**O F F I C E F O R S T A N D A R D S
I N E D U C A T I O N**

INSPECTION OF

HARROW

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

September 2001

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

CONTENTS   **PARAGRAPHS**

SECTION 5: ACCESS

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

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 in education services and in other council departments. In addition a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to all its schools. The response rate was 73 per cent.

3. Discussions were held with representatives of schools and the LEA's partners. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to two first schools, seven combined schools, three middle schools, five high schools and the pupil referral unit. 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 provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in schools and provides value for money. The inspection also took account of relevant evidence from Her Majesty Inspector's national monitoring work.

COMMENTARY

4.   Harrow is one of the outer boroughs of Greater London. It is relatively affluent, compared with other London boroughs and the rate of unemployment is lower than the outer London average. Over half the pupils in schools are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The authority operates a three-tier arrangement for school organisation. Pupils transfer to high schools from middle and combined schools at 12 years of age at the end of Year 7. The structure is under pressure as a result of the decision of certain Roman Catholic schools to change their age of transfer to age 11. In addition, there is a significant movement of higher achieving pupils out of the borough's schools to secondary schools in neighbouring boroughs at the end of Year 6.

5.   Pupils in Harrow begin their statutory schooling with attainment which is above the national average. The performance of pupils at age 11 maintains this trend and attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above the national average. Performance at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the national average. Nevertheless, good progress is made by pupils as they move through the high schools. In 2000 a higher percentage of pupils than nationally achieved five or more A*-C grades and the average points score was above the national average. All the high schools are achieving at least in line with like schools elsewhere and almost three-quarters are achieving above or well above.

6.   Schools have benefited from a political consensus on the importance of education in Harrow. Funding has traditionally been above the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), although pressure on other council budgets has resulted in a reduction in spending relative to the SSA in recent years. The council is committed to protect the real value of school budgets, although this will not quite be achieved in the coming year.

7.   Schools also benefit from the good relationships that have been built over time with education services. The director of education and his senior team have created a strong culture of trust; consultation with schools and the LEA's partners is very good. The strategic leadership provided by the LEA is, however, more varied. The Education Development Plan (EDP) sets a clear agenda for school improvement and there is a common vision in the LEA with raising standards at its heart. However, in the areas of special educational needs (SEN) and important areas of access, the LEA's intentions are insufficiently clear and progress has been too slow. Good progress is being made in supporting schools to become self-evaluating, but too little is being done to encourage them to become discriminating procurers of services, through the application of the principles of Best Value. Indeed, both elected members and schools hold the mistaken belief that the local authority would be put at risk if it were not the provider of services.

8.   The strengths of the LEA are mainly in the services that support school improvement, where performance management is well embedded in services and where advisers provide consistently good support to schools. The weakest schools are well identified and support and intervention is well targeted to help them improve. In other areas of the LEA's work services are more variable in quality, for example, in the services which support management infrastructure in schools and access to

education. There are, however, significant weaknesses in aspects of the LEA's provision for special educational needs. The LEA takes reasonable steps to carry out its statutory responsibilities in this area, and some aspects of services are well regarded by schools. Nevertheless, funding is poorly targeted at priorities and service effectiveness is constrained by the lack of clarity in the LEA's planning and deployment.

9. Overall, however, the majority of the LEA's functions are performed satisfactorily and there are more strengths than weaknesses. The following are performed particularly well:

- planning for school improvement;
- the leadership of services to support school improvement;
- the expertise of attached advisers;
- support to schools for the use of performance data;
- support for literacy;
- support for numeracy;
- support for schools causing concern;
- support for school management;
- financial services to schools;
- personnel services to schools;
- support to improve attendance; and
- planning for Early Years.

10. The following are not being carried out satisfactorily:

- structures to achieve Best Value;
- information and communication technology (ICT) in the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4;
- ICT in school administration;
- strategic planning and support to school improvement in Special Educational Needs;
- leadership in provision for school places;
- provision for pupils with no school place;
- support for behaviour; and
- support for children in public care.

11. The LEA is aware of its weaknesses and it has begun to address them in a number of areas. The inspection team believes that the LEA has the capacity to respond positively to the recommendations within this report. Nevertheless, the agenda is considerable, particularly in areas of access and Special Educational Needs, and action will have to be taken with more urgency than has been the case in the past.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

12.   Harrow is ranked 145 out of 354 local authority districts nationally in the Department of Environment Trade and the Regions index of local deprivation. The rate of unemployment in Harrow is lower than the outer London average.

13.   Just over a third of the total population and over half the pupil population are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is significantly higher than in the LEA's statistical neighbours and nationally. In 2000, 46.9 per cent of primary pupils and 45.3 per cent of secondary school pupils were white. This was the largest single group. The second largest group was of Indian origin (21.9 per cent in the primary sector and 25.7 per cent in the secondary sector). There has been a slight increase over time in the percentage of Black African and Black Caribbean pupils in schools and an increase recently in the number of refugees in the borough. In 2001, 5.8 per cent of high schools pupils and six per cent of primary school pupils were refugees.

14.   In 2001,12.7 per cent of primary pupils and 17.4 per cent of secondary pupils were eligible for free school meals. This is below the national figure for primary schools and broadly in line with the figure for secondary schools. The LEA does not provide hot meals in primary schools and has recently conducted a 'hot meal' pilot in two primary schools. Take up of free school meals in the two schools went up by 15 per cent. This indicates that the figures for eligibility for free school meals may not be entirely reliable.

15.   In 2000, 2.4 per cent of primary age and 4.3 per cent of secondary age pupils had a statement of special educational needs; this was broadly in line with the national picture.

16.   Harrow operates a three-tier system of school organisation across 19 first, 19 middle, 18 first and middle (combined), ten high, three special schools and a pupil referral centre. Ten primary schools and all the high schools are currently funded as additionally resourced mainstream schools with specific expertise in areas of Special Educational Needs. Pupils transfer to secondary education at the end of Year 7 at the age of 12. There are a small number of places in Year 7 at the two Roman Catholic high schools for pupils from primary schools where the age of transfer is age 11. The diocese of Westminster is currently consulting on the possibility of introducing transfer at the end of Year 6.

17.   Harrow is a net exporter of pupils to other LEAs at the end of Year 6. The LEA has evidence which indicates that these pupils are, on average, higher achievers. In a number of schools pupil mobility is increasing.

18.   Twenty-four primary phase schools and one special school have attached nursery classes, and 79.4 per cent of all four-year-olds are in nursery places provided or funded by the council. Two local tertiary colleges and one aided sixth form college provide post-16 education. In 2000, 84.3 per cent of pupils left Harrow high schools to take up full-time further education.

Performance

19.   OFSTED inspection data indicates that attainment on entry to Harrow primary schools is, overall, slightly higher than in statistical neighbours[1] and above the national average.

20.   In 2000, at Key Stage 1 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 or above was above the average in statistical neighbours in reading, writing and mathematics. It was well above the national average in writing and above in reading and mathematics. Rates of improvement in the National Curriculum (NC) tests over the last three years have been slightly above trends nationally and in statistical neighbours for reading, writing, and mathematics.

21.   In 2000 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 and above in the NC tests at Key Stage 2 in English (81.6 per cent), mathematics (76.5 per cent) and science (88.6 per cent) was above the national average. In English it was above the average in statistical neighbours, while in mathematics and science it was broadly in line. Rates of improvement over the last three years in mathematics are below national trends and trends in statistical neighbours; they are broadly in line for English and science.

22.   In 2000 at Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in the NC tests was broadly in line with averages nationally. For mathematics and science it was in line with statistical neighbours; in English it was below. Rates of improvement over the last three years have fluctuated in line with national rates. Overall, they are broadly in line with the national trend in English, but below in mathematics and science and in line with trends in statistical neighbours.

23.   In 2000, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE (57.2 per cent) was above the national average and broadly in line with statistical neighbours. The percentage of pupils achieving one or more grade A*-G at GCSE (96.7 per cent), was broadly in line with the national average and with statistical neighbours and the average points score of pupils (42.3), was above the national average and broadly in line with statistical neighbours. Over the three year period from 1997 to 2000, the rate of improvement at GCSE was below the national trend and the trend in statistical neighbours for five A*-C and points score, but was in line for one or more A*-G.

24.   OFSTED inspection data indicates that the percentage of primary and secondary schools judged to be good or very good in Harrow is broadly in line with the national and statistical neighbour averages. In primary schools inspected twice by OFSTED, there has been an improvement in management and efficiency and in quality of education, although in the latter case inspectors judged there to be less good teaching and more poor teaching than nationally. The climate in schools, which had been judged to be mainly very good or good, remained much as it was in first inspections. Six high schools have undergone two inspections. In management and efficiency and climate, Harrow high schools in second inspections were judged to be

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[1] Harrow's statistical neighbours are Trafford, Barnet, Bromley, Croydon, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Redbridge and Sutton.

performing above schools nationally and statistical neighbours. In quality of education they were in line. Overall, this was an improvement on first inspections.

