Resources and Management Services Group.

30. The final details of the structure are currently the subject of a report to the Education Committee on the management of the Behavioural Support and Education Welfare Services. The intention is to bring together under one management those services with a behavioural focus in order to provide a more coherent and better co-ordinated service to schools and to meet the changing needs of schools and pupils more effectively.

## SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS

31. Performance statistics for maintained schools in Kingston are contained in Appendix 2, from which the following general points emerge.

32. No sufficiently comprehensive baseline assessment has operated long enough in the Borough's schools to enable reliable overall judgements to be made about pupils' attainments on entry to schools.

33. The attainment of pupils in maintained schools (including grant maintained schools) in Kingston upon Thames is above, and in some instances well above, national norms on a number of indicators up to and including the age of 16. For example:

- on the performance of its pupils in the Key Stage 2 English tests in 1 997, Kingston ranked 9 out of 1 32 LEA areas;
- on the performance of its pupils in the Key Stage 2 mathematics tests in 1 997 Kingston ranked 1 5 out of 132 LEA areas;
- on GCSE performance at 5+ A\*~C in 1997, Kingston ranked 3 out of 131 LEA areas.

34. However, behind these high profile figures lie some more modest performances. These figures suggest that, whilst the more able pupils achieve high standards, there is scope for considerable improvement in the achievements of other pupils, particularly the lower achievers. For example:

- on GCSE performance at 5+ A\*~G in 1997, Kingston ranked only 59 out of 131 LEA areas;
- on GCSE performance at 1 +A\*~G in 1997, Kingston ranked only 70 out of 131 LEA areas.

35. Nevertheless, overall and over time, the standards attained by pupils in maintained schools in Kingston continue to rise. For example:

- performance improved in Key Stage 2 English tests by almost 12 percentage points over the academic years 1 99 5/97; this is lower than the national increase of almost 1 5 percentage points. Similar improvements have occurred over the same period in mathematics tests.
- at GCSE, performance improved by just over 6 percentage points at the 5 +A\*~C Level over the years 1 994/97, whilst the national increase has been 2.6 percentage points. Indeed, by 1 996 the improvement at this level had been exceptional: a rise of 8.6 percentage points in three years to almost 1 9 points above the national average for pupils achieving 5 +A\*~C.

- three secondary schools have been listed in the top 100 most improved schools in England in terms of the rise in the percentage of pupils achieving 5 + Ak-C grades at GCSE over the period 1994/97.

- at A level, the trend has been gradually upwards, such that the average points score per pupil entered for two or more A-levels in 1997 is 1.6 points above the 1994 figure. Although this figure for pupils in Kingston remains slightly above the national figure, the difference between them is narrower in 1997 than it was in 1994.

36. The gap between schools with the highest results and the lowest is very wide at the end of each key stage. For example:

- in 1997 the highest and lowest percentage of pupils at Key Stage 2 achieving the expected level for their age is:

	Highest	Lowest	National Average
English	91	28	63
Mathematics	100	29	62
Science	100	28	69

- the variation in school results at GCSE is similarly wide

% of pupils	Highest	Lowest	National Average
5+ A~C	99	24	43
5+ A~G	100	76	89
1+A*~G	100	85	94

It should be noted that judgements based on analysis of the data are complicated by the very different characters and intakes of the small number of secondary schools in Kingston: single sex selective school; mixed non-selective schools; and single sex non-selective schools.

37. Judgements made by OFSTED inspectors about the primary schools thus far inspected in Kingston bear out the general picture described above of the high achievement of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. They are equally positive about the quality of education, the ethos and the management and efficiency of primary schools. Inspectors' judgements about the quality of teaching are more variable.

38. Judgements about the general picture for secondary schools in Kingston based on OFSTED inspection data need to be made with some caution because of the small number of secondary schools in Kingston and because all the schools inspected in the first four-year cycle were inspected more than 18 months ago and half the schools more than three years ago. Nevertheless, at the time the inspections took place,

the overall standards of achievement, the ethos in schools and the quality of their management and efficiency all required at least some improvement in three schools and significant improvement in a fourth school; and there were five schools where the overall quality of education required some improvement.

40. Two secondary schools and one infant school have been listed in HMCI's Annual Reports as being particularly successful. At the time of the inspection, one primary school was in need of special measures to remedy problems identified in its inspection.

41. Attendance rates in primary schools are slightly better than the national averages. Attendance rates, overall, in the secondary schools are above those found nationally. However, over the past four years, five secondary schools have had attendance rates below the national average in at least three of those years. In 1997, unauthorised absence rates in primary and secondary schools were below the national averages.

42. Exclusion rates in Kingston's schools are broadly in line with those found nationally, but between 1 996 and 1 997 they increased at a faster rate than seen nationally, particularly in secondary schools.

## SECTION 3: THE LEA STRATEGY

### ROLES AND PRIORITIES

- *Between 1995 and 1996, no permanent Director was in post. The quality of leadership and planning suffered as a result, and relationships between the LEA and schools were impaired by budget reductions.*
- *Over the past 12 months the LEA has defined a role for itself and a clear set of priorities for education in Kingston. This role is underpinned by sound principles and a partnership statement which articulates well the responsibilities and accountabilities of both the LEA and schools. Priorities in supporting school improvement have been identified which take account of national policy and the corporate vision for the Council. Strategic planning is much improved and resources are better aligned to tackle school improvement.*
- *Consultation between officers and headteachers to identify priorities and develop strategies is now good and is based on careful analysis of performance data, inspection evidence and other relevant information. The LEA has also made good headway in drawing on the views of parents and the community.*

42. In May 1994, a new administration with an overall majority was elected. Shortly afterwards, there was a major restructuring of services within the Council, including the setting up of the ELS Directorate. The May 1998 election has resulted in a change of administration, but without any overall majority. The current Director of ELS took up post in April 1996. In less than one year, the Education and Leisure Service was led by four different Directors, two of whom held the post in an acting capacity. This period of instability coincided with a deterioration in the relationships between the LEA and schools which came under strain when reductions in the education budget fed through to deep cuts in school budgets.

43. In the past year, the LEA has defined a role for itself, set clear priorities and worked out a coherent strategy for achieving them. These have been adopted after wide consultation with schools. The role, in broad terms, is to secure high standards of achievement, to support individuals and to plan, fund and secure provision. A key element in this role is the partnership between the LEA and its schools. A clear view has been established of what this partnership means and involves on both the LEA's and schools' side, in terms of accountabilities and responsibilities.

44. In 1994, a new administration established the Education and Leisure Services Committee and produced a policy statement for the four-year period 1994-98. Since then the Chair of Education has produced an annual policy statement supported by a set of policies upon which budget decisions are based. These policy statements are based on members' perceptions of the needs of schools and are informed by

Reports from officers and by policy developments which have been undertaken in preceding years. Schools receive these policy statements and have an opportunity to discuss them at meetings. However, over the years there has been insufficient consultation with headteachers and governors on these plans and policies and, until recently, they have not been accompanied by detailed strategic plans for their delivery.

45. In 1997, a statement of corporate commitment was developed for the Council through the Chief Executive's office, which involved a working group of representatives from a wide field and included headteacher representation. Following on this, the ELS Directorate prepared a draft service plan for 1997-2000 which affirms the contribution it will make to the corporate commitment. This plan was prepared by officers as an in-house document and was a first attempt to produce an education service plan and to bring more structure and consistency to the planning process in the Directorate. It has been sent to schools, but further developments on the plan, including the wider involvement of schools, were suspended pending further guidance on LEA Education Development Plans (EDPs) being received from the DfEE. Work on preparing the EDP for Kingston has now started and is part of a planned programme involving extensive consultation with headteachers and governors, including parent governors.

46. The LEA has a clear, straightforward set of priorities. The main ones are

- raising achievement;
- improving access and opportunity for all young people including those with special educational needs and those excluded from schools;
- developing early years education;
- reducing primary class sizes; and
- providing sufficient school places and improving school premises.

These are appropriate. Schools know these priorities, they have been consulted upon them and they support them.

47. At the heart of the LEA's role in supporting school improvement and delivering a number of these key priorities is the LEA's School Improvement Strategy, approved by Committee in March 1998 after extensive consultation with schools. This strategy focuses on:

- improving standards of literacy and numeracy;
- more effective provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- developing provision in the early years;
- raising standards through target setting; and
- using data on school performance.

48. These aspects are consonant with the LEA's main priorities for education as set out in paragraph 47. They benefit from simplicity and are well focused on some important areas of weakness as well as key policy areas. For example: there is wide variation in the standards achieved in literacy and numeracy across its needs show key aspects which need to be addressed; the LEA has a long-standing commitment to early years' education; and the LEA has lagged behind in the analysis and

use of performance data.

