



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF  
ISLINGTON  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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**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*<sup>1</sup> which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was conducted in two stages. An initial review in January 1999 established a picture of the LEA's context, the performance of its schools, its strategy and the management of services. The initial review was based on data, some of which has been provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 68 schools. The response rate was 76 per cent.
3. The second stage of the inspection carried out in February and March 1999 involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to two nursery, ten primary, four secondary, one special school and three pupil referral units (PRU5). 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.
4. This report draws on material from the initial review, from the school survey and from the school visits together with evidence relevant to the themes drawn from recent visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to Islington schools.

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<sup>1</sup> *LEA Support for School Improvement: A Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities*, London, OFSTED, 1997

## COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The schools in Islington face all the issues characteristically associated with deprived inner-urban areas: pupil mobility, linguistic and cultural diversity and poverty. The statistics on pupil performance set out in this report suggest that schools are, albeit unevenly, having some success in raising standards. However, they feel that, working in such a context, they need, and do not receive, effective support from the LEA. They are right.

6. Islington LEA has a few strengths but many weaknesses. The weaknesses are, in many instances, long-standing and fundamental. The LEA is not adequately discharging its duties to support school improvement to secure suitable and effective education. The findings of this inspection including the evidence of the twenty school visits undertaken indicate that the LEA's support is inadequate and ineffective in most major areas. The following functions are not adequately exercised:

- consultation with schools over major plans;
- support for school planning and target-setting;
- support for literacy;
- support for numeracy;
- support for information and communication technology (ICT) in the curriculum;
- support for the quality of teaching;
- support for schools in special measures and with serious weaknesses;
- behaviour support
- managing the supply of school places;
- the maintenance of school buildings and grounds; support for school governors.

7. By contrast, the performance of the following functions is at least adequate, though in most cases improvements are needed and services are expensive:

- support for attendance;
- some aspects of services to meet special educational needs; financial services;
- personnel services;
- ICT for administration;
- liaison with other services and agencies.

8. The existence of so many weaknesses of such severity sets the LEA a formidable agenda. We do not believe it has the capacity to tackle it. The Council as a whole has many problems, including a large budget deficit, from which education is not immune. Not the least of these problems is that, according to the Chief Executive, it has largely lost the confidence of the people it serves. This is especially true of the education service, which is generally held in low esteem by the schools, which it fails adequately to consult, or inform through, for example, appropriate service specifications. As the LEA attempts to emerge from its difficulties, it has a limited bank of goodwill on which to draw, partly owing to the tendency of elected members to oscillate between expressions of support for schools and vilification of them.

9. Because of the recurrently precarious financial position of the Council, there is no secure tradition of planning in the Education Department. The Education Development Plan (EDP) is an improvement on previous planning, but it has weaknesses and it has not attracted the full commitment of schools, which do not believe the LEA has the capacity to deliver it. In so far as the implementation of the EDP depends on the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS), we believe that the schools are right. This poorly managed service makes ineffective use of the information it has about schools and supports them expensively, but inadequately. It lacks both the expertise and the capacity for performance management to enable it to carry out the key role of link adviser with consistent effectiveness.

10. Islington's inadequacies are obvious, not least to senior officers and elected members in the Council. There were many expressions of desire for change. The Chief Executive is beginning to define ways forward, and the Chief Education Officer (CEO) is developing ideas, such as a major restructuring of the department, and formulating a bid for an Education Action Zone. At present, these are merely aspirations; they are not part of a coherent, fully articulated strategy and they have yet to be translated into action. The EDP, for all its faults, sets out many worthwhile tasks. If the LEA were able to do some of them a little less inadequately than it does at present, that would be a major advance. We do not believe that, as an organisation, it is currently in a condition to achieve more than limited, piecemeal improvement and while that would be welcome, it is not sufficient.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. *In order to bring about an improvement in the provision of inspection and advice:***

- (i) a complete overhaul of the management of the Inspection Advisory Service should be undertaken, in order to put in place procedures for the programming and performance management of inspectors and advisers, including evaluation and review of their work, with improved guidance and training, especially for the role of link inspector;
- (ii) the balance of expertise in the service should be better aligned, if necessary through changes in personnel, to the tasks undertaken, which themselves should be better defined in the light of a thorough analysis of the needs of schools;
- (iii) better use should be made of the information available to the service from, for example, OFSTED reports and performance data in order to target support where it is most needed.

### **B. *In order to bring about a more rigorous target-setting process:***

- (i) clearer guidance should be given to inspectors and expectations set as to the degree of rigour required in discussion with schools;

- (ii) if necessary, external consultants who may speak with an authority the LEA inspectors individually and collectively lack, should be involved in training, guidance and consultancy;
- (iii) improved guidance and training on the use of performance data should be offered to schools.

**C. *In order to bring about more effective consultation and a better working relationship with schools:***

- (i) the purpose and extent of consultation should be made explicit. Schools should not be left uncertain what is a matter of principle and what is up for discussion. Adequate time should be given for response, and the responses should be summarised, acknowledged and, when they are not acceded to, the reasons should be given;
- (ii) schools should be involved in the process of reviewing and restructuring LEA services;
- (iii) regular surveys of schools' perceptions of the LEA and its services should be undertaken.

**D. *In order to bring about improved support for literacy and numeracy***

- (i) support to schools should be more carefully targeted on the basis both of the levels of need in individual schools and of an informed view about any deficiencies in subject knowledge among teachers across the Borough;
- (ii) the role of the link inspectors, in relation to literacy and numeracy development should be set out, and fulfilled consistently.

**E. *In order to provide better support for the quality of teaching:***

- (i) the support given by link inspectors should be more clearly focused on issues raised in OFSTED reports;
- (ii) rigorous evaluation of in-service training should be undertaken, and incompetently delivered courses pruned. Courses should be offered on the basis of a secure needs evaluation and delivered by competent persons. Where the LEA lacks expertise, it should be prepared to advise schools to go elsewhere, and should be in a position to provide them with the necessary information to make a reasoned choice;
- (iii) through its guidance to, and training of, headteachers the LEA should seek to ensure that heads and other senior teachers are able to undertake classroom observation.

**F. *In order to improve the support given to schools causing concern:***

- (i) the categories of concern, criteria for intervention and related levels of intervention should be set out, with the resource implications, in a written policy which should be the subject of consultation with schools;
- (ii) the support given to schools in difficulties should be rigorously evaluated, and the newly appointed Head of Standards and Achievement Unit should take immediate action to remedy inadequacies, for example in post-inspection planning;
- (iii) the LEA should cease to take short-term expedient decisions as exemplified by the closure of a special school and its immediate reopening as a pupil referral unit.

**G. *In order to achieve better management of the supply of school places:***

- (i) the review of surplus places should be reinstated, and subjected to clear and extensive consultation with schools.

**H. *In order to secure the financial viability of schools:***

- (i) the action now planned to eliminate deficits in school budgets should be vigorously pursued;
- (ii) the monitoring of school budgets undertaken in the future should identify potential problems in good time.

**I. *In order to achieve better management of the maintenance of buildings and grounds:***

- (i) a stock condition database should be maintained and periodic surveys undertaken;
- (ii) a clear, transparent system for prioritising needs should be devised and implemented after discussion with schools;
- (iii) the possibility of a Private Finance Initiative bid to secure much-needed investment should be vigorously pursued.

**J. *In order to secure better support for ICT in the curriculum:***

- (i) the concerns raised by teachers about their relative lack of expertise, and about the integration of ICT into the curriculum should be recognised and reflected in the LEA's provision of guidance, training and consultancy.

**K. *In order to promote better school governance:***

- (i) efforts to recruit suitable governors need to be intensified;
- (ii) governors should be given more information, and better guidance in interpreting the information they receive. In particular, their role in raising standards should be carefully discussed with them and made the subject of guidance and training.

**L. *In order to bring about improved support for behaviour and attendance:***

- (i) behaviour support should be targeted where needs are greatest, and successful interventions should be made widely known and the reasons for their success analysed and shared;
- (ii) more advice should be given to schools on attendance policy.

**M. *In order to improve provision for special educational needs:***

- (i) better use should be made of monitoring data so that advice on matters is more effectively targeted at those schools and pupils which need it most;
- (ii) guidance should be issued on how to make the best use of resources to support pupils with special educational needs; such guidance should cover the question of when it is appropriate to withdraw pupils for support from mainstream lessons and on how such support may be most effectively provided;

the burgeoning costs of statements should be held and, if possible reduced The criteria for statements and the levels of support provided should be reassessed in the context of a clear overall policy on inclusion;

more attention should be given to preventative approaches; early intervention and coordination between services should be improved.



## **SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA**

### ***Socio-economic Context***

11. Further data on the context is given in Appendix 1. The LEA serves an inner-city community which has areas of considerable wealth as well as economic deprivation. Some of the most expensive homes in London are to be found only a short distance away from very deprived areas with severe social problems including drug abuse, high crime rates and vandalism.

12. The total population of the Borough in 1997 was 176,800. The population is projected to increase to 177,854 by 2001. In the 1991 census, approximately 81 per cent of the Borough's population were white compared to 95 per cent nationally. The main non-white ethnic groups were black Caribbean (five per cent), black African (four per cent), other black (two per cent) and Bangladeshi (two per cent).