25.   In 2000, permanent exclusions in the primary sector and secondary sector were broadly in line with national figures and statistical neighbours. Attendance was broadly in line with national figures and statistical neighbours. Unauthorised absence was in line in the primary sector but below in the secondary.

26.   Two Harrow primary schools and two high schools have been awarded Beacon status. Since the start of school inspections in 1993, one special school, in 1999, has been judged to require special measures. One combined school has been identified by OFSTED, since September 1997, as having serious weaknesses. This school inspected by OFSTED in October 2000 was found to have improved and no longer has serious weaknesses. One other combined school was declared to be an underachieving school in January 2000.

Funding

27.   Harrow has traditionally funded its education services above the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), although pressure on other council budgets has resulted in a reduction in spending levels relative to the SSA in recent years. The SSA increase in the current year will not be fully passed on to the education budget. Harrow has taken up all of its Standard Fund options. However, planned spending for 2001/2002 is 0.9 per cent above SSA compared with two per cent above in 2000/2001. Spending across the council is 5.3 per cent above aggregate SSA.

28.   Harrow's education SSA allocation per pupil is broadly in line with its statistical neighbours, above the England average but below the average of outer London boroughs. Nevertheless, in 2000/2001 individual school budget shares were significantly above these comparators.

£ per pupil	Primary Funding	Secondary Funding
Harrow	2,076	2,919
Statistical Neighbours	1,966	2,660
Outer London Boroughs	2,024	2,746
England	1,869	2,559

29.   In addition to the higher levels of funding in schools, centrally retained funding was also higher (£517 per pupil in Harrow, compared with £440 per pupil for statistical neighbours, £470 per pupil for outer London boroughs and £446 for English authorities). The most significant contributory factors were the costs of exercising the statutory and regulatory function (£74 per pupil in Harrow, compared with £57 in statistical neighbours authorities, £58 in outer London boroughs and £50 for English authorities) and the central costs for special educational needs (£238 in Harrow, compared to £187, £188 and £160 per pupil respectively).

30.   Further delegation in 2001/2002 of some central Information and Communication Technology costs, elements of advisory service costs and a significant portion of the costs of statements will reduce central costs to £476 per pupil. Overall delegation will exceed the target in 2001/2002 rising to 86.1 per cent from 83.1 per cent of the Local Schools Budget in the previous year. However, it remains below the national average.

31.   Opportunities to access external funding in Harrow are limited. The borough does not benefit from major programmes of government funding focused on urban deprivation or community regeneration. The council has, however, secured some revenue support from the European Social Fund to contribute to north west London learning partnerships. It is successfully pursuing partnership funding and the private finance initiative (PFI) for capital projects across the council in four areas, one of which involves the replacement of an all age special school with two phase specific schools in a project worth £13m. Early work is underway to explore PFI funding to support a community regeneration programme in two areas of the borough centred on two high schools and their partner schools clusters.

Council structure

32.   The Labour group currently controls the council. In November 1999, Harrow introduced a system of cabinet government as part of the 'modernising local government' agenda. The cabinet consists of 17 elected members, with representatives of the three minority parties included in it. Education, arts and leisure is one of nine portfolios. The cabinet takes all decisions, although education issues which require fuller discussion are generally presented to the education, arts and leisure committee, which is used in an advisory capacity and makes recommendations to the cabinet. In addition, the authority has retained the governors forum, the education consultative committee, the admissions forum and admissions and awards panels.

33.   Education services, which includes the library service, community and youth service, arts and leisure service, student support unit and childcare development unit is one of four council departments. A director of education manages it and three senior managers are responsible for school and community services, strategy and resources and school development services.

The Education Development Plan

34.   The first EDP drawn up in 1999 has been revised twice as the LEA has made progress in its implementation. The original plan and subsequent revisions incorporate national priorities and have a clear focus on the local needs of schools. The priorities and the actions within the plans are informed by a detailed audit of contextual and performance information, based on a wide range of evidence and data, including an analysis of the LEA's and schools' self-evaluation process.

35.   There are eight priorities:

- continuing to improve teaching and learning;
- raising expectations to reduce underachievement;

- strengthening curriculum organisation and development;
- improving the quality of early years education;
- raising standards of literacy;
- raising standards of numeracy;
- improving learning with ICT across the curriculum; and
- enhancing the quality of leadership and management.

36.   The priorities are clearly defined; actions are detailed and are cross-referenced with other priorities. Special educational needs and ethnicity are well embedded within and across the priorities. A strength is the links that are made with other LEA and corporate plans. In the first EDP, timescales and the sequencing of activities varied from being clear and precise in some areas to vague in others, and success criteria were insufficiently linked to measurable outcomes. Subsequent revisions have measurable outcomes, activities are precisely sequenced and responsibilities are clearly defined.

37.   There is appropriate emphasis within the plan on school self-review, and a range of mechanisms are set out for the identification and dissemination of good practice through networks of schools, continuing professional development and partnership arrangements with other LEAs, higher education and business. More unusually, there is a strong emphasis on school-based research. This gives the plan a strong local flavour and draws on the detailed analysis of performance data in subjects, underachieving groups of pupils and across key stages. Support is clearly differentiated and targeted at schools that require additional support and intervention.

38.   The target-setting process outlined in the first EDP is sound and is linked closely to the LEA's approach to monitoring, challenging and intervening in schools through the well established review, evaluation and development (RED) programme. Statutory targets set when the plan was first written were appropriately challenging for Key Stage 4, although the targets for Key Stage 2 were too modest. Results in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 for 2000 exceeded the targets set for 2002 and have been re-adjusted upwards to take account of the better cohort data now available. Targets set for exclusion and for attendance are appropriate and have largely been met. However, exclusions are increasing this year and the target set for 2001 will not be met.

39.   The implementation of the plan is well managed. The head of school development services is responsible for the management and oversight of the plan and each activity and priority has a responsible officer. The plan is monitored regularly at various levels and there are detailed annual reviews, which outline progress and result in the revised action plan for the following year. Reviews are most effective where success criteria have been most clearly defined, for example in literacy and numeracy, and should become more precise with the better definition of measurable outcomes set out in the revision for 2001. Reports to members and steering groups monitoring the implementation of the plan are clear and well informed.

40.   Implementation is generally progressing well. In particular, attainment in literacy and numeracy is on target. Activities related to the attainment of ethnic

minority pupils are progressing well; schools identified with additional needs are being well supported and are reducing in number. There has been much effective work to develop leadership and management and to improve the quality of teaching.

41.   Headteachers and other stakeholders have been well consulted about the priorities within the plan and schools feel well informed about its progress. It is therefore not surprising that in the primary phase schools visited there was a close correspondence between the activities within the EDP and the priorities within school development plans. The match is less clear in the high schools, although they are well informed about the plan and have benefited from activities within it.

The allocation of resources to priorities

42.   Harrow has sought to protect school budgets from cuts in the past. However, the need to respond to significant unanticipated pressures within the council's budget has resulted in short term measures impacting on the efficient operation of, and the level of funding available to, central services. In the context of substantial increases in school budgets overall the real value of school budget shares has been reduced marginally in the current financial year.

43.   Within education, budget forecasting and controls have been relatively secure, both in relation to central budgets and school balances. Home to school transport and the increasing costs of Special Educational Needs statements have contributed to overspends over the past two years. These have been partly offset by savings elsewhere and have now been built into the base budget. School budget deficits are rare and, where they have existed, recovery plans have effectively been put in place.

44.   Harrow has been slow in delegating its services to schools and has not until recently divorced the costs of services offered in service level agreements from the amounts of money delegated. Partly as a result of inadequate preparation and consultation, there has been a delay in delegating some special needs funding in the current year. In 2000/2001, nearly £300k of additional funding to schools for unfilled special needs places were locked into school budgets thereby reducing flexibility. This is reduced to £235K in 2001/2002 but remains unsatisfactory.

45.   Harrow's approach to Fair Funding is limited. It has not yet explored an activity led resourcing approach to determine future priorities. Its formula has compensated schools for under-capacity and in the past re-enforced a culture of linking delegated funding to support the buy-back of local authority services. It is however considering the outcome of a commissioned exercise of its school budget funding approach. The process has appropriately involved a headteachers' consultative group and an external consultant, and has yielded some useful prompts for action.