49. Link inspectors are the key to ensuring that the School Improvement Strategy is successful. A set of priorities for the work of the link inspectors has been established along with an annual minimum entitlement from each inspector for each school. Those schools with the greatest need will receive more time. In order to support improvement, the LEA has published criteria for school effectiveness and has identified the need to support school self-evaluation and development planning so that schools can analyse their own performance and set appropriate targets to improve. Essential to this strategy is work focused on enabling schools to become more effective in managing their own improvement.

50. In response to requests from schools, the inspectors and advisers are focusing on developing teacher effectiveness through advice, training and regular classroom observation, and link inspectors are to work systematically with headteachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. The details of this approach are yet to be decided. This focus is appropriate, because, although the evidence from OFSTED inspections shows that there is much good quality teaching in Kingston schools, there is also much variation in schools and between schools, and a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching in some schools.

51. The Inspection and Advisory Service has recently developed a framework for the delivery of the School Improvement Strategy. This is set out in the draft service plan for 1997-2000. Timescales, success criteria, targets and lead officers are identified, but costings are not set out. However, this document will be replaced by the statutory Education Development Plan to be drafted during 1998.

### *Evaluating effectiveness*

52. Evaluation of the provision of education services, of progress on priorities and of users' views of provision is carried out in a number of useful ways. For example:

- the Director's Annual Review to the ELS Committee which assesses progress on the Chair of Education's annual policy statement from the previous year and also reports on the performance indicators required annually by the Audit Commission;
- annual surveys conducted by MORI on behalf of the Borough, which track changing perceptions of the public about the quality of service delivery and provision in schools and the quality of certain aspects of education;
- reviews of provision undertaken by working groups of councillors, officers, headteachers and governors. For example, under the direction of a review consultant, a review of special schools took place during the summer of 1996, a review of nursery schools was completed in October 1996 and a



- the headteachers' budget review in 1996-97, which was a wide ranging review of the financial aspects of the education service and was intended to inform future financial planning;
- customer satisfaction surveys and, for some services, the number of complaints received and the amount of buy-back of the services by schools;
- reports to Committee by the Chief Inspector on the findings from OFSTED inspection reports on Kingston schools, on pupil achievement and school performance against national data and the performance in schools in neighbouring LEAs.

53. The LEA is less advanced on evaluating how effective it is in improving schools and whether its services provide value for money.

*The schools' response to the LEA strategy*

54. A survey of schools was carried out for this inspection in late autumn 1997. At that time, schools held a poor opinion of the LEA's strategic planning, its processes for setting budgets and its consultation with schools. Only three schools in five rated the communication of the LEA's key priorities and the quality of its actions to achieve its priorities as adequate or better. Only a quarter of the schools considered both the communication of, and quality of action on, priorities to be good. A significant minority were unclear about the LEA's priorities.

55. Visits to schools in June 1998 revealed a significantly improved picture. Four schools in five viewed strategic planning and consultation as at least satisfactory with two thirds rating them as good or better. All schools had at least a reasonable grasp of the LEA's priorities; the majority had good knowledge of them, supported them and were involved in initiatives directed at them.

56. Schools considered the LEA's priorities to be appropriate and understood that they were expected to contribute, where appropriate, to their implementation. This was felt to be reasonable, particularly since full consultation had taken place. A number of schools were enthusiastic about their involvement in LEA initiatives and, as a consequence, took on board the LEA's priorities in a tangible way. Generally, schools' own priorities are driven by the key issues identified in their OFSTED inspection reports or their own development plans, which focus on their own particular needs. These include issues which, not surprisingly, often match the priorities identified by the LEA, thus enabling a shared agenda for school improvement to be pursued, without spreading resources too thinly across a plethora of small initiatives.

57. Many schools detected more purpose and direction in the LEA over the past year and a new climate of trust in the LEA was emerging. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go in making this secure.

58. On visits to schools, the inspection team were made aware of a significant shift in the schools' attitudes to how well the LEA consulted, listened to and took on board schools' views now compared to last year. References were made by schools to improved consultation occurring as a result of school representation on a variety of review groups, on the School Improvement Strategy, on the Education Development Plan, on special educational needs and the Partnership Meetings between headteachers, governors and officers. The extent to which schools were kept informed of decisions and the lines of communication between the LEA and schools were also generally well regarded. Nevertheless, some considered there was a need for the LEA to be more effective on its stated commitment to partnership with schools, and that councillors should engage in a greater dialogue with schools and praise their considerable achievements more.

## **BUDGET PLANNING**

- O *Budget allocations to Education and Leisure Services and to schools have been reduced in real terms for the past four years against a background of significant growth in the pupil population. This has created tensions between schools and LEA. Public consultation on the Council's budget is comprehensive. Consultation with schools on the education budget has been thorough in recent years and was improved further for the 1998-99 settlement when schools were given indicative budgets. Both LEA budgets and school budgets are monitored effectively.*

59. Over the last four years, the Council has set its overall budget at the maximum level that the Government will allow (the capping limit), but has been obliged to make budget allocations at levels well below the Council's calculation of what is necessary to maintain services at existing levels. Although the Council has attempted to protect school budgets at the expense of central services, the budget allocations to the Education and Leisure Services Directorate and to schools have seen reductions in real terms throughout this period.

60. The Council's procedures for allocating resources follow the common practice of incremental changes. Each year, possible savings and additional expenditure are considered against a base budget that represents the estimated cost of delivering the previous year's services. Any legislative change or any increase in pupil numbers are treated as growth items and must compete for resources alongside proposed service improvements or other policy developments. In Kingston, the school population is rising rapidly and is a significant growth item:

7 per cent in primary schools and 5 per cent in secondary schools over the period 1994-97. Normally growth items have to be funded from efficiency savings or cuts in services. In addition to this year-on-year incremental process, the Council is developing a Service Opportunities Exercise that looks three years ahead at some of the wider opportunities and constraints.

61. Public consultation on the Council's budget setting has become very comprehensive in recent years. Last year, this involved a questionnaire to all households in Kingston, a mobile exhibition, focus groups and an interactive questionnaire on the Internet. In the previous two years, consultation on the

education budget with school governors and headteachers had been thorough, and the arrangements in autumn 1997 improved this further, particularly with the provision of indicative budgets for each school.

62. During the last four years, the main increases in the education budget have been in relation to special educational needs, reflecting the increase in the number of statemented pupils. The biggest percentage reductions have been in 'Other Education'. Changes to the schemes for the Local Management of Schools (LMS) and Special Schools (LMSS), including a relative shift in funding to Key Stage 1 for 1998-99, have followed appropriate consultation.

63. Ensuring value for money is a major concern of the Council. The formal processes for delivering this, through performance indicators and benchmarking, are currently under review. For the last two years, the Chief Executive and Director of Finance have undertaken financial reviews of each service, seeking areas where costs may be reduced or services improved. Within education, there was a series of budget reviews of services in 1996, which involved headteachers. This commendable scrutiny helped to foster greater openness with schools and identified valuable savings. The Director's annual review now includes a number of performance measures, based on the Audit Commission performance indicators. These are geared towards indicating performance and outputs, but do not yet provide sufficient information on expenditure and value for money or provide comparisons with other authorities.

64. A sub-group of chief officers monitors budgets on a regular basis to avoid overspending. This is effective in controlling the expenditure of individual directorates. Where budgets are in danger of being exceeded, as is often the case for special needs expenditure within education, a report is required indicating how the overspend is to be contained. If the particular budget cannot be brought into line, the directorate concerned must find equivalent savings from within its overall budget. The LEA monitors schools' budgets closely and effectively and has ensured no existing LEA school has had a budget deficit within the last four years.

## **SCHOOL PLACES AND ADMISSIONS**

- O There is significant pressure on school places in Kingston: less than 1 per cent of primary places are unfilled and three out of four primary schools are overcrowded. This projected growth is a significant challenge for the LEA. There is a mix of surplus places and excess demand in secondary schools where there are, overall, 8 per cent unfilled places. Information provided to parents is good and a high proportion of parents are offered a place in their first preference of primary school. There are weaknesses in the provision at the pupil referral units. A wide-ranging and thorough review of units in mainstream schools for pupils with special educational needs has recently been completed and proposals arising from it are out to schools for consultation.*

65 The District Auditor's report on school places and admissions, presented to

the LEA in February 1 998, affirms that Kingston adopts generally good practices in planning for, providing and managing school places and statutory responsibilities are met. The LEA maintains good records of accommodation, including temporary accommodation, and regularly reviews admission numbers and physical capacity. Forecasting of demand for school places achieves a high level of accuracy. Kingston has produced a review of primary provision. This is an excellent document and an example of good practice in providing an overall picture and a commentary by planning area. A review of secondary provision was completed in summer of 1 997 and another is planned for 1998.

