



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF
ISLES OF SCILLY
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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Lead Inspector: David Hinchliffe HMI

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in conjunction with the
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INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities*, which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement. The inspection took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.
2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff working in education and in other council departments, and representatives of the LEAs partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to the five LEA maintained schools. The response rate was 100 per cent.
3. Inspectors also visited the five schools to discuss with teachers, governors and other staff the effectiveness of key aspects of the LEA's work. These visits also considered whether the support provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, effectively contributes to improvements in the schools and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4. The Isles of Scilly are a small group of islands lying 28 miles off Land's End. The total population is approximately 2,000 of whom 1,600 reside on the main island, St Mary's. In January 2000, there were 130 pupils in the LEA's four voluntary controlled primary schools, and 108 pupils in the one community secondary school on St Mary's. The council of the Isles of Scilly has sole responsibility for local government. It is the second smallest local education authority in England, has many unique features and a long history of educational provision. However, it lacks the capacity to support its schools adequately.

5. Despite additional funding from central Government through the Standard Spending Assessment to compensate for diseconomies of scale, the size of the schools, the fluctuation in the numbers of pupils, and the need to keep open very small off-island schools makes the financial situation very difficult for the council to manage. This, along with the high level of delegation now required of the local authority, has resulted in central services which have a very limited capacity to support schools.

6. It is in the area of school improvement where the lack of capacity is most noticeable and where there are major weaknesses in the support provided by the LEA. The LEA has not developed an effective strategy through which schools causing concern can be identified, supported and improved. Support which has been purchased from consultants external to the LEA and directed at the weakest schools has been insufficient to result in improvements, and has been poorly managed by the LEA. Some progress has, however, been made. The LEA's strategy within the Education Development Plan is well founded on an audit of need, and, despite structural weaknesses, has the right priorities for improvement. Support for literacy and numeracy is competent and has some good features. Headteachers work together, with the LEA's support, to share professional development needs and share good practice, and the LEA has done much to improve the quality of governance in schools.

7. Standards in schools are well above national expectations at all key stages. Rates of improvement in the three years up to 2000 where comparative data are available have been in line with or above the national averages for English and overall for GCSE. However, in mathematics in Key Stages 2 and 3 they have been below the national rate, while in Key Stage 1 they have been above. OFSTED inspections report that education in the three off-island schools is good, very good and in one it has outstanding features. The secondary school on St Mary's has been judged by OFSTED to require special measures and the primary school has serious weaknesses.

8. The LEA has plans that have the potential to lead to improvement. The LEA has recently consulted on a federated model for school organisation, which will bring all five schools under the management of a single governing body and headteacher. The plan has been well conceived and should lead to economies of scale. It also offers opportunities to share scarce teaching and curriculum expertise across schools. The LEA has done well to carry the process through to its present

resolution, but does not have within its existing resources the capacity or expertise to manage the demanding legal and resource planning aspects of this change.

9. Education is a high priority for elected members. Funding has been at or around the Standard Spending Assessment and resources are well targeted at priorities, with proposals to federate the schools at the top of the political agenda. Corporate planning is competent overall. However, procedures for the implementation and evaluation of progress are unsatisfactory across the council plans and in the Education Development Plan and crucially in the implementation of the information and communication technology infrastructure. The council's approach to delegation has failed to engender in its corporate staff the customer-responsiveness Fair Funding is designed to secure.

10. There are more weaknesses than strengths. The following functions are performed well:

- support for early years;
- collaboration with other agencies;
- statutory obligations for special educational needs;
- special educational needs functions to support school improvement;
- admissions to schools;
- support to behaviour and attendance in schools; and
- measures to combat social exclusion.

11. The following functions are performed inadequately:

- the implementation of the Education Development Plan;
- monitoring, challenge and intervention;
- support for schools for information and communication technology in the curriculum, and in the provision of infrastructure;
- support for schools causing concern;
- support for school management;
- procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans;
- the leadership of elected members;
- advice to schools on applying the principles of Best Value;
- financial services for schools; and
- administrative aspects of personnel services for schools.

12. This report sets a formidable agenda for this small LEA. We believe that the challenge of federating the five schools, and managing the monitoring, support and intervention required to improve the schools causing concern are beyond the current capacity and resources of the LEA. The LEA does not have the expertise to meet the recommendations made in this report without assistance.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

13. The Isles of Scilly are a small group of islands lying 28 miles off Land's End. The total population is approximately 2000, of whom 1,600 reside on the main island of St Mary's. The other populated islands are known locally as the off-islands. Main sources of employment on the islands are tourism, flower farming and fishing. The cost of living is higher than on the mainland. Levels of unemployment are low, although much of the work is seasonal. The council of the Isles of Scilly has sole responsibility for local government. It is the second smallest local education authority in England.

14. In January 2000, there were 130 pupils in the LEA's four voluntary controlled primary schools, and 108 pupils in the one community secondary school on St Mary's. Secondary aged pupils from the off-islands are weekly boarders on St Mary's. At 16 years of age, students generally transfer to full-time education or training on the mainland. This requires them to board, to live independently or to stay with relatives. Numbers of pupils are forecast to decline, and the LEA has produced proposals to federate its five schools into one voluntary controlled school. It aims to start the new arrangements in April 2002.

15. Six per cent of primary school pupils and 3.6 percent of secondary school pupils are in receipt of free school meals; this is well below the national average. Six pupils have a statement of special educational needs and there are three pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Performance

16. The small numbers of pupils in the island schools makes comparisons with statistical neighbours and national averages of limited statistical value¹. In 2000², the percentage of pupils in Key Stage 1 achieving Level 2 or above in reading and writing was well above the national average; it was above in mathematics. The rate of improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 or above in reading tests over the last three years was well above the national trend, but in writing and mathematics the trend was well below. At Key Stage 2 in 2000 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English and mathematics was well above the national average; in science it was broadly in line. The rates of improvement of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English tests over the last three years have been well above the national trend; in mathematics and science they have been below and well below, respectively.

17. At Key Stage 3 in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above was well above the national average for English, mathematics and science. The rate of improvement over the past three years has been broadly in line with the national trend in English tests, but well below in mathematics. In 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* - C grades at GCSE, and the average points score,

¹ The closest statistical neighbour is Rutland, which had 4553 pupils in its maintained schools in September 1998.

² Comparative figures were not available for 2001 at the time of the inspection.

was well above the national average. The percentage achieving one A*-G grade was above the national average. Rates of improvement from 1998 to 2000 are broadly in line with, or above, national trends. In 2001, approximately three quarters of pupils achieved five or more higher grades at GCSE and all achieved one or more A*-G grades.

18. One of the four primary schools has been judged by OFSTED to be outstanding. The largest primary school has been judged to have serious weaknesses, and the secondary school is in special measures. Overall, around 80 per cent of the pupil population are taught in these two schools. Authorised absences in primary schools is well above the national figures. Attendance in the secondary school is well above national figures. No pupils currently are permanently excluded from school.