13. According to the 1998 Index of Local Conditions, Islington was ranked as the tenth most deprived area in England. Summer 1998 figures showed that Islington had an unemployment rate of nearly 12 per cent compared to an inner London average of 9.5 per cent and a national average of 4.6 per cent.

### ***The Schools and Pupils***

14. The LEA currently provides three nursery schools, nine under-fives education centres, 49 primary schools, nine secondary schools, four special schools and five pupil referral units. The secondary schools comprise three mixed schools, three girls schools and three boys schools. Four of the secondary schools have sixth forms. In September 1999, George Orwell School will close and will be replaced by the new Islington Arts and Media School.

15. The total number of pupils in the Borough's schools in 1998 was nearly 25,000. 58 per cent of secondary pupils were boys and 42 per cent were girls. 42 per cent of pupils were white. The main other ethnic groups represented were African, Caribbean and Turkish. 35 per cent of statutory age pupils in the Borough's schools spoke English as an additional language.

16. In 1997, 49 per cent of pupils in primary schools and 59 per cent in secondary schools were eligible for free meals. These were well above the national averages of 21 per cent and 18 per cent respectively.

17. In 1998, only 63 per cent of Year 6 Islington pupils transferred to secondary schools in the Borough. Schools in Camden and Barnet were the most popular alternatives. However, pupils from other boroughs came into Islington. 16 per cent of Year 7 pupils have come from Hackney and nine per cent from Camden. Reading test scores show that it is more able pupils that tend to leave the Borough at the end of Year 6.

18. In 1997, the proportion of primary pupils in special schools was just under one per cent. The proportion of secondary pupils was just under two per cent. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need was 2.9 per cent for primary and 5.6 per cent for secondary. Both figures represent an increase since 1994 and are above national averages and corresponding figures in similar LEAs. However, data provided by the Borough suggests that the high figures have much to do with pupils requiring statements coming into Islington from elsewhere. The number of special educational needs pupils without a statement has also risen in recent years in both primary and secondary schools.

19. Currently, the percentage of unfilled places in primary schools is 10.7 per cent and 13.7 per cent in secondary schools compared to 9.5 per cent and 11.5 per cent nationally. The percentage in primary schools has increased slightly since 1995/6. The percentage of surplus places in secondary schools has decreased by 1.3 per cent over the past three years. 19 schools have over 10 per cent surplus places and of these, 11 (nine primary and two secondary) have over 25 per cent surplus places.

### ***The Council***

20. Islington Council consists of 52 members (26 Liberal Democrat and 26 Labour). The current chair of the education committee is a Labour councillor. He became chair in May 1998.

21. The Council administration consists of 15 service areas of which education is one

22. In 1996/97, the District Auditor highlighted serious problems relating to the financial health of the Council as a whole. The District Auditor described a financial situation where Council expenditure was consistently exceeding resources, reserves were exhausted and attempts to rein in expenditure had failed. There was a gap between expenditure and resources of over £50m despite the fact that the Council had the highest council tax in London. Therefore, this gap would need to be met by reductions in expenditure. The District Auditor highlighted the lack of any medium or long term financial plan or strategy to ensure this. Although the main problems identified were in services other than education, it was inevitable that weaknesses elsewhere were having an impact on the resources available for education.

23. Over the past year the Council has begun to respond to these weaknesses. In early 1998, the Council's senior management produced a three-year financial strategy. This aimed to put the Council's finances on a sound footing. There was to be no increase in the council tax, so there would have to be cuts in all budgets, including the education budget.

24. In December 1998, the government announced its funding for Islington for the next three years. This was more generous than the Council's three-year strategy had anticipated. It meant that while there would still have to be cuts, they would now be less severe. A total of £32.4 million would have to be saved over the next three years assuming a freeze in council tax levels. However, given that the Council was now also committed to spending on education in line with government expectations, it would fall to other services to find the necessary savings.

## ***Educational Funding***

25. Features of Islington's education funding in the recent past have included:
- for 1997/98, the government's expectation (as stated in the published Standard Spending Assessment (SSA)) was that Islington would spend £435 per head of population on education. This was the eighth highest for England and the seventh highest within London. On top of this, the Council has consistently spent more than its SSA since 1994/95;
  - the aggregate level of school balances fell from £1 .06m in April 1997 to £0.78m in April 1998. However, this hides the fact that five of the Borough's nine secondary schools were in deficit and two secondary schools had deficits in excess of 10 per cent of their budget;
  - in 1997/98, the LEA's expenditure on education per pupil exceeded the average for both London and all English LEAs. The expenditure exceeded the average for London by about nine per cent for primary and secondary pupils. For those at special schools, the cost per pupil was 27 per cent greater than the average for London and 66 per cent above the average for all English LEAs;
  - in 1997/98, the LEA delegated just under 93 per cent of its potential schools budget to schools, putting Islington well within the upper quartile of budget delegation nationally. Only four London boroughs delegated more of their budgets;
  - an analysis of the use of money not delegated to schools indicates that Islington spends more centrally per pupil than any other LEA included in the Audit Commission cost survey on ICT, accommodation, and advice and inspection services. It is also among the highest spenders for financial services, buildings maintenance, nursery education, special educational needs, adult and community education, and school meals.

## **SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS**

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

**26. Data from the Borough's baseline assessments in 1998 shows that pupils' attainment on entry to primary schools is generally average or above.**

- 58.4 per cent of pupils scored at least 100 (i.e. average) on entry and 71.8 per cent scored 95 or more. 46.9 per cent scored 105 or more;
- pupils' attainment on entry to school was average in 24 out of 51 schools. It was above average in another 18 schools and below average in only nine.

**27. Standards achieved by pupils are below national averages at both ages 11 and 16. However, there is considerable variation between schools and standards are generally closer to the national average in primary schools than in secondary schools.**

- in 1998 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in the Key Stage 2 English tests was 57.6 per cent whereas nationally the proportion was 64.7 per cent;
- in 1998 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in the Key Stage 2 mathematics test was 51.1 per cent whereas nationally the proportion was 58.5 per cent;
- overall, Islington was ranked 131 out of 150 LEAs in Key Stage 2 results in 1998;
- in 1998 the proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A\*~C grades at GCSE was 23.3 per cent, whereas nationally it was 44.4 per cent;
- in 1998 the proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A~G grades at GCSE was 77.8 per cent, whereas nationally it was 89.6 per cent;
- overall figures hide considerable differences between schools. For example, in GCSE examinations, the best performing secondary school in terms of 5+ A\*~C passes achieved only just below the national average whereas three achieved 27 per cent and three below 20 per cent.

**28. The overall rate of improvement in standards is in some respects above the national rate.**

- in 1997, Islington was ranked 107/132 LEAs for the performance of its schools in the Key Stage 2 English tests but 6/132 for improvement from the previous year. Similarly, Islington ranked 97/132 in the mathematics tests but 32/132 for improvement;
- Islington's rate of improvement in the Key Stage 2 English tests between 1995 and 1997 was 19 per cent, which was above the national rate of 15 per cent.

- Islington's rate of improvement in the Key Stage 2 mathematics tests between 1995 and 1997 was 18 per cent, which was slightly above the national rate of 17 per cent.

29. **GCSE results are improving but the picture is mixed.**

- the proportion of pupils gaining 5+ A\*-C at GCSE in Islington rose by 10 per cent between 1994 and 1998; it rose nationally by 2.6 per cent;
- although the proportion of pupils gaining 5+ At-C at GCSE in Islington rose by 0.9 per cent between 1994 and 1998, it rose nationally by 3.7 per cent;
- average GCSE point scores have risen from 23.7 in 1994 to 26.2 in 1997 and 26.4 in 1998.

30. **OFSTED inspection data confirms that:**

- in primary schools, there is a high percentage of schools requiring an improvement in standards, the quality of education, the quality of school management and efficiency. While there is significant variation between schools, too many pupils are making unsatisfactory progress in mathematics, geography, design and technology, information technology, art, and religious education;
- in secondary schools, there is also a high percentage of schools that require improvement in standards, the quality of education, the quality of school management and efficiency. Recent inspection evidence highlights that the percentage of lessons inspected where pupils are making unsatisfactory progress is high at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics, geography, modern languages, music, and religious education. At Key Stage 4, progress is unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, geography, history, modern languages, and music. Again, there are variations between schools although these are less marked than in the primary sector.

***Schools in Special Measures or with Serious Weaknesses***

31. Currently, four primary and three secondary schools are in special measures. One has been in special measures since 1996, four since early 1997, and two since 1998. Seven primary schools have been identified as having serious weaknesses in the period September 1997 - February 1999.

***Attendance and Exclusions***

32. Attendance in primary schools improved slightly from 92.4 per cent in 1995 to 92.7 per cent in 1997, which was only slightly below the national average of 93.9 per cent. However, levels of unauthorised absence rose to 1.1 per cent, which is above the national figure of 0.5 per cent.

33. Attendance rates in secondary schools improved over the same period from 87.6 to 88.6 per cent. However, they remained below the national average of 90.9 per cent. Levels of unauthorised absence fell to 2.6 per cent in 1997 but they remained above the national average of one per cent.