66. There is significant pressure on primary school places in Kingston and the LEA is constrained by a lack of building space across the Borough. Less than 1 per cent of primary places are unfilled and three out of four primary classes are overcrowded. All surplus places are expected to be eliminated by an increase in demand, not least from new housing developments. The projected growth is a significant challenge for the LEA to achieve the best use of existing building stock and to successfully earmark new sites for schools to take account of new housing. A development plan which provides a framework for future expansion of primary school places has recently been approved by members.

67. Kingston has the highest percentage of pupils in primary schools in classes over 30 compared to other LEAs in England. Over 69 per cent of pupils at Key Stage 1 and 67 per cent at Key Stage 2 are taught in classes of over 30 pupils (January 1 998). However, there are very few classes of more than 36 pupils. In 1 997, the pupil teacher ratio (PTR) in primary and secondary schools was close to the national average.

68. There is a mix of surplus places and excess demand in secondary schools. Overall, about 8 per cent of places are unfilled. No school was at less than 75 per cent capacity, although one school had 23 per cent unfilled places. The situation is complicated by the fact that just over 20 per cent of secondary pupils live outside the Borough. In the two schools which are totally selective, approximately half the pupils come from outside the Borough. The single sex girls' schools are particularly popular.

69. The LEA shares the planning of secondary places with the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS). There is agreement between them on the essential requirements for school places. In particular, they were in accord in supporting a GM girls' school in its proposal to increase its admissions and to become partially selective. This was a response to an increase in the intake of the selective boys' GM school and took account of local preferences.

70. The information provided to parents on admissions both to primary and secondary schools is clear and follows good practice, although it does not give an indication of which primary schools were oversubscribed in the previous year.

71. A high proportion of parents are offered a place in their first preference of primary school: 95.5 per cent in 1997. In 1996/97, the number of appeals heard concerning admissions to primary schools was 63 and for secondary schools 166.

These figures represented growth on those for 1995/96. In all, 13 of the appeals relating to primary schools, and 23 to secondary schools, were found in favour of the parents.

72. The LEA has a clear rationale for provision at its two pupil referral units (PRUs), both of which cater for secondary age pupils. However, the recent OFSTED inspection reports show that one of the units does not effectively fulfil its purpose of providing education for an interim period. Also, some pupils who have been excluded from special schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties are placed in one of the units for a relatively long time. This arrangement is inappropriate, since the unit is unable to meet their specific needs.

73. During the autumn and spring terms of 1997/98 the LEA carried out a major review of its units for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. A report of this review, carried out with the involvement of an external consultant, is currently with schools for consultation on its main proposals. This review is thorough, wide-ranging and appropriately focuses on the LEA's wish to ensure that provision in the units is well matched to the needs of pupils, that it allows for a flexible response as needs change, that the pupils have sufficient access to mainstream classroom experience, that there is careful assessment of need and that resources are used efficiently. The report gives clear findings and key points for action. Implementation of the findings is likely to improve provision in the units considerably.

## **LIAISON WITH OTHER SERVICES AND AGENCIES**

- O *The Education and Leisure Services Directorate has established effective links with other directorates in Kingston and with other local authorities. It has also formed productive partnerships with other agencies and co-operates effectively with other planning bodies. In this small authority, both schools and officers recognise the need to broker arrangements for specialised support for schools which the Borough would find it uneconomical to provide itself. Officers are increasingly active in this respect and a growing number of such arrangements are being established, particularly in the field of curriculum advice and support.*

74. The Chief Executive and the Director of Education and Leisure Services are keen to encourage cross-directorate and cross-agency working. Many partners are identified: students and parents, schools and colleges, Kingston University, the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the business community and voluntary bodies. The vision statement places emphasis on the need for education to work through an inter-agency approach with social, health, probation and police services in providing people with integrated and co-ordinated services which meet their particular needs and recognise the diversity of their communities.

75. A number of inter-agency projects are designed to raise the level of pupil achievement and to encourage high levels of attendance. For example, the Admovere Project is a European Social Fund Project involving Community Services and others and aims to develop a holistic approach to meeting the needs of troubled, and frequently truanting, young people as they move towards the world of work

or training. At the other end of the age spectrum, Community Services are co-operating with other education service personnel in the development of a joint approach on early years provision.

76. In Kingston, the LEA manages the Education Business Partnership (EBP). A number of businesses in the Borough are actively supporting the EBP co-ordinator in providing placements for teachers and in mounting projects for pupils such as Insight into Industry. The LEA has co-operated with AZTEC (the local TEC for Kingston, Wandsworth and Merton) in making a bid for SRB funding to support the development of information technology in schools. There are a further seven SRB projects involving Kingston's secondary and special schools and developed in liaison with AZTEC. These include target-setting and the development of key skills in vocational courses.

77. Across south-west London LEA officers from the various boroughs liaise closely so that matters of policy and practice can be shared and cross-borough issues can be discussed and any working difficulties readily resolved. The local Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) convenes meetings of chief education officers from the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston. Heads of services in Kingston LEA also meet with colleagues with similar responsibilities in the south London area LEAs. For instance, a joint borough on special educational needs liaison group comprising the London Boroughs of Richmond, Merton, Sutton and Kingston has recently been reconstituted. Kingston is also working with the Borough of Richmond and the Health Authority to support an advisory teacher for health education and is also the lead authority in a consortium of four LEAs and the Diocese of Southwark Education Board which organises a regional Headteacher Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP).

78. There is regular liaison between a senior officer and the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) regarding school places. Whilst there is a regular flow of information to the Diocesan Boards and co-operation on matters concerning SACRE, there is not a pattern of meetings at which school places and admissions procedures are discussed.

## **STATUTORY DUTIES**

79. The LEA is taking reasonable steps to meet its statutory duties in relation to the provision of schools; the funding of schools; school governance; the employment of staff; admissions, attendance and exclusions; health and safety; the curriculum; special educational needs; and schools in special measures. However, there are points on which further action is desirable. The LEA should:

- responds to concerns expressed by some schools about the regularity of headteacher appraisal are resolved;
- systematically follow up issues raised in OFSTED inspection reports in relation to schools meeting the statutory requirements for the curriculum and collective worship.

- O *Most services are well managed and effective: those that are less well managed or less effective have identified the improvements which are required. Schools find services generally helpful and expert. There have been significant restructuring and re-alignment of services over the past two years to establish a more coherent and efficient service to schools. Some of this is still going on, particularly in relation to the Inspection and Advisory Service, the services supporting pupils with special educational needs and services promoting access.*

## **ADVISORY AND CURRICULUM SUPPORT SERVICES**

### ***The Inspection and Advisory Service***

80. Inspection and advisory support for improving the standards of attainment and the quality of education in Kingston schools has been delivered, in the main, by a team of inspectors and curriculum advisers. This team was significantly reduced in number two years ago. A new Chief Inspector was appointed in April 1 997. During the past two years there have been no inspectors for English, mathematics or special educational needs. One inspector has had the lead role for science and design and technology, and another for early years. Advisers continued to provide advice and support for modern foreign languages, physical education and information technology. The responses to the school survey indicated that schools felt acutely the effects these cuts had had on the ability of the LEA to provide effective support for curriculum subjects, especially literacy and numeracy; support to improve the quality of teaching; support for senior management in schools, including school self-evaluation and development planning; how well the LEA knew or understood the schools; and, to some extent, the support to the governing body.

81. Under the revised structure of LEA services, the Chief Inspector now manages an Educational Achievement Group which includes an enlarged team of five inspectors with responsibilities for English and Literacy; Mathematics and Numeracy; Science; and two inspectors for Primary and Early Years. Special educational needs will be covered through buying in consultancy time and advisory support for modern foreign languages and information technology will be available as before. Inspectors are centrally funded, although for the past three years between 6 and 7 per cent of the budget has been devolved to secondary schools and a similar amount is earned through carrying out inspections for OFSTED. For each of the past two years, advisers have had to earn an increasing proportion of their salaries through being bought in by schools.

82. The service is well managed and over the past year significant advances have been made in analysing more precisely the requirements of schools, in identifying the improvements which are required and how to deploy the inspectorate to secure these. The current aims of the service are set out in the draft service plan and the School Improvement Strategy. These are clear,

85. A major aspect of each inspector's work is the role of link inspector to a group of schools. Each inspector negotiates with each of their schools how to fulfil the role. In general, all inspectors undertake paired observations of lessons with headteachers or subject leaders; they identify issues in school development plans or action plans following OFSTED inspections in order to monitor and evaluate progress on them; and they are involved in staff appointments.

