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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* (July 1999) which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the education, libraries and arts business group, and in other Council groups and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to all schools. The response rate was 81 per cent.
3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to two nursery schools, eleven primary schools, three secondary schools and the pupil referral unit (PRU). Evidence was also drawn from recent HMI inspections of progress in literacy and numeracy teaching in three primary schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4. The LEA's ten year campaign to improve its schools has been outstandingly well managed. Standards are high at the end of each key stage compared with other inner-London boroughs. The attainment of pupils is below average as they enter primary schools but they make good progress. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards are above national norms and well above those in similar LEAs. This performance is maintained in English at Key Stage 3, but it drops to below national norms in mathematics. This is affected by a severe shortage of specialist teachers. At Key Stage 4, GCSE results mirror the national average.

5. The schools are well managed and resourced. They provide a high quality of education with a much higher proportion of good teaching than is found nationally. Apart from recruitment difficulties in some subjects, the schools are well staffed. The teachers benefit from the LEA's excellent recruitment, training and support procedures. No school has been deemed to require special measures and the one school with serious weaknesses has made satisfactory progress in recent months.

6. The schools have won this success against high odds. In doing so, they have been strongly supported by the LEA. Many residents of the borough are very wealthy but they tend not to use the LEA's schools and over a half of school age children attend independent schools. The maintained schools serve a diverse population, similar in social and economic terms to those in neighbouring boroughs. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is twice the national average. Movement rates of pupils in and out of schools are very high, reflecting the numbers of asylum seekers, homeless families and refugees in the area. Over a quarter of pupils are not fluent in English.

7. An underlying reason for success in this difficult context is the systematic and businesslike way in which the education service has been, and is, run. Political leadership is strong, well informed and sharply focused on school performance and continuous improvement. A high degree of consensus exists between members, officers, schools and other stakeholders on what needs to be achieved and how best to secure this. Officers and inspectors are of high calibre and their planning is incisive and thorough. They are vigilant in consulting, monitoring progress and responding promptly when performance does not come up to scratch. Headteachers and deputy headteachers lead schools effectively along the same lines. They benefit from the LEA's effective procedures for performance management, within which clear development targets are set and success is rewarded. Headteachers are rightly very satisfied with the leadership and assistance provided by the LEA, within which challenge is ever present but finely balanced with strong support. The schools are well resourced. The Council has the financial capacity to live up to its strong belief that its high expectations of schools will best be met when teachers have the right tools for the job and adequate remuneration. The education service is expensive overall but it gives at least sound value for money throughout, and all statutory duties are met. The inspection found nearly everything in this system fit for its purpose and there was no evidence of waste.

8. The LEA's many significant strengths include:

- the strong, clear and efficient leadership of councillors and officers;
- high expectations of schools, accompanied by very good resourcing well targeted to priorities;
- very effective strategic planning and management;
- very effective analysis and use of information in the management of improvement;
- robust and very effective performance management;
- excellent training for senior staff, teachers and assistants in schools;
- well coordinated school and community education services which promote school improvement effectively;
- improvement in standards in literacy and numeracy in primary schools;
- harmonious and productive relationships with partners; and
- good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language.

9. Also, the present arrangements for the review of progress in each school one year after OFSTED inspections are very helpful in keeping members and officers informed. The reviews are also very helpful in encouraging schools to improve and to measure their effectiveness rigorously. However, the arrangements are not sufficiently consistent with the principle of 'intervention in inverse proportion to success'. Although the reviews are of considerable benefit in many schools, they are not entirely necessary in highly performing schools. Greater differentiation, based on objective evaluation of schools' needs for intervention, would reflect more appropriately the 'light touch' procedures recently brought into the OFSTED school inspection system for highly performing schools.

10. The only LEA function to have unsatisfactory features is that of ensuring and monitoring the provision of education otherwise than at school.

11. This criticism needs to be set, however, against the many strengths. Overall, schools, especially the primary schools, have benefited significantly from the LEA's exemplary strategy for school improvement. They are likely to continue to do so given the Council's intention to carry on its vigilance in this area.

SECTION ONE

THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

12. The LEA serves a population of 169,000 living in a compact area of great cultural, economic and ethnic diversity. The unemployment rate of 5.3 per cent is above the national average but below the inner-London rate of 10 per cent. There are some areas of severe disadvantage and some of great wealth. Uniquely in the country, more than half (52 per cent) of the 21,300 children of school age attend independent schools. The number of pupils in the LEA's schools is half the average for inner-London LEAs. The pupils attending maintained schools are on average from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The mobility of pupils in the maintained sector is high, reflecting the incidence in the population of homeless families, refugees and asylum seekers. For example, in 1998, 32 per cent of pupils assessed at Key Stage 2 were admitted into their schools after the Key Stage 1 assessments in 1994. Also, 50 per cent of pupils attending the LEA's secondary schools do not attend their primary schools.

13. The LEA maintains four nursery schools, 26 primary schools (12 of which are voluntary aided), four secondary schools (three of which are voluntary aided), one special school, a hospital school and a pupil referral unit. Forty six per cent of pupils in these schools come from ethnic minorities and 100 different home languages are spoken. English is spoken as an additional language by 43 per cent of pupils and 26 per cent are non-fluent, with a very wide range between schools. Forty five per cent of primary pupils and 39 per cent of secondary pupils are entitled to free school meals compared with national figures of 21 and 18 per cent respectively. Statements of special educational needs were drawn up in 1998 for 1.1 per cent of primary school pupils and for 2.2 per cent of secondary pupils of statutory school age compared with national figures of 1.5 and 2.4 per cent respectively. In 1998, 81 per cent of pupils had received at least one term of nursery education.

Performance

14. The following are key features of the overall performance of schools:

- the attainment of pupils on entry to primary schools is slightly lower than nationally and covers a wide range;
- at Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving level 2 is in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science, and above the averages in similar LEAs;
- at Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 is above the national average in these subjects and well above the averages in similar LEAs;
- at Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 is above the national average in English, below average in mathematics and in line in science. It is well above the average in similar LEAs in English, above average in science and in line in mathematics;

- the percentage of pupils achieving five or more higher GCSE passes is broadly in line with the national average, and above the average in similar LEAs;
- standards overall are high compared with most other inner London LEAs;
- rates of improvement in test results are similar to those nationally at Key Stage 1. They are also similar in English and science at Key Stage 2. In mathematics at Key Stage 2 the LEA's rate of improvement is higher than that nationally. In English and mathematics at Key Stage 3, however, improvement falls a little below the national rate. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more higher GCSE passes fell at Key Stage 4 in 1999 despite a national rise and after a local rise in 1998;
- most schools provide a good quality of education, and inspection reports show the LEA's schools to be improving. There are three beacon schools. Only one school has serious weaknesses and none has been judged to require special measures;
- the pupil-teacher ratios, at 19.1:1 in primary schools and 14.3:1 in secondary schools, were among the lowest in the country in 1999;
- there is little difference in achievement between particular ethnic groups except, generally, where pupils are held back by lack of fluency in English and, specifically, at Key Stage 3 where there is underachievement among a small group of pupils of Black African origin;
- the rate of permanent exclusions is above average in secondary schools and high in primary schools; and
- attendance is well below average in primary schools but it is in line with national norms in secondary schools. At all levels, unauthorised absence is well above the national average.