Structures for achieving Best Value

46.   Schools have been provided with good comparative data on resource deployment to assist in benchmarking and the authority is actively exploring how this may be extended. However, Harrow offers insufficient support and challenge to

schools to help them develop as autonomous and discriminating procurers of services. Through its actions and policy statements it encourages an inward looking focus. Schools are not regularly required or prompted to review how they will apply the principles of Best Value. Their awareness of the concept is limited, and service packages too often offer limited choice and flexibility. The council starts from a presumption of internal provision. The wording of the council's Best Value Performance Plan reinforces this message and interviews conducted during the inspection, involving members and schools, encountered the mistaken belief that the local authority would be put at risk if it were not able to provide services. Examples of securing outside providers are infrequent and even in the area of property maintenance, where the local authority operates an efficient managed arrangement, this is secured through schools routinely returning the historical delegated budget amount in total. This process effectively limits schools' real choices in the deployment of their budgets.

47. The council's approach to conducting four early pilot Best Value reviews in education has been satisfactory overall, but the recommendations to achieve service improvement were limited. The exercises have proved useful in assisting the authority to assess its operational options, but in the main the reviews have tended to be undertaken from a provider perspective and have avoided fundamental challenge and competition. The council has restructured its programme of reviews, which will result in a more appropriate cross-cutting approach in the future.

Recommendations

In order to improve the allocation of resources to priorities:
- complete the implementation of the delegation of Special Educational Needs funding to schools; and
- match school funding more closely to need.

In order to improve the structures for achieving Best Value:
- provide support and challenge to schools to help them develop as autonomous and discriminating procurers of services; and
- ensure that schools are aware of, and are appropriately challenged on, the application of the principles of Best Value.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention

48.   The LEA's approach to monitoring, challenge, intervention and support has many good features, and generally schools are clear how these functions are carried out. Nevertheless, despite recent changes and an approach which is well targeted at helping schools to become self-evaluating institutions, the LEA's practice is insufficiently differentiated.

49.   The LEA's approach is set out clearly in the EDP. A review, evaluation and development (RED) is undertaken with each school by an attached adviser on the basis of three programmed visits each year. The RED is used by the LEA to monitor the progress of the school, negotiate and agree statutory targets and identify those schools which need additional support and intervention. It is also designed to help schools with their self-evaluation. A visit in the autumn term focuses on performance and target-setting. One in the spring term brings together all the information on the school held by the LEA and the school through self-review. A third visit contributes to the school's self-review of a whole school issue, which has been agreed with the attached adviser. Visits result in a clear report on progress, which is sent to the headteacher and should be, but is not always, automatically sent to the chair of governors.

50.   Schools are placed in one of five levels based on published and agreed criteria related to standards, quality of education and management. Contextual difficulties are also taken into account. The LEA is currently developing more detailed criteria to identify levels and plans are in place to consult on them in the future. Support and intervention are allocated differentially and through negotiation with the school, across levels two to five. Schools at level one, 'light touch' schools purchase additional support. The LEA also conducts a rolling programme of ten to 12 joint reviews each year, across all schools. These reviews are designed to support school self-review, and are conducted jointly with the senior managers in the school. However, they are not in line with the Code of Practice on LEA/School Relations and plans are in place to phase them out over the year.

51.   The schools find the RED activities and the joint reviews challenging, and in most cases stimulating and helpful in developing practice. However, as the LEA has excellent data on which to monitor its schools, and all schools have the opportunity to purchase additional adviser time or joint reviews, one or at most two visits a year should be sufficient for those schools already carrying out self-review and school improvement effectively.

52.   The support provided to schools at levels two to five is appropriately targeted at their needs. This was confirmed by the visits made during the inspection and in discussions with headteachers and chairs of governors. The work undertaken is having an impact and the need to intervene is reducing as schools become more self-evaluative. In 1999, at the time of the first EDP, 17 schools were classified as level one. Following visits in spring 2001 by attached advisers, 48 schools have been classified in level one. This is a significant improvement.

53. The school development services leads on school improvement. The head of services, is a member of the director's group, and three senior advisers. There is a clear and agreed vision for school improvement, which is well expressed in the EDP and is understood and shared across the service and by schools. The EDP is underpinned by detailed operational plans. Communication with schools is very good. This, to a great extent, is the result of the work of attached advisers and the relationship they have built with schools and to the involvement of schools in the EDP and the curriculum projects within it.

54. The attached advisers are crucial to the LEA's progress in school improvement. Their deployment is clear, well conceived and appropriately prioritised. It includes in priority order:
- attachment to six to ten schools;
- responsibilities for ensuring the statutory duties of the LEA are appropriately discharged;
- the management of curriculum development projects and EDP activities; and
- subject management, which includes oversight of in-service training sold to schools and subject reviews on a purchased basis.

In addition, advisers are expected to make and maintain links across the council and with external organisations.

55. Advisers are highly regarded by schools for their expertise and subject knowledge. Training has been provided to ensure that gaps in expertise have been filled. For example three have completed the national professional qualification for headteachers (NPQH). There has been a growth in the use of consultants to provide training and to run projects. The LEA assures the quality of work they do, before recommending them to schools.

56. Performance management in the school development services is good. Despite there being no plan which lays out the operational priorities for the development of the service, staff are well informed and share a common vision. Operational procedures and processes are set out in a comprehensive handbook and good internal communication, regular meetings, and monitoring by senior officers ensures they are well known and consistently applied. School visits confirmed the consistently high quality of the work of advisers and reports to schools are of high quality and to a common and agreed format. Job descriptions are up to date and are competency based. Detailed individual action plans are in place which set out priorities, relate them to the EDP and schools and define the resources that will be deployed to them. The progress made in their implementation is reviewed regularly, through line management arrangements, steering groups set up to oversee the EDP, and formally through twice yearly performance management interviews. Training is appropriately organised across the service and all staff have professional development plans.

57. A Best Value pilot review of the school development services, governor support and the research and information team was published in August 1999. Although the review did not fundamentally challenge the need for the services, it did set out the role of the services at that time with regard to the EDP. Considerable

efforts were made to benchmark costs and outcomes. Consultation was undertaken with schools and officers through questionnaires, focus groups and interviews with individuals. The review concluded that the cost of services was well below the mean in comparison with other London LEAs and compared favourably with other external providers. The views of stakeholders were broadly favourable and the services responded positively to comments through the recommendations within the improvement plan. The recommendations within the improvement plan were modest but appropriate. They have largely been met.

58. The service has been effective in reducing the intervention required in schools. The cost of the service remains lower than the cost in outer London boroughs, and schools rate the service above average for almost all aspects of school improvement. In the case of support provided to schools on performance data and to secondary schools on monitoring, challenge, intervention and support for schools self-evaluation, the rating given by schools places the LEA within the top quartile of LEAs surveyed nationally. The service provides good value for money and has the capacity to improve.

Collection and analysis of data

59. The LEA provides schools with effective support on the use of performance data for the monitoring and raising of standards. All schools are provided with a profile containing a comprehensive range of data, benchmarked locally, which complements national data provided to schools. The profile contains useful benchmarked information on management; for example, finance and staffing. An analysis of performance by ethnicity, free school meals, English as an additional language and other contextual information is also available. Baseline assessment is in place and schools are provided with value added information against which they can begin to develop targets for each key stage. Data on children in public care have been slow to be developed.

60. There has been substantial training at all levels, including governors and elected members, on the analysis and use of data. The LEA holds regular assessment co-ordinator meetings and has set up an effective project to develop greater involvement of pupils in assessing teaching and learning. A commercial package for the analysis of data is now in all schools and training on its use has begun and will be complete by the end of the year. Attached advisers are trained well in the use of data in preparation for the target-setting visits they make to schools.

61. The research and information team provide data to LEA services and to schools. This team is well regarded by schools and works very closely with the school development services to ensure that schools receive coherent and well-focused support. Activities planned within the EDP to improve the analysis and transfer of data are appropriate, although their effective implementation will depend on administrative ICT arrangements, which are currently underdeveloped, being in place in schools.

62. Schools generally have well developed systems for assessing pupils' attainment at all stages and for setting targets. Baseline assessment on entry to

school, non statutory interim tests, CAT tests at year eight and the analysis of NC results at the end of each key stage are well established. Almost all the schools visited had begun to track the progress of individual pupils. Target-setting overall has improved, reflecting the better use of assessment and data analysis now being undertaken by schools. Attached advisers challenge schools to set demanding but realistic targets and closely monitor progress towards them.

Support for literacy

63.   The LEA's support for literacy is good. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been effective and well managed over Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. In 2000, the Key Stage 2 target was exceeded by five per cent. The LEA should reach its targets for 2002.