86. At the end of a visit, inspectors discuss their findings with the school and these are generally well regarded. However, there is a variety of practice in what written records are left with schools, not only by different inspectors, but by the same inspectors. There is also variety in the style of written records: some are evaluative, others more descriptive and therefore less helpful to schools. Support to schools before and after OFSTED inspections has previously been unsystematic, but generally well regarded by most schools. The role of the link inspector is now being more precisely defined to enable the LEA's School Improvement Strategy to be delivered and to provide a more consistent approach across all schools so that schools know what support they can expect.

87. Curriculum support has been provided by link inspectors and advisers through school visits and the LEA training programme. Subject specific support has been severely limited since 1996 and even when the inspection team is enlarged, it is acknowledged that the schools will still require some curriculum support which the LEA will not be able to provide itself. To overcome this problem, the LEA is negotiating with other providers to give schools access to a wider range of expertise and support for the curriculum. Arrangements already exist with other LEAs for supporting the professional development of teachers in aspects of special educational needs, the induction of headteachers, and sex education. More recently, the LEA has brokered other curriculum support for schools with other LEAs. Support groups from primary co-ordinators of English, mathematics and special educational needs have continued on a termly basis and advisers for information technology have also continued to lead meetings of co-ordinators. These were highly regarded. Schools regret the demise of meetings for other subject co-ordinators, which had previously been led by inspectors: they found them valuable for the dissemination of good practice, the provision of up-to-date information on developments and for networking with other colleagues. This regret was more prevalent amongst subject co-ordinators in primary schools than others.

88. Support for early years education is of good quality. The work has been effectively managed and much has been achieved over the past two years. The successful development of the baseline assessment scheme is discussed elsewhere, but other initiatives and activities have been promoted effectively. The LEA's Early Years Guidelines were reviewed and relaunched in 1996 after full consultation with the Social Services and headteachers. The Early Years Annual Conference and courses for early years co-ordinators are valued: they are clearly



annual conference is an excellent source of motivation for teachers and other early years' staff at the start of the new academic year. In addition: an Early Years Forum has been established, which includes parents and teachers; an effective Early Years Partnership has been established; and an Early Years Development Plan has been approved by the Secretary of State.

### ***The Language and Achievement for Bilingual Pupils Service***

87. The Language and Achievement for Bilingual Pupils (LABP) Service was established in 1992. With the exception of the head of service, all staff are part-funded by the Home Office: this ceases in March 1 999 when the current project ends. Staffing levels have been cut over recent years and have not matched the increasing number of pupils supported, currently 740.

88. The service is effectively managed, has a well-deserved reputation and has been able to respond rapidly to changing circumstances. There is a comprehensive service plan with agreed targets derived from its annual performance return to the Home Office. A recent document clearly sets out the partnership between schools and the service. The service has extensive and valued links with community groups and its standing group, which has an important management function for the service, draws representatives from schools and the community.

The service has well-established monitoring procedures and provides detailed information on bilingual pupils. The service is also responsible for providing support for refugees, Travellers and equal opportunities.

### ***The School Information and Technology Service***

89. Support for information technology in the Borough is provided by the School Information and Technology Service. The service has been set up to provide advice and training on the delivery of the curriculum and the management of information systems; to provide an installation, repair and maintenance service, and for central purchasing of information technology resources. The service is part funded from a central budget and part from annual contracts with schools. Charges relate to the size of schools.

90. The service is well managed and the responses to the school survey indicate a high level of satisfaction with the overall quality of the service. In the past year, the service has started to refocus and strengthen its role in relation to the LEA's strategy for school improvement by initiating a comprehensive review of information technology in schools. The two advisory teachers are currently working with four secondary and 15 primary schools on the review and audit aspects of this initiative. The service evaluates its work with schools annually through questionnaires. These are carefully analysed and appropriate adjustments and improvements made to the service.

### ***Other curriculum support services***

91. Three other LEA services provide teaching and curriculum support to schools. The Kingston Sports and Recreation Service is responsible for the

co-ordination and development of all sports and recreation within the Borough. There is increasing involvement with schools, particularly secondary schools, where advice has been provided on gaining external funding. This support for schools is well regarded and well managed. Until recently, an adviser for physical and outdoor education in schools worked with the service and held termly meetings with physical education co-ordinators; these were valued by schools, but since April 1 998 the post no longer exists. For the past seven years, the Schools Library Service (SLS) has been funded entirely on buy-back from schools: 45 per cent of LEA primary schools and ten others, including independent schools, buy into the service. There is limited use of the service by secondary schools. As the level of buy-back suggests, schools had mixed views about the quality of the service: those continuing to buy back valued the service; others found it too expensive, that it provided poor quality stock and gave poor value for money. It is a priority of the service to improve the quality of its resources. The Kingston Music Service has recently become a Trust the Kingston Music and Arts Trust (KMAT). The service is well managed and well regarded by schools. Effective advice and help are provided in the planning and organisation of school-based projects arranged with professional artists. KMAT is non-profit making and charges reflect actual cost. All but one primary school and half the secondary schools use the instrumental tuition part of the service. The service offers good quality advice and effective support to schools relating to the National Curriculum and runs in-service training.

## **OTHER SERVICES SUPPORTING ACCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT**

0 *There has been a marked improvement in the management of these services over the past two years. A number have undergone significant recent changes to their status, funding, structure and management: for some the changes are still on-going. In the survey, schools expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of an up-to-date LEA policy on special educational needs to reflect these significant changes and the need for better co-ordination of the various pupil services. A standing group of officers and headteachers was established in order to bring direction to the services supporting pupils with special educational needs and a consultant was commissioned to report on how the use of the special units might be rationalised. The LEA is now building on the work of this standing group.*

92. The Educational Psychology Service has recently been strengthened through the appointment of a new principal educational psychologist and a new post of senior educational psychologist. A detailed service plan with appropriate priorities and targets has recently been produced, along with revised service aims and job descriptions. Strategic Planning and management have improved and are now good. Two problems persist: firstly, the time allocation of psychologists to each school is not perceived to be equitable; secondly, pupils assigned to units are assessed after being placed and this sometimes uses up almost all the time allocated to the main school. The service is aware of these difficulties and is improving its own procedures: new administrative systems and more clearly defined practices have been introduced. Current priorities include reviewing time allocations to schools to ensure equitable service levels according to needs; setting

up projects to improve literacy and the management of behaviour; and adopting a more consultative approach with schools. Team specialisms and roles have been clarified as well as links with special educational needs moderation groups and other services and agencies. The service has close links with the Education Welfare Service and the two services are working jointly on a new Standards Fund project on attendance and behaviour. The service is currently developing procedures to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of its work.

93. The Education Welfare Service is well managed. The service is generally well regarded by schools with almost half rating it as good. Attendance is not a problem in Kingston, although it is below 90 per cent in five schools. There is a clear service and strategic plan with appropriate priorities and targets. Considerable attention has been given to improving the service's administrative systems and procedures. Detailed performance information is now produced to enable the service to match its activities better to statutory and other responsibilities. Extensive links are made with other services and agencies. The service is involved in initiatives to reduce levels of pupil disaffection, to prevent exclusions and to improve pupils' behaviour. The service has introduced a staged model to improve attendance, linked to a clear referral system that provides details of the problem and action to be taken by the school. The training, advice and support on child protection are thorough and effective.

94. The Special Educational Needs Assessment Service is responsible for administration and advice on all statutory requirements connected with the referral assessment, review and placement of children with special educational needs at Stages 4 and 5 of the Code of Practice. The service development plan identifies appropriate priorities. Progress has been made against these priorities and the service has significantly increased the percentage of proposed statements completed within 18 weeks from a low 14.6 per cent, 18 months ago, to 81 per cent. Over the years the LEA has financed a small number of important special educational needs initiatives for mainstream schools such as providing additional resources for speech and language therapy. In the survey, only about half the schools rated the service as at least adequate, but since then there have been improvements in the effectiveness of the service: it is now more efficiently administered and annual reviews take place at set dates. The service enables the LEA to fulfil its statutory duties in relation to the assessment of and provision for pupils with special educational needs..

95. The Learning and Literacy Support Service (LLSS) has undergone substantial changes over the past year. A key role now is to provide advice to schools on support for pupils with learning difficulties. Previously, it provided specialist teaching staff and classroom assistant support to pupils with statements of special educational need to enable them to receive their full curriculum entitlement and to provide appropriate additional support in mainstream schools. A significant amount of the budget for this service has been devolved to schools: by September 1998 all funding for teaching support and welfare assistant support for statemented pupils in mainstream schools will be devolved to all primary and secondary schools. The service has well-established procedures for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of its work. However, as the responsibility for LLSS

teaching and welfare support passes to headteachers, resulting from further devolution of funds, it will be important for procedures to be in place to monitor the quality and effectiveness of that provision. The team is well managed and has considerable breadth of expertise.