Funding

19. Education on the Isles of Scilly is inevitably very expensive. Because of the distances involved, and the difficulties of transport, there has to be a primary school on each of the off-islands. These are, again inevitably, very small schools, which are disproportionately expensive to run. The Government recognises this in the education the Standard Spending Assessment through the area cost adjustment, which is 75 per cent higher on the Isles of Scilly than the average for England. This is insufficient. Moreover, the LEA has to cope with the largest fluctuations in its annual income of any authority, other than the Corporation of London, precisely because its population is so small. A change of just two or three pupils makes a sizeable difference to the budget. Finally, the funding the LEA is able to retain centrally is, as a result of all these factors, insufficient to enable it to afford more than very modest levels of centrally provided services.

20. Capital expenditure per pupil on schools is lower than average for unitary authorities and for England, particularly for primary schools. Capital expenditure on the island's schools has largely been funded, in recent years, through the Government's New Deal for Schools.

21. The council is not eligible for educational grant aid, but does benefit from European objective one status. European funding has been successfully obtained for the community information and communication technology facility in the Harold Wilson centre. While this is not of direct benefit to schools, they will benefit indirectly from the planned establishment of an island area network as a part of this scheme.

Council structure

22. The council is made up of 21 independent elected members, eight from off-islands and 13 from St Mary's. As a result, policy emerges through informal meetings, rather than through party policies. There are eight committees with delegated powers, transport and general purposes, planning and development, education, housing and social services, policy and resources, sea-fisheries, standards committee and the tourist board. The council has sought and been granted exemption from parts of the Local Government Act 2000 requiring changes

to the decision-making process. It is, nevertheless, further streamlining committee arrangements.

23. The education committee includes lifelong learning, sport and recreation. It is made up of 11 elected members and the chair and vice-chair of the council. There are three co-opted members, one with voting rights. Meetings take place on a quarterly basis and chairs of governors and headteacher representatives are invited to attend, participate in debate and answer questions. They do not vote.

24. The education department is very lean. The chief executive is the secretary for education. The general schools adviser has oversight of a lifelong learning officer and peripatetic music services. There are additional officers for the early years, staff in the Harold Wilson lifelong learning centre and learning assistants attached to learning centres. The chief executive's department provides administrative and personnel support to schools; financial support is provided through the treasurer's department. The role of the general schools adviser is demanding, covering as it does almost all the educational functions of the LEA. He will be required to undertake, in addition, the planning and implementation of the federation of the island schools, and the intervention and support for the two schools on St Mary's requiring special measures and with serious weaknesses.

The Education Development Plan

25. The EDP published in 1999 and approved by the secretary of state has seven clearly articulated priorities, which cover local and national issues and reflect the LEA's audit of needs. They are:

- developing schools' capacity for self improvement;
- ensuring good schools with distinctive qualities;
- developing inclusive provision, supporting individual achievement for children with learning difficulties and high achievers;
- raising attainment in literacy;
- raising attainment in numeracy;
- using information and communication technology to support teaching and learning; and
- providing continuity in learning.

26. Actions within the plan, while generally appropriate, are broad. Given the limited resources available to the LEA they are over-ambitious in scope. Success criteria are varied in quality; some are well related to outcomes, others are more difficult to quantify. Overall, timescales against which progress can be measured are insufficiently sequenced and precise.

Recommendations

In carrying out planning for the next the Education Development Plan, ensure that:

- activities are clearly sequenced and that timescales are identified and agreed with schools; and
- success criteria are set out clearly as targets which can be rigorously monitored.

27. The strategic statement for schools causing concern set out in the Education Development Plan (EDP) is weak. The plan identifies key areas against which schools will be monitored in standards, quality of education and management and efficiency, but it is not clear how the criteria will be used to trigger concerns. Action to be taken when a school has been identified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures are set out. However, while these actions are broadly satisfactory, there is no indication of interventions that will take place if a school is identified by OFSTED as underachieving or by the LEA as causing concern.

28. The target-setting process laid out in the EDP is sound. Targets are derived from the aggregation of targets of individual pupils, using prior attainment as the key indicator. Discussion takes place with each school's headteacher and procedures to challenge schools where targets are deemed to be too low are appropriate. Priority one within the EDP recognises the need to develop the use of value added measures to improve target setting.

29. Consultation on the original EDP is reported by schools to have been good. Headteachers worked with the LEA to identify priorities. Visits to schools confirm that the priorities within the plan are understood, and, where appropriate, have been incorporated into school development plans. However, the key issues for action in OFSTED reports have understandably dominated priorities, particularly in the weakest schools. The impact of the EDP has been varied. There has been too little progress in developing schools' capacity for self-improvement, in the introduction of information and communication technology, and in the monitoring and development of teaching and learning in the schools on St Mary's. Progress on other priorities has been sound and is described in more detail in the following sections of this report.

30. The monitoring and evaluation of progress on the priorities within the EDP have been unsatisfactory. A review has been conducted on the progress of the plan and shared with elected members and the headteacher cluster group, and there has been regular discussion by the cluster group on the progress being made. Actions have been revised although this revision has not been scrutinised by elected members. However, reviews have been cursory and have not focused with sufficient rigour on success criteria or whether targets have been met.

The allocation of resources to priorities

31. The council's allocation of resources to educational priorities is competent and has a number of good features. The education budget is built from scratch each year to ensure needs are met. There is a generally understood, although not formally stated, intent to spend broadly to education Standard Spending Assessment, and provide matched funding to allow Standards Fund grants to be fully taken up. New education money is passed on to schools.

32. The total annual budget for school improvement is only £5,300. This year, the council, recognising that this is insufficient to purchase adequate support to improve the schools causing concern, has belatedly allocated a one-off sum from reserves.

33. The school funding formula is based on notional pupil numbers and meets the unique circumstances of the islands. A school with 15 pupils or fewer is funded for 20 pupils, one with 16 to 24 for 24 and one between 24 and 34 to 34. An actual sum for known premises factors and special educational needs requirements is added, together with additional delegations. There can be severe consequences when the number of pupils hits the threshold, for example, the number dropped in one of the off-island schools to 22 in 2000/2001 and there was insufficient funding for two full-time teachers. In this instance islanders set up a trust fund to make up the difference and keep the valued second teacher employed. Proposals for federation will increase flexibility.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Monitoring, challenge, support and intervention

34. Monitoring, challenge, support and intervention are poor. There is no written strategy for early intervention, and monitoring, support and intervention purchased from other LEAs have not been sufficient, nor well enough used by the LEA, to lead to the required improvement. Only limited progress has been made in the two largest schools to develop their capacity for self-improvement.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that weaknesses are identified early, and that appropriate action is taken to remedy them before they become serious, in consultation with the federated school:

- define how criteria for monitoring standards, quality of education and management and efficiency will be used to identify concerns and to trigger intervention; and
- identify the levels of support and intervention that will be provided to a school which has been identified by the LEA as causing concern, or by OFSTED as underachieving.