64.   Raising standards of literacy is a priority in the EDP. Activities are appropriate and clear. There are good links with other priorities, such as in support to underachieving groups and to boys' achievement. Work is being extended into Key Stage 3 through professional development, regular meetings between middle and high school teachers, schemes of work for teachers of literacy in Year 7, and individual programmes targeted at pupils.

65.   The management of the National Literacy Strategy is good and there are close links between literacy consultants and advisers attached to schools. There is one literacy consultant and a further appointment has been made to extend the strategy into Key Stage 3. Good practice has been disseminated through the release of literacy co-ordinators to attend in-service training at other schools and through the work of school based consultant headteachers who lead project work and provide advice. Consultant headteachers advise on strategies for managing change. The literacy steering group effectively co-ordinates activity with the ethnic minority achievement service, services supporting Special Educational Needs and family literacy. Common approaches to assessment and target-setting are used.

66.   Schools report that support for literacy is better than satisfactory. The schools that have received intensive support for literacy have made good progress, achieving on average improvements seven per cent in the NC tests at Key Stage 2 compared to the 5.8 per cent improvement in other schools. Literacy was a focus in three high schools visited during the inspection. All three were making good progress in developing strategies to introduce literacy across the curriculum, and regular meetings of literacy co-ordinators were organised through which good practice could be shared.

Support for numeracy

67.   The LEA's support for numeracy is good. The appointment of a numeracy consultant a year in advance of the national scheme has made an important contribution to the progress made. The Key Stage 2 target for mathematics for 2000 was exceeded by five per cent. As a result, over a third of schools have amended their targets. The LEA should reach its targets for 2002.

68.   There is one numeracy consultant for Key Stages 1 and 2. The LEA has been unable to attract a suitable candidate to fill a recently advertised consultant post for Key Stage 3. The consultant works closely with the attached adviser to the school. Implementation of the strategy has been well managed and is effective.

69.   Raising standards of numeracy is a priority in the EDP. Numeracy is planned and co-ordinated by the numeracy steering group. Training opportunities have been very good. The numeracy strategy has been extended into Year 7 with a framework for mathematics being piloted in half the Harrow middle schools. Training is available to extend this work. Three numeracy consultant teachers have been identified for Key Stage 3. There are regular meetings for high school teachers of mathematics, and training has been put in place on the National Numeracy Strategy. Curriculum development initiatives for mathematics include a Key Stage 3 project and a group exploring thinking skills.

70.   First, combined and middle schools rate support for the teaching of numeracy as good. High schools rate it between satisfactory and good. Schools in Key Stage 2 that have received intensive support have improved at a faster rate than other schools in the LEA.

Support for information and communication technology in the curriculum

71.   Support for ICT in the curriculum is inconsistent and unsatisfactory overall. OFSTED inspection evidence indicates that progress in ICT at Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory, but there are weaknesses in Key Stage 3 and 4. Strategic planning for ICT lacks coherence, although plans are now in place which focus appropriately on improving standards and teaching, and recognise the need to improve ICT across the curriculum.

72.   A curriculum leader and an advisory teacher provide support for ICT. The advisory teacher was deployed in the first, combined and middle schools in the period from September 1998 to April 2001, and schools value this work. Support for ICT in high schools has been limited. Curriculum support has been given for the introduction of the National Grid for Learning (NGfL), but there has been little investigation of its impact on teaching and learning. The school survey indicates that support for ICT is poorly rated by high schools. Primary phase schools are much more positive and rate support better than satisfactory. These views were generally confirmed in the visits to schools during the inspection.

73.   In previous years, work was dominated by the introduction of the NGfL. This overshadowed the need to establish a broader strategic direction or ICT and has led to a lack of coherence in support. The LEA has responded to these concerns by establishing an ICT steering group, to oversee the strategic plan for ICT within the EDP. A recent plan produced for 2001 resulted in an appropriate action plan focuses on Key Stages 3 and 4.

74.   First, combined and middle schools value the training provided by the LEA and the guidance provided on the development of schemes of work. The magazine, 'Kaleidoscope', and the web site have disseminated good practice.

Support for schools causing concern

75.   The LEA's support to schools causing concern is good. Since the start of OFSTED school inspections in 1993, only one school, in 1999, has been judged to require special measures. Since 1997, only one school has been identified with serious weaknesses, and one school was identified as underachieving in January 2000. The school requiring special measures has recently been monitored by Her Majesty Inspector and no longer requires special measures. The school with serious weaknesses has been removed from that category.

76.   Schools requiring intervention and support are identified through the review, evaluation and development process. Level two requires only limited additional support from the school's attached adviser. Level three and four requires a school action plan tailored to the specific weaknesses within the school. In 2000 the LEA identified seven schools in level three, and three schools (those identified by OFSTED), in level four. At the time of the inspection, five schools were in level three and two were in level four. Level five schools are identified for additional support because of contextual issues, for example, where a school has an acting headteacher. There were five in 2000; now there is one. Levels are appropriately differentiated in terms of support and intervention.

77.   The attached adviser, in consultation with the school, devises the action plan. The director of education, head of school development services, attached adviser, headteacher and chair of governors review progress each half term. This demonstrates the importance placed on improving these schools and ensures that support can be prioritised across services. Targets are set at each of these meetings for the next review. Monitoring reports on progress are of high quality and have clear recommendations for improvement.

78.   Visits were made to five level three and level four schools. All the schools had clear and appropriate action plans. Additional support had been well targeted at raising standards, improving behaviour and improving management. Schools had been provided with intensive literacy and numeracy support and in one school, a consultant headteacher had been seconded to work alongside an inexperienced senior management team. Where necessary the LEA has brought in expertise from outside the LEA and, in the school requiring special measures, an acting headteacher and additional governors have been appointed. All the schools were complimentary about the work of the attached adviser and valued the involvement of the director of education in the monitoring process. However, in two schools, while the LEA's support was helping to maintain the *status quo*, the inability of the school to attract and retain teachers was constraining progress.

Support for governing bodies

79.   Support for governing bodies is satisfactory overall. Governor support provides for recruitment of LEA appointed governors, an induction programme for new governors and an officer presence at one governing body meeting per term. In the school survey LEA support to governors and to governing bodies is rated satisfactory and average in comparison to other LEAs.

80.   Schools value governor training. The quality and relevance of training are perceived by governors to have improved over the past year or so. Nevertheless, the take-up of training is relatively low. Training can be tailored to the needs of the school and some of the schools visited indicated that this approach was valued. Plans are in place to pilot the 'governor index'; a self-evaluation model for governing bodies, over the summer term 2001.

81.   Schools value the termly attendance of a LEA officer at governing body meetings. The service is provided free to all schools, but this use of resources is not sustainable under the requirements of the Code of Practice in LEA/School Relations. Some chairs of governors insist they would pay for this service, others that they would not.

82.   Vacancies on governing bodies are currently running at around 15 per cent. Where long term vacancies exist they are in categories outside the LEA's direct responsibility and are not focused on individual schools. The LEA provides satisfactory support for the recruitment of governors. Election guidelines are provided for schools on the appointment of parent and teacher governors. A central register of potential governors is maintained for schools to access. Minority ethnic representation on governing bodies is almost in line with the background percentage of the population. The LEA has appointed additional governors when schools have been identified with serious weaknesses, particularly where the weakness relates in part to the quality of governance.

83.   Communication with governors is generally good. Newsletters provide relevant and topical information, there are seminars, and research findings are presented to governing bodies. There are regular briefing sessions for chairs of governors by the director of education. Governors value the policies produced by the LEA, which they have been able to adapt for their own use. Governors participate as representatives on a good range of consultative and decision making groups.

Support for school management

84.   Overall, the LEA supports school management well. OFSTED inspection evidence indicates that management and the quality of teaching are improving in the LEA's schools. The LEA's own monitoring and categorisation indicates a substantial increase in schools which are self-evaluating institutions.

85.   The original Education Development Plan set out clear activities for developing school self-evaluation, headteacher and deputy headteacher recruitment and induction and support for middle managers. The most recent review appropriately builds on the work already undertaken and appropriately set out the LEA's intentions for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

86.   A two-term induction programme for headteachers is well established. Mentoring is arranged by the LEA for primary headteachers but not for high school headteachers. The LEA has actively encouraged aspiring and established headteachers to participate in the NPQH and leadership programme for established headteachers (LPSH). Take up of the LPSH has been healthy but for NPQH it has

declined since phase one. Support for middle managers has been satisfactory although it is less well received by schools. However, training for literacy and numeracy co-ordinators has been good, schools can buy training and there has been support targeted at weak middle managers in schools identified for additional support by the LEA.