96. The Behaviour Support Service (BSS) was formed a year ago when the Learning Support Service was reorganised into the separate LLSS and BSS. The service provides support for schools and units with pupils who have behavioural difficulties. It is responsible for managing two pupil referral units (PRUs) for secondary pupils and for the Hospital and Home Tuition Service. The service is well managed and there is a clear vision for its development. This service has also undergone substantial changes in the past year and is currently consulting on a set of proposals to bring more coherence to behaviour support. Many schools report that they do not have need of support from the service; of those that do, many have experienced a recent improvement in quality. Recent inspections of the two PRUs identified good provision at one PRU and unsatisfactory provision at the other and provided a number of key issues for action by the LEA. Amongst these were recommendations for draft policies on PRUs to be formally adopted by the LEA; to provide support and advice on curriculum planning and lesson planning; and to ensure that the planned management committee for the two PRUs is established at the planned time to enable the LEA to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision more effectively.

## **MANAGEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

### ***Financial support Services***

97. Funds for the provision of financial support services are delegated to schools. Support for budget preparation and monitoring is provided by Education Finance, a section of the ELS Directorate. The service is purchased by all LEA schools and is viewed very positively by them. The same is true of the income and creditor payments service provided by the Finance Directorate. Examples of good practice include a booklet setting out costs and service levels, a choice of different service levels being available and the use of questionnaires to obtain client feedback on service quality. All LEA schools buy into the payroll service, but this is viewed less positively than the other financial services. Education Finance provides schools with data on comparative expenditure and it provides training for schools' administration officers. These services are valued by schools.

### ***Personnel and Legal Services***

98. Funds to provide personnel services are also delegated to schools. The service, provided by the Council's Personnel Directorate, is purchased by all but one of the LEA schools and by three GM schools. It has a strong customer focus, with schools being provided with a choice of service levels, a clear description of costs and performance standards and a chance to provide feedback through an annual survey of customer satisfaction. Schools appreciate the responsiveness of the service, with many of the schools describing it as first class.

99. Schools also appreciate the legal support service that is provided by the Legal Services Directorate. This service is funded centrally and provided on a responsive basis. There are no delegated funds or buy-back arrangements.

### ***Property maintenance***

100. SERCO Property and Design Partnership manages the LEA's responsibilities for the repair and maintenance of school buildings. In addition to providing a responsive service for dealing with emergency repairs, SERCO manages the planned maintenance programme. It carries out an annual survey of all school premises to assess needs and priorities. Schools are generally satisfied with the responsive maintenance service, but many expressed dissatisfaction at the level of resources available for planned maintenance and at a lack of transparency in how resources are allocated.

### ***Grounds maintenance, cleaning and catering***

101. Funds for carrying out grounds maintenance and cleaning are delegated to schools. Each school has a choice of whether or not to be part of a centrally negotiated contract. However, the take-up of the central contracts is low, with most schools preferring to make their own arrangements. The continued viability of negotiating contracts on behalf of a small number of schools is becoming questionable.

102. Kingston does not provide a comprehensive school meals service. It provides a hot meal service to its two special schools, but at other schools it provides packed lunches for those pupils entitled to free school meals. On the school survey, schools expressed dissatisfaction with the school meals service, but no major deficiencies in the delivery of the service were identified on school visits. Thirty primary schools and the nursery school use this contract; the remaining eight primary schools and five secondary schools have their own catering contractors. Many of these larger schools have found that they can provide a hot meal at a lower cost than the allowance for free school meals.

## **SECTION 5: LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN STANDARDS, QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT**

### **IMPROVEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS VISITED**

103. HMI visited 21 schools, 14 of which had made good overall progress on those aspects of work inspected and the remaining seven schools had made satisfactory overall progress. There was little difference in this pattern between primary and secondary schools.

104. The overall effectiveness of LEA services was judged to be good in eight schools and sound in ten. It was variable in another two and weak in one. The support was more consistently effective in secondary schools than in primary schools or the special school. Where it was ineffective, it was, without exception, the result of either frequent changes in the school's link inspector, which led to discontinuity in advice and support, or the lack of a specialist inspector or adviser. This was a consequence of the decision two years ago to reduce significantly the number of inspectors and advisers. The effect has been greater on primary and special schools than on secondary schools, because there have been fewer changes of their link inspector and they have been more able than most primary schools to obtain specialist advice from other sources.

### **SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN LITERACY**

0 *Schools in Kingston have traditionally done well in maintaining one of the best overall averages for results in English for school age pupils. The LEA should, therefore, be well placed to take up the challenges presented by the National Literacy Strategy. However, the lack of an English inspector over the past two years has contributed to a slowing of the momentum for improvement and has inhibited the implementation of a local project designed to raise standards in language and literacy. There is much still to do if the schools are to deliver the locally and nationally determined targets by 2002.*

105. National Curriculum test and examination results in English in Kingston schools are significantly above national averages in all key stages although the percentage points difference between the LEA and national averages at Key Stages 2 and 3 in 1997 has declined in the last two years. At Key Stage 1, between 1995 and 1997 standards in writing in Kingston schools improved from a comparatively low base, but at a faster rate compared to the national figure. From a higher base, reading improved only marginally and at a slower rate than nationally. In 1997, there were no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls in English at Key Stages 1 and 2, but, at Key Stage 3 and GCSE, the proportion of boys achieving higher levels and grades in English was significantly below that of the girls.

106. The amount of support in English and literacy recently provided by the LEA to schools has been adversely affected by the lack of an English inspector between

March 1 996 and early 1 998, when a new appointment was made. In the intervening period, a part-time consultant was available to schools, but only limited use was made of this person.

107. In response to the national priority, literacy is currently one of eight foci for school improvement in the Borough. Kingston's target in English is for 88 per cent of pupils to achieve Level 4 at Key Stage 2 by 2002, compared with 72 per cent in 1997. Fourteen primary and five secondary schools, including two GM schools, are participating in a locally devised project to raise standards of language and literacy in Kingston schools. The project aims to support schools in raising standards in literacy, to disseminate best practice and to support schools in setting ambitious targets for pupils' attainment. To date, these aims have only partially been achieved. Evaluation of the project is limited and LEA monitoring, invariably by link inspectors, is slight, although a full evaluation is to be done later this year.

108. The effectiveness of the LEA's existing support for literacy was a theme in visits to five primary and four secondary schools. These schools all participate in Kingston's literacy project.

109. There has been an improvement in the standards achieved in literacy in three of the five primary schools and in three of the four secondary schools since their OFSTED inspection. In the others, standards have fluctuated or fallen. Overall, the stronger schools are improving whilst the weaker are struggling to maintain standards.

110. The quality of the planning for improving literacy is uneven across the schools. In primary schools, this ranges from a document which accurately assesses current strengths and weaknesses and sets out targets and detailed strategies for improvement to a policy document for English which makes only a passing reference to the literacy initiative. In secondary schools, the range is similarly wide, from a significant change of culture and practice and improvements in curriculum planning, teaching and assessment, to low priority being given to the development of the principles associated with the literacy initiative.

111. For primary schools, in-service training linked to the literacy pilot was effective when it was led by a respected practitioner and included helpful and relevant suggestions for classroom practice. The best regarded sessions were invariably school-based, included a 'literacy hour' demonstration lesson, and were followed by an opportunity for teachers to try out the techniques in their classrooms. This combination has led to more effective teaching of literacy. A good many primary school teachers have drawn on the National Literacy Project Framework for Teaching and have introduced a more systematic approach based on a daily session of reading and writing. However, in several lessons the link between the plenary session and the group sessions was not sufficiently well thought through and the match of activities to pupils' capabilities is still a weakness in many schools.

11 3. For secondary schools, staff development associated with the project to date has been principally through attendance by co-ordinators and headteachers at

meetings of the literacy working party. This is well received by schools. Some more specific in-service training has been provided, although there are needs identified by heads of English departments which are, as yet, unmet. Useful cross-phase meetings with primary schools have been set up by the LEA and opportunities have been provided for secondary teachers to visit local primary schools to see the literacy hour in practice.

## **SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN NUMERACY**

0 *There has been very limited support from the LEA to improve standards in numeracy or mathematics during the past two years and this has had only a slight impact. Headteachers and mathematics co-ordinators, particularly in primary schools, frequently commented that this was one curriculum area where they look to the LEA for support, advice and challenge.*

113. Standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1 are at or above national norms and in Key Stages 2 and 3 are above or well above these norms. At GCSE they vary considerably between schools because of the selective system in the Borough. When compared to national averages (42.9 per cent), the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C in GCSE mathematics in Kingston secondary schools (54.3 per cent) is significantly higher. These standards have been maintained, with minor fluctuations, for several years.

114. The LEA has recently refocused attention on improving standards of numeracy in schools as part of its School Improvement Strategy, and has appointed an inspector for mathematics and numeracy to take up post in September 1 998, after being without one since April 1 996. At the time of the inspection, the LEA did not have a strategy to improve the development of pupils' numeracy skills.