Funding

15. Since its inception in 1990, Kensington & Chelsea has put a high priority on education. It has always spent well above education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), although it has the fourth highest SSA per pupil nationally. There have never been cuts in real terms in school budgets and all of the 1999/2000 increase in education SSA was passed on to the education budget. In the past two years the LEA has provided the large increases in matched funding for the Standards Fund. Although the actual grant has fallen, the Council has used its own financial strength to increase the education budget.

		1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-2001*
Budget	£m	46,492	47,330	50,136	52,025
Education SSA	£m	34,794	37,811	40,211	43,438
Budget as % of SSA		133%	125%	124%	120%

*Provisional

16. In 1999/2000 both the Local Schools Budget (LSB) and the delegated budget were the highest per pupil in the country (apart from the City of London and Scilly Isles). Fixed costs per pupil are high as the LEA is very small, and it maintains two special schools, inherited from the Inner London Education Authority. They are a hospital school and a mainly residential Moderate Learning Difficulties/Severe Learning Difficulties school in Kent: both are regional resources with few pupils coming from within the LEA. Comparisons of costs per pupil are misleading given the high and increasing mobility in some schools. Some classes of fewer than 20 pupils had had over 40 different pupils on roll over the past five terms. These pupils have been supported by central access, school improvement and special educational needs (SEN) services. The inspection found wide evidence of the challenge and costs of this to the LEA, and of the commitment of the LEA and schools to meeting needs of individual pupils and raising achievement.

17. In 1999/2000 the LSB was 150 per cent of the national average but only 74 per cent was delegated, lower than similar LEAs and substantially below the national average of 80.8 per cent. The funding retained for strategic services was the highest nationally; £167 per pupil compared to £49 nationally and £79 among statistical neighbours. However, no school visited was critical of this - they believed funding was appropriately high, both in schools and in the LEA central services which were all rated as effective and responsive. The inspection found evidence that schools were at least adequately, and usually well funded.

18. Although central funding for school improvement was below similar LEAs, both access and SEN were one and a half times the level of similar LEAs and two and a half times the national average. This reflects the high priority the LEA and schools have put on SEN and social inclusion strategies, both to meet pupils' needs and to raise attainment, which they do with considerable success. The high funding was well targeted to create small class sizes, a good provision of trained primary teaching assistants, performance-related pay for headteachers and deputy headteachers, excellent training and learning resources, well maintained buildings and expert central services. During the inspection all aspects of the LEA's strategy for school improvement appeared fit for purpose.

1999/2000	Kensington & Chelsea	Statistical Neighbours	Inner London	England
Local Schools Budget (LSB) £ per pupil	£3963	£3370	£2595	£2475
Delegated school budgets (ISB) (£ per pupil)	£3003	£2640	£2013	£2067

19. Following the DfEE publication of central budgets in 1999/2000 the LEA rigorously reviewed and reapportioned central service costs. They consulted other boroughs and the DfEE who gave clearer advice for 2000 to improve consistency across all LEAs. Committee reports indicated that in 2000/01 they will meet all statutory funding targets; strategic spending per pupil will be £75 or lower, over 80 per cent will be delegated, each age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU) will rise by at least 2.5 per cent, and there will be a 6 per cent or higher rise in cash per pupil including the Standards Fund. The increased delegation will include all stated support and appears well planned with schools.

20. The formula which allocates the individual schools budget (ISB) was reviewed in 1999 by a working group including heads and an expert consultant. Close analysis of the different factors for deprivation and SEN showed little correlation with one another, and so all will be retained within the formula. A scheme covering the curriculum, staff costs, social factors, SEN and premises was developed through which some funding would be transferred from the secondary to primary sector. Although probably an accurate ideal position, this would create instability for secondary schools if implemented, and the LEA is rightly re-considering the situation.

21. The LEA has clearly identified its priorities and secured extra funding for them. It has coordinated an Excellence in Cities bid with Westminster, which will bring £1.3 million to Kensington & Chelsea schools over the next three years. This has been developed quickly in consultation with schools. Economic development is managed within the education, libraries and arts business group reflecting a Council focus on jobs and training for disaffected and deprived youth, and the LEA works in an effective range of partnerships and projects which benefit schools.

Council structure

22. The Council has 54 members: 39 Conservative and 15 Labour. It has five business groups for the strategic management of services, each reporting to an executive committee of councillors. One of these is for education, libraries and art. As with other groups, it receives support from the corporate services group on financial, information technology, legal and property matters.

23. A chief executive leads the team of business group executive directors. The executive director for education, libraries and arts is supported by a deputy, who manages the schools division, and other division heads for community education, libraries and arts, research and development and support services. Each of these divisions provides support for schools.

The Education Development Plan

24. The LEA's role in school improvement is clearly expressed in, and well supported by, a good education development plan (EDP). The plan's seven priorities are:

- (a) early years
- (b) literacy
- (c) numeracy
- (d) teaching
- (e) leadership

- (f) management and governors
- (g) information and communications technology
- (h) social inclusion.

These priorities are in tune with the national policy to raise standards. They are also appropriate for pupils in the local schools, being based on a very rigorous audit of performance and clear judgements on what needs to be improved. Similarly, the LEA's and schools' targets are firmly grounded in well-established data on the performance of schools and pupils, both individually and in cohorts. Given the high rate of mobility of pupils, this degree of specificity is particularly valuable. The targets themselves are entirely appropriate in their level of challenge, except those for looked-after children for whom the LEA needs to, and is, improving its data analysis.

25. Action plans for each priority provide sharply focused and convincing bases for improvement. They are internally coherent. Proposed activities are closely aligned to identified needs, the LEA's targets, and national priorities. Each plan is effectively cross referenced to other relevant local initiatives including the education, libraries and arts business plan. Given the strong tradition within the LEA of evaluating performance, the EDP's clear criteria for success should enable officers and members to continue to measure progress. A strategy monitoring group, representing officers, headteachers and governors is evaluating progress. The group draws upon the already extensive procedures which the LEA uses to measure performance. So far, significant progress has been made in each priority.

26. In the development of the EDP, consultation was carried out as required by the DfEE. Schools are very satisfied with this and are very clear about, and supportive of, the LEA's approach to school improvement. In all of the schools visited during the inspection, headteachers showed a high degree of commitment to the EDP. This was based on their thorough knowledge of its contents and a view, strongly expressed, that it is relevant to schools and in tune with the LEA's longstanding policies to secure school improvement. In some schools, the quality of development planning had been sharpened by becoming more closely aligned with the EDP priorities.