34. According to LEA figures, permanent primary exclusions fell from 0.8 per 1000 pupils in 1996/7 to 0.5 per 1000 pupils in 1997/8 but were above the 1997 national rate of 0.4 per 1000 pupils. The rate of permanent exclusions in secondary schools fell from 7.7/1000 in 1996/97 to 6.1/1000 in 1997/8 compared to a 1997 national rate of 3.4/1000.

### SECTION 3: THE LEA STRATEGY

*In the past, the LEA has had an imprecise view of its role in support of schools and its strategy has been inadequate. It has not determined, with sufficient clarity, what the needs are; nor has it defined effective ways of meeting them. A more coherent strategy is beginning to emerge in the Education Development Plan but the feasibility of the plan is questionable. The targets set are challenging but, because of inadequacies in the target-setting process, there are doubts that the schools genuinely subscribe to them. There are also doubts that, given its past performance and despite its high cost, the Inspection and Advisory Service will be able to carry through its central role in delivering the plan. Surplus places in schools and the unpopularity of Islington's secondary schools represent significant problems for the LEA. At present, there is no clear strategy for dealing with them.*

#### ROLE AND PRIORITIES

35. The current thinking of the Council is dominated, rightly, by recognition of the need for fundamental change. In August 1998, the Chief Executive published a paper, *Modernising Islington*, in which she defined, in outline, the changes needed. She argued, with some reason, for a change in culture across the Council, stressing the need for an approach driven by the needs of the electorate, rather than those of the service providers. She referred also to a history of poor financial decision-making and management, which adversely affected the ability of all departments in the Council to plan, and implement plans in a stable financial climate. *Modernising Islington* was endorsed by the Council on 3 November 1998, and a programme of reform was instituted. Councillors and officers are committed to change, but the process of reform, in a difficult financial climate, will not be easy, and there is little sign, as yet, of the desire for change being translated into purposeful action.

36. With regard to education, the Chief Executive noted 'a schools system held in low esteem by large numbers of parents and constantly vilified in the national and local press.' There is a clear realisation in the education service that this hostile public perception will not easily or swiftly be changed, particularly since it has, in the past, been fuelled by Islington councillors. That realisation underlies the thinking, which was at an early stage during the inspection, about the desirability of an Education Action Zone. That would, in some respects, constitute a fresh start, but it is not a panacea. The Chief Executive's programme of change included, for education, the definition of a clear vision, key priorities (including improving standards in numeracy and literacy in primary schools and GCSE results in secondary), more focus on the needs of schools as customers, and improved training and communications.

#### ***The LEA Strategy for School Improvement***

37. The main vehicle for the LEA's strategy for school improvement is, of course, the EDP, which all LEAs were required to submit for approval by the Secretary of State in time for implementation from April 1st 1999. Hence, the Islington EDP was in the process of drafting (indeed, it improved considerably) as this inspection was in progress. Implementation of the plan has yet to be attempted.

38. The Council has established a structured process for strategic and annual planning. The three key elements are:

- performance contracts between executive directors and service heads;
- management, service and/or business plans covering all aspects of service development;
- appraisal of performance.

In principle, these processes could establish links between corporate, service and individual objectives. In practice, in the climate of crisis leading to expedient decision-making that characterises Islington Council, they have not done so. Links between financial and service planning are insecure. Inadequate performance has not been challenged through appraisal or the evaluation of services. The link between service and individual objectives is incomplete because by September 1998 the majority of appraisals had not been carried out. Service plans vary greatly in content, format and usefulness. Worst of all, schools have had little involvement in the development of LEA plans and priorities.

39. In these circumstances, the EDP represents a substantial improvement on the LEA's previous planning, in the following senses:

- it is longer term (three years, as against the previous pattern of annual plans);
- it defines worthwhile priorities, with associated targets, and sets out how they are to be achieved;
- it is costed, and defines procedures for evaluation.

40. The priorities defined in the EDP are:

- leadership, management and school self-review; targeted support to schools on the basis of need; the quality of teaching and learning;
- support for literacy;
- support for numeracy;
- pupil motivation and engagement;
- the development of ICT as a resource for learning and school improvement.

41. There is some overlap between these priorities. Moreover, the activities set out in support of them are not sufficiently precisely targeted or prioritised, nor are they always set out in a clear, logical sequence. Success criteria and costings are not always clear.

42. Nevertheless, it is the feasibility of the EDP, rather than its intrinsic quality as a document, that is open to severe question and it is a matter for major concern that its feasibility has not been tested in rigorous debate with schools and others. There is little evidence that the process of drawing up the EDP was markedly different from previous planning exercises, or that it has any greater reality. The targets set are very challenging, for example:

- 79% of all Year 6 pupils to achieve level 4 or better in English test by 2002;
- 71% to achieve level 4 or better in mathematics;
- 39% of all Year 11 pupils to achieve 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C by 2002.



43. The validity of these targets is questionable. The process of target-setting was unsatisfactory. The schools visited demonstrated little confidence in the LEA's capacity rigorously to participate in the process and, in some cases, they preferred their own data to the LEA's. This was symptomatic of a more general scepticism about the LEA's capacity to deliver support of the quality likely to be required to render these targets achievable. The evidence of the school visits and of the school survey suggests that consultation over the EDP was inadequate and the plan is by no means regarded, even in some cases by LEA officers themselves, as a blueprint for action to which all are genuinely committed.

44. Much of the scepticism of schools about the LEA's capacity to support improvement centres on the inconsistent, but generally weak, performance of the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS). Primary schools in particular have received little support. The energies of the service have been focused on the secondary schools, notably in the Improving Pupil Achievement Project involving both the LEA and the Institute of Education. For reasons set out in a later section of this report, we share the scepticism of the schools. The role of link inspector is critical to the successful implementation of the plan. The current performance of that role and the absence of any strategy for improving that performance give no grounds for optimism that that role will be performed consistently, or with competence. Where implementation of the EDP depends less on the link inspector than on access by schools to support from particular services, the terms of engagement are currently not sufficiently clear. The inadequacy of service specifications leaves schools in considerable doubt as to what is available and on what basis. That in turn points to a more fundamental failure to define, and agree with schools, what the respective roles of school and LEA in relation to school improvement are.

## **FUNDING**

45. Islington is a high-spending LEA. The Borough has consistently spent above its Standard Spending Assessment, which is in any case high. Among the areas in which its expenditure is very high is inspection and advice. Given the weak performance of these functions, the extent to which the LEA is ensuring value for money in its services is clearly questionable.

46. The LEA has generally not been successful in targeting its resources on educational priorities, partly because it has lacked a clear picture of the needs and partly because recurrent financial difficulties have regularly necessitated unplanned cuts. Its budget pattern reflects a series of accommodations, rather than a deliberate strategy.

47. The LEA's monitoring of school budgets, despite the overall soundness of the financial services supplied, has not prevented five of the nine secondary schools falling into deficit. However, viable plans are in place to eliminate these deficits.

## **SCHOOL PLACES AND ADMISSIONS**

48. The proportion of unfilled places in Islington schools in both phases is a little above the national average. This does not represent a crisis, but it does entail a degree of waste, and there are schools in which that waste is serious.

Nine primary and two secondary schools have over a quarter of their places unfilled. Rightly, the LEA has sought to reduce the number of surplus places, but has failed to do so, and that failure illustrates a wider incapacity to formulate, consult adequately over and drive through necessary change with will and conviction. In 1997, the LEA began a review leading to proposals for reductions. These led to opposition among parents, teachers and local politicians, and to charges of inadequate consultation. The response of the LEA has been to postpone a decision, pending a further review, to some unspecified date. One consequence is that this has delayed benefits from the disposal of surplus assets.

49. The relative unpopularity of Islington secondary schools constitutes a significant strategic difficulty for the LEA. Only 63% of Year 6 pupils currently transfer to Islington schools at Year 7. Reading test scores suggest that the higher attaining pupils are predominantly those who move to schools in other boroughs. At present, there is no clear strategy for tackling this problem.

50. The LEA has suitable arrangements for inviting and responding to expressions of parental preference. The number of appeals is low, particularly at primary level. However, the school survey indicates a high degree of dissatisfaction among schools with the LEA's handling of admissions, particularly at the stage of transfer between stages. Primary schools express concern that they lack adequate information about admission arrangements to secondary schools, which, in turn, refer to administrative inefficiency relating to the transfer of records and information about pupil performance.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

51. The LEA has had, since 1993 a policy statement in favour of incorporating provision for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools so long as this was compatible with parents' wishes, consistent with the child's needs, consistent with the efficient education of other children, and consistent with the efficient use of resources.

52. Improving provision for special educational needs is not identified as a separate priority within the EDP. However, raising the quality of teaching for special educational needs and developing a more inclusive approach with higher quality provision are important strands within more general priorities. The activities set out in support of these priorities are targeted to areas of need, but are not sufficiently specific. For example 'promote high participation and achievement by pupils with special educational needs in accredited courses at Key Stage 4, including Entry Level qualifications' is a desirable aspiration, but it is not in itself an activity, or set of activities. Thus, there is an essential element missing from the strategy, namely having a clear idea of how to achieve it.