115. Without a subject inspector there has been very limited focused support for numeracy, although some has been provided for mathematics through a consultancy arrangement and by some link inspectors through lesson observation in primary schools. The mathematics co-ordinators' meetings have continued and a limited range of in-service courses for primary teachers has been offered at the LEA's Professional Development Centre.

116. Visits were made to one secondary school and five primary schools in relation to this theme.

117. In the majority of schools, improvements have taken place since their OFSTED inspections. Numeracy skills are generally well developed in relation to pupils' abilities and often above national expectations for more able pupils. In one school there is no obvious improvement in the overall standard of numeracy and a lack of concentration in mathematics teaching on number facility. In the schools visited, the quality of planning for, and organisation of, mathematics teaching, is generally sound. Some primary schools have set numeracy targets and some are now using optional National Curriculum Tests in Year 4. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory and good in some cases.



118. Various small-scale initiatives are taking place in some schools in relation to numeracy, but the LEA's influence on these has thus far been unco-ordinated and its impact slight.

119. Some co-ordinators are isolated because of the absence of LEA support due to the lack of a mathematics inspector: they have little or no access to expert advice and are not professionally challenged. Some teachers are diffident about new approaches to numeracy and require professional support and training. In several schools, the value of the in-service courses being offered was questioned as being too superficial and insufficiently differentiated.

## **SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

0 *The standards achieved by pupils are lower than those in similar LEAs or nationally at Key Stages 1 and 2, but are generally higher in Key Stages 3 and 4. Advice and support from the School Information and Technology Service are well regarded by schools, but, although the service is very effective in supporting technical aspects, it is less good in curriculum support and support for teaching and learning.*

120. Data from OFSTED inspections show that standards of achievement in information technology are lower across Key Stages 1 and 2 in the Borough's schools than in statistical neighbours or in comparison to national averages. In secondary schools, standards of achievement are generally higher than national averages in both Key Stages 3 and 4; there is, however, variation between schools.

121. Improvements are taking place in primary schools, but in secondary schools these are more variable. There are still gaps in some pupils' National Curriculum entitlement for information technology across all key stages and the quality of curriculum planning and the development of information technology are patchy. Some schools are at the leading edge of national developments while others are still lagging behind.

122. The service has been very effective in supporting technical aspects such as installation, systems management and keeping schools' co-ordinators aware of technical developments in this field. It has been less good in curriculum support and support for teaching and learning. Recently the service has developed a more strategic approach to improvements in the teaching and learning of information technology. Where schools are involved, this is helping co-ordinators to develop a systematic approach to the development of good learning experiences.

122. Visits were made to six secondary schools and five primary schools in relation to this theme.

124. Overall, schools make regular use of, and place a high value on, the technical and operational support and advice provided by the information technology service. They feel that they get good value for money, especially compared to other agencies which offer a similar service.

125. In each primary school some improvements in organisation, management, teaching and learning have taken place as a result of LEA support. Those schools that have made the most significant developments have benefited from working with an advisory teacher on operational matters and have used the LEA's review and planning model for information technology. These schools are focusing on the development of teachers' information technology skills as a way of raising standards and improving the quality of pupils' learning. Well-conceived policies for information technology have been devised and standards of achievement are beginning to rise.

126. In secondary schools the picture is more varied. In two schools, no improvements have been made to standards of achievement, pupils' National Curriculum entitlement or to the organisation and management of information technology particularly at Key Stage 4. One of these schools has not requested any help with curricular issues; in the other, the LEA has provided help on policy and technical matters, but not on raising standards. In other schools, standards have risen and curriculum organisation and entitlement have improved.

127. In some secondary schools, developments in the use of information technology to support teaching and learning across the curriculum are well ahead of what is happening nationally. Where information technology co-ordinators are experts in, and effective managers of, information technology, schools are able to forge ahead on their own, using the service for periodic advice. Where co-ordinators are less expert or effective the service has a more substantial role to play.

1289. The information technology service has been used effectively by secondary schools in a number of ways to provide better access for pupils to a wide range of learning experiences. These include on-site operational help and advice on installation; telephone advice; the provision of a reliable and cost-effective repair service; centralised purchasing with substantial discounts; and advice on making applications for additional SRB funding.

129. Most primary and secondary schools make good use of the courses run by the service and the regular meetings for co-ordinators. These meetings are effective in keeping co-ordinators informed about national developments in information technology and what hardware and software are available.

130. The service does not monitor systematically the standards of achievement in information technology, National Curriculum entitlement or the quality of teaching and learning. The advisory staff respond to requests for help rather than taking a proactive role in school improvement on the basis of inspection findings. Where co-ordinators lack experience of the role it is difficult for them to identify what needs to be done. In several schools the co-ordinator is not concentrating sufficiently on improvements in standards or the quality of teaching and learning.

## SUPPORT FOR BILINGUAL PUPILS

- O *Support for bilingual pupils is generally good. It is well regarded by schools, although not all schools are clear about their own role in managing the support.*

131. Approximately 12 per cent of pupils in Kingston's schools are bilingual. Support is provided to schools by specialist teachers managed by the Language and Achievement for Bilingual Pupils (LABP) Service. The level of support has declined recently as budgets have been cut, whilst the number of pupils who could benefit from this type of support has increased. There is much evidence of the project's effectiveness in contributing to the progress pupils make.

132. Schools are helped to raise the achievement of bilingual pupils by support teachers who work with class teachers and develop resources and materials. They also give advice and training in the identification of children in need of support and on planning and evaluation. This support is effective and well regarded by schools.

133. Currently all LEA-maintained secondary schools, and all but four primary schools, receive at least a half-day of support each week: some schools, on the basis of need, receive much more support. All school staff and governors have access to training provided by the service.

134. Visits were made to one secondary and four primary schools in relation to this theme. The proportion of the total number of pupils on roll receiving support in these schools varied from one per cent to 33 per cent. Where the school was receiving only the minimum entitlement, the support teacher was principally involved in liaising with the school's co-ordinator for English as an additional language, providing individualised action plans and monitoring progress of pupils. In other schools, support is more extensive: pupils are withdrawn from classrooms to work with the LEA support teacher or the support teachers work alongside classroom teachers. There was a recognition in all the schools of the value of the contribution of the LABP support teachers.

135. At the time of each school's OFSTED inspection, the quality of the support to bilingual pupils was at least satisfactory and, in two of the schools, good. The visits undertaken for this inspection showed, in four of the schools, that the quality of the support is rising. All the schools were able to identify how individual pupils have benefited from the support provided. A review of the comprehensive records on pupils' progress in each of the schools provided good evidence of the progress that was being made. In Key Stages 1 and 2, bilingual pupils are quickly helped to acquire an oral competency in English and most make sufficient progress to enable them to achieve levels commensurate with their ability. At Key Stages 3 and 4, some valuable work is being done with bilingual pupils in helping to determine more precisely their true levels of ability.

136. The quality of management of the project in different schools varies. At best, in-class support is well targeted and support teachers work closely with class

teachers: for example, providing the necessary language skills for Key Stage 1 mathematics, which has led to an overall improvement in test results. At the other extreme, there is uncertainty about the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator and that person's relationship with LABP and, in some schools, there is a lack of clarity about the role of the headteacher in the management of the support teacher's time.

137. Good quality in-service training has been provided by the LEA for school co-ordinators and for class teachers. Classroom materials have been devised centrally and made available to schools and were making a valuable contribution in a number of the classrooms visited. On-going support to teachers is provided through documentation by the LEA team and these are helpful to teachers, as are the recommendations regarding resources and the loans available to schools. Particularly good use is made of loans of books in home languages.

## **SUPPORT FOR PUPILS WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS**

*O Places for pupils with speech and language impairments are provided at four units and at a special school and cover the full age range except for pre-school. The quality of the planning, the teaching and support is of a high standard and pupils have access to their full curriculum entitlement.*

138. The LEA works in partnership with the Kingston and District Health Trust to provide for pupils with speech and language impairments. The pupils concerned are well known to both parties who endeavour to ensure that their particular needs are properly met. The speech and language therapists have recently undertaken a thorough and detailed analysis of the pupils' needs and are currently revising their programme of support appropriately within the present budgetary restrictions. The LEA has increased its contribution towards the cost of speech therapy, additional teaching and adult assistance to meet current needs. Places for pupils with speech and language impairments are provided at an infant, a junior, a primary and a secondary school and support is also provided for several pupils with additional moderate learning difficulties at a special school.

139. The LEA has been without an inspector for special educational needs for two years and, while the staff concerned have endeavoured to provide an appropriate service for pupils with speech and language impairments, the lack of an inspector is beginning to have an adverse effect on strategic planning and overall co-ordination.