The Allocation of Resources to Priorities and Best Value

27. The LEA is effective in matching its high targets for schools with a high level of resources aligned to their needs. The Council has been committed for some time to continuous market testing and customer surveys of services. Its well developed business planning is being adapted to meet the requirements of Best Value. It consulted on its aims, and is developing thematic reviews. A pilot Best Value review of education services was undertaken but had trouble finding a similar LEA against which to benchmark staff numbers and costs. Until recently the Council was paying above the inner London rates for most posts, and this has helped to secure high calibre staff and fewer vacancies than in other inner London LEAs. Recently, as pay in other LEAs has caught up, the LEA has experienced some recruitment problems.

Recommendations:

In order to implement its funding formula review without destabilising secondary schools, the LEA should:

- change the formula with only minimal disruption to schools.

SECTION TWO

LEA SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention

28. The LEA has a small and very effective inspectorate which achieves the optimum balance between monitoring, challenge, intervention and support. The service comprises four link inspectors and the principal of the professional development centre led by the director of schools. Consultants are bought in as they are needed. The inspectorate sets out to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the schools; provide advice and support on school improvement; and contribute to arrangements for assessment and testing in schools.

29. The role of the link inspector is well conceived. Inspectors are effective in improving provision and standards in schools. They focus clearly on improving the quality of teaching, learning and standards. They are also concerned with efficiency, economy and effectiveness in the management of programmes for school support. The inspectorate is highly respected by headteachers and governors. Inspectors are very experienced, competent, well briefed and resourceful. They are well led and their work load is managed and monitored very effectively.

30. A major strength is the LEA's detailed knowledge of schools which provides a basis to challenge school performance, intervene where necessary, give informed support to schools, and target resources efficiently. Both the inspectorate and the education, libraries and arts committee are exceptionally well informed about standards and provision in schools. Performance and socio-economic data have been collected regularly and analysed in detail over many years by the research and information unit. This information is reported to members and schools. Alongside this, link inspectors regularly visit all schools for the purposes of monitoring provision, setting targets and supporting school improvement.

31. Generally, support to schools is provided in inverse proportion to success. The standard three days of inspector work in primary schools and six days in secondary schools is viewed positively by headteachers and is used effectively to raise standards. In this LEA, where there is high teacher and pupil mobility, this degree of intervention has been, and remains, necessary to monitor the changing and often unstable profile of schools. Schools causing concern receive additional support directed to their identified needs. Intervention is swift, intensive and effective. Headteachers report that help is provided promptly and that in a crisis the school can depend on the LEA for assistance.

32. One year after an OFSTED inspection, a detailed review of success in implementing the action plan is carried out jointly by inspectors and schools' senior staff. A major aim of this collaboration is for the inspectorate to pass on to schools some of its expertise so that they become better at reviewing themselves. This is well in tune with government policy, and headteachers report that this joint working has increased their competence to evaluate their schools. The outcome of the review is a report which is considered in detail by members. This approach, although having significant benefits for schools, does not differentiate sufficiently according to their specific circumstances. In some highly effective schools, such a detailed approach is

not necessary. Also, for some parts of action plans, a year is too short a time in which to judge the success of implementation.

33. The ability of the schools to provide high quality education for the diverse pupil population is well supported by excellent procedures for professional staff training, and a well used professional development centre of the highest quality. Headteachers and deputy headteachers value greatly the induction and development programmes which prepare them well to be efficient and effective managers. The LEA provides an impressive induction programme for its newly qualified teachers which enables them to rise to the challenges of inner city teaching. High teacher turnover is compensated for by regular induction courses, for instance for SEN coordinators and end of key stage assessment. In order to retain teachers from abroad, the LEA has acquired recommended body status for the graduate teacher programme. This level of support does much to retain staff, particularly at headteacher level.

Collection and analysis of data

34. The collection and analysis of performance data in the LEA are very impressive, as are publication and use. The LEA has been collecting comprehensive data from schools since 1990 as part of a strategy for improvement. Headteachers, governors and councillors have confidence in and value the data provided and they use them effectively.

35. Link inspectors and headteachers are in a very informed position to set challenging targets for attainment for individual pupils, and to identify how to reach them. However, the LEA has found target setting for cohorts of pupils to be unreliable where pupil mobility is high and new pupils have low fluency in English. In these circumstances the LEA rightly encourages schools to review targets and revise them accordingly. Baseline data is collected during the first term, sent to the LEA, analysed and returned to schools. The LEA's analysis concentrates on significant factors such as attainment, free school meals, fluency in English, special educational needs, summer birthdays plus value added data. The LEA has established that once pupils are in its schools they make good progress so it is targeting early years education and families with the aim of raising baseline achievement.

36. The schools use performance data well. Heads of departments, year group leaders and key stage coordinators use the data to evaluate attainment and progress and set targets. Resources are directed effectively to support pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Support for literacy and numeracy

37. Improving standards in literacy and numeracy is a major priority for the LEA. High standards are set and progress towards them is good, except in mathematics in three out of four secondary schools, which are held back by the difficulty of recruiting competent specialist teachers.

38. In English, attainment is slightly lower than the national average as pupils start school. Standards rise after time to the national average at Key Stage 1 and to above this at Key Stages 2 and 3. A challenging but realistic target of 83 per cent of pupils at Key Stage 2 achieving Level 4 or above by 2002 has been set.

39. Similarly, attainment in mathematics is slightly below the national average as pupils start school. Standards rise as pupils progress through primary schools. In 1999 they were above national averages, following a decline in 1998. A realistic target of 78 per cent of pupils at Key Stage 2 achieving Level 4 or above by 2002 has been set. However, poor GCSE results and below average attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 give cause for concern.

40. The LEA's strategic management and organisation of support for the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) are having a positive impact on standards. Management structures and accountability are clear and effective. The use of performance data to inform the strategies is excellent. Literacy and numeracy consultants are well prepared and knowledgeable. Training for headteachers, coordinators, teachers, classroom assistants and governors has been of high quality, as have materials and guidance produced by the LEA for schools. Links between related initiatives are good (including early years, primary, secondary and family projects). Imaginative use has been made of full time teachers as active teacher consultants and leading mathematics teachers. Summer schools for literacy and numeracy have been successful. The NLS and NNS have been extended to Key Stage 3 and early years. Schools with a high rate of pupil mobility have received appropriate additional help.

41. In the school survey, primary schools rated the support for literacy very highly, and nursery and secondary schools rated the service higher than average. Recent visits from HMI revealed that training sessions were prepared and organised well to meet the demands of teaching all pupils, including those with English as an additional language and SEN. The school visits of literacy consultants are much valued for the practical advice given. Teachers from the language development service have had appropriate training to support the National Literacy Strategy. There is well targeted support for pupils who are not fluent in English and there are strong links with ethnic minority achievement grant initiatives.

42. Secondary schools found briefing sessions for literacy coordinators and senior managers valuable. The schools are working to raise literacy standards across subject departments. In all phases, headteachers found the monitoring visits of the literacy manager and the inspector challenging and helpful in improving teaching and raising standards.