53. That said, the priorities and some of the activities proposed are worthwhile, not least the proposed collaboration between the special needs section, the IAS, learning support teams and the Education Psychology Service. Broadening that collaboration to include behaviour support is also self-evidently desirable, as is the review of the LEA policy for special educational needs promised in the EDP.

54. It is not clear what is meant by the proposal in the EDP to 'implement an alternative funding model for pupils with special educational needs'. However, what

the LEA should have a strategy to deal with is the potentially explosive growth in the costs of statementing. A total of 249 requests for statutory assessment have been made this (incomplete) year, compared to 126 last year. Appeals have also increased, from six to 18. This in the context of expenditure, which is already high by national, if not by London, figures, with a particular problem about transport for special educational needs pupils. There are good features to Islington's strategy for special educational needs and to its practice, but a disciplined attempt to make the best use of scarce resources is not among them.

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

55. The LEA has useful links with a number of other services and agencies which will also serve as a good basis for planned developments. For example, its links with the Social Services Department have contributed to the development of the Behaviour Support and Children's Service Plans and the Education Department is represented on the Area Child Protection Committee and related groups. Links with the Health Authority and Health Trust are fruitful. The integrated Speech and Language Service provided by the Health Trust and the Education Department is an example of on-going collaboration. Collaboration with the police has been helpful, for example, the police contribution to the Behaviour Support Plan and in the LEA's provision of accommodation for summer youth schemes. The Training and Enterprise Council has provided support for the Borough's literacy programme and for transition arrangements between Years 6 and 7. There is a continuing Education Business Partnership and a Skills for Work Experience Diary developed with the LEA is now being used across London.

## **STATUTORY DUTIES**

56. In the light of the evidence of this report, the inspection team judges that the LEA is not properly fulfilling its statutory duties in respect of:

- raising educational standards
- providing suitable and efficient education;
- providing adequate support for schools causing concern; managing school places;
- headteacher and teacher appraisal.

## SECTION 4: THE MANAGEMENT OF LEA SERVICES

***Most pupil support services and management services are adequately run but suffer from an overall lack of strategic direction. The IAS is poorly managed. Overall, in relation to most services, planning is inadequate, reflecting the ambiguities and other weaknesses in the LEA'S overall strategy. This results in the failure to identify needs, poor prioritisation of activities and the ineffective and inefficient use of resources. The absence of a coherent strategy leads to an inadequate co-ordination of services. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are inadequate and overall, the services are too ready simply to respond to needs raised with them rather than identify needs and challenge schools to improve.***

### THE INSPECTION AND ADVISORY SERVICE (IAS)

57. In the documentation prepared for this inspection, the IAS lists 15 priorities. These priorities, which are too numerous, overlap considerably with each other. They relate obscurely, if at all, to the key objectives set out in the IAS work programme, and despite their number, they omit tasks, such as offering advice to the Council and the CEO, which are, presumably, nevertheless undertaken. This is symptomatic of a lack of direction in the management of the service. Some work of quality is done, but it is at the instigation of particular individuals, rather than an outcome of effective management.

58. The principal functions of the IAS are to:

- monitor schools and other educational establishments; provide professional support to heads and teachers; offer curriculum leadership;
- monitor and support the processes of target-setting, development and action planning;
- support schools with serious weaknesses and in special measures; support LEA projects for raising achievement;
- oversee standards fund strategies and projects; lead on the implementation of much of the EDP.

59. This is a broad remit, which will require some revision in the light of *Fair Funding*. The cost of fulfilling it is considerable: £48.98 per pupil (the average for inner London Boroughs is £27.39). There is a total of 21 inspection and advisory staff together amounting to 10 full-time equivalent staff. They are line managed by an Assistant Chief Education Officer and the heads of the Primary and Special School Effectiveness Team and the Secondary School Effectiveness Team.

60. The IAS has little tradition of focusing its work on precisely identified needs, and will need to make a significant shift if it is to deliver the range of activities planned in the EDP. At present, there is insufficient targeting of support, and programming is not sufficiently tight. Individual work programmes of inspectors or advisers are a combination of prescribed elements and activities which arise spontaneously. This is not an approach guaranteed to achieve either value for money, or focus on precisely identified priorities. The written work programme for the service in 1997/98 is, in fact, not a programme, but an outline allocation of resources to tasks. That proposed allocation corresponds poorly to

the actual activity levels undertaken. By far the largest elements on the work undertaken (apart from Standards Fund Activities) were the delivery of in-service training, response to requests under service level agreements and subject advice.

61. This is, in other words, an IAS that has a long way to go if it is effectively to support improvement through planned intervention. Its approach is, and is considered by schools to be, reactive and ad hoc. For example, the head of service calculates support for schools in special measures at five per cent of IAS activity and supports schools with serious weaknesses at the same proportion. Even allowing for overlap and some hidden contributions, this is plainly, in the circumstances of Islington, not enough.

62. If the service is to make the change that is needed, the role of the link inspector will be crucial. At present, that role is poorly conceived, and the evidence of the school visits suggests that it is unevenly carried out.

63. Link inspectors make two half-day visits to schools per term, and are expected, in addition to undertaking classroom observation, to give particular emphasis to:

- school development planning;
- literacy;
- numeracy;
- discussing test and examination results;
- supporting action planning;
- agreeing targets;
- discussing arrangements and provision for meeting and learning needs of pupils with special educational needs with the headteachers.

64. This is over-ambitious for visits of such brevity. It is doubtful whether all this is necessary, but abundantly clear that in the time available, it cannot be done. It is also not clear that all link advisers/inspectors, have the range of competencies needed to attempt these tasks, yet training for the link role has not been identified as one of the major development issues facing the service. Moreover, the arrangements for performance management, monitoring and evaluation are ill-defined, and are not delivering consistency in this key role.

65. Worse still, the LEA has not secured an effective link between data collection and analysis and the work of the IAS which uses data adequately neither to target its own efforts, nor to support informed discussion with schools. The IAS is unable to challenge school performance or practice because it does not have either the necessary insights that would come from information, well used, or the legitimacy that would derive from a constructive relationship with the schools. The data circulated schools arrived too late to be wholly useful for target-setting. IN principle, it was the task of link inspectors to discuss and agree targets with schools. In practice, such discussion as took place had, in most cases, little credibility.

66. Overall, this is an expensive service which has delivered too little of value in the past. Where help has been most needed, it has often been least effective. The remedy for provision of such poverty is emphatically not more of the same. The service has currently nine posts unfilled. Before considering whether to fill

them, the LEA should ensure that the management of the service has the capacity to achieve the tightening of focus and improvement in quality that are urgently needed. The inadequacy of that management has been clear to the LEA, in that the CEO himself took over leadership of it, pending the very recent the arrival in post of the Head of the Standards and Achievement Unit. What is now needed is a clear strategy and evidence of a determination to implement it.

## **PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICES**

67. The LEA's pupil support services generally suffer from a lack of co-ordination, such as a coherent policy for combating social exclusion might, if vigorously implemented, in principle give. They also suffer from the lack of a convincing budgetary policy, which would allocate resources on the basis of needs.

68. The LEA has in place some of the elements necessary for a differentiated set of interventions in support of improving behaviour. There are five PRUs focusing on different age ranges, needs and length of stay. However, there has been no review to ascertain whether this variation actually meets the Borough's needs. In addition to provision for pupils who have no school place, the Behaviour Support Service provides support for individual pupils within mainstream (the impact of which is evaluated elsewhere in this report). The annual planning for the service has yet to be integrated with the Behaviour Support Plan, which is to be enacted for three years from January 1999. The consultation on the Behaviour Support Plan was ineffective: the response rate from schools was only 15 per cent, with no clear view emerging. The plan itself has two important omissions: it does not address the need to encourage schools to take more responsibility for pupils with behaviour problems; nor does it consider the likely impact on the PRUs of a shift to earlier intervention.

69. **The Education Welfare Service** also contributes to behaviour support, though some three-quarters of its work is devoted to support of good attendance. It has planned liaison in this area with Social Services and the police (including joint patrols to combat truancy), and with the Play and Youth Service, making provision for disaffected young people. It is a large and expensive service, even by the standards of inner London boroughs, with a Principal Education Welfare Officer, three team managers, a court and youth justice specialist, two behaviour specialists and 14.8 fte Education Welfare Officers. Despite this, the school survey shows that support for improving attendance is rated as less than satisfactory, and less good than in any of the LEAs so far inspected. There is some ambiguity about the formula by which support is allocated to schools. It is said to be increasingly influenced directly by need, but for the most part, the formula aims, inappropriately, at equity, rather than satisfying need.

70. **The Learning Support Service and the Education Psychology Service** make major contributions to supporting children with Special Educational Needs, though they do so generally in response to requests for help. As later sections of this report show, much of the work undertaken is effective, but early identification and intervention are not strong features; neither is whole-school support. Statutory requirements are met, but the services are less effective than they could be because insufficient attention is given to supporting schools' efforts to improve their own provision.

71. **The Client Services Section** is well managed and effective. It ensures that the LEA carries out its duty to keep Special Educational Needs policy under review and that its functions to do with assessment, placement and annual reviews are carried out. The LEA meets the target of producing proposed statements within 18 weeks in 88% of cases. This is well above the national figure.