35. The general schools' adviser visits all schools; frequency varies according to need. Monitoring and intervention are appropriately light when schools are doing well, but are insufficiently rigorous or effective when there are weaknesses. Challenge is linked to agreeing statutory key stage targets. This is satisfactory but the off-island school report that there is little challenge to the targets within their school development plans. The most recent HMI visits to monitor the two schools on St Mary's indicated that monitoring, self-evaluation and aspects of development planning were weak. Visits to the off-island schools indicate that strengths in self-evaluation owe little to the support of the LEA.

Recommendations

In order to improve school self-evaluation and the level of challenge provided to the school:

- work closely with the school to put in place arrangements for self-evaluation; and
- ensure that the school is challenged on the appropriateness of targets in the school development plan and the progress made in meeting them.

36. The general schools' adviser has appropriately targeted monitoring and support purchased from a mainland LEA at management and teaching where there are weaknesses. However, there has been limited impact. Service level agreements are unsatisfactory and are currently being re-negotiated. Outcomes have not been clearly specified or monitored by the LEA or the schools. Reports are provided to the school and to the general schools' adviser on the work undertaken by these consultants. Reports are full, and set targets for improvement, although some equivocate in their identification of weak teaching. However, the evidence collected

has not been collated with other information, nor always shared with governing bodies.

Recommendations

In order to improve the quality of support and intervention purchased by the LEA in order to carry out its role to monitor, challenge and intervene in the school:

- service level agreements for school improvement, undertaken with external consultants should clearly specify outcomes which relate to the LEA's and school's targets;
- systems for monitoring the impact of these agreements should be put in place and regularly scrutinised by elected members; and
- all reports written on the progress of the school by consultants and by the general schools adviser should be shared with governing body as a matter of course.

37. The general schools' adviser is appropriately qualified and experienced in school improvement. However, he has simply insufficient time.

Performance data

38. The analysis and provision of performance data to schools are generally competent. The analysis of data is undertaken yearly by key stage, against benchmarks and through the analysis of data on individual pupils to compare performance at key stages. Activities within the Education Development Plan for the continuing development of data analysis are appropriate and focus on the better use of prior attainment data to set targets. The LEA has adopted the Cornwall baseline assessment scheme.

39. Schools on the off-islands have very small cohorts of pupils and analysis is appropriately undertaken at the level of the individual pupil. Targets set by schools are generally appropriate and are in line to be met for 2002. The largest primary school carries out intermediate National Curriculum tests, and all pupils are tested for reading. This information and the teachers' knowledge of the pupils are used to put pupils in ability groups for English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 and to set targets. The secondary school reports that data transfer is sound. The general schools' adviser undertakes an analysis of Key Stage 4 results by subject and these are appropriately used to inform discussions with the senior management team in the school. Discussions between the LEA and the school on target-setting focus on the progress of individual pupils, although OFSTED reports indicate that two of the four primaries and the secondary school would benefit from additional support on the use of assessment to inform planning and set targets.

Support for literacy and numeracy

40. Support for the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools is competent, and in numeracy there are some good features. Support to the secondary school has had a limited impact. National Curriculum test results in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 in English and mathematics are well above national expectations. Rates of improvement in English are well above or broadly in line with national trends in English, but in mathematics they are below. The gap between girls' and boys' attainment, particularly in English, widens significantly in Key Stages 3 and 4.

41. The LEAs strategies for literacy and numeracy set out in the Education Development Plan are appropriate. They focus on the continuing introduction of the National Literacy and National Numeracy strategies and identify weaknesses such as standards in writing for further development. Extending the strategies into Key Stage 3 is a priority for development, although the under-performance of boys in literacy at Key Stages 3 and 4 is an omission in the plan.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for literacy and numeracy in Key Stages 3 and 4 ensure that:

- planning in the next Education Development Plan, in consultation with the school, adequately addresses boys' under-achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4.

42. Support to schools is purchased from a mainland LEA. The general schools' adviser oversees the work of consultants. The LEA has been responsive to schools' needs; a new consultant was negotiated for literacy when relationships between schools and the original consultant were strained. Reports to schools and the general schools' adviser, which are prepared by consultants following visits to the schools, are clear and set out a helpful agenda. Schools speak highly of the expertise of the consultants and the LEA has purchased sufficient time for all primary schools to have intensive support. Recent planning by the consultants and schools has been well targeted on weaknesses, and planning in primary schools, where it was seen by inspectors, particularly for numeracy, is good.

43. In-service training is well regarded by the schools. The numeracy consultant has observed lessons in primary schools, taught demonstration lessons and provided support on monitoring, resources and audit. Secondary school staff have attended training on the national strategies, and consultants are beginning to target Key Stage 3. However, developments are in their infancy. A literacy co-ordinator has been appointed in the secondary school but the co-ordinator for numeracy left the school at the end of the summer term. The secondary school has begun to address the issue of boys' underachievement and professional development has taken place for all staff. There is an added focus on improving the literacy level of boys; although in a visit made to the school by HMI in June 2001 there had been no improvement in boys' writing or in the presentation of their work.

Support for information and communication technology

44. Support to schools for information and communication technology in the curriculum is poor.

45. The most recent OFSTED inspections of the off-island schools conclude that, where it was weak, ICT has improved and is broadly in line with expectations. The most recent monitoring visit by HMI to the primary school on St Mary's also noted improvements although standards remained unsatisfactory. However, in the secondary school standards have deteriorated and at Key Stage 4 GCSE results in 2001 were very poor. The school has sensibly decided not to offer the subject to GCSE this year and the member of staff responsible for the subject has left. The recent appointments of an ICT co-ordinator and a new technician offers some hope for progress.

46. The strategy for the support of ICT infrastructure is competent. However, there is currently no clear project management or co-ordination of ICT by the LEA. The ICT plan does not specify clear outcomes, and objectives in the strategy have not been met. The production of a draft ICT development plan is behind schedule and the LEA is unlikely to meet its deadline of April 2002 for broadband connection. This will have a detrimental effect in the short term on achieving the benefits of federating schools. Of the four activities in the Education Development Plan, only two have been met. All schools are connected to the National Grid for Learning and teachers and groups of pupils have e-mail addresses. Nevertheless, schools received little guidance on the introduction of National Grid for Learning and hardware in schools is not always compatible. All teachers on the off-island schools have received appropriate National Opportunities Fund training. However, training in the two St Mary's schools has been funded, but has not been carried out effectively because of staffing difficulties.

Recommendations

In order to implement the strategy for information and communication technology (ICT) in the curriculum and administrative ICT:

- identify and put in place an officer or consultant to lead developments; and
- establish a working group, which includes representatives of the school and other stakeholders, including elected members, to develop and implement the strategy for the use of information and communication technology in teaching and learning.

47. Support for administrative ICT is poor. The LEA does not offer support for administrative ICT, and no money is delegated for it. The council is lagging behind most local authorities in its use of, and support for, ICT in administration, and is behind some of its schools. The schools on St Mary's buy good support from a mainland LEA for their financial software package using the Standards Fund. Off-island schools have adopted their own administrative systems, in two cases paper-based. Schools are ahead of the LEA in connectivity. E-mail is well established between schools, although it is only recently being used for communication between the LEA and schools. The LEA has been slow to develop a common platform for

information technology systems, and uses different software from schools, making file transfer difficult. Electronic transmission of data is said by schools to be improving. The off-island schools rely on islanders' goodwill to operate and maintain ICT for administrative purposes.