43. The LEA reacted quickly to reverse the decline in standards in mathematics in 1998 and has continued to focus on improving standards through the National Numeracy Project (NNP). Evaluation of courses by teachers, the NNS regional coordinator and HMI is positive. The school survey rates the service provided very highly. An intensive support programme was well targeted at 15 per cent of primary schools with the lowest standards.

44. Raising standards in numeracy in Key Stages 3 and 4 has received a high priority. The difficulty of recruiting mathematics teachers is at the root of the problem.

A mentoring scheme for heads of departments has been introduced to provide support for curriculum planning and management. Mathematics consultants work with the whole department and links are being made with beacon schools for mathematics. The LEA is far from complacent and is exploring further solutions to this problem.

45. The LEA is committed to improving the attainment of all pupils. A centre for excellence in mathematics, established in one of the LEA's primary schools, has become a focus for gifted and talented pupils, with three pupils in Key Stage 2 attaining level 6. Summer schools are planned for gifted children, one linking mathematics and science and another focusing on English and information and communication technology (ICT).

Support for Information and Communication Technology

46. Support for ICT is a priority for the LEA. Standards of attainment across the phases vary considerably: most are average, some are good and a very small number unsatisfactory. All schools are well resourced with hardware and software. Teachers are building ICT into the curriculum and developing pupils' capabilities using an appropriate range of software.

47. There is a wide variation in teachers' ICT skills, even though the LEA has been providing training for nine years. Some enthusiastic teachers are developing skills at a fast rate to make best use of the new technology available. New Opportunity Funding for ICT has begun with an assessment of teachers' skills, and will be followed shortly by training sessions. However, the high turnover of teachers in the LEA means that the recurrent costs of training are high.

48. The strategy for improvement is sound and involves developing the LEA's ICT infrastructure and staff expertise. Over the last two years a major corporate commitment by the Council to ICT has fostered rapid improvement. In education, the ICT team have consulted and worked with schools to overcome technical difficulties. An LEA intranet is in a pilot phase. The general view of headteachers interviewed during the inspection is that the LEA had overcome technical problems and is well placed to make a major impact on teaching, learning and the curriculum. In the school survey the ICT strategy was rated satisfactory in secondary schools and better than average in primary schools compared with other LEAs surveyed.

Support for teaching

49. Support to improve the quality of teaching is a priority in the EDP. OFSTED inspection reports during the last three years show that teaching was good in three quarters of lessons throughout the statutory school age range and in nearly nine-tenths of lessons in Key Stage 2. This is considerably better than the national picture. Maintaining such a good standard in an LEA with a high turnover of teachers, many recently qualified and some from overseas, is justifiably given a high priority. A robust strategy has been developed and its many strengths include good procedures for monitoring teaching and providing support where necessary; giving additional help to specific groups such as newly qualified teachers and their mentors, or to senior staff, to help them develop objective school self-review procedures; focusing training on teaching for special needs coordinators, teaching English as an additional language,

and working with pupils who show behaviour problems. Links with initiatives for literacy, numeracy and ICT are strong.

50. The quality of the training provided by the LEA is excellent. Courses are identified through a comprehensive needs analysis, and consultation with schools. The training booklet is well laid out with information about local and national courses. The impressive professional development centre has the highest mean satisfaction score in the LEA's own survey of services for schools. In the school survey, dissemination of good practice in primary schools, support for subject leaders in secondary schools and support to improve teaching and classroom management were rated very highly by schools.

Support for school management and governors

51. Support for senior managers successfully underpins the overall aim of raising standards. A very effective strategy is in place based on the recruitment of high quality headteachers and deputy headteachers, a well planned and thorough induction programme, a comprehensive training programme and support and monitoring by link inspectors. The school survey revealed that support for primary and secondary headteachers was rated very highly. In OFSTED inspections the quality of leadership is rated good in over 80 per cent of primary schools and in all secondary schools. This level of support is costly, yet seen by the LEA as necessary to recruit and retain senior managers of a high calibre. It has clearly been successful.

52. Headteachers confirm that they work in partnership with the LEA. They spoke of a professional dialogue about school improvement where issues could be aired openly and tackled constructively. They felt valued, respected and well supported by inspectors and other officers. This climate of mutual trust helps the LEA to face the challenge of raising standards and implementing new initiatives in circumstances where there is high pupil and teacher mobility. The well established LEA performance procedures, setting of development targets, and rewarding performance in meeting them has had a positive impact on school improvement, and has helped to maintain a high level of morale, according to headteachers during the inspection.

53. Well planned support for SEN coordinators, literacy and numeracy coordinators and heads of department also contributes to the effective management of schools. This layer of effective middle managers, properly trained and well resourced, helps raise standards in schools.

54. Support for school governors forms part of the LEA's priority for improving management and leadership in schools. Governing bodies are well supported to carry out their role. There are few vacancies. Training courses for governors on all aspects of school governance are of high quality. Support for the appointment of senior staff is valued, as is involvement in the performance-related pay scheme and help with post OFSTED action planning by link inspectors. Governors welcome performance data about individual schools, and help with its interpretation. Good consultation and information-giving procedures are helped by the accessible governors' resource bank at the professional development centre, the prompt response to queries from governors by officers, and availability of the director of schools and the executive director of education, libraries and arts.

Support for schools causing concern

55. In this LEA, to its great credit, no school has been in special measures and only one has been deemed by OFSTED to have serious weaknesses. This reflects the longstanding and robust approach to challenge and support schools showing signs of underperformance. This includes rigorous evaluation of performance and improvement by the inspectorate, reporting to governors and the education, libraries and arts committee, and the coordinated application of support from various services designed to meet specific needs. Several schools which are now successful were once weak and helped considerably by the LEA.

56. The school designated as having serious weaknesses has made satisfactory progress so far. It has clearly been helped by the LEA's well conceived procedures for dealing with serious weaknesses, the well balanced mixture of support and challenge and the insightful understanding of the school and the procedures necessary for it to improve. Standards have risen, teaching and the curriculum are more effective, and the management of the school has improved considerably.

57. During this inspection, four schools in which aspects of performance cause the LEA concern were visited. Again, these schools are receiving close and rigorous monitoring and expert assistance. The LEA sensibly does not attempt to provide support for the whole curriculum. It is successful in helping schools to secure the services of effective specialist consultants.

58. Systems for monitoring and evaluating school performance are well established. They pre-date but are largely compatible with the requirements laid on LEAs by the Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations. The LEA knows its schools very well. Its support for those causing concern has been very effective.

Recommendations

In order to improve support for numeracy, the LEA should:

- continue to seek solutions to the recruitment and retention of good quality mathematics teachers in secondary schools.

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

- devise a more differentiated approach to the post-OFSTED partnership self review scheme.

SECTION THREE

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

59. Members and officers have developed a highly effective strategy for school improvement since the LEA took on responsibility for the education service from ILEA, a decade ago. Three of the Council's seven corporate aims provide the springboard for this strategy: to improve service quality, to raise educational standards; and to promote social inclusion. Consensus on these aims is strong within the major political parties. This agreement on aims is also clear among officers, in schools and among other education stakeholders as a product of open and extensive consultation. Such a high degree of congruence, achieved through determined political leadership, underlies the businesslike way in which the education service is run and in which its output is evaluated.