## **MANAGEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

72. Islington provides a range of functional services to schools, the purpose of which is to provide an administrative infrastructure for school management, so that headteachers and other senior managers can concentrate on the key task of raising standards. In contrast to those services which focus more directly on school improvement, the performance of management support services in the Borough is generally sound, if sometimes expensive, and they are rated more highly by schools.

73. The exception is property services. Expenditure on building maintenance, at £70.37 per pupil is high against an average for London Boroughs of £54.29. Despite this, schools regard the standard of premises as unsatisfactory and are critical both of the advice they receive on maintenance and of the quality of maintenance itself. The service does not maintain a stock condition database or undertake regular stock condition assessments and has no up to date assessment of the extent of the backlog of repairs. Monitoring is inadequate, and the service is not in a position to assess the value for money it gives. The requirement to formulate an Asset Management Plan is intended to ensure a more coherent approach, but, at present, the service continues to follow the policy of 'make do and mend' into which a shortage of capital resources throughout the 90s has forced it.

74. The cost of financial services is in line with the average for London boroughs. The schools are generally satisfied with the clarity of budget statements and support for financial planning and control of school finances, though it should be noted that the latter has not prevented five of the secondary schools falling into deficit. Appropriate plans are in place to remove these deficits, and the introduction of a financial software package into the majority of schools has made it easier to predict deficits and take action early. As, under *Fair Funding*, schools take more responsibility for managing their own finances, the service will need to become more flexible in its response.

75. Personnel services are provided to schools through a service-level agreement covering employee relations, staffing, administration and advertising. The schools regard the service as effective and offering good value for money. The service is well-managed, customer-focused and flexible. It offers guidance and support which schools rightly value and it takes appropriate measures to review its own effectiveness.

76. Support for information and communication technology (ICT) is, at a net cost of £40.10 per pupil, more than twice as expensive as the average for London Boroughs, though 75 per cent of the cost is accounted for by a recharge, the basis of which is unclear, of £731,000 to the Education Department for central ICT. All the secondary schools and 94 per cent of the primary schools purchase support for developing and implementing the school administration system. The service also coordinates expenditure on curriculum resources and provides a central purchasing service.

77. The LEA established an ICT strategy in 1997, covering both curriculum and administration uses. That strategy has now become a three-year development programme for implementing the National Grid for Learning (NGfL). To date, the strategy has been more successful in facilitating better communication between the LEA and

schools, improved response to better understood needs and in enhancing evaluation than in supporting the development of ICT in the curriculum. There is therefore a need for improved systems to be accompanied by better guidance and more effectively targeted training if the LEA's very large financial investment is not to be wasted.



## **SECTION 5: LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS**

*The inspection team visited 20 schools, including three PRUs and one special school. Overall, the schools had received too little support, and what they had received was ineffective. None of the 10 primary schools visited had received either sufficient or effective support. Where primary schools were improving, as some were, it was not because of the LEA. The picture in the four secondaries was more mixed: one had received a sufficient and effective contribution; in another, the support had been insufficient, but of acceptable quality. The PRUs and the special school were better served: three had received sufficient, reasonably effective contributions from the LEA. In the other school, the support had been insufficient and ineffective. Overall, these are dismal findings, the worst encountered to date in any LEA inspection.*

*While the overall picture is therefore bleak, there is variation in LEA support for particular areas of schools' work. Thus, for example, support for improving literacy was good in five schools visited, satisfactory in one, unsatisfactory in three and poor in another three. In relation to help for improving numeracy, help was adequate in one of the schools visited but inadequate in three. LEA support to improve behaviour and provision for special needs education was also varied. In relation to the support of schools in special measures and with serious weaknesses, support was generally inadequate. In contrast, the LEA '5 support to improve attendance was satisfactory. This considerable variation reflects the absence of clear, coherent and consistent strategies based on an adequate assessment of need.*

### **SUPPORT FOR THE USE OF PERFORMANCE DATA FOR TARGET-SETTING**

78. Support for the use of performance data was sufficient in eight of the sixteen schools in which this aspect was judged, and effective in only six of them.

79. The collection and analysis of data in Islington are at an early stage. The LEA is beginning to provide comprehensive data, with analyses by gender and ethnicity, as well as against socio-economic indicators, but not everything that is intended was in place during the inspection, and the extent to which target-setting was informed by detailed discussion of data was limited. Schools therefore had to use their own statistics to set targets.

80. Collection and analysis of data are the responsibility of the Pupil Achievement Data Unit, led by a statistician and managed within the IAS. Overall, the authority has not established, in the eyes of schools, the validity of its work in this area. Secondary schools which have participated in the Improving Pupil Achievement Project and some primary schools, as a result of participation in the National Literacy Project (NLP), latterly the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), feel, with some justice, that their own capacity to make intelligent use of data exceeds that of the LEA. The LEA came late to target-setting, and is, in some respects, unprepared for it.

81. LEAs are required to challenge schools to set realistic but ambitious targets for improvement. In order to achieve that, they require a professional authority in this area that is, in this case, lacking. The LEA has not established its authority in this area, nor has it yet the expertise across the inspection and advisory team to do so. This calls into question both the contribution it can make in this area and the validity of its EDP targets.

## **SUPPORT FOR LITERACY**

82. Improving literacy standards in Islington is an obvious and urgent priority. This is recognised in the EDP which has set an ambitious target of 79 per cent of pupils reaching Level 4 and above by the year 2002. This presents a serious challenge to schools and the LEA.

83. The LEA has been involved in the NLP and was one of the 15 pilot LEAs in September 1996. Prior to that, the LEA set up its own literacy project which ran alongside the NLP until the two were eventually subsumed under the management of the NLP. Schools involved in the NLP have now adopted the NLS along with most other Islington schools. The Borough is also one of 22 LEAs taking part in the NLS Key Stage 3 pilot involving four schools in 1998/99.

84. Literacy development is currently within the remit of the head of IAS but day-to-day management lies with the Literacy Project Manager working primarily with two literacy consultants.

85. The strategic management and organisation of literacy support development in the Borough has been problematic, resulting in a weak start:

- there has been uncertainty about the principles on which literacy development should be based;
- there has also been some opposition to the NLS from some staff within the Borough and not all schools have adopted the NLS;
- there has been a high turnover of key LEA staff;
- the role of the English inspector has been ambiguous and, unusually, the inspector has had little direct involvement in the NLS;
- the role of link inspectors has been unclear;
- there have been problems aligning the approaches of staff from the Support for Pupils with English as an Additional Language Project (SPEAL) with those of the NLP and NLS.

86. This weak start is reflected in the evidence of visits to seven primary schools and two nursery schools. In five of the schools, support has been inadequate including three in which it has been poor. In four schools which had no prior involvement with the NLP, there were weaknesses in staff knowledge and understanding of how to teach to the NLS and staff clearly lacked confidence. Activities such as paired reading with older pupils were not always successful and there were examples of children making too little progress because they were unable to work alone at the activities provided. Nursery schools were concerned about the absence of an LEA strategy to support consistency and progression between nursery and primary phases. Some schools have lacked sufficient help and challenge from the LEA in diagnosing problems in the quality of teaching and finding solutions.

87. Other weaknesses in LEA provision include the fact that it has been too slow to spot and react to emerging patterns; for example, despite lower Key Stage 1 and 2 test results this year, the LEA has not undertaken an analysis of comparative attainment levels gained in NLP and non-NLP schools. The target-setting exercise, criticised elsewhere in this report, lacks authority so there are real doubts as to how committed schools are to the targets agreed. Until very recently, the role of link inspectors was unclear outside the initial target-setting and their work was inadequately defined and prioritised.

88. However, there are now signs that the LEA is beginning to tackle these problems, not least because of the clear commitment given in the EDP and, since June 1998, by the present literacy team. For example, recent HMI visits to training sessions revealed good presentation of issues using relevant materials which had been suitably adapted and clear monitoring guidelines and procedures have just been introduced to govern the role of link inspectors. On visits to schools, there was praise for recent advice and lesson monitoring by literacy consultants, training materials, demonstration lessons, help in writing action plans, attendance at parents' evenings, and in-service training for classroom assistants.

89. SPEAL staff are now working more closely to NLS guidelines. However, the LEA's strategic management of SPEAL and related special needs services generally is still not well enough developed to ensure appropriate integration and consistency of support by the different services and maximum value from the available resources.

90. In the secondary schools visited, support for literacy has been good. It was very good in two of the three schools visited where the NLS Key Stage 3 pilot was valued despite the challenges posed. In these schools, the Literacy Hour was being thoughtfully managed. Its structure followed closely national guidelines and there were clear improvements in the quality of teaching, staff collaboration, curriculum planning and resource development including, in one school, improved library use. In one of the schools, literacy developments had begun to penetrate the rest of the curriculum, notably in history and geography. In the other school, more whole-class teaching was encouraging pupil-teacher dialogue.

91. The Library Service is also highly valued for its contribution both to literacy and other subjects. 90 per cent of schools judged the service to be satisfactory or better in the school survey; 65 per cent thought it was very good or excellent. The service tailors support well to meet teachers' needs.

92. Overall, while there was a weak start to literacy support in the Borough, more recent developments are promising. However, it is too early to say that all difficulties and weaknesses have been resolved and there is yet to be a consistent improvement in standards in all schools.