Early years

48. Support for education in the early years is good. All three and four-year-olds have access to early years education as a consequence of the Nursery Education Grant. Provision ranges from a playgroup on the main island, to the attachment of a child to the primary school on St Agnes. Out of school childcare includes holiday play schemes. The Early Years Development and Childcare Plan was revised in March 2001 to take account of progress towards comprehensive early years education provision. The plan's strategic vision is appropriate: it states that the early years development and childcare partnership is committed to creating new childcare places, and ensuring the provision of high quality care for Isles of Scilly children.

Support to schools causing concern

49. Support to schools causing concern is poor although action is being planned which has potential for improvement.

50. The largest primary school and the secondary school were judged by OFSTED to have serious weaknesses when they were inspected in October and March 2000, respectively. Visits by HMI in June 2001 concluded that the secondary school had made insufficient progress and required special measures, and that the primary school had made reasonable progress in addressing issues in the report, but impact had been limited and considerable weaknesses remained in the quality of teaching. A further visit was recommended for spring 2002.

51. The LEA has brokered a programme of support and advice provided by consultants from a neighbouring LEA on the mainland. This has been insufficient to meet the needs of the schools and has amounted to the equivalent of only nine days of consultant/adviser time. In the secondary school there has been a programme of advice and training for senior staff, teachers and governors. In the primary school there has been support for the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy, and specialist teachers from the secondary school have been deployed to work in the primary school.

52. The impact of this advice and support has been unsatisfactory. The LEA has not been sufficiently rigorous in its management of the support and in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the schools. For example, deadlines were missed in the production of progress reports to governors in the primary school, and monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education have been insufficiently rigorous. In both schools there has been too little evaluation by the LEA of the impact of support on standards, the quality of teaching and the capacity of the senior managers in the schools for self-evaluation.

Recommendations

In order to improve the quality of support to the schools requiring special measures and with serious weaknesses:

- put in place rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the progress being made by the school, and ensure that agreed dates for feeding back to governing bodies on progress are met;
- monitor the impact of the work of consultants or others intervening in schools causing concern, and ensure that intervention is adjusted accordingly; and
- put in place support to help senior managers to develop their monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, and link this closely to the LEA/school agreed approach to school self-review.

53. Nevertheless, there are some positive features in the LEA's support. Elected members have very recently allocated an additional £28,000 from reserves to support intervention in the two schools. The governing body in the secondary school is now a unified group and is beginning to hold the school to account for its standards. Relationships have improved. Service level agreements are being re-negotiated with consultants to focus attention more closely on monitoring and evaluation. Changes in personnel offer the prospect of improvement in teaching.

54. A key part of the LEA's strategy to improve the two schools causing concern is to federate them with the other island schools and establish a 'fresh start' school in April 2000. However, some of the weaknesses currently in the two schools are the direct result of the decision made in 1996 to move to one headteacher for both schools while retaining separate governing bodies. The turnover of headteachers and inadequate leadership and management which resulted in each school have yet to be resolved and the challenge of federation and the demands of raising standards within the two weakest schools are going to be considerable.

Recommendation

In order to help schools meet the challenge of federation:

- ensure that additional support is available at a senior management level within the school, to help manage and facilitate the implementation of federation and set up the 'fresh start' school.

Support to governors

55. Support to improve the standard of governance in the islands' schools has been a high priority of the LEA. All schools have fully constituted governing bodies. Overall, support is competent with some strengths and some weaknesses.

56. OFSTED inspection reports indicate that the quality of governance has improved in those schools where there were weaknesses. Overall, governance is sound, although monitoring and evaluating the quality of education is a weakness.

Recommendations

In order to improve the effectiveness of the governing body in the federated school:

- put in place training to help governors in their monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education; and
- ensure that arrangements put in place are linked to arrangements developed for school self-evaluation.

Support to school management

57. The LEA's strategy to improve management, leadership and teaching in the islands' schools is set out in appropriate activities within the Education Development Plan. However, the implementation of the activities and their impact on the weakest schools have been insufficient and inconsistent. As a result, support to management is unsatisfactory.

58. OFSTED inspections report that leadership and management, and the quality of education on the three off-island schools are good. However, there are weaknesses in the secondary school and in the largest primary school on St Mary's which have only partially been addressed.

59. The LEA makes appropriate and extensive use of the headteachers on the island schools, through a cluster group arrangement, to identify common priorities for professional development and to share good practice. This is effective and is facilitated by the general schools' adviser, who also co-ordinates and organises training and brokers a wide range of services from the mainland. Schools purchase support and professional development from a mainland LEA, higher education institutions or other mainland providers.

60. Induction for headteachers is sound, although there is no formal written induction programme. New headteachers are provided with a mentor, either from an island or mainland school. Professional development, including access to national qualifications, is undertaken on a bespoke basis by headteachers, and where appropriate is facilitated and brokered by the general schools' adviser.

61. Through the literacy and numeracy programmes, support is being provided to help co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning. Overall, however, there has been too little support for headteachers in the weakest schools to ensure that the quality of education is being monitored effectively. Insufficient support has been provided for school self-review. Published guidance has been circulated on development planning and in OFSTED inspections and recent HMI visits to schools causing concern comment that school development plans are generally sound, although there are weaknesses in evaluation in three of the five schools.

62. Support for subject co-ordinators is purchased mostly from a mainland LEA. Training attended on the mainland is well regarded. Consultants employed by the LEA have worked with weak subject teachers, particularly in the secondary school. However, their impact has been limited and the reasons for this have already been

discussed earlier in this report. The development of cross phase working is a priority within the Education Development Plan. This is appropriate, given the size of schools and the move to federation. It is therefore surprising that no formal arrangements are planned. Recent improvements have been instigated by the schools with the encouragement of the LEA. Specialists in several subjects in the secondary school have provided support to St Mary's primary school, and music in particular and sport are becoming more integrated across the schools.

63. Seven new teachers began work on the islands this September, one a newly qualified teacher. Induction is appropriate and the newly qualified teacher has been allocated a mentor who has been trained on the mainland, and linked to specialist advisers and other newly qualified teachers on the mainland. Teacher recruitment and retention are adversely effected by the high cost of living, and the high cost and scarcity of housing on the Isles. All schools are fully staffed, although the number of applicants for posts to start in September 2001 was limited. The LEA is doing all it can to open a dialogue with housing associations and the Duchy of Cornwall, and officers, the acting headteacher of the secondary school and chair of governors spent much of the summer ensuring that new teachers had accommodation when they arrived in September.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

64. Corporate planning is improving from a low base and although weaknesses remain it is now competent overall. However, monitoring and review of implementation within education are unsatisfactory.