60. The Council has an efficient annual business planning cycle but also plans and reviews over a three year period. The five business groups have considerable autonomy in planning and review but are required to cover corporate initiatives and to co-operate where the work of the groups overlaps. The education, libraries and arts business group creates an annual business plan, with targets and action plans for divisions and for cross-group corporate initiatives. The planning is of high quality and leads to clearly defined management activities. The collaborative procedures for drawing up plans are rightly valued by officers as a good way of engaging staff in developmental work. Officers have ensured that the additional plans recently required by central government have been tightly integrated into the routine planning of the business group, and that they work well.

61. The Council expects high and improving performance in the education service. In order to ensure that this is achieved, and that the considerable social and economic barriers to high standards are overcome, the service is well funded. There is a strongly held view in the Council that the effectiveness of teachers will be maximised if they are well supported. To this end, procedures and facilities for their professional development are of the highest quality and this is reflected in the good education provided in the LEA's schools. Schools are also well resourced to teach the curriculum, and well served by open and efficient officers. The LEA is in a strong position to build on its long established and successful initiatives to improve standards through the Excellence in Cities programme.

62. The Council's strategy is one of high spending, yet it secures sound value for money. Procedures for reviewing performance, and hence the impact of spending, are sophisticated and firmly embedded in management procedures at all levels, including the evaluation of pupil performance, teaching quality, the management of schools and the efficiency of services. The education, libraries and arts committee meetings focus very precisely on the performance of schools. Aided by the good information provided by officers, members are able to scrutinise this performance and to challenge underperformance with authority. Target setting and performance related pay are well developed means of evaluating outcomes. Overall, this LEA has very good performance management procedures with which there are high levels of satisfaction among staff throughout the service. This clearly influences the effectiveness of

schools. Compared with LEAs with similar social and economic problems, pupil performance is relatively high; OFSTED inspections have judged the quality of education provided to be usually good; no school has required special measures; and the LEA is successful, for an inner London borough, in recruiting high quality teachers and headteachers to work in the borough.

63. The LEA has well-developed and effective mechanisms for consultation. The main stakeholders are satisfied that the LEA listens to their views, reacts promptly to their concerns and that partnerships are strong. Cooperation with other agencies to meet shared aims is effective. For example, much work is done with the local police to reduce truancy and to alert children to drugs, safety and crime prevention issues. Similarly, joint projects with the education business partnership (in some schools) have led to specific successes, including ways to motivate disaffected pupils. Liaison with social services has brought benefits, for example, to the quality of education provided in local authority day nurseries. Representatives of the Roman Catholic and Church of England diocesan boards report that the working relationship with the LEA is productive. There are good levels of cooperation and appropriate consultation over matters of mutual interest.

64. Financial decision making is well managed. The Council has a strong financial base, robust budget planning procedures and close monitoring and control of central and schools' budgets. There is an annual analysis of education priorities and costs of possible savings and growth within the context of a three year financial plan. Schools are not formally consulted on the overall Council budget, but there is an explicit presumption each year that the education and schools' budgets will be protected, and inflated. Schools have benefited from consistently high levels of funding.

Management services

65. The services are generally very effective, flexible, responsive and highly valued by schools. They are particularly well coordinated to contribute to school improvement. Staff are expert and there are good relationships and understanding between them and schools. The Council has a strong culture of consultation, review and improvement. It has outsourced some services but nearly all schools buy back the traded services offered. Some services have been bought by self-governing and independent schools for years. Services are well managed and record and review the time spent with each school. The guide to services to schools sets out the core LEA role of some services and includes service level agreements which are clear and specific in defining the costs and service standards of traded services. This was cited as an exemplar in a recent national good practice guide to central services. Extra delegation was planned over two years, and schools were well prepared and able to make informed choices.

66. Financial services are effective. They perform the core LEA duties of managing the formula allocation and issuing indicative and final budget shares. In addition, they offer a traded advice and training service, which is responsive to the needs of individual schools. This contributes to the EDP leadership strand, particularly in training for new headteachers, and support to governors and headteachers in budget planning, which is well coordinated with professional development and personnel advice. School budgets are benchmarked and model financial health checks are being developed. There is close monitoring of school budgets and spending through the

year, particularly of spending on specific external grants. The LEA has never withdrawn delegation, but has identified targets and deadlines for schools causing concern. All school balances are reported to committee, and schools have to submit plans for spending. No deficit has lasted a full year. Schools are able to choose whether or not to be directly on the Council mainframe financial system or operate locally with the LEA support.

67. Personnel is a very effective and highly valued service with 100 per cent buyback of most aspects. The LEA had introduced performance-related pay for headteachers and deputy headteachers in 1991, before LMS. During the inspection headteachers and governors said that this process had been a significant influence on raising standards, and providing focus and targets before school development planning became widespread nationally. They credited its success to the good collaboration with the LEA's inspectors.

68. The LEA has revised pay and conditions into a more coherent structure helpful to all schools and is reviewing the grading and support available for teaching assistants. The image of the Royal Borough, extra benefits and excellent training promote healthy recruitment of newly qualified teachers and headteachers, but the LEA is increasingly experiencing problems of retaining and recruiting experienced teachers because of the high local living costs and travelling times. A third of schools visited reported growing problems recruiting teachers and a reliance on supply teachers for cover, often for several terms. Most supply teachers are from overseas, and although qualified, enthusiastic and valued by schools, they are committed to short term work and are relatively unfamiliar with the National Curriculum and local cultural diversity. Since cover is often required for several terms, this requires extra induction and training from the LEA. Over several terms the cost of deploying supply teachers can be 20 per cent more expensive for schools than employing permanent staff. The LEA is developing strategies to improve the position.

69. Administrative ICT is adequate and improving. Schools' expectations are high and they are confident that the LEA now has the necessary capacity and vision to overcome their past uncoordinated support.

70. The LEA provides technical advice and support in buying hardware and software and has supported a diversity of school systems. This puts a strain on the support, and some schools regret the lack of uniformity and resulting lack of ability to share good practice. All schools are connected to the internet but the local authority's e-mail network linking schools will not be complete until late summer, and the LEA has acknowledged it needs to improve the lines of communication in order fully to exploit this technology. The LEA's basic information and procedures, including model letters, are being put on the intranet. The LEA has set up a working party to review and improve service delivery and the costs of administrative and curricular support. It is piloting a managed service, and helped coordinate a National Grid for Learning bid between 19 boroughs which the DfEE has requested be extended to all 33 London LEAs.

71. Capital management is another high corporate priority. The LEA spends well above the national average. It supplements grants and capital approval from its reserves. The school visits identified innovative solutions to improving and extending schools to meet curricular needs, and to improve their external playspace, often in

restricted central London locations. Some projects, such as ICT suites, are jointly funded by the LEA and schools.