## **SUPPORT FOR NUMERACY**

93. Improving standards in numeracy is another major priority for Islington. Results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1998 were below average and GCSE results at the end of Key Stage 4 were well below. In the four primary schools visited on this inspection, standards in mathematics fell in 1998 in all four schools, having risen substantially in 1997. This was

despite two of the schools already introducing features of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). The LEA's target is set at 71 per cent of pupils reaching Level 4 and above by the year 2002 which is at the lower end of the national target range but regarded by schools as challenging.

94. The LEA has been slow to challenge schools to tackle their shortcomings and has provided inadequate support. While there has been good work undertaken by the LEA in helping some schools, for example, advice and training, in-service courses, coordinator meetings and in one school visited, a workplace attachment, it has not helped others sufficiently and the help has been inadequate for the scale and nature of the problems.

95. This variability is clear from the evidence on visits to four schools. In one school, the LEA had been very active. The headteacher and coordinator had been on courses which were valuable to the school and the mathematics advisory teacher had given both good advice and staff training. Inspectors judged the LEA's support to be effective. However, in the other three schools, the reverse was the case. While there had been some support, it did not match needs and weaknesses continued. Thus in one school, the advisory teacher had delivered a useful course but that alone was insufficient to address the problems manifest in the school's poor results. In a nursery school, staff were critical of the lack of any overall strategy for the development of a mathematics curriculum across the phases. In another school, the LEA had helped with a scheme of work but this was judged to be very inadequate, given the severity of the problems.

96. The LEA has not been directly involved in the National Numeracy Project (NNP) but three Islington schools have taken part in Hackney's NNP programme. Schools are now being given dates for NNS training but for one school visited where there are significant weaknesses, the training is needed more urgently than planned.

97. These weaknesses indicate a failure on the part of the LEA to create an appropriate strategy in collaboration with schools that will make them sufficiently aware of their deficiencies, the need for urgent action and the means to improve. This has been recognised in the EDP which defines an appropriate basis for a strategy to address them. However, it is too early yet to say that the plans will succeed. Current management deficiencies are not helping the situation. The LEA has no specialist inspector and only one mathematics advisory teacher is currently at work, although a new numeracy consultant has just been appointed. A NNS manager has yet to be appointed.

## **SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS IN SPECIAL MEASURES OR WITH SERIOUS WEAKNESSES**

98. Three Islington secondary schools (out of nine) and four primary schools are currently in special measures. A further seven primary schools have been identified as having serious weaknesses. This is a considerable burden on a small LEA: a fact recognized in the EDP which proposes, not before time, to refocus the work of advisers and inspectors in a new Standards and Achievement Unit to provide intensive support and decisive action. That would be welcomed by the schools. The

school survey rates the support provided by Islington for schools in difficulties as almost at the lowest level for any LEA surveyed. However, the evidence of this inspection suggests that the main issue about inspectors' work is not lack of focus, but lack of quality.

99. HMI visited four schools with serious weaknesses, and analysed the evidence of earlier HMI monitoring of schools in special measures. Of the seven schools in special measures, one was so designated in 1996 and four in early 1997. That does not in itself suggest a sufficiently rapid rate of improvement. The LEA's capacity to analyse the needs of schools and plan effectively to meet them is small. It is generally unable to identify schools which are likely to run into difficulties. When they do, the help it provides is, with a few individual exceptions, late and inadequate. The quality, for example, of its support for post-inspection action planning when schools fall into special measures is still, despite considerable experience, at best uncertain. There had been improvement in each of the four schools visited on this inspection, but the LEA contribution to that improvement was usually not discernible. In three of the four schools, LEA support for teaching and management had assisted the school neither in diagnosing, nor remedying weaknesses.

100. Intervention in schools in difficulties is a critical function of an LEA. In Islington it is inadequately performed.

## **SUPPORT FOR BEHAVIOUR**

101. Improvements in pupil attitudes and behaviour were the focus of visits to five schools or PRUs and other evidence was gathered in relation to five others visited during the inspection. In two of the focus schools there have been improvements in attitudes and behaviour, in two there has been no change since the full OFSTED inspection and in one the situation had deteriorated. The degree of support from the LEA was at least satisfactory in all but one of the five and it was effective in three.

102. Last year's changes to the organisation and management of the Behaviour Support Service are slowly beginning to have a positive impact in some schools and PRUs. Three PRUs and at least one primary school have been helped by Senior managers of the Behaviour Support Service. They have observed pupils working, assisted in the preparation of development plans and provided advice which was considered expert and helpful. This support has been well received and has led to considerable improvements in teaching in two of the institutions.

103. However much more needs to be done to provide strategically planned behaviour support elsewhere. The official closure of an EBD school in summer 1998 was followed by its re-opening the following day as a PRU and yet in many critical aspects the unit remains identical to the school. The pupils present very challenging behaviour and the needs of the unit are complex and urgent; an immediate programme of planned, sustained support is imperative. Staff here as in other PRUs and at least two of the schools, have identified their need for prompt training in behaviour management but there is no mechanism to respond to this in a timely way.

Whilst members of the Behaviour Management Team have observed lessons and provided helpful advice in three primary schools, others believe that behavioural support is ineffective or too expensive. There is also confusion about whether or not the Behaviour Management Team - which is part of the Behaviour Support Service - is able to work in both the primary and secondary phases.

104. The target-setting associated with the Improving Pupil Achievement Project in the secondary phase has led to improvements in attitudes and behaviour in at least two schools. Overall, however, there is more dissatisfaction with the quality of behaviour support amongst secondary schools than amongst primary schools. None of the secondary schools were confident that they knew and understood the different levels and types of behaviour support available within the LEA.

105. Some schools claim to have only recently learnt of the availability of the Behaviour Support Service and whilst the behaviour support plan is reasonably well known to staff of the PRUs there is little awareness of it in mainstream schools. The role of the inspector for equal opportunities is also not well understood. In two secondary schools the inspector had, within her responsibility for raising the attainment of African and Caribbean pupils, arranged for funding and training to set up peer group mentoring projects. These had been valuable in improving pupil behaviour but the project has not been adequately disseminated or connected with other work. This contributes to the feeling of isolation that some schools experience in endeavoring to tackle behavioural issues.

106. One PRU is about to have a joint visit and discussions with both the inspector for Special Educational Needs who is the link inspector and a senior member of the Behaviour Support Service. This is welcomed as an opportunity to discuss needs and to negotiate a coordinated response by the LEA. Such examples are too rare. A piecemeal approach to supporting behaviour has, at times, led to overlap in the use of resources but more frequently to schools lacking the help they need to tackle difficult behaviour and lacking understanding of the approach to behaviour support in the context of the LEA's priority of social inclusion.

## **SUPPORT FOR ATTENDANCE**

107. Attendance has improved in each of the four schools where this was a focus of inspection visits. The degree of LEA support relative to need was satisfactory and usually effective. Evidence arising from other school visits echoed this picture and in some schools there have been very necessary and marked improvements.

108. In the schools visited, Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) give their schools sufficient time and play an important part in strategies to improve attendance. A PRU, for example, benefits from a specialist EWO who is able to help them gain access to services beyond the LEA. In mainstream schools, casework with younger pupils at risk of developing a pattern of poor attendance and strategies to bring Key Stage 4 non-attenders back to education are examples of positive intervention by EWOs. Some EWOs have also provided staff training. In a minority of schools, the LEA is sharing the cost of a home/school worker and these are having a good effect on some

pupil behaviours and helping to improve attendance. In the case of one of the schools where there has been considerable improvement but where attendance stubbornly remains below 90 per cent, the LEA has paid for the installation of an electronic system of registration which is valued by the school.

109. Support for attendance has, therefore, been effective in most of the schools where it was a focus of visit in this inspection. However, these examples notwithstanding, considerable improvement is called for. The service is rated as less than satisfactory in the school survey and less good than in any of the comparator LEAs. There is uncertainty about the basis for allocating support to schools. Schools also need more advice on attendance policy. A document was circulated in February 1999. While this is a useful starter, it does not go far enough. The LEA has also been slow to provide advice on the issue of holidays in term time, which is a particular problem for some Islington schools. Schools are also critical of the high turnover that there has, at times, been of their linked EWO. Overall, this is only a barely satisfactory picture.

### **SUPPORT TO IMPROVE PROVISION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

110. Inspectors focused on the support for special education needs in six schools or PRUs and made judgements about aspects of the support in a further eight institutions. In three of the six schools, improvement had been made in supporting progress amongst pupils with special educational needs. In two others, the position remained static - good in the case of one and satisfactory in the other. In one school, the situation was less favourable than that described at the time of the last OFSTED Inspection. In only one of the schools was the degree of LEA support related to need better than satisfactory and in two, the degree of support was unsatisfactory. In only half the schools had the LEA's contribution been effective and in only half did it represent value for money.

111. In the majority of schools or PRUs, pupils with special educational needs are better provided for and making greater progress than at the time of their full OFSTED inspection. Much of the improvement is due to the efforts of the schools themselves and changes such as of headteacher or SENCO. There are, however, some notable contributions from LEA services. The support of educational psychologists is very well regarded. They fulfil their statutory functions in relation to assessment and review and have also helped with the design of individual education plans advised on the purchase of resources and generally acted as sources of expert advice. There is similar praise for the expertise and help provided by the specialist teachers for visual impairment, hearing impairment and speech and language difficulties, though there are long waiting lists for speech and language support.