87. Support for recruitment and retention is sound although the issue is now becoming pressing in a number of schools. Personnel services hold some data on recruitment and retention of staff in schools, although they are not comprehensive. The local authority has very recently appointed a recruitment and retention manager. The LEA is involved in 'Teachers for London', a consortium of authorities that has been promoting activity to address teacher supply issues and has successfully worked with local heads and an agency to recruit teachers from New Zealand. Harrow has traditionally operated a primary recruitment arrangement with its headteachers. This generally works well and is valued by schools.

88. Good progress is being made in supporting school self-review. The review, evaluation and planning meeting undertaken by the school with the attached adviser, has been helpful in identifying professional and school development needs. A school development project has been running since 1997, initially with support from the London Institute of Education, to explore approaches to school development planning. Initially ten schools were involved. Attached advisers have used the project with their schools, and the LEA has worked assiduously to disseminate good practice. Training for primary headteachers through a leadership and partnership course has been well subscribed, and a significant number of schools have participated in training using the OFSTED course on school self-evaluation.

89. The LEA offers an extensive programme of continuing professional development. Training needs are identified well and courses are related closely to the priorities within the EDP. Take up by schools is good and overall, costs are low. There is good evidence of partnership with higher education institutions. Training events are evaluated and the impact of training is also carried out through longitudinal study of school development.

90. The LEA mounts an extensive action research programme, often in partnership with higher education, which has grown steadily over the last three years and now includes 73 projects. The LEA retains a modest amount of the Standards Fund to pump prime these projects (£29,000 over the past two years). Participation is determined from a combination of key issues in OFSTED reports, application by schools and by specific invitation where a school has areas for improvement which are appropriate and has been identified as level three or four by the LEA. Schools visited were positive about their participation in projects. The LEA maximises impact by disseminating good practice through the brokerage arrangements between schools, sharing research, seminars and training sessions, its web site and the magazine 'Kaleidoscope'.

91. Induction for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) is good. The programme is wide ranging in scope and complements school-based training. All schools buy into the package. Attached advisers monitor schools' compliance of statutory duties.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

92.   The most recent revision of the EDP identifies the LEA's intention to work with ten schools to pilot strategies and activities for pupils with potential for high achievement. In a number of the schools visited plans were in place to provide additional support and extension activities for the most able pupils. However, schools were not aware of an LEA strategy in this area and developments were in their infancy.

Support for early years

93.   The LEA provides effective support for early years education. The early years development and childcare plan (EYDCP) has been approved for three years and was based upon a thorough audit and wide consultation. Early years is identified as a priority within the EDP and there are good links between this plan and the EYDCP. Progress on the activities has been good. In response to the need identified in the audit for further work on assessment, the effective early learning project is operating in 22 settings, in conjunction with University College, Worcester. Training for early years through the school development services is open to all providers. Good links are made with the ethnic minority achievement service, particularly to help parents with home based learning.

94.   Places are available for all four-year-old children whose parents want one. The LEA and the early years partnership are on target to meet the provision of places for three-year-olds and there are realistic targets in the EYDCP to obtain these places through a range of providers. The early years partnership operates a telephone helpline to give advice to parents on the choices of childcare; information can also be obtained from a web site that can be accessed from libraries.

95.   There are good data supplied from the baseline assessment scheme that gives information by gender and by ethnicity. These data are used to inform Key Stage 1 planning and targets.

Best Value review of the instrumental music service

96.   A pilot Best Value review of the instrumental music service was carried out in 1998-9, which although generally satisfactory, had weaknesses in aspects of challenge and competition. The review established the need for the service and made a genuine attempt to benchmark costs against those of three other authorities, one private contractor and a range of private teachers. Alternative sources of supply were sought during the review but there was no detailed specification against which service provision could be challenged.

97.   Consultation with stakeholders was good and outcomes were positive. Schools purchase a service level agreement that offers some flexibility in the way tuition is delivered. The service maintains a comprehensive list of music teachers in order to meet the needs of schools and pupils. All but one school in the borough purchase the service. Overall this is a sound service.

98.   The improvement plan takes key issues from the audit and customer surveys and builds these into appropriate objectives. Although the plan takes too little account of alternative sources of supply, benchmarking has developed since the review.

Recommendations

In order to improve compliance with the Code of Practice on LEA/School Relations:
- differentiate and reduce, according to need, the number of core visits undertaken by attached advisers to schools;
- stop providing reviews to schools capable of carrying out school improvement effectively; and
- no longer provide officer attendance at governing body meetings as a core entitlement of schools.

In order to improve support for Information and Communication Technology in the curriculum:
- target support and improve learning with ICT at Key Stages 3 and 4; and
- ensure that the strategy for ICT is communicated to schools and implemented.

In order to improve support to management:
- introduce the systematic collection and analysis of data on teacher recruitment and retention to enable support to be targeted at the greatest need.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

99.   The vision, values and principles within the Best Value Performance Plan and the community plan are translated into key values and strategic priorities within the education services strategic plan. The plan appropriately sets out a commitment to excellence, partnership, participation, public service and accountability and identifies five strategic priorities for education services:
*   raising standards of achievement in schools;
*   improving lifelong learning;
*   promoting equal opportunities through partnership;
*   securing Best Value; and
*   providing educational leadership.

These priorities draw together all the supporting plans for which education services have responsibility, along with other council plans to which education services contribute. The strategic plan sets out clearly an overview of what the authority intends to achieve over the next two years.

100.   However, the individual plans for education which underpin the strategic plan are too variable overall. The key plan for school improvement, the EDP, sets a clear agenda for the LEA and is being well implemented. It is sound for supporting minority ethnic pupils and in response to the Macpherson of the Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. It is good in support for attendance and the early years. However, there are significant weaknesses in the key areas of behaviour, provision for pupils out of school and special educational needs.

101.   Procedures for evaluating the priorities for education are sound overall. The school development services carries out a systematic review of the targets for school improvement. This review, along with information collated by other officers, provides the basis of reports to senior officers within the services, to the chief executive and to elected members. This information is well supported by the detailed analysis of data and provides elected members with a clear picture of the progress being made. Performance management is well developed. Targets are set for all officers, including the director, based on the priorities within the plans for which they have responsibility. Their implementation is reviewed through regular performance management arrangements.

102.   The leadership of members is sound. There is political consensus on the importance of education in Harrow. The commitment of elected members can be seen in education spending, which has been above the SSA and in the protection from cuts of school budgets. The authority modernised its council structure early and the change to a cabinet arrangement has improved the openness, efficiency and speed of decision making, which are now good. Members are kept well informed by officers, and seminars have been put in place on key educational issues at their request. The new arrangements have reduced the bureaucratic burden on officers now they no longer have to service a range of sub-committees. The authority has maintained its education committee in order to ensure the consultative arrangements previously in place remained. A scrutiny committee has been established, but there

has been insufficient scrutiny of the progress being made by the education service to implement a number of plans and initiatives.

103.   The council's senior management board is made up of the four directors of services, including education, and the chief executive.   Directors have project management responsibilities, which cut across services. Cross cutting approaches are at an early stage of development, but are being explored through Best Value themes based on 'life episodes' rather than traditional service delivery. This has the potential to bring services together in the future. The chief executive is well informed about education through regular performance management meetings with the director of education and attendance at meetings with headteachers. Schools value this direct line of contact with the senior officer in the authority.

104.   The leadership of education services has a number of strengths but there are some significant weaknesses.   Services to schools are generally well managed and operate effectively. Performance management ensures that officers have clear objectives and are accountable. The director in particular, and his senior team overall, have established excellent relationships with schools and the LEA's partners. Schools speak with genuine affection about the relationship that has been created and there is a strong culture of partnership and trust.   Consultation with schools is very good. Headteachers, governors and teachers participate in working groups to draw up and agree policies and to monitor and steer the key developments in the LEA.   School improvement is well led, and there is a clear and shared vision which has been translated into effective action.

105.   There are a number of important areas where the strategic leadership of the LEA has not been sufficiently clear and where progress has been too slow. In many cases the LEA is aware what needs to be done and has plans to deal with it. However, progress has sometimes been constrained by the desire of members and officers not to upset the relationships that have been built over time with schools. Certain plans lack clarity and are taking too long to implement.   For example, there is no coherent strategy for social inclusion and schools are not clear what the LEA's intentions are with regard to Special Educational Needs (SEN). Some schools believe, and the inspection team agrees, that the LEA has delayed too long in opening the debate on the age of transfer. The lack of a coherent strategy for information management has constrained progress, and the requirements of the Code of Practice on LEA/School Relations are being implemented, but slowly. The LEA has an expressed commitment to school autonomy.   However, the visits made to schools indicate that while the LEA is working to develop self-evaluation in schools, it is doing too little to encourage and support schools to become discriminating procurers of services, or to apply the principles of Best Value.