72. Asset management planning is advanced. It has included input from a representative working party of headteachers and governors, and has improved the understanding of most schools. Condition surveys have been undertaken and checked with schools, prior to the resulting database being put on the intranet. Suitability surveys are underway. There is positive and constructive liaison with the dioceses, as the majority of schools are voluntary aided, often with the oldest and most intractable site problems. There are clear committee reports setting out strategy and long term plans for maintenance and improvement. Given the good condition of schools, New Deal funding is limited to top priorities and consideration is being given to a Private Finance Initiative.

73. Schools and their inspection reports were positive about the condition of buildings. Repairs and maintenance were delegated in 1990. There are no in-house contractors but there is 100 per cent buyback from the efficient and expert property advice team. The team convenes termly schoolkeepers' meetings, which schools report to be useful and to epitomise the high regard the LEA has for non-teaching as well as teaching staff.

74. Good health and safety advice is given to schools to help them to comply with legislation. The LEA has given priority to improving access and security and developing safe routes to school. Many schools are located on major central London roads, and traffic is a severe problem. Schools valued the health and safety officers' guidance, visits and responses to incidents.

Recommendations:

In order to maximise retention and recruitment of good permanent staff in schools, the LEA should:

- liaise with other London boroughs to identify a pan-London strategy to recruit effective staff in shortage subjects.

SECTION FOUR

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

Strategy

75. The LEA has a coherent strategy for SEN. Schools appreciate the level and the quality of support provided by specialist staff in teams for pupils with and without statements of SEN. These teams include early years, Traveller support, the education psychology consultation service (EPCS), primary outreach team for behaviour support, and a team of teachers and learning support assistants. The teams work in close collaboration where appropriate with the education welfare service and social services. School staff are clear about whom to approach for different aspects of SEN provision. Primary schools are particularly appreciative of the level and quality of support provided.

76. Social inclusion is a key priority in the EDP; it focuses on the improvement of behaviour, support for vulnerable groups and improving attendance to raise achievement. Social inclusion is also interpreted more widely in the Council's aim to raise achievement for all pupils, including those with SEN.

Statutory Obligations

77. The LEA is taking all reasonable steps to fulfil its statutory obligations. Good progress has been made to speed up the production of statements, with 84 per cent being produced in the recommended period of 18 weeks. Delays in gaining medical advice sometimes prevents statements being completed within the statutory timescale.

Improvement and Value for Money

78. The quality of statements is very good. Annual and transitional reviews are carried out promptly. The percentage of pupils with statements of SEN has reduced, and there have been few appeals to tribunals to challenge the LEA's decisions. This is largely attributable to the focused support given to schools for pupils at earlier stages of the Code of Practice and to good liaison with parents.

Analysis

79. The LEA has no day special school provision and if pupils' special educational needs cannot be met in mainstream schools, the LEA purchases places in special schools and units in neighbouring boroughs. There are too few pupils for the LEA to create new specialist provision. A few pupils attend independent day and residential special schools. Monitoring arrangements tend to rely on the education welfare service and social services' department, and attendance at some annual review meetings by a member of EPCS. Members of EPCS or specialist teachers do not regularly undertake systematic monitoring to ensure that these pupils are getting good quality education provision, and that their needs are being met in the independent sector.

80. Provision for pupils with SEN is good. Schools feel well supported, especially in the primary phase, and specialist teacher support is contributing to a rise in standards.

The LEA is generally successful in recruiting and retaining teachers and educational psychologists with a range of specialist skills in working with pupils with SEN.

81. The LEA exercises its SEN functions with a clear focus on raising standards. With a small inspection team, the emphasis has been placed on direct support for schools via the EPCS, and teams of specialist teachers in the pupil support service (PPS). A priority is given to support for SEN in the early years to improve the prospects of children and to reduce the need for more expensive intervention later on. The EPCS aims to empower staff in schools to plan and implement individual education plans and to become more confident to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning and behaviour difficulties. The EPCS team is highly rated by schools, with several schools describing their support as outstanding. There is a good understanding in schools that pupils' needs can be met without necessarily progressing through all of the stages to a statement. In a quarter of schools visited, there was clear evidence of pupils making sufficient progress through focused support for them to be moved down the Code of Practice register.

82. The total gross budget for meeting SEN and social inclusion/deprivation (excluding recoupment costs which are outside the LSB) in 1999/2000 is £8.079m, 20 per cent of the LSB. In addition, a net sum of £655,000 is spent on SEN recoupment. The proportion is in line with similar LEAs, but the costs per pupil are high. Overall the LEA spends £381 per pupil, compared with a national average of £159 per pupil and an average in similar authorities of £277 per pupil. Both special schools are small and unusual, with most pupils attending them coming from out of the borough. Although the LEA recoups the high cost of provision for these schools, it has to buy places from other LEAs or independent special schools for all of its own SEN pupils whose needs cannot be met in mainstream schools. This distorts the per-pupil cost comparisons of SEN funding.

83. The funding formula, which provides the resources for pupils on the early stages of the register, reflects the complex social and language needs of pupils and the high levels of pupil mobility within the LEA. A detailed and effective audit of pupils with SEN identifies the additional level of need in each school for pupils on stages 2 and 3 of the register. The audit is rigorous, and moderated by small groups of co-ordinators of special educational needs who sample a range of evidence in pupils' files. This exercise also provides good professional development for those participating.

84. At the moment, the funding and provision for statemented pupils is centrally retained and organised. There are plans to delegate this to schools from the next financial year. As yet, schools are not aware of any monitoring arrangements to be used when the funding for statemented pupils is delegated.

85. The LEA is successful in educating a high proportion (over 98%) of all pupils in mainstream schools. Schools have a positive view of services and SEN pupils are making good progress. The LEA is achieving its objectives and obtaining good value for money, even though costs are high.

Recommendations:

In order to improve provision for special educational needs, the LEA should:

- make explicit to schools how the delegated funding for pupils with statements of SEN will be monitored when it is delegated;
- carefully monitor the progress and provision for all pupils placed in educational establishments outside the LEA, and particularly those placed in independent schools.

SECTION FIVE

ACCESS

School organisation and admissions

86. Fifty two per cent of the borough's school-age children go to independent schools. In some schools only 16 per cent of pupils are resident in the LEA. The LEA, like others nearby, is receiving increasing numbers of asylum seekers living in temporary accommodation. The LEA uses data well to develop school organisation and asset management plans, with the involvement of schools and the dioceses. The LEA works well to achieve coherence and support for parents and schools. The school planning and admissions services offers sound value for money.