112. The picture is less positive when it comes to other support. The special educational needs inspector has provided help to improve teaching, curriculum and policies in at least three of the schools and two of the PRUs but these are not always the institutions that have most needed help. Some have been generously served while others wait with much greater need for sustained intervention. Each of the special schools and PRUs has need of subject specialist advice; they have sought help from the LEA's subject inspectors or advisers but their requests have usually been unmet.

113. Support from the Learning Support Service (LSS) - with the exception of visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech and language difficulties - is too variable. Teaching by the LSS was a strength in five primary phase schools or units. Although schools complained about a rapid turnover of staff, there was satisfaction with the level of provision, which was at times generous. There is, however, confusion about the form which the support should take and whether it is the LEA's policy that LSS teachers should always work on the basis of supporting pupils withdrawn from lessons. Where such support was observed, pupils were generally making insufficient progress and/or they were finding it difficult to cope with the amount of attention being focused on them and their concentration and behaviour suffered. In one school, the withdrawal was suitably expert as a brief intervention, dovetailing with mainstream class activities, but in others the sessions were too prolonged and denied the pupils access to worthwhile class activities. Three secondary schools believed that the withdrawal model of support is LEA policy. These schools had consequently made their own alternative arrangements to buy learning support from elsewhere. This also enabled them to overcome other problems cited in the use of the service such as organisational and managerial difficulties, inexperienced teachers and insufficient monitoring and lack of whole school involvement and responsibility. This contrasts with the view of primary schools where even when it was not judged effective by inspectors, schools valued the teaching support from the LSS. This exemplifies the need for greater discussion about the role of LSS and shared monitoring and evaluation by both schools and the service.

114. Assessment and placement services are usually working effectively and schools are generally satisfied with the administrative aspects of special educational needs provision. There are half-termly meetings for SENCOs and these have recently improved with more relevant inputs and interesting speakers. Nevertheless, there remain concerns amongst teachers that these and other LEA training sessions are not sufficiently challenging.

115. There is still a notion amongst many schools that support for special educational needs means extra resources which increase as the higher Code of Practice stages are reached. There is therefore scope for more attention to preventative approaches and early intervention as well as a review of LEA policy alongside the publicisation of the Behaviour Support Plan and EDP. There are examples of overlap in provision between special educational needs services, behaviour support services and help for pupils with English as an additional language which call for better coordination of services and better matching of provision to school needs.



## **SECTION 6: LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

***LEA support for the improvement of teaching has been poor, bearing insufficient relation to the needs of schools and the scale of problems. This is largely due to the LEA's insufficient knowledge of its schools and the absence of effective and efficient strategies to support improvement. There has been some useful support, for example, as part of the Improving Pupil Achievement Project and recent work in literacy but this has generally been insufficient to tackle the full range of issues.***

### **SUPPORT FOR TEACHING**

116. Support to improve the quality of teaching was inadequate in both quantity and quality in two-thirds of the primary schools visited. Of the four secondary schools, two had received insufficient support, and in one of those, what support had been received had been ineffective. One PRU and one special school had received very good support, but one other PRU had received little or no effective contribution from the LEA.

117. The failures of support included: absence of intervention in the case of obvious difficulties, for example in one PRU where, despite requests for help, major weaknesses in teaching had not been addressed; a failure to support schools where, though not in crisis, the institution was in danger of coasting, as a result, for example, of inability to appoint a substantive headteacher; and an incapacity to detect and spread excellent practice, as with one nursery, left to flower largely unobserved.

118. The LEA has insufficient knowledge of its schools and the quality of teaching within them. This is due to insufficient monitoring of schools by link inspectors and the inadequate analysis of both OFSTED reports and performance data by the IAS. The Improving Pupil Achievement Project in the secondary sector was helpful in generating both data and understanding and generated some useful activities aimed at improving teaching. There has also been some useful, recent work in improving literacy and numeracy teaching in some primary schools. However, these have not had the desired effect of improving quality sufficiently. In general, link inspectors have not worked with sufficient consistency to a set agenda and their work has not been monitored and evaluated effectively.

### **IN-SERVICE TRAINING**

119. School visits indicate that while some LEA training has been useful, overall, it is unsatisfactory in its match to teachers' needs and in delivery. This is borne out by the school survey where support for staff development policy and planning are judged to be only marginally better than unsatisfactory. Teachers report that some training has been of good quality, for example, some training sessions on literacy, effective management, history, geography, music (when there was an adviser) and science. In these cases, the training was seen to be relevant and well delivered. However, they also report that, too often, the quality has been indifferent, restricted by the sometimes limited expertise of the course or session leader. In some instances, teachers have said that important issues are relatively neglected, for example religious education. Teachers also report that the LEA generally provides insufficient information about

training available elsewhere. It is yet to develop fully a successful partnership with schools aimed at helping schools find the best provider to meet their needs.

120. According to both the school survey and school visits, LEA induction of newly-qualified primary teachers is generally adequate, although there were instances where the training had failed to take into account the individual needs and circumstances of teachers and had little impact.

## **SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM PLANNING**

121. OFSTED inspections suggest that curriculum planning and the use of pupil assessment are problems in Islington's schools. Weaknesses include poor long-term planning and monitoring, inconsistency in assessment, absence of schemes of work in some foundation subjects, under-use of ICT, lack of continuity and progression in some subjects, inadequate departmental documentation, unsatisfactory schemes of work and curriculum plans not being matched to different pupil abilities.

122. The LEA provides inadequate support for curriculum planning and development, although the support is better in secondary than in primary schools. Although in eleven of the 20 schools visited on this inspection, the quality of curriculum had improved since their OFSTED inspection, the improvement was mainly due to the efforts of staff rather than any major LEA input. There had been some examples of useful input, for example, on literacy, geography, history and science. However, despite the cost of IAS, input has also been lacking or inadequate where it has been needed. For example, some curriculum plans sent to advisers have received no comment and some guidance has been too general to be helpful. Support for the use of ICT across the curriculum, for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development including religious education, and health and careers education has been barely adequate. Support for music, which was good, is now virtually non-existent and support for other arts subjects is poor. Provision for extra-curricular sport and outdoor pursuits is poor, though better in secondaries than in primaries.

123. These findings are borne out by the school survey where the quality of LEA support for curriculum planning was judged to be less than satisfactory and amongst the poorest of LEAs so far inspected.

## **SUPPORT FOR APPRAISAL**

124. The LEA has ceased to carry out its statutory duties on appraisal. The LEA produced guidance for the first cycle in 1991 and all headteachers were appraised. However, the second cycle has not been completed. This is attributed to changes in personnel in schools and in the LEA, the large number of schools in special measures, and headteachers' opposition to appraisal by link inspectors. The EDP includes provision for re-launching appraisal, although the plans define more of a role for the LEA than the government's new approach envisages.

## **SECTION 7: LEA SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOLS**

*LEA support for governors is unsatisfactory. In particular, they are not being assisted sufficiently to be able to help headteachers and other senior managers move schools forward fast enough. LEA support for senior management is similarly weak. The LEA has yet to devise an effective strategy for determining problems and helping find solutions. LEA support for personnel and financial management including the payroll is good but support for maintaining accommodation and premises is not.*

### **SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS**

125. Support for governors was a focus in visits to sixteen schools. In five, LEA support was judged to have been satisfactory but in the remainder, it was unsatisfactory.

126. The main weaknesses are that:

- governors receive insufficient advice from the LEA on fulfilling their duties;
- they receive insufficient information from the LEA about their school;
- they receive insufficient help in interpreting what information they do receive;
- there are very few occasions on which governors meet link and other advisers;
- they receive too few suggestions from the LEA about how to help their headteachers and senior managers move schools forward;
- there are too many vacancies for LEA — appointed governors.

127. Overall, governors feel, and are right to feel, neglected and left to get on with things when they do not necessarily feel competent to be left alone. Governors are also inadequately consulted by the LEA on policies and plans.

128. There are, however, some successes. For example, the courses, conferences, and information provided by the LEA have general value but they are insufficient in relation to need. Help from the personnel service, especially in relation to the appointment of headteachers and the clerking service bought by schools are also satisfactory.

129. Currently, there are 130 places (about 13 per cent) on governing bodies unfilled, in particular, as a result of the lack of nominations for LEA — appointed governors. Some of these vacancies have existed for a considerable length of time. With the agreement of the political parties represented on the Council, the LEA is now taking active steps to fill these vacancies. However, the process is too slow.

### **SUPPORT FOR HEADTEACHERS AND OTHER MANAGERS**

130. LEA support for senior managers includes advice and support on school planning, the quality of teaching and the curriculum, the provision of performance data, in-service training courses, support on ITC for administration and help from other services such as finance and personnel

131. Support for school planning and development was assessed in twenty schools visited. In fourteen, inspectors judged the quality of management to have improved since the full OFSTED inspection of the school. But they also judged the LEA's support to be unsatisfactory overall in sixteen schools. In the school survey, support for management was judged on average to be less than satisfactory. Development planning was examined at fifteen schools on this inspection. It was generally improving but again, in all but six schools, LEA support was ineffective.