65. The Best Value Performance Plan is a concise document, fit for purpose and related to the Education Development Plan. Best Value has provided a spur to the council to create policy direction and to start to monitor its performance. However, milestones against which progress can be measured and the recording of progress, are under-developed, and until they are improved procedures for implementing and evaluating progress will remain unsatisfactory. Although written procedures are lacking, the chief executive meets directors of services fortnightly to discuss progress on live issues, and he and the general schools' adviser are aware, at an informal level, of educational priorities and progress against them. Action points from chief officer meetings are recorded briefly but are not linked systematically to plans, and there is no formal monitoring of progress on a plan by plan basis.

66. Elected members have traditionally placed a high value on education and the move to federate the islands' schools is currently at the top of their agenda. A strong consensus dominates the council's thinking. The islanders wish to maintain and support viable communities on the populated islands, to look after weaker and disadvantaged members of their community well and to conserve the high quality of life. There are, however, deeply held and divergent views as to how this is best to be achieved. The council is composed entirely of independent members and there are no formal or informal group mechanisms. Agreement on clear educational policy presents problems for the council. There is no council leader, although the chair liaises closely with the chief executive to exchange information about the national and local agenda, and to relay feedback from community soundings by elected members.

67. Council policies are determined at full council debates. Committee chairs work with their service officers to develop proposals in their areas, but working parties on policy areas have not found favour, as they are felt to exclude interested members. While in the past in education these arrangements have not resulted in strong policy thrusts, the move to federation has been an exception, and members, working alongside school governors, have provided effective leadership.

68. The council is consciously using the Best Value process to improve internal decision-making by setting a clear direction with realistic objectives. A recent positive move has been the introduction of the monitoring of action plans following Best Value reviews, with the participation of elected members. Nonetheless, the work of elected members, although well intentioned and improving, is unsatisfactory in monitoring and reviewing services. Despite regular officer reports on school standards, the education committee does not systematically monitor school performance, progress against its own plans or the outcomes of its policies. Members have been insufficiently aware of the strengths and weaknesses of

schools and of the LEA's support to school improvement. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate progress on the federation of schools are not yet in place.

Recommendations

In order to improve the quality and effectiveness of corporate planning, ensure that:

- plans have clear milestones against which progress is measured and recorded; and
- arrangements are in place which ensure that elected members monitor systematically the performance of the school and the progress made in the implementation of the council's key plans for education.

69. The advice given by officers on education has been sound and includes reports on school performance. The chief executive and general schools' adviser have concentrated the minds of members on structural issues and have provided resolute leadership on these matters. Officers have not in the past succeeded in engaging elected members on the issue of standards in schools. However, key decisions are properly subjected to democratic scrutiny, with those taken under delegated powers reported to committee. Delegations are appropriate. Committee papers are generally clear, although sometimes too brief in explaining possible options.

70. The routine decision-making of the council, including agreeing the budget, is open. Budget decision-making takes place in an open policy and resources committee, following a traditional cycle through service committees. While the technicalities of the budget process are obscure to schools, particularly the minor adjustments to formula funding made routinely to keep the small schools viable, they believe the process to be fair and benign.

71. Pressure on the council's officers is severe. The council has a wider range of duties than most, including managing the airport, the provision of water, coastal defences and fisheries. The chief executive is also the chief education officer, but has limited time to fulfil this function. Officers work in cramped conditions with poor information and communication technology infrastructure and little clerical support. Central services account for only 21 staff, of whom five are part-time. Generally each department has only one professional officer, with a very few, often part-time, support staff. This presents difficulty in responding to government initiatives, planning requirements and other work that is over and above daily tasks.

72. Despite these constraints, schools rate the LEA in the top quartile of all of those in the sample of LEAs inspected for those questions relating to responsiveness, advice on national policies, the extent of schools' influence on the LEA's policies and consultation on the budget. This is a reflection of the hard work of LEA officers, and particularly the general schools' adviser.

Inter-agency collaboration

73. Partnership arrangements are good. The school survey rates liaison between the LEA and social services, the health service, employers and police as satisfactory. Partnerships operate principally at an informal level. With about 2,000 permanent residents on the Islands, communities are close knit and supportive. At a formal level, there are strong working relationships between the LEA and the social services department. The Quality Protects management action plan places emphasis on early intervention, and strong links between education and social services. The social worker, who is also the education welfare officer, is involved in statementing of pupils who may have special educational needs. The local knowledge possessed by the social worker and the Islands' health visitor, who chairs the early years development and childcare partnership, also ensures that potential problems with children are identified at an early stage. There are good links with mainland LEAs and work is underway to develop a network of care-related professions to co-ordinate responses to Government initiatives and bids for funding. The chief executive represents the Isles on the Connexions strategic partnership and Year 10 and 11 pupils benefit from work experience and are well informed about career paths, including peer group training from Year 12 and 13 students funded through Barclays new futures project.

74. Relationships between the LEA and other partners are reported to be good. Consultation and communication with the diocese and the teachers unions are well developed. The standing council on religious education meets regularly. Schools use the Cornwall religious education syllabus, and inspections by the diocese indicate that it is being used appropriately. Overall, partnership work in the Islands is effective and properly targeted.

Best Value

75. The Best Value Performance Plan has received qualified approval from the external auditor, with a recommendation to strengthen the collection and use of performance indicators and to articulate action plans more clearly and record progress against them more systematically. The programme of Best Value reviews is appropriately risk-based. Inspection reports on the first two reviews, tourism and emergency planning, by the Best Value inspectorate were generally favourable. The review of school organisation is included in the Best Value Performance Plan. The inspection report on the review is included as Appendix 2. Other education functions are appropriately scheduled for later in the five-year cycle. School meals on St Mary's and catering at the boarding house have been included in a wider review of catering.

76. Performance management is developing with the implementation of appraisal down to and including the principal officer grades. However, individual objectives are not linked to operational plans and progress is not systematically monitored. In addition, the LEA has been insufficiently rigorous in monitoring the impact of services it has purchased to intervene in the two schools causing concern.

Recommendation

In order to improve the quality of performance management:

- officers' objectives should be linked to plans and monitored regularly, with the outcomes recorded.

77. Support to schools in applying the principles of Best Value is unsatisfactory although there are some strengths. Schools are largely autonomous in their purchasing. They receive good support on alternative provision from the general schools' adviser, and through a cluster group arrangement often combine to make support cost effective. However, the central management services provided by the council offer poor value to schools and are not supportive to them in seeking alternative provision.

Management services

78. Support to schools in securing effective and efficient management services is poor. There is insufficient resource within the education system to provide, or secure, adequate services to schools. In addition, the council's approach to delegation has failed to engender in its corporate staff the customer-responsiveness Fair Funding is designed to secure.

79. Support is offered as a single block made up of personnel, payroll and central accounting services, financial advice, legal advice and contract management. No choice of service level, or ability to mix and match services is offered, and schools are given less than a month to make a decision about buy-back. Schools have no information about the definition of services or the standards to be expected. Fees are equal to the sum delegated. Information about alternative providers is not offered. Simplicity has been the council's aim, but at the cost of genuine choice for schools. The LEA does not seek the views of schools to inform its service management and planning, and does not monitor provision. However, schools buying from alternative providers are not impeded, and the general schools' adviser is helpful in acting as an intermediary.