87. Primary schools are all between one and two forms of entry and the basic level of funding enables them to run with no classes having more than 30 pupils. There were 17 per cent primary surplus places in 1999. This will reduce within three years as rolls are rising but some surplus will remain, concentrated in a few schools. The LEA is awaiting the new DfEE capacity measure and subsequently intends further to reduce capacity by using some existing school accommodation for other purposes. The school organisation plan identified the rising number of surplus places in primary schools in the north of the borough. As a result, the LEA published proposals in 1999 to close two schools and rationalise under-fives provision. Almost immediately, there was a rise in intakes to reception and other years' intakes, and the LEA withdrew the proposal. The LEA believed that its decisive proposals were the appropriate response, but the experience was unavoidable given the volatility of the population. The LEA is now re-building relationships with those schools that had been identified for closure.

88. Three of the four secondary schools are Roman Catholic. There is little continuity of provision from primary to secondary school, and secondary intakes are from over 40 schools. Primary headteachers reported that secondary transfer was increasingly traumatic, with parents making multiple applications across many boroughs. There is a wide perception of extremes of quality of schools on offer in the region, with some very oversubscribed.

89. The LEA provides customer-focused admissions advice to schools and parents, but faces real problems placing casual admissions of pupils arriving throughout the school year. This is compounded by numbers of nearby schools outside the LEA deemed to be in special measures or with serious weaknesses, who are unwilling to accept casual admissions, particularly if they present additional language or other challenges to the schools. Currently the LEA is aware of up to 30 secondary pupils, mainly refugees, having no school place. As rolls have risen in the community school the LEA has indicated that if necessary it would give priority to resident pupils in order to secure education for them. This would contravene admissions legislation. The local LEAs do meet but there is a need for greater co-operation in the interest of the growing numbers of pupils unable to find secondary places.

90. There is long standing parental demand for a new community or Church of England secondary school in the south of the borough. In principle, the LEA is supportive, and wants to shape its provision to meet local demands, rather than its historic inheritance, but has not been able to identify a site, or make a strong need

case given the surplus places in neighbouring boroughs, although they are not available in practice.

91. Within this context, the LEA provides admissions information to parents which is admirably clear and informative in setting out the complex current arrangements. It could be improved by including details of procedures for casual admissions and the previous year's level of over subscription. Officers attend an admissions forum, convened by Westminster, covering five boroughs, but this does not include all the admissions authorities linked either to pupils resident or attending schools in the LEA. There have only been appeals to a few community primary schools, and all have been handled within a term.

Promoting social inclusion

92. The LEA carries out its statutory requirements and supports schools well in combating social exclusion through a wide range of work involving effective combined inter-agency approaches. These fully support the priority given to promoting social inclusion within the EDP, and other key plans such as the Quality Protects Management action plan and the behaviour support plan (BSP). The LEA's strategy is clear. It is focused appropriately on supporting improvement in individual schools' management of absence and behaviour. There are comprehensive policies based on a proactive approach to working with a range of vulnerable groups, including looked-after children, those at risk of drug abuse and those whose behaviour is a cause for concern.

93. The high volume of pupil mobility within the area means that often pupils live in another education authority from that where their school is situated. In such circumstances, improving levels of attendance and enabling quick and successful re-integration of excluded pupils into mainstream is a significant challenge, with often no straightforward solution. Although Kensington and Chelsea staff make every effort, this challenge is made more difficult for secondary pupils as there is no spare capacity within LEA schools, and more especially within the borough's only community school. There are discussions and some agreements with neighbouring schools and LEAs, but arrangements are neither comprehensive nor based on secure and co-operative cross-boundary working practices. The scale of the problem is made more acute by the number of schools in neighbouring LEAs who are unwilling to accept excluded pupils. For a small, but significant, number of pupils, finding appropriate placements causes intractable problems and contributes significantly to the difficulties faced by staff at the PRU.

Attendance

94. Recent changes whereby each school has a named link education welfare officer (EWO) are enabling the education welfare service (EWS) to meet the needs of schools more effectively. There is an optimal balance of work between individual pupils' cases and support for school management in improving attendance. A good level of local knowledge helps the staff make appropriate decisions about which schools to target.

95. All schools visited during the inspection rate the service highly. There are shared policies and clearly defined roles between schools and EWOs that contribute to

effective working practices. In schools targeted for focused work, levels of attendance are rising. In three schools visited, the EWO is helping to monitor and improve punctuality. In a further six primary schools, the EWS has worked with pupils and parents to reinforce the importance of regular attendance, and has given practical advice to headteachers in schools where pupils make extended visits to their parents' country of origin. The EWS has also been effective in improving the attendance levels of pupils based in the PRU.

96. The EWS co-operates successfully with colleagues in neighbouring boroughs. This has been especially helpful in improving attendance at the community secondary school where approximately two-fifths of pupils are from other boroughs.

Provision of education otherwise than at school and behaviour support

97. There are significant weaknesses in education otherwise than at school in the LEA. The PRU exists for excluded pupils from all key stages, persistent truants, those in danger of becoming permanently excluded, those who are unable to attend school because of illness, and teenage mothers or mothers to be. Despite their strenuous efforts, staff are unable to offer a suitable curriculum for pupils with such a wide range of needs and ages, and where provision expands to take on further pupils as needed. Although staff are increasingly successful in running an alternative programme at Key Stage 4 in conjunction with the youth service and further education, many pupils receive a restricted education. In particular, pupils with statements of special educational needs are not receiving their curricular entitlement. The LEA has much to do, and quickly, to develop an adequate and sufficiently differentiated provision for these pupils.

98. Parents and staff are finding it extremely difficult to reintegrate excluded pupils into secondary schools. Whilst many excluded pupils have been on the register of the PRU for less than two terms, over twenty pupils have been there for nearly two years, and at least one pupil for over three years. There are currently 25 pupils at the PRU awaiting school placements. This problem is made more acute as the LEA has no spare capacity in its own secondary schools and, as outlined above, finding placements in neighbouring boroughs is difficult.

99. A speedy return to education is being achieved for most of the small number of primary pupils excluded from schools. However, one Year 3 pupil who was reintegrated into school in the autumn term 1999, had been at the PRU for over two years. Evidence from visits to primary schools shows that, once placements have been found, the outreach team attached to the PRU work in close co-operation with schools and re-integration is generally successful. It is a weakness in the system, however, that not all potentially disruptive primary pupils are on behaviour support programmes or known to staff at the PRU prior to their being permanently excluded from schools.

100. The LEA recognises that improvements are necessary. There has recently been major re-organisation of the provision of education otherwise than at school. As part of this, the role of the head of service has been extended to include responsibility for exclusions. This sensible move is designed to help unify provision, and to establish a closer partnership between schools and the LEA in the prevention of exclusions. It is too early to judge the impact of the changes.

101. The schools support team within the pupil support service and the outreach team work collaboratively with schools. Both teams are regarded highly by schools. Once they are made aware of issues, staff are effective in preventing emerging behavioural problems and exclusions among difficult pupils, especially in primary schools, and in supporting teaching staff.

102. The BSP is based on a thorough audit of need. The strategy, provision and referral routes are clear to schools visited. The plan appropriately draws in a wide range of inter-agency work, and has been based on a survey of existing provision and consultation with schools and other partners.