Management services

106.   Management support services are sound overall with some good features. The significant exception is support for administrative ICT, which is weak. Service specifications are generally clear, although not consistently presented, and the take-up of local authority provided services is high. Packages often lack differentiation. However, this is recognised by officers and some progress has been made in offering schools more choice. School satisfaction ratings are high, although the

authority's own survey has more generous assessments than the school survey used for this inspection. The approach taken to secure schools' views and their involvement in feedback about both the structure and performance of services is uneven.

107. **Finance** support services are good and comprehensive. Information to schools to assist in budget planning and monitoring is wide-ranging and clear. The service and its staff are consistently highly rated by schools. The service provides good support for education cost centres and for schools. School balances are effectively monitored. The service contributes fully to the identification of schools causing concern and their subsequent support. Financial data transfer is satisfactory between schools and in the local authority in so far as the ICT systems allow.

108. **Personnel** services are good overall. Schools' rating of personnel was always better than satisfactory and school visits generally presented a positive picture of its effectiveness. The service makes a good contribution to work with schools causing concern, and works closely with the school development services on issues of school management and competency. The payroll service performs well.

109. **ICT** administrative systems and support are unsatisfactory. The stock of hardware in schools and administrative software, and its support, are generally acceptable. However, the communications infrastructure is limited, and the local authority's ICT strategy in the past has been unco-ordinated. School administrative systems are handicapped by not having access to the Internet or effective electronic mail and, in the majority of cases, do not connect to the schools' curriculum networks, nor are there developed or clearly understood plans to achieve this. The provision by the authority of an electronic document transfer system has met only limited needs. In the past technical support provided in-house has been insufficient to meet demands and schools have perceived an unhelpful approach to assisting them with equipment procurement. Schools rate ICT strategy and administrative systems well below satisfactory. The council frankly acknowledges these weaknesses and appropriate restructuring has started. Schools visited have confidence in the staff now involved. The authority is currently populating its central pupil database as part of its new management information system. However, schools are not yet clear about the overall strategy, the detail of which is currently being worked out. This year a significant proportion of the central ICT budget has been delegated to schools, although this may be insufficient to meet the investment needs they now face.

110. **Property** support for structural maintenance is sound with some good features. Services are secured for schools through the building services group in environmental services and almost all schools return their delegated budget to a pool managed by the authority to deal with urgent maintenance. The package is offered at a single level, including professional services. Following an initial one-year trial, schools have agreed to remain with the pool for a three-year period. Orders are placed with external contractors who work across the council's functions and comply with an agreed schedule of rates secured through competitive tender. A local management premises group made up of headteachers and service staff appropriately monitor the arrangement. In general, schools visited were satisfied with

an arrangement, which appears to work well and which limits their potential annual commitment on unforeseen property expenditure. However, the absence of information given to schools about work undertaken throughout the borough, or in relation to their own buildings, prevents governors making informed decisions about participation in the scheme. Participation inevitably reduces flexibility to deploy their individual school budgets. The absence of a systematic independent quality assurance arrangement is a weakness.

111. A Best Value pilot study of **special needs transport** was completed in September 1999. Given the early timing of the review, the outcomes were satisfactory, the service is generally sound and improvements resulted.

112. The review considered the arrangements made by the local authority for the transport of adults and children with special needs within the borough to schools and day centres. Provision is secured through council owned vehicles and private contractors' buses and taxis. The review process involved the use of questionnaires aimed at stakeholders, consultation meetings and an exercise to gather comparative information and costs, although little data was readily available. The authority's efforts to secure comparisons have contributed subsequently to the development of a benchmarking club, LAPTOP (the London Authorities Passenger Transport Operational Panel). The improvement plan covered a range of appropriate, but mainly operational, developments. Progress has been recorded in most areas and reported upon. Regular review meetings take place with staff, stakeholders and contractors, as well as joint training involving escorts and social services staff. School and adult centre staff overall rate the service and support for travel arrangements for children and adults with SEN as good. Transport is usually on time, although some reported journeys for children with SEN attending schools in the borough are excessive. The provision of the service has been monitored through questionnaires since the review, but these lack sufficient qualitative assessments that start from the needs of individuals, rather than the needs of the providers. The authority has not secured more in depth examination of individual experiences matched to expectations.

Liaison with other agencies

113. The LEA has established and is involved in a wide range of productive partnerships with other agencies. The Harrow Partnership represents an ambitious programme of community engagement, which was started in the summer of 1998 and informed the preparation of the community plan in 1999/2000 and 2000/01. Co-ordination and understanding among service providers and other agencies have improved and are productive. The school survey, interviews and school visits indicate that the effectiveness of liaison with the principal agencies of the police, health, further education and the business sector are sound. The LEA works closely with other LEAs, for example, through the work experience partnership with Brent and with institutes of higher education through curriculum development projects.

Recommendations

In order to improve strategic management:
- ensure that elected members rigorously scrutinise progress in all aspects of the work of the education services, particularly focusing on Special Educational Needs and access issues identified in the report; and
- work with schools and partners, to define and develop a coherent strategy for social inclusion in education.

In order to improve management services to schools:
- complete the administrative Information and Communication Technology (ICT) strategy and communicate it clearly to schools;
- review the adequacy of funding delegated to schools to assist them to meet their responsibilities for ICT;
- ensure that information about expenditure from the pooled property fund is available to schools, to inform their assessment of the value of the scheme and assess the appropriateness of the deployment of their delegated budget; and
- put in place systematic independent arrangements to quality assure work undertaken within the pooled property scheme.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

Strategy

114.   The framework for special educational needs provision in Harrow is insufficiently cohesive. The LEA is proud of its objective to include all pupils in mainstream schools wherever possible, but there is a lack of a wider vision about how this is to be achieved successfully.   There has been insufficient attempt to support pupils more effectively at earlier stages of the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs.   Schools place too much emphasis on gaining support through the acquisition of statements of SEN.   The future role of special schools and their expertise has not been articulated.

115.   The SEN policy is out of date and is now being reviewed by the LEA in consultation with the learning support advisory group. Senior managers within the LEA know what needs to be done but have been too slow in the action they have taken. Progress has been constrained by personnel difficulties, a focus on one special school placed in special measures, a desire to await the national review of the Code of Practice and the LEA's own Best Value review of special schools.   A draft document on the responsibilities of schools and the LEA for aspects of SEN is yet to be issued.

116.   A review has recently been carried out of the needs of pupils with physical disabilities and a long-term plan has been agreed for the improvement of accessibility to Harrow schools.

117.   There is a significant weakness in the provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). There is no effective, staged management and support structure for EBD or strategy for early intervention and support at stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice. This accounts, in part, for the rapid rise in the number of fixed term exclusions over the last three years. The LEA plans to establish learning and support units (LSU) in three of its high schools in 2001-2.

118.   Overall responsibility for SEN provision is held by the head of school and community services. An acting head of learning support services has recently been appointed and is beginning to provide leadership to the services and clarify what action needs to be taken to improve. A curriculum access adviser manages several teams within the learning support services and links with the school development service. This is helpful in leading curriculum developments and ensuring that SEN has a strong focus within schools. However, links between the various groups involved with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are insufficiently clear.

119.   The school survey and the visits to schools indicate widespread dissatisfaction with the LEA's provision for SEN. Schools broadly agree with a policy for inclusion, but they feel that the allocation of funding is inequitable, and that provision is inadequate to support pupils with increasingly complex needs in mainstream schools.

Statutory obligations

120.   The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its statutory obligations. Time-scales for completing statutory assessments have improved over the last two years and in 2000/1 all new statements, where an exception for health advice did not apply were completed within 18 weeks. However, delays, mainly as a result of late medical advice, resulted in only 36 per cent of proposed statements being issued within that time.

121.   The number of statemented pupils has risen from 124 in 1999/2000 to 179 in 2000/1. This is a significant increase. Panels consider the need for statutory assessment and the provision for pupils who have been assessed. Headteachers are involved in these panels, but effective systems for moderating levels of need across schools are not in place.

122.   There have been improvements in the writing of statements. Schools comment adversely about the number of annual reviews that result in LEA decisions to reduce support hours, but in cases studied during the inspection, these decisions are appropriate, and informative letters are sent to parents to explain the LEA's response. Unfortunately, in some cases, changes to SEN provision as a result of the annual review have been communicated to parents before the school has been informed.

Improvement and value for money

123.   Despite some positive features in aspects of school improvement for SEN, the lack of rigorous monitoring of the use of SEN funding to judge the impact on pupils' attainment and progress means that support for school improvement is unsatisfactory. As a result the LEA does not know whether it provides value for money.

124.   Schools value the work of the sensory and communication team (SACT) and the education psychology service is highly regarded. Specialist teaching assistants attached to the SACT have been trained in particular aspects of support, including the use of Braille, signing and specific approaches to autism.