80. Services themselves are less comprehensive and responsive than those normally available to mainland schools. Financial and personnel support services each occupy less than one full-time equivalent member of staff, making them vulnerable to sickness, to peaks of work and to competing priorities in other areas of council operations. So far, since the delegation of budgets for central support services in 2000/2001, all schools have bought back what was on offer. However, the limited nature and unresponsive financial and personnel support distracts headteachers and governors from their key task of raising standards. Despite their low cost, these services are not providing good value. Work has not yet started on planning support systems for the federated school, and time is pressing.

Recommendations

In order to improve the provision of management services:

- systems for consulting the temporary governing body on the range of options it requires in service provision to the federated schools for finance, personnel and administrative information and communication technology; and
- reappraise the provision of management support services by:
- examining options for buying well-integrated financial, personnel and administrative information and communication technology support from another education authority or independent provider; and
- recognising immediately that services must be responsive to the needs of schools.

81. Financial support to schools is poor. The LEA deducts payroll costs at source for each school and then pays the remainder in a monthly allowance. The council uses, for its corporate accounts, an off-the-shelf small business financial system that does not allow accounts for the new financial year to be started until the previous year's accounts are closed. Typically, the council does not close its accounts until June. This means that schools receive no payments for the first three months of the year. This is most unsatisfactory. School balances are high: 22 per cent in primary schools and 19 per cent in the secondary school. This is not an efficient use of money.

Recommendation

In order to improve financial support:

- ensure that the school receives funding from the start of the financial year.

82. The council's inability to respond to schools' legitimate needs for up-to-date information on centrally retained school finances is unacceptable. Schools were highly critical of the accuracy of financial systems in the school survey, with three of the five grading it 'poor', and two 'very poor'. Schools report difficulty in obtaining information on payroll and other centrally held expenditure from the council in due time to manage their accounts. They could show files containing repeated requests for financial information, unanswered by the council's treasurer. The consequences are that schools find it impossible to plan and manage their finances effectively.

Recommendation

In order to allow the school to manage its budget effectively:

- ensure it is supplied with prompt accounting information on transactions made on its behalf.

83. Internal audit is bought in by the LEA from Cornwall and is competent. Schools find auditors helpful and constructive, audit reports are of good quality, and the frequency of school audits is appropriate.

84. Personnel advice, guidance and casework, including equal opportunities advice, are generally competently provided. However, personnel administration is unsatisfactory, leading to frustration in schools. Errors in payroll are too frequent and schools find them time-consuming to remedy.

85. The division of responsibilities between the LEA and schools has not been clearly set out. This leads to unsatisfied expectations on both sides. Telephone or on-site administrative guidance is not provided to schools at early stages of recruitment or other staffing changes. Despite training and written procedures, schools get administrative details wrong. Too often, errors slip through into payroll. The LEA does not have the capacity to provide additional support to schools to the extent that they need.

86. Facilities management services are satisfactorily procured directly by schools.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Strategy

87. The LEA has adopted the Cornwall policy for special educational needs and uses Cornwall's guidance to identify pupils with special needs. The behaviour support plan and Annex 4 in the Education Development Plan commit the LEA to inclusion, and this commitment is effectively carried out in practice with the active support of the schools and the local community. The LEA has no special schools and all pupils, with one exception, are integrated in the island schools.

88. The EDP sets out the LEA's responsibilities and makes general but appropriate links to special educational needs within its seven priorities. Activities within the EDP designed to provide early support for pupils where a need has been identified have largely been met. Criteria for identifying need are set out in the behaviour support plan.

89. At the time of the inspection six pupils had a statement of special educational needs. The LEA has devolved funding to support these pupils to the schools along with funding for special needs support. A small fund is retained centrally and allocated to schools on a need basis through negotiation. This is beneficial. Schools are well informed, and in the school survey and visits made as part of this inspection they rated the LEA's planning and provision for special educational needs highly.

Statutory obligations

90. Statutory obligations are securely met. Criteria for the assessment of pupils are clear. Statements are prepared by the general schools' adviser with guidance from the educational psychologist, and are checked and moderated by Cornwall LEA. They are carried out within the Government's recommended timescales. The general schools adviser ensures that independent parental support is available and that parents have access to information and guidance. Reviews and transitional arrangements are appropriately carried out. The general schools adviser attends all reviews and the educational psychologist attends those where difficulties may occur.

Improvement and value for money

91. The LEA's exercise of special educational needs functions to support school improvement is a strength. OFSTED inspection reports conclude that provision for pupils with special needs in the island schools is sound overall, and in the primary schools it is good. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in the secondary school and good progress in those primary schools that have pupils with special needs.

92. The LEA, through a service level agreement, purchases educational psychologist support from a mainland LEA. The support and advice provided by the educational psychologist are of good quality and are highly regarded by schools. The officer knows schools and pupils well and allocates his time according to need.

Support includes statutory work, some in-service training and where appropriate work with families. If schools require additional time they purchase it with their own funds. However, the allocation provided is generous and generally meets the needs of schools. There are regular meetings between the educational psychologist and the general schools adviser. This allows the LEA to monitor informally the use of funds by schools and the progress of pupils. The LEA has delegated funds for special educational needs support to the schools. They purchase as appropriate from mainland providers. There has been limited use of sensory support, although schools comment that good advice has been available from a mainland LEA when requested.

93. The special educational needs co-ordinators in the St Mary's schools work closely together, and the co-ordinator in the primary school provides specialist support to a pupil with a statement who has moved to the secondary school. Occasionally, difficulties arise when a pupil requires specialist support, which is not available on the Isles, and appropriate training for learning support assistants has been difficult to arrange. Special educational needs co-ordinators have links to networks on the mainland and attend training. However, as in other areas, professional development is constrained by vagaries of the weather and associated travel difficulties. The Education Development Plan identifies the need to improve the quality of individual education plans in schools. This need is confirmed by the relatively low rating given to this aspect of support by the schools in the school survey.

94. Overall, the support provided to schools by the LEA is effective and provides good value for money.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

Planning school places and admissions

95. Planning of school places is competently carried out. Forecasting is straightforward because all children on the islands are known to the responsible officer. Children attend primary school on their own island, except for children from the island of Bryher who are transported by boat to Tresco, which lies close by over relatively sheltered water. Any choice of primary school is unrealistic because of the dangers of transporting young children in open boats in winter over rough water. The LEA is rightly determined to maintain a primary school on each of the three largest off-islands. Secondary aged children from the off-islands attend the 11-16 school on St Mary's, boarding weekly. Post-16 provision is offered on the mainland, with a variety of destinations.

96. The three off-island primary schools all have spare capacity, but there is no realistic opportunity for it to be reduced. Surplus capacity has been tackled in the secondary school by converting a separate building situated on the opposite side of the road to community and early years use. This exercise led to ferocious opposition from some factions within the school and community, and the LEA accepts with hindsight that it could have been handled better. However, it was the right decision and the LEA pursued it with resolution.