140. Visits were made to three units and a special school in relation to this theme.

141. All school staff involved in this support ensure that lessons, group sessions and individual activities are carefully planned, that teaching and support are of a high standard and that teachers are well supported by LEA staff. The pupils receive their full curriculum entitlement, have good attitudes towards their work and try hard. Most of those pupils assigned to the units take full advantage of the

opportunities available in the main school as well as the specialist provision provided when they are withdrawn to the unit. However, currently only pupils at the special school have access to a suitable range of nationally accredited courses at Key Stage 4. The LEA has yet to set clear criteria for admission to the units which ensure that those pupils selected are able to make best use of the facilities available. A more accurate process of assessment has yet to be considered for pre-school age children.

## SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- O *The LEA has been effective in improving the quality of teaching. Link inspectors have been influential through their observations and evaluations of lessons, but many subjects and aspects of the curriculum have been outside inspectors' areas of expertise and, because of this, the breadth of their influence is restricted. Inspectors have usefully put schools in touch with other inspectors in neighbouring LEAs when schools required advice beyond their own area of expertise: this is now beginning to be coordinated and more systematic. Dissemination of good practice does occur and has been beneficial, but it is unco-ordinated. There has been good support for schools on competency issues, appointments of key staff and for newly qualified teachers. Courses for teachers met with mixed responses: not all, by any means, were judged to have had an impact on teaching and there is no sufficiently systematic approach to monitoring or evaluating their impact. School-based in-service training provided by inspectors for the whole staff, which is focused specially on the school's needs, is, however, well regarded and effective.*

142. Data from OFSTED inspections about the quality of teaching in Kingston primary schools show it to be slightly better than that in schools in statistical neighbours and nationally. The quality of teachers' planning, their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and their methods and organisation are all judged to be good in about two-thirds of the primary schools inspected. Teachers expectations of their pupils are not judged as highly: good in about four out of ten schools; satisfactory in a further five out of ten; and unsatisfactory in one school in ten.

### The quality of teaching in primary schools

Percentage of lessons

	Number of lessons	Good or better	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory or worse	Satisfactory or better
Kingston upon Thames	2379	50	38	12	88
Statistical neighbours	14606	48	37	15	85
England	884214	45	41	14	86

144. Judgements about the quality of teaching in the secondary schools showed certain aspects of teaching to be good in most schools. For example, teachers' knowledge and understanding and the planning of their lessons were judged to be good, overall, in almost all schools and at both key stages, but teachers' expectations, methods and organisation were judged to be good in only a minority of schools at Key Stage 3. Analysis of all lesson grades show that the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 84 per cent of lessons in Kingston secondary schools compared with 85 per cent both in statistical neighbours and England.

### The quality of teaching in secondary schools

	Number of lessons	Good or better	Satisfactory	Percentage of lessons	
				Unsatisfactory or worse	Satisfactory or better
Kingston upon Thames	1613	50	34	16	84
Statistical neighbours	11782	48	37	15	85
England	618649	48	37	15	85

146. The quality of teaching had improved in all 13 of the primary schools visited, markedly so in seven of them. The LEA has made an effective contribution to improvement in 12 schools. The quality of teaching had also improved in all the LEA's secondary and special schools visited, markedly so in three of them and the LEA's contribution had been effective in all six.

145. Link inspectors have provided the bulk of, and the most significant contributions to, support for improving the quality of teaching and almost all schools value this support highly. The observation of lessons by inspectors has helped teachers focus on the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning. In primary schools, these observations are usually undertaken jointly with the headteacher and, hence, improve the monitoring of standards and quality of education in the school. As well as observing lessons to assess the quality of teaching, inspectors have focused on assessment procedures and provided detailed reviews of subjects and departments. They have also provided a good deal of effective school-based in-service training for teachers, particularly in primary schools. There is a variety of practice in the way inspectors feed back their findings to schools: sometimes detailed, written reports are left with the school, but sometimes feedback is done orally, with no written reports being left.

146. The Continuing and Professional Development (C PD) Service, based at the Kingsdowne Centre aims to provide high quality courses to support school improvement. A wide variety of courses is offered, but the only curriculum subjects to be adequately covered are science, design and technology, music, PE and English as an additional language. The quality of the courses varies and, although the service evaluates teachers' views after each course, there is no systematic approach to monitoring or evaluating the impact of the training in schools.

147. Partly owing to the loss of subject expertise within the Inspection and Advisory Service, more schools are now identifying their own sources of training for curriculum support rather than being dependent on what the LEA offers, and there is an increasing tendency for secondary schools to take the initiative to look outside the LEA where there are gaps in provision. It is policy to ensure that schools in this small LEA have access to a wide range of advice and support. To this end, the LEA is negotiating for external agencies to provide the expertise and training, which is not readily available from within the LEA's own Inspection Advisory Service or from within its own schools.

148. A number of the schools visited had received good support from the Personnel Service over competency issues and from inspectors in providing advice and support for weak teachers. Link inspectors have also provided well-regarded help and expertise both to primary and secondary schools in the appointment of key staff, often at deputy headteacher level.

149. A curriculum adviser has managed support for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) for several years. Since 1996, this budget has been delegated to secondary schools, but primary schools decided to have the service retained centrally. Almost all the NQTs and schools valued this support: the courses, handbooks, mentoring and the appraisal by the adviser although the courses did not meet the needs of all NQTs. Some NQTs in secondary schools have not had the benefit of this support, remain isolated from other NQTs and have not had the benefit of an external view of their teaching.

150. The LEA has an established appraisal scheme for teachers. A working group of headteachers and officers produced detailed guidelines, and effective training for appraisees and appraisers has continued since 1992. There are annual meetings between school appraisal co-ordinators and the LEA officer responsible. The scheme was reviewed in 1995, but the implementation of a fully revised scheme is not expected until new national guidelines are produced. School visits provided little evidence of the effect of appraisal itself on the quality of teaching.

151. In a third of the schools the LEA, principally, the link inspector, has recommended to schools examples of good practice elsewhere. This has generally proved to be helpful. This is not the only way the LEA encourages the dissemination of good practice; such work is featured as part of inspector-led meetings for co-ordinators. However, these meetings have been cut back as the numbers of inspectors and advisers have fallen.

## **SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOLS**

- *Services to support senior management in the efficient running of their schools are generally effective and well regarded. Support for improvement in the management of schools is, in the main, provided by link inspectors. Almost all headteachers now rate their support highly or, where over the past two years a school has found it to be unsatisfactory, it is now improving. The link inspectors have got the balance of their work broadly right. Courses aimed at supporting middle management were better received than those targeted at supporting senior management; this was particularly the case for secondary schools. However, the increasing involvement of headteachers and deputy headteachers on working parties is an effective way of developing senior managers, using their expertise to good effect and disseminating good practice. The LEA makes other effective contributions to supporting senior managers through its role in HEADLAMP and the mentoring of new headteachers. Not all headteachers have been appraised.*
- *Support to governors is provided by a number of different LEA management support services. Again these are generally effective, valued by schools and found to be prompt and expert. Partnership meetings, LEA reports and Committee papers all combine to ensure governing bodies are fully consulted and kept informed of issues. The training courses for governors received mixed responses as to their value: some, though, were consistently highly rated. Although contacts between governors and their link inspectors were generally viewed favourably, these varied in frequency and in their purpose. Inspectors do not systematically meet with governors as a matter of course.*
- *The analysis and provision of performance data to schools and training and guidance in its use is improving, but from a low base. Useful comparative data are now being produced. The guidance and consultancy provided on the use of data to support school planning for improvement and target setting is also improving and well regarded by most schools.*

### **Support for senior management**

1 53. Data from OFSTED inspections thus far completed of Kingston primary schools show that the quality of management and efficiency was generally good and, in a high proportion, it was judged to be good or very good. The judgements from the first complete cycle of secondary school inspections show the quality of management and efficiency to be good or very good in six of the ten schools, but requiring some improvement in three schools and substantial improvement in a fourth.



153. Management was improving, to a greater or lesser degree, in all 13 primary schools visited. The LEA has made an effective contribution in 11 schools. In the other two schools, improvement has occurred, but there has been no significant contribution from the LEA. All five LEA secondary schools and one LEA special school were visited. Improvement in management had occurred in all six schools. The LEA has made an effective contribution to improvement in five of these six schools.

154. The two key areas of support from the LEA which impact most on improvement in management are the support provided by the Inspection and Advisory Service - again, principally through the link inspector - and training. Many examples of effective support were found on visits to schools: assistance in preparing a school for its OFSTED inspection; help with action plans and development planning; paired observation of lessons to improve monitoring; a rolling programme of in-depth reviews of subject areas or aspects of a school's work; school-based in-service training; help with target setting and the use of data; and assistance with the appointment of key staff, for example, deputy headteachers. In some schools, the LEA has provided appropriate pressure to address some persistent weaknesses.