125.   Staff within the access and development team work in schools with individuals and groups of pupils, and provide in-service training for teachers. Time from the team is negotiated with the school each term. The team was formed relatively recently by the merger of learning support and behaviour support. This combined role for learning and behaviour has not always resulted in the best advice available being targeted at the particular needs of the school.

126.   A good range of professional development is provided for many aspects of SEN. Special educational needs co-ordinators meet regularly and there are opportunities to take further qualifications. Training for learning support assistants has been well received. Induction of newly qualified teachers to Harrow includes training on inclusion in the borough's schools. The LEA has established a parent

partnership service, providing advice and support to parents independently from the LEA. Some training for parents on the statutory SEN process has been given.

127.   Twenty schools are designated as additionally resourced mainstream schools (ARMS) and receive additional funding for a specified number of places to meet the needs of children with statements. However, unfilled places in ARMS schools are being funded which results in resources being diverted away from support at earlier stages of the Code of Practice. The LEA has proposed a banding system for funding SEN. These proposals are being reviewed because of concerns expressed during consultation that the banding system is not sufficiently flexible to address multiple needs in any one child.

128.   All schools receive additional educational needs funding (AEN) based principally upon the proportion of pupils in a school receiving free school meals. This funding is intended to support pupils in schools up to level 3 of the Code of Practice. Several first and middle schools visited during the inspection reported that AEN funds were increasingly being used to provide behaviour support at the expense of learning support at early stages of the Code of Practice. The LEA negotiates temporary support for pupils at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice on an individual and flexible basis. The allocation of this support and the deployment of support teachers to teach individuals and groups of pupils on a regular basis is not always transparent or efficient.

129.   There is no rigorous monitoring of the use of SEN funding. Information is not collected from schools and used by the LEA to help inform schools' strategic decision making or to monitor the impact of funding on pupils' attainment. Overall, the LEA does not provide value for money.

Recommendations

Urgently improve the quality of leadership and strategic management of Special Educational Needs by:

- putting in place a comprehensive strategy for SEN which defines the LEA's intentions for inclusion, outlines clearly the distribution of resources and provision to support that intention, and clarifies the role and expectations of ARMS schools and special schools within that strategy;

- examining the appropriateness of the current structure of learning support services taking account of the need to ensure that:

    - provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is co-ordinated within one team, but with a range of facilities and support;

    - the allocation and deployment of learning support provided to schools is clear and efficient;

- ensuring that all contributions are received in time for all statements to be issued within 18 weeks;

- introducing systems of moderation for statutory assessments and levels of SEN support that involve headteachers and special educational needs co-ordinators;

- putting in place rigorous systems for monitoring and analysing the use and effectiveness of delegated SEN funds by schools, and ensuring that the results of this analysis are communicated with schools.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The supply of school places

130. The local authority has not taken a sufficiently open or strategic view on the future structure of school organisation in Harrow. The draft school organisation plan offers a good basis for decision making and a clear analysis of the criteria proposed for the management of school places. However, it is largely silent on the issue of the age of transfer, which, in high schools in particular, is a major concern. Currently, surplus place levels are below national averages. The council's approach to reducing surplus places last year was to propose the closure of a school in one area of the borough. The proposal was withdrawn because of the potential impact of a possible housing development on future numbers. Both the school survey and school visits confirm a lack of clarity over the reasons for the decision and some doubt about the council's determination to tackle school organisational issues.

131. Although the organisation of schools is three-tier, the two Roman Catholic high schools operate as *de facto* 11 to 16 schools, and their feeder schools mainly cater for children in the primary age range. Consultation to formalise this arrangement, initiated by the diocese of Westminster, is currently underway. In responding to the consultation, the council has confirmed its commitment to the present three-tier system. However, Harrow is losing significant numbers of pupils annually at the end of Year 6, who, on average are higher achieving, with consequences for school and class organisation and the effective use of resources. Certain high schools recruit from a larger number of middle schools as the intake from their feeder schools is reduced. In addition, standards at the end of Key Stage 3, unlike in other Key Stages, are just in line with national averages, and some schools suggest that the current three-tier arrangement may be leading to recruitment difficulties in both high and middle schools.

132. Members have asked officers to provide them with a briefing on the implications of school organisation. However, it is now time to involve schools in the debate.

Admissions

133. Arrangements for admissions and appeals are satisfactory. Admission booklets are generally satisfactory and conform to requirements, although they do not give any basic information on assistance with transport, free meals or grants. The secondary booklet is particularly good; it is well set out and lists full information about each high school in the borough. There are common admission forms for reception, school transfer and casual admissions. These are adequate in most respects. However, the form for casual admissions contains a request for parents to indicate whether a child speaks English and at what standard. This is inappropriate, as there is no criterion for admission that relates to the ability to speak English.

134. The admissions service maintains a pupil database. Currently, it operates independently of other pupil databases held centrally or in schools, although convergence is planned. Information about transfers is sent to schools on hard copy

and the exchange between the education department and schools is inefficient. Some schools visited had vacancies in year groups, while the education department was advising parents that they would need to go on a waiting list that Harrow maintains for all community schools for all year groups.

135.   The admissions service's role has been the subject of an early Best Value review, which started in February 1999, was completed over an 18-month period, and concentrated on primary school admissions. The focus of the review was too narrow and dealt mainly with the organisational aspects of admissions and whether they should be centralised or managed at school level. Consultation involved a range of individual and telephone interviews, questionnaires and a focus group convened from members of the Harrow residents group. Opportunities to explore parental perception in more depth were limited, and parents of children admitted during the first and middle school phase were not specifically involved in the coverage. Although information on costs was limited, the review made a good attempt to analyse the costs of managing different systems in neighbouring authorities, and also interviewed their staff. Attempts were made to secure cost information from the private sector but they were unable to provide this. Agency or outsourcing arrangements were not seriously examined. The outcome of the review has generally confirmed the *status quo*. The action plan is limited and is unlikely to lead to significant improvements in the service.

Asset management planning

136.   Asset management planning is generally satisfactory. All schools have asset management information and are aware of the programme of surveys planned over a five-year period. However, schools are not consistently clear about their responsibilities or how to interpret the complex documentation. Plans to provide additional briefings for governing bodies and to consolidate condition, sufficiency and suitability information held by schools should ease this problem. The local management premises group, involving headteachers, is taking a more strategic role in relation to capital and property issues and this should further improve the involvement of schools and improve communication. The local authority routinely informs schools if they are involved in a planned maintenance programme and all high category work has been scheduled appropriately. However, partly because the authority anticipates limited capital funding and partly because it analyses its capital strategy corporately, communications with schools about how longer term education responsibilities are to be met are unclear.

137.   The authority's approach to tracking schools' intended deployment of the use of formula capital to meet needs in the asset management plan is good. However, partnership funding with schools is undeveloped. Schools with large balances are not challenged to link them to the plan. Procedures are in place to ensure that schools update the local authority annually on changes to the plan as a result of their activity. The local authority landlord function is not well defined; for instance there is no programmed, routine, on-site reviews.

138.   Education has been prioritised in the deployment of the borough's scarce capital resources and has also benefited from a £13m PFI project to provide two replacement special schools in 2004. In the absence of capital funding, the local

authority has initiated briefings with heads and governors of clusters of schools within two areas of relatively high deprivation about PFI opportunities to address achievement, early years provision, participation and progression and poor building stock. This approach is appropriately opportunistic.

Provision of education otherwise than at school

139.   Arrangements for children educated other than at school are unsatisfactory. The policy statement of June 2000 sets out a curriculum entitlement and the responsibilities of schools, but it does not contain guidance on how placements are to be made or cross-reference to other plans. Following a district audit report, data on exclusions, home tuition and attendance are now available, but cannot be accessed electronically.

140.   Education for children educated otherwise than at school is co-ordinated by the Harrow tuition service (HTS). At the time of the inspection, there were 60 pupils registered with the tuition service, of which 24 had been permanently excluded from school. The majority of registered pupils attend the Gayton Road Centre, but for a variety of hours. Ten of the 60 have a statement of special educational needs, which the Centre cannot adequately meet. The Centre aims to provide Key Stage 4 tuition in morning sessions, and tuition for younger and more vulnerable children at other times. This situation is unsatisfactory and there is increasing difficulty in catering for the wide variety of needs and ages. In 1999/2000, 20 per cent of the pupils had been on roll for over one year.

141.   Attendance has improved from 50 per cent to 67 per cent with a target to achieve of 80 per cent. There is now a linked education social worker working on attendance. Tuition service staff have little scope to use their expertise to provide support and advice to schools in the borough.