97. More recently, school governors and the LEA have consulted on a federated model, which will bring all five schools under the management of a single governing body and headteacher. The school organisation committee adopted this proposal in June 2001. A temporary governing body has been appointed and the post of headteacher is currently advertised. The high salary on offer demonstrates the importance given to attracting a high calibre candidate. The new federated school will open as a 'fresh start' school in April 2002. This exercise was included in the council's Best Value Performance Plan as a Best Value review, and is covered in more detail in Appendix 2. Generally, the plan has been well conceived and should lead to economies of scale in governance, management, support services and information and communication technology infrastructure. It also offers opportunities for sharing scarce teaching and curriculum expertise across schools.

98. Wounds still remain from the earlier exercise to remove surplus places, and they have been reopened by the debate over federation. Divisions still remain within the community and in order to overcome entrenched suspicion and rumour, much of it based on misunderstanding, communication needs to be strengthened.

99. The LEA does not have within its existing resources the capacity or expertise to manage the demanding legal and resource planning aspects of this change.

Recommendations

In order to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the proposal to federate the islands schools a detailed plan should be produced which sets out:

- the resource planning and management arrangements at a school and LEA level;
- the management of statutory processes and liaison with the Department for Education and Skills;
- an appropriate LEA structure to reflect the new arrangement;
- support for the temporary governing body;
- induction arrangements for existing staff and the newly appointed headteacher;
- appropriate support services and information and communication technology infrastructure for the new, federated school;
- the establishment of, and transition to, a permanent governing body; and
- consultation and communication arrangements with parents and the wider community.

100. Schools administer admissions, and arrangements are good. Admissions information for parents is clearly presented and fit for purpose. Primary schools have individual arrangements for inducting four-year-olds that are clearly set out. Schools rate this aspect of LEA provision highly.

Asset management

101. Asset management planning is competently undertaken overall, although there are a few weaknesses. The council's management of its assets has improved since it contracted out architectural and technical building advice and contract supervision. Consultants have undertaken condition surveys of buildings, and designed and managed recent projects at St Agnes School and the Isles of Scilly School. In the school survey the quality of asset management planning is rated above satisfactory, close to average for authorities inspected. Landlord responsibilities for structural building maintenance are rated better than average, at satisfactory. The programming and management of building projects is in the top quartile of all LEAs included in the schools' survey.

102. With the exception of the secondary school, school buildings are in a generally satisfactory condition. Funding for recurrent maintenance was delegated in 2000/2001. The council has made a commitment to continuing to provide centrally for updating the asset management plan, including making information available for schools to carry out their own responsibilities. The backlog of work has been identified and schools are consulted about capital priorities. However, the identified need for capital work is considerably greater than the annual budget, and the council will be dependent on continuing grant funding or public/private financing initiatives to keep its buildings in acceptable condition. A coherent, resourced forward plan has not been developed from individual school plans. The main concern is the condition of the system-built secondary school building, which has underlying structural problems. While these are not yet acute, and the council is continuing to invest in maintaining and improving it, the building has a finite

economic life. The council has as yet not started to consider long-term plans for its replacement.

Recommendation

In order to improve asset management planning:

- information from the asset management plan condition and suitability surveys should be drawn together in a long-term plan for the buildings, including proposals for capital financing.

Attendance, behaviour and education other than at school

103. Support for attendance and behaviour is good. Levels of authorised absences in the primary schools are high. This is principally because some families employed in the tourist industry take holidays in term time. In general, children are well motivated and keen to attend school, and the close knit community means that adults are apt to spot and report apparent unauthorised absences to the school concerned. The LEA's approach to attendance is low key and appropriate. Individual cases are assessed on their merits, and action is taken accordingly with the involvement, as appropriate, of social services or a mainland LEA.

104. A similar approach is taken to behaviour. The behaviour support plan is sound and reflects the case by case approach taken by the LEA. A written referral process sets intervention in train at an early stage. The social worker has attended training on handling attendance and behaviour management. Support for both attendance and behaviour was rated as good in the schools survey, and discussions with schools indicate that the mechanisms to access support are clear. No child is currently permanently or temporarily excluded from school, partly because the LEA and social services intervene early and partly because of the lack of disaffection amongst pupils. No child is currently being educated otherwise than at school although discussion is underway to provide home tuition to a pupil currently withdrawn from school. Should a child enter this category, the LEA has stated that it would not be able to secure support for an entitlement of 25 hours tuition per week. The LEA's approach to support for attendance, behaviour and potential cases where pupils will be educated out of school is appropriate and proportionate given the small school population, and the close links between social services, the community, and schools.

Recommendation

In order to secure 25 hours of tuition for children educated other than at school:

- methods of meeting the requirement should be explored.

Health and safety, welfare, child protection, and children in public care

105. The LEA meets its statutory responsibilities in respect of health and safety, welfare, and child protection. Support for health and safety is rated as good in the school survey. Schools are aware of the local authority's health and safety policy, staff and governors have attended appropriate training courses, and risk assessment exercises have been undertaken in schools, with an emphasis on water-related risks. Schools and providers of early years education have taken part in the LEA's 'healthy schools' scheme, which involves coverage of a range of topics as diverse as drugs education and fruit in schools. The scheme assisted in securing the opening of a gym – used by pupils and the community – in former school premises.

106. Child protection procedures are satisfactory in schools. The Islands' social worker is its representative on the Cornwall child protection group, which revised its procedures in April 2001. The LEA and social services have run useful training courses on child protection for teachers, governors, youth and childcare workers. No child has been placed in public care in recent years. It is the case that when a child needs to go into public care, the community rallies round and the child is placed with relatives, friends or neighbours until the crisis eases. Should the circumstances arise, the LEA and social services can call on Cornwall LEA or the NSPCC for support. The support and training on health and safety, welfare, child protection and children in public care are appropriate and proportionate, given the unique circumstances of the Islands.

Measures to combat racism and social exclusion

107. There are currently three children on the islands for whom English is an additional language. Nevertheless, inspection reports indicate that schools are aware of the need to explore other cultures and faith communities through textbooks and assemblies. In addition, the LEA has facilitated work from the Cornwall association for development education through a year-long project conveying greater understanding of other cultures, and a teacher who spent some time working in Africa will be talking about the educational experiences from that trip to schools. Work on the Macpherson report of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence is undeveloped.

108. Work on combating social exclusion permeates other education-related activity on the Islands. The work on attendance and behaviour and the support given to pupils with special educational needs – with its emphasis on a case by case approach to meeting the needs of individual and their families – illustrates the strength of community and LEA support in those areas. Early signalling of issues enables the LEA and its partners to deploy resources well when the need arises.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In order to ensure that weaknesses are identified early, and that appropriate action is taken to remedy weaknesses before they become serious, in consultation with schools:

- define how criteria for monitoring standards, quality of education and management and efficiency will be used to identify concerns and to trigger intervention; and
- identify the levels of support and intervention that will be provided to a school which has been identified by the LEA as causing concern, or by OFSTED as underachieving.