Child protection and looked-after children

103. Officers respond quickly to requests about welfare issues from schools, and give good support and advice. Schools see LEA staff as excellent in dealing with the numbers of traumatised refugee children who move into the area. The multi-agency family partnership scheme is a good example of co-operation between health, social services and education for the benefit of the welfare of all pupils, but especially refugees. Child protection procedures are well established, with regular in-service training for schools and governors. Work on drugs and other aspects of health education are effective and much appreciated by schools.

104. Work is underway to gather a comprehensive set of information and to establish a shared database on looked-after children. For those looked-after children who are educated in the LEA, systems are appropriate and the database provides relevant information about achievement and attendance. The system does not yet provide comprehensive information about children who are looked after by the local authority but educated in other boroughs.

105. The range of support services for looked-after children in education, social services and health is effective. The deployment of a social worker to support work with looked-after children in the PRU and in a secondary school is proving effective, based on evidence from school visits.

Ethnic minority children

106. The language development service (LDS) gives good support for the extensive ethnic minority population within the LEA's schools. There are comprehensive systems to collect and analyse data on achievement and exclusions by ethnic groups. This has helped raise the profile within schools of underachievement by black African heritage pupils, and to focus attention on reducing exclusions of black Caribbean pupils. All schools visited welcome the substantial support and guidance given by the authority in response to the Macpherson report of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, published in 1999.

107. There is a constant influx of pupils who speak little or no English. Hence, an appropriately high priority is given to supporting individual pupils and developing literacy skills. The intensive language work is successful and programmes for pupils with English as an additional language are structured well. LDS teachers offer a range of appropriate strategies to support teachers, including presenting and evaluating

lessons in partnership, induction support, and working with parents and community groups. The service has been especially successful in helping schools to prepare action plans for raising ethnic minority achievement.

108. In addition, the LDS team support temporary, school-based projects, tailored to improving the quality of provision for ethnic pupils in individual schools. Funding for projects is gained through competitive bidding. Projects are successful. For example, in one primary school visited, intensive support, funded jointly by the ethnic minority achievement grant and the education-business partnership, has enabled the school to improve the proportion of ethnic minority pupils achieving level four in English and to reduce fixed term exclusions of black Caribbean pupils.

109. The LEA has a small Traveller population. Extensive individual data is kept on the attainment of these pupils and used well to track progress. The LEA, as part of joint work with Hammersmith and Fulham, is developing a range of effective and successful initiatives to support pupils and families.

School improvement

110. The LEA has considered the links between attendance, behaviour, attainment and school improvement. It recognises the pressing need to reduce the number of permanent exclusions and to improve attendance rates. The structure of the LEA and its well-coordinated services underlie a coherent approach to school improvement. The high profile given to school self-evaluation and setting of targets as part of the process for performance-related pay is having a positive impact on access issues. The LEA is working with school senior management teams and governors who together increasingly see social inclusion as integral to their work on raising standards. School-based work is effective, targeted to need and often involves a range of partners working closely and successfully together. Two social exclusion projects in particular are contributing well to school improvement. At secondary level the inclusion project is managed and coordinated by school staff. The initiative involves the school, youth workers, the EWS, social services and health working collaboratively to promote inclusion and to reduce exclusions. At primary level an outreach worker has been seconded to work intensively in two schools to help teachers to devise strategies to pre-empt difficult behaviour and promote attendance. In both schools, strategies and practices are being built so that good standards and improvement can be sustained once funding ceases. Plans have been made to ensure that staff disseminate findings and good practice widely. Expenditure on the services working to improve attendance and permanent exclusions is high. For example the cost of the EWS is over one-and-a-half times higher than the average for similar authorities. This high cost reflects the substantial priority the LEA gives to social inclusion. Customer satisfaction surveys, the survey of schools and visits to schools during the inspection indicate that the access support services are highly valued and their impact viewed positively. Given their significant contribution to school improvement, within a context of high levels of pupil and teacher mobility, the services give sound value for money.

Recommendations:

In order to improve information to parents, the LEA should:

- include data on the previous levels of over-subscription to voluntary schools and

the criteria that led to successful admissions, on the admissions information.

- the process should be set out for 'casual' admissions of pupils not at the normal time of entry or transfer, referring to other LEAs if relevant.

In order to promote social inclusion of pupils, the LEA should:

- generate an immediate plan with agreed working practice, and develop it into a long-term strategy to ensure, when appropriate, that excluded pupils can be integrated into schools quickly and effectively;
- discuss and agree the plan and strategy with representatives from all neighbouring boroughs and other concerned parties, drawing on advice and policy from DfEE;
- liaise further with the DfEE and neighbouring LEAs to determine how best to ensure that the needs for school places of refugee children are met, without reducing the stability of receiving schools;
- complete the joint database for Looked-after children as quickly as possible;
- improve provision at the PRU quickly to provide an education which is adequately differentiated to meet the varying needs of pupils placed there;
- take action to ensure that pupils at the PRU with statements of SEN receive their curricular entitlement; and
- continue to encourage schools, especially primary schools, to ensure that early use is made of the clearly identified lines of support for those pupils who may potentially have serious behavioural problems.

APPENDIX

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to implement the funding formula review without destabilising secondary schools, the LEA should:

- change the formula with only minimal disruption to schools.

In order to improve support for numeracy, the LEA should:

- continue to seek further solutions to the recruitment and retention of good quality mathematics teachers in secondary schools.

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

- devise a more differentiated approach to the post-OFSTED partnership self review scheme.

In order to maximise retention and recruitment of good permanent staff in schools, the LEA should:

- liaise with other London boroughs to identify a pan-London strategy to recruit effective staff in shortage subjects.

In order to improve provision for special educational needs, the LEA should:

- make explicit to schools how the delegated funding for pupils with statements of SEN will be monitored when it is delegated;
- carefully monitor the progress and provision for all pupils placed in educational establishments outside the LEA, and particularly those placed in independent schools.

In order to improve information to parents, the LEA should:

- include data on the previous levels of over-subscription to voluntary schools and the criteria that led to successful admissions on the admissions information; and
- the process should be set out for 'casual' admissions of pupils not at the normal time of entry or transfer, referring to other LEAs if relevant.

In order to promote the social inclusion of pupils, the LEA should:

- generate an immediate plan with agreed working practice, and develop it into a long-term strategy to ensure, when appropriate, that excluded pupils can be integrated into schools quickly and effectively;
- discuss and agree the plan and strategy with representatives from all neighbouring boroughs and other concerned parties, drawing on advice and policy from DfEE;

- liaise further with the DfEE and neighbouring LEAs to determine how best to ensure that the needs for school places of refugee children are met, without reducing the stability of receiving schools;
- complete the database for Looked-after children as quickly as possible;
- improve provision at the PRU quickly to provide an education which is adequately differentiated to meet the varying needs of pupils placed there;
- take action to ensure that pupils with statements of SEN at the PRU receive their curricular entitlement; and
- continue to encourage schools, especially primary schools, to ensure that early use is made of the clearly identified lines of support for those pupils who may potentially have serious behavioural problems.

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