132. There are several reasons for this. Much depends on the quality of the link inspector but their quality is very variable, particularly in relation to diagnosing problems and finding solutions. Moreover, such knowledge and understanding as link inspectors do have does not result in sufficient action being taken to address problems. Headteachers often regard link inspectors as insufficiently challenging. They are generally reactive, responding as best they can to issues raised by the school but they lack the incisiveness needed to direct the school's attention to areas of which it would otherwise not be aware.

133. The increasing supply of performance data is generally seen as helpful by senior managers in schools as a way of increasing their own and the LEA's understanding. However, as this is only a recent innovation, such data and its implications are not always fully understood by both managers and link inspectors. The mechanisms for discussing the data with the link inspector and others and then acting upon the implications are new and insufficiently developed. Many uncertainties remain about the implications of the data, the targets set and the wherewithal to achieve them. Self-review is underdeveloped in the Borough's schools and it has not been an LEA focus in the past. The EDP places emphasis on developing it.

134. Lack of expertise in the LEA is a problem. Some headteachers suggest that the LEA does not have sufficient expertise to meet their needs and that not enough help is provided in identifying other providers. Many link inspectors do not enjoy credibility with headteachers but the LEA is also poor at identifying expertise amongst its own school staff and using this to good effect.

135. Some senior managers report that some LEA courses have proved helpful but others comment that they could sometimes be of better quality, more timely, and more relevant to their needs. The absence of induction support to new headteachers and training for would-be headteachers is a frequent complaint.

## **FINANCIAL PLANNING AND PERSONNEL SUPPORT**

136. Some services are, however, more highly rated by senior managers. Finance, payroll, personnel and ICT administrative support have all been mentioned in this context. These services are provided to schools under service level agreements. Thus, for example, some schools do not use the payroll service.

137. Both the school survey and inspection visits indicate that schools regard the LEA's support for financial management and its management of the payroll as good. They have a similar view of for guidance and support on personnel management. All schools visited valued not just the accuracy and reliability of information and guidance but also the degree to which officers responded to specific needs. However, there is still room for improvement. During the school visits, there was evidence that the LEA

offers only limited advice on the availability and quality of services from other providers.

138. Five of the Borough's nine secondary schools were in deficit in 1998 and two secondary schools had deficits of in excess of ten per cent of their budget. However, the LEA has appropriate plans in place to reduce these deficits.

## **PROPERTY SERVICES**

139. Property costs are very high. Accommodation costs at £52.66 per pupil are well in excess of other London boroughs at £23.88 and £12.93 nationally and building maintenance is similarly high at £70.37 per pupil compared to £46.54 nationally.

140. School survey responses indicate that headteachers rate as unsatisfactory the standard of school premises and services to maintain and improve school accommodation. This was confirmed on school visits. In five of the schools visited, deficiencies in accommodation were serious enough to represent a potential health and safety risk. Given the high costs of the service, these findings present a poor picture.

141. The shortage of capital resources available to the Council is one explanation for the situation. Officers have never been confident of future capital resources to meet the apparently growing maintenance backlog. The policy has been to 'make do and mend' within the limited resources available. Little effort to date has been put into establishing and maintaining a condition survey of schools, as there was no long-term maintenance planning for such information to feed into.

142. However, the requirement for the LEA to prepare an Asset Management Plan has prompted a change in approach. A programme of school condition surveys is being commissioned to provide the foundation for a long-term maintenance plan. The LEA is also exploring the possibility of a Private Finance Initiative bid to provide the resources to invest to address the outstanding maintenance backlog and improve the fabric of the schools. In at least five schools, New Deal for schools funding had been obtained and applied to tackle disrepair.

## SECTION 8: APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

#### STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL PROVISION

**TABLE 1:**

Nursery Schools	3
<b>Total number of primary schools</b>	49
County primary schools	33
Church of England Voluntary Aided primary schools	9
Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided primary schools	7
<b>Total Number of secondary schools</b>	9
County 11-16 secondary schools (1 girls; 1 boys; 2 co-educational)	4
County 11-18 secondary schools (1 girls; 1 boys)	2
Voluntary aided 11-18 Foundation secondary school (boys)	1
Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided 11-16 secondary school (girls)	1
Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided 11-18 secondary school (boys)	1
Grant Maintained Schools	0
Percentage of primary school classes with fewer than 30 pupils	94%

#### PUPILS WITH STATEMENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

**TABLE 2**

	1996		1997		1998	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Primary	409	2.5%	476	2.9%	435	2.7%
Secondary	380	4.9%	434	5.6%	438	5.7%

#### FREE SCHOOL MEAL ELIGIBILITY (1997)

**TABLE 3**

Primary Schools	49.6%
Secondary Schools	58.6%

#### PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS 1997/98

**TABLE 4**

	Numbers	Percentage
Primary Schools	8	0.05%
Secondary Schools	44	0.61%

## PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS BY GENDER (1997/98)

**TABLE 5**

	Number	Percentage of all exclusions
Girls	7	13.5%
Boys	45	86.5%

## PUPILS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

**TABLE 6**

Primary	31.7%
Secondary	36.8%

## ATTENDANCE RATES 1996/97

**TABLE 7**

Primary	92.7%
Secondary	88.6%

## APPENDIX 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

### PUPILS' ATTAINMENT

#### Attainment at age 7 (Key Stage I)

	Year	% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above					
		Teacher Assessment			Tasks/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	74.4	79.3	-4.9			
	1997	78.0	80.4	-2.4			
	1998	77.8	81.4	-3.6			
English (reading)	1996	74.0	78.6	-4.6	73.2	78.0	-4.8
	1997	76.7	80.1	-3.4	76.0	80.1	-4.1
	1998	77.4	80.8	-3.4	74.4	77.4	-3.0
English (writing)	1996	72.5	76.6	-4.1	75.3	79.7	-4.4
	1997	74.3	77.5	-3.2	77.3	80.4	-3.1
	1998	74.5	78.9	-4.4	76.6	81.4	-4.8
Mathematics	1996	76.4	82.2	-5.8	75.7	82.1	-6.4
	1997	81.6	84.2	-2.6	80.8	83.7	-2.9
	1998	81.6	85.5	-3.9	81.3	84.8	-3.5
Science	1996	80.2	84.1	-3.9			
	1997	83.8	85.5	-1.7			
	1998	83.3	86.5	-3.2			

Source: DfEE

#### 2. Attainment at age 11 (KEY STAGE 2)

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 4 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	51.9	60.1	-8.2	45.5	57.1	-11.6
	1997	56.9	63.4	-6.5	56.7	63.2	-6.5
	1998				57.6	64.7	-7.1
Mathematics	1996	51.8	59.9	-8.1	47.5	53.9	-6.4
	1997	58.9	64.1	-5.2	57.5	62.0	-4.5
	1998				51.1	58.5	-7.4
Science	1996	58.5	65.1	-6.6	54.8	62.0	-7.2
	1997	64.6	69.5	-4.9	65.6	68.8	-3.2
	1998				60.5	69.3	-8.8

Source: DfEE



### Attainment at age 14 (KEY STAGE 3)

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 5 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	43.3	60.3	-17.0	38.2	56.6	-18.4
	1997	38.2	60.2	-22.0	36.7	56.6	-19.9
	1998				47.1	65.1	-18.0
Mathematics	1996	39.5	61.5	-22.1	30.5	56.7	-26.2
	1997	38.7	64.0	-25.3	37.7	60.7	-23.0
	1998				36.1	59.9	-23.8
Science	1996	42.2	59.7	-17.5	34.0	56.4	-22.4
	1997	36.0	62.2	-26.2	36.6	60.8	-24.2
	1998				31.9	56.5	-24.6

Source: DfEE

### Attainment at age 16 GCSE results in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
1 A*-G	1995	85.6	93.5	-7.9
	1996	88.3	93.9	-5.6
	1997	88.2	94.0	-5.8
	1998	89.0	95.2	-6.2
5 A*-C	1995	17.8	41.2	-23.4
	1996	22.8	42.6	-19.7
	1997	25.3	43.3	-18.0
	1998	23.3	44.4	-21.1
5 A*-G	1995	67.7	87.5	-19.7
	1996	72.9	88.1	-15.2
	1997	76.5	88.5	-12.0
	1998	77.8	89.6	-11.8

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

### Attainment at age 18 A level results Average point score per pupil

Number entered	Year	LEA	National	Difference
2 or more	1995	9.4	15.9	-6.5
	1996	10.6	16.8	-6.2
	1997	8.8	17.1	-8.3
	1998	9.0	17.5	-8.5
Less than 2	1995	2.8	2.7	0.1
	1996	2.4	2.7	-0.3
	1997	3.2	2.7	0.5
	1998	3.0	2.8	0.2

Source: DfEE

### Vocational qualifications of 16 to 18 year olds in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries (Advanced)	1997	83.0	75.4	7.6
Pass entries (Intermediate)	1996	69.9	69.1	0.8
	1997	71.5	68.9	2.6

Source: DfEE

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

**Telephone 0171 421 6800**

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