155. The Inspection and Advisory Service has broadly got the balance of their work right: between support and challenge; and between intervention and standing back. However, too much has been dependent on the good judgement of individual inspectors rather than a planned and systematic approach.

156. Support for management from LEA courses is not sufficiently effective. The reasons vary from school to school: the courses offered do not meet needs; the quality of courses is too variable; and there is insufficient expertise within a small authority to deliver a sufficiently wide range of good quality courses. However, there are also positive features: good courses for middle managers; good training for appraisal; good school-based in-service sessions on management; and helpful meetings for co-ordinators of subjects, for example, science and information technology. A number of headteachers and their deputies are well supported through their involvement in HEADLAMP, the mentoring arrangements for new headteachers and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

157. A few headteachers have not been appraised for several years, but others have regular appraisal, done on schedule, which is constructive and challenging. The LEA intends to complete the current cycle of headteacher appraisals and to begin a new cycle from September 1998.

158. The LEA's various management support services contribute to improvement in the efficient running of schools. Whilst there were some exceptions particular to certain circumstances, headteachers valued the support provided on finance, payroll, personnel, legal matters and buildings. These were effective in enabling managers in schools to function more efficiently

159. Support for development planning and post-inspection action planning is invariably provided by a school's link inspector. Twenty of the schools visited were LEA schools at the time of their inspection and, hence, had a link inspector. In 15 of these, the support provided by the inspector was effective. Of the remaining five schools, three had not requested any support and, in two, continuity of support had been disrupted as a result of the loss of their inspector. Support was most effective when the link inspector had provided well-matched advice and comment on a school's action plan and had subsequently monitored and evaluated progress on key issues and targets in a planned and systematic way. That this was not always the case was due to a combination of factors, of which the two key ones were that there was no clearly set out procedure or entitlement of what schools could expect or inspectors themselves were expected to provide and that some schools had been without a link inspector at the crucial time of their inspections - many of these schools were inspected just as the inspectorate was being reduced in number. A few schools have produced good action plans and school development plans without any, or little, support, but in others, planning is weak and would have benefited from some external support and advice.

160. The extent to which a school's action plan and development plan is monitored and evaluated with help from their inspector has varied. In the majority of schools monitoring and evaluation of plans have occurred and are done effectively as part of a regular cycle of meetings between the link inspector and the headteacher. In many primary schools, as part of the monitoring process, there is also observation of lessons; sometimes these are very usefully done jointly with the headteacher or a co-ordinator. This is less common in secondary schools. Schools return their action plans and development plans to the LEA, but a number commented that they had no knowledge of how they were used and that they seemed to disappear without trace.

### ***Support for governors***

161. Support and advice for governors are shared between three officers. Training for governors has been managed by the Head of Continuing Professional Development - a post vacant since April 1998 - with input from officers, inspectors and advisers where appropriate.

162. The main function of the governors' team is to fulfil the LEA's statutory duties in relation to school governance. This it does. A free support service is provided to clerks. Funding for support to governors is retained centrally with the agreement of schools; funding for governor training comes partly from the GEST (now Standards Fund) budget and partly from central funding. Charges for governor training have been heavily subsidised, but take-up of courses is low.

163. The arrangements for consulting with governors are good. Governors have been consulted on a draft set of principles to underpin a partnership between the LEA and schools. This has resulted in the Kingston Schools Partnership statement

governors and the Director on topics of specific importance, in addition to the established termly meetings.

165. Two-way communication between the LEA and governors is well established, not only through the clerks and the governors' meetings referred to above, but also through sending education committee minutes to schools and the Director's termly report. Minutes of governing body meetings in the LEA's schools are sent to the officers and issues followed up where appropriate.

166. In all but two of the schools visited, the LEA's support to governors has been generally helpful in improving the management and efficiency of the school. Advice on financial, personnel and legal aspects has been of critical help to many governing bodies. Other than these services, governors experience LEA support through: the Director's termly report and meeting, which were generally considered informative and helpful; the governor support team, which were considered to be prompt, helpful and generous of their time; training, which received a mixed response; and the school's link inspector, which, whilst generally well received, follows a variety of practices.

167. A good range of courses on appropriate topics are provided for governors, but several considered the quality to be too variable, both in presentation and content. Courses for clerks and new governors were frequently highly rated. A few governing bodies receive very good bespoke in-house training from officers. Contact with the school's link inspector ranged from regular and very helpful, to very infrequent and of little help. Generally, these difficulties related to the significant changes to the inspectorate over the past two years, but not all.

168. Some governing bodies had received helpful support before and after their school's inspection especially on preparing an action plan. Others had received little. However, a number of these had not sought help and the evidence suggests that most governing bodies, with their headteachers and staff, were sufficiently competent to do this work themselves in any case. Practice also varied over whether link inspectors met with the chairs of governing bodies or presented governors with reports of their visits. Governors would generally welcome increased contact with link inspectors whilst recognising the increased workload this might put on each one.

169. The large majority of governors appreciated the increased level of consultation by the LEA, although there were frequent references to the short amount of time governors sometimes had to make a considered response to detailed papers.

### ***Support for the use of performance data and target-setting***

170. Prior to November 1 1997, the LEA had been without the services of a research and statistical officer for some time. As far as was possible, the role had

marking is underdeveloped, but work is gathering speed and an appropriate range of initiatives is being tackled.

171. The LEA has developed, piloted and obtained accreditation for its baseline assessment scheme. The scheme was trialled in summer 1 997 with summer-born pupils in reception classes, following wide consultation with schools. In several schools the introduction of the scheme has led to reappraisal of existing assessment procedures and record keeping. The level of consultation with schools was good and the phased introduction of the scheme worked well. Training and monitoring and evaluation have also been effective. As a result of this work further improvements will be implemented for September 1 998.

172. Useful performance data on attainment in National Curriculum assessments, GCSE and A level are circulated to schools. In view of the small number of schools in Kingston, helpful steps have been taken to widen the sample with the inclusion of schools in neighbouring boroughs and, in the case of secondary schools, some independent schools. Attempts by schools to use the data to help raise standards of attainment in schools have so far been relatively limited. Helpful in-service training has been provided both for headteachers and governors and sometimes the whole staff in a school. General guidance on target setting is clear and has been well received by schools. Link inspectors are working with schools to establish appropriate targets and to devise a strategy for achieving them. More recently, extensive consultation and work have been undertaken on target setting in connection with the LEA's Education Development Plan.

173. Work is developing on the production of school profiles. A working group was established in the summer of 1 997, with the involvement of headteachers, and school profiles have now been produced. A new information technology package will enable financial, performance and contextual data, thus far provided separately, to be brought together and analysed more effectively. Further improvements in the quality of data provided to schools are now progressing fast.

174. In the past, reports have been made to the Education and Leisure Services Committee on the performance of schools. These reports are sent to schools. The emphasis has been on overall results rather than the performance of individual schools. Reports have rightly noted the overall high standards achieved by pupils, but there has been less emphasis on the wide variation in performance between schools. However, there has been a shift to identify variation in performance between schools in the most recent report to Committee. This ensures that members are aware of the spread of performance and the need to take this into account when setting priorities and allocating resources to meet those priorities.

175. Schools responding to the survey last autumn considered that the provision of comparative performance data, guidance in their use and help in using them to set targets were generally unsatisfactory. However, in the intervening months the LEA has made rapid progress and the large majority of schools now rate these aspects relating to performance data to be satisfactory or better. In only four of the 21 schools visited was the effectiveness of the LEA on this issue less than satisfactory: in two, because the schools themselves had made rapid progress over

the previous few years; in the other two, because they had not acted on the data. Almost all schools reported improvement in the range and quality of data they were receiving and also in the guidance on its use to set targets and raise standards. The inspection team came across specific examples where the LEA had been instrumental in helping to identify particular aspects in schools which needed special attention; for example, overall underperformance in a subject, or of girls in a subject. Some schools have developed their own effective practice in the analysis and use of data and this is worthy of wider dissemination amongst schools in the LEA.

176. The comparative analysis of performance of secondary schools with neighbouring LEAs is a sensible initiative, which it would be helpful to develop further, perhaps through pooling resources with other LEAs.

### ***Support for schools requiring special measures***

177. At the time of the inspection, no school had been judged in an OFSTED inspection to have serious weaknesses, although one school in the LEA is subject to special measures. The LEA provides effective support for the school. It has allocated a substantial sum of money to underpin the school budget, to provide additional teaching time in Year 2 and to fund external consultancy. The LEA also funds the secondment of an experienced headteacher to work with the school. The LEA's link inspector plays a major role in supporting the school and monitoring its progress, including providing regular reports to governors. The appointment of additional governors has benefited the governing body.