In order to improve school self-evaluation and the level of challenge provided to the school:

- work closely with the school to put in place arrangements for self-evaluation; and
- ensure that the school is challenged on the appropriateness of targets in its school development plan and the progress made in meeting them.

In order to improve the quality of support and intervention purchased by the LEA in order to carry out its role to monitor, challenge and intervene in the school:

- service level agreements for school improvement, undertaken with external consultants should clearly specify outcomes which relate to the LEA's and school's targets;
- systems for monitoring the impact of these agreements should be put in place and regularly scrutinised by elected members; and
- all reports written on the progress of the school by consultants and by the general schools adviser should be shared with the governing body as a matter of course.

In order to improve support for literacy and numeracy in Key Stages 3 and 4 ensure that:

- planning in the next Education Development Plan, in consultation with the school, adequately addresses boys' under achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4.

In order to implement the strategy for information and communication technology in the curriculum and administrative information and communication technology:

- identify and put in place an officer or consultant to lead developments; and

- establish a working group, which includes representatives of the school and other stakeholders, including elected members, to develop and implement the strategy for information and communication technology in teaching and learning.

In order to improve the quality of support to schools requiring special measures and with serious weaknesses:

- put in place rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the progress being made by the school, and ensure that agreed dates for feeding back to governing bodies on progress are met;
- monitor the impact of the work of consultants or others intervening in schools causing concern, and ensure that intervention is adjusted accordingly; and
- put in place support to help senior managers to develop their monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, and link this closely to the LEA/school agreed approach to school self-review.

In order to help schools meet the challenge of federation:

- ensure that additional support is available at a senior management level within the school, to help manage and facilitate the implementation of federation and set up the 'fresh start' school.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the governing body in the federated school:

- put in place training to help governors in their monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education; and
- ensure that arrangements put in place are linked to arrangements developed for school self-evaluation.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

In order to improve the quality and effectiveness of corporate planning, ensure that:

- plans have clear milestones against which progress is measured and recorded; and
- systematically the performance of the school and the progress made in the implementation of the council's key plans for education.

In carrying out planning for the next Education Development Plan, ensure that:

- activities are clearly sequenced and that timescales are identified and agreed with schools;
- success criteria are set out clearly as targets which can be rigorously monitored.

In order to improve the quality of performance management:

- officers' objectives should be linked to plans and monitored regularly with the outcomes recorded.

In order to improve the provision of management services, put in place:

- systems for consulting the temporary governing body on the range of options it requires in service provision to the federated school for finance, personnel and administrative information and communication technology; and
- reappraise the provision of management support services by:
- examining options for buying well-integrated financial, personnel and administrative information and communication technology support from another education authority or independent provider;
- recognising immediately that services must be responsive to the needs of schools.

In order to improve financial support:

- ensure that the school receives funding from the start of the financial year; and

In order to allow the school to manage its budget effectively, ensure:

- it is supplied with prompt accounting information on transactions made on its behalf.

ACCESS

In order to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the proposal to federate the islands schools a detailed plan should be produced which sets out:

- the resource planning and management arrangements at a school and LEA level;
- the management of statutory processes and liaison with the Department of Education and Skills;
- an appropriate LEA structure to reflect the new arrangement;
- support for the temporary governing body;
- induction arrangements for existing staff and the newly appointed headteacher;
- appropriate support services and information and communication technology infrastructure for the new, federated school;
- the establishment of, and transition to, a permanent governing body; and
- consultation and communication arrangements with parents and the wider community.

In order to improve asset management planning:

- information from the asset management plan condition and suitability surveys should be drawn together in a long-term plan for the buildings, including proposals for capital financing.

In order to secure 25 hours of tuition for children educated otherwise than at school:

- methods of meeting the requirement should be explored.

APPENDIX 2

SCHOOL ORGANISATION: BEST VALUE REPORT

The scope of the review

The organisation of the four maintained primary schools and the 11-16 secondary school on St Mary's, formed the basis of the review. Sensibly the review combined with the statutory requirement to put forward a school organisation plan in 2000.

A federated model, with a single headteacher and governing body and voluntary controlled status was chosen as the preferred option. Schools would be kept open. Federation would offer better continuity of learning through the key stages, economies of scale in support, management and governance, greater financial flexibility and shared curriculum, management and technical expertise.

The initial position

Pupil numbers in the island schools in January 2000 were exceptionally small, except for the primary school on St Mary's, and were forecast to fall at secondary level. All are community schools and the primary schools are voluntary controlled. The secondary school and the primary school on St Mary's had been judged to have serious weaknesses (the secondary school has recently been placed in special measures by OFSTED) but the off-island schools were judged to be good by OFSTED.

Difficulties in funding the schools, and the council's determination to keep them open, have been well rehearsed in the main report. An earlier proposal to merge the primary and secondary schools on St Mary's had been unsuccessful owing to opposition by the governing bodies. As a compromise the two separately governed schools had shared a headteacher. This had proved an unsatisfactory management arrangement, which had partially led to the current weaknesses within the two schools. Concerns over the viability of the secondary school and difficulties of attracting and retaining a suitable headteacher for the St Mary's schools precipitated this review.

The review

The review team comprised governors from all schools, the chairman and vice chairman of the education committee, and was supported by the chief executive and the general schools' adviser. The team considered a number of options including the status quo, closure of the off-island primary schools and the secondary school. Consultation was conducted through the governing bodies of the schools. On the off-islands consultation involved the whole community, but on St Mary's it was limited to staff and parents. Full copies of the written plan were not supplied to parents individually, or to those attending the consultation meeting and has led to some accusations of lack of openness. Nevertheless, diocesan officers, teaching unions and headteachers all report that consultation has been full and open. Opposition, though vocal and deeply-felt, has been confined to a few, and is partly

rooted in the mistaken belief that the council should not have a role in such matters, and that it should be left to governors to decide. This misconception points, at least, to the need for stronger communication with the local community.

Comparison was good. The review team sought and investigated models of organisation, in the Western Isles of Scotland, Denbighshire and Dorset. The review has sought to achieve greater cost-effectiveness of the school system but did not, understandably in view of the ambitious and controversial nature of the proposed change, look at alternative provision for the management of the school. This was the right decision in the circumstances.

Progress on the action plan

Council agreed the proposal in March 2001 and a statutory notice was issued. Only two objections were received, and the school organisation committee agreed the school organisation plan in June 2001. An outline plan for implementation was prepared with help from the Department for Education and Skills and subsequent actions are on schedule. A temporary governing body was established in September and the headteacher's post has been advertised.

Conclusion

In summary, the council's proposals for federating its schools are well-conceived and ambitious. The review has the potential to lead to improvement in the management, governance and cost-effectiveness of schools.

Key recommendations

Recommendations are set out in the main text of this report below paragraph 99.

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

Tel: 020 7421 6800

This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities*, which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement. The inspection took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.

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**Council of the Isles of Scilly
Town Hall
St Mary's
Isles of Scilly
TR21 OLW**

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