142.   The proportion of Key Stage 4 pupils entered for GCSE or vocational qualifications is below that found in similar LEAs and nationally. Pupils permanently excluded from school in Key Stage 4 receive 15 hours tuition at the Centre supplemented by a college or work placement. Other pupils receive a maximum of 15 hours tuition at the Centre each week. The LEA policy states that full time provision will be available from 2002 for all pupils excluded for more than 15 school days. However, it is not clear how the LEA plans to meet this target for pupils in all key stages.

143.   Pupils who are ill receive an average of six hours per week of home tuition. At the time of the inspection, 38 pupils were being educated at home, these pupils are visited by an officer from the school development services at least once a year.

144.   In the school survey, three quarters of the high schools, and nine tenths of the first and middle schools, reported that advice on exclusion procedures was satisfactory or better. Nevertheless, the capacity of the LEA to improve will depend upon the strategy for behaviour support in the new behaviour support plan, and on the preparedness of the council to provide the additional resources required to meet the stated commitment to full time education for these pupils by 2002.

Attendance

145.   Support for attendance is good. Attendance figures in both primary and secondary phases were close to the targets set in the EDP for the year 2000.

146.   There is a good, staged policy for attendance that clearly sets out the roles of schools and the LEA. The education social work team is pursuing a strategy to support the management of attendance by the school with progressively less reliance on casework. A very clear document to schools on children's employment has been issued. Useful guidance on extended leave and authorised absence is about to be sent to schools for consultation.

147.   Each school has an entitlement of time from an ESW. Additional time is allocated according to need, following analysis of the good quality data on attendance and consultation between the ESW and the school. Data is also used effectively by the principal education social worker to monitor and supervise the work of the team and there are monthly meetings where targets for future work are set and agreed.

148.   The school attendance panel meets half-termly to consider cases where action by the school and the ESW has not resulted in improved attendance. Decisions to pursue legal action are carefully managed but full use is made of legal powers where necessary. Family group conferences are being developed as an alternative to legal action. There is a good and effective protocol between the ESW team and the police to monitor truancy.

149.   In the school survey, all secondary schools and eighty per cent of primary schools reported that support for attendance was satisfactory or better. Expenditure on the ESW team per pupil is below the level found in similar LEAs and nationally. The service offers good value for money and has the capacity to improve still further.

Behaviour support

150.   The LEA' approach to support for behaviour is poor. The Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) describes, but does not evaluate, current services and provision. It identifies behaviour problems as presenting the greatest challenge in the LEA, but fails to identify a strategy through which that challenge will be met. The LEA has been given an extension by the DfES until September 2001 to update the Plan and a multi-agency group is currently engaged in this task.

151.   The number of pupils excluded permanently fell each year between 1997 and 2000. The 1999/2000 target in the EDP was met. This trend has reversed and, by May 2001, the number of permanent exclusions had already reached the target in the EDP set for the 2000/1 academic year. The level of fixed term exclusions rose by nearly 40 per cent in the period 1997-2000. In 1999/2000, 975 fixed term exclusions were reported. Fifty seven per cent of these were for one or two days, but 11.5 per cent were for six or more days. Twenty five per cent were from three Black ethnic groups, although these groups form approximately ten per cent of the pupil population.

152.   The LEA provides good documentary advice to governing bodies on the procedures for exclusion, and provides comprehensive data on exclusions to elected members and governing bodies. At the time of the inspection, there had been 28 permanent or fixed term exclusions from Year 7 but 101 permanent or fixed term exclusions from Year 8. Nearly one pupil in ten in Year 10 was excluded at least once in 1999/2000. This high level of fixed term exclusions indicates the absence of a suitably staged approach to behaviour management and support in schools, and some variation in the application of exclusion as a sanction between middle schools and high schools. Visits to schools confirmed that provision to support schools when they have exhausted their own sanctions and expertise is limited.

153.   The 2001/2 EDP proposes the establishment of learning support units in three high schools, using methods of withdrawal and mentoring. The development of an alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been slow; an appointment to plan and co-ordinate this work was to be advertised at the time of the inspection.

154.   Guidelines on behaviour policies and positive behaviour have been drawn up by teachers and advisory staff and provide some good exemplars. The access and development team provides behaviour support to schools. A termly meeting between the team's staff, the educational psychologist and the school's staff identifies pupils at risk of exclusion and those needing support. However, numbers put forward exceed the capacity of the service, and increasing demands to respond to urgent requests affect the deployment of the team. In the absence of a clear strategy, the team's work is becoming increasingly reactive. The capacity of the LEA to improve will depend upon the clarity and coherence of a strategy for behaviour support within the new Behaviour Support Plan.

Health, safety, welfare, child protection

155.   The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its responsibilities for safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of pupils and provides schools with clear information and guidance. Schools are appreciative of the support provided by the LEA for health and safety. Guidance, training and support on child protection procedures are comprehensive and are well regarded by schools and other agencies.

Children in public care

156.   Arrangements for children in public care are unsatisfactory, but there is action in progress to secure improvement. Harrow is one of three authorities taking part nationally in the 'Taking Care of Education Project', funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and the National Children's Bureau, to identify what is effective in bringing about improvements in the educational performance of children in public care. Of the 176 children in public care to Harrow local authority, 120 are of school age and, of these, 67 are educated within Harrow schools.

157.   Data are not yet sufficient or easily accessible. A paper-based system has only recently been introduced and there is not yet full data on the attainment of all these children. A monitoring form to collect this data is part of the new paper based system. The authority has been slow to develop a protocol for sharing information on children in public care, although one is now in draft form. The development of

personal education plans has been delayed and forms a key development strand for Year 10 pupils initially within the "taking care of education project". All schools have a designated teacher. Whilst there have been briefings offered to all designated teachers of children in public care, the provision of training has been slow and is due to commence in June 2001.

158.   'Planning services for children in Harrow' is a good, clear document identifying the co-ordination of services for children in public care and shows the links between the various council plans. A specialist team has been established within social services from April 2001 to focus specifically upon children in public care and a children's management information officer has been appointed to establish baseline information.

159.   Over half the schools surveyed were critical of the liaison with social services. Dissatisfaction is caused by an inadequate flow of information and a slowness of response to concerns raised by schools about children who may need social services support. The restructuring arrangements within social services, the development of data and the introduction of the 'taking care of education project' have the potential to lead to improvement.

Minority ethnic children, including Travellers

160.   Support for pupils of ethnic minorities, including Travellers, is satisfactory and has some strengths. The ethnic minority achievement service (EMAS) and the Traveller education service are located within learning support.

161.   Attainment data are analysed by ethnic group. Results for these groups in 2000 were close to the targets set in the ethnic minority achievement plan. Targets are presently constructed on the basis of an historical trend. Whilst there has been satisfactory progress on activities within the EDP for ethnic minority groups, the 2001-2 EDP presents a better and sharper range of activities to address attainment.

162.   Funds are delegated to schools according to an assessment of needs. Schools provide an annual return to the LEA on the use and impact of delegated funding, and data on the attainment of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The EMAS teams offer a service level agreement, which is purchased by 33 schools. Other schools purchase their own support staff, but visits are made to all schools by EMAS staff to monitor the work. Schools that do not purchase the service level agreement value the range of in-service training, working groups and other meetings which are available.

163.   EMAS staff are often deployed at short notice to assist where pupils from minority ethnic groups are at risk of exclusion. In addition, the rising number of refugee children has had an impact on the planning of the work of the team. There is, however, very clear supervision and monitoring of the work of EMAS staff.

164.   EMAS is involved in a wide range of projects and support. A project with the Somali community has been very well received and an attainment project for Afro-Caribbean pupils at Key Stage 2 is in progress. Good support is provided to refugee pupils. Useful guidelines have been produced on the work of the support teacher in

the literacy hour. The EMAS team also contributes to curriculum materials to ensure a multi-cultural approach.

165.   Traveller pupils are satisfactorily supported in school or by outreach work. Attainment data for Traveller pupils at Key Stage 2 was collected for the first time in 2000; there are plans to extend this to other key stages in 2001. Assessment of the needs of Traveller pupils, arriving on both authorised and unauthorised sites is carried out promptly by the Education Social Worker team and social services staff. Attendance difficulties are well followed up by an assigned Education Social Worker.

166.   In the school survey, over 80 per cent of all schools reported that support for pupils from minority ethnic groups was satisfactory or better and visits to schools during the inspection confirm this view. The service is responding well to the needs of the schools and the pupils from minority ethnic groups and has the capacity to improve still further.

Measures to combat racism

167.   The LEA has clear policies on equality of opportunity and combating racism and has taken sound action on the recommendations of the *Report of the Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence* (Macpherson report, 1999). Reports provide good data and specific examples of initiatives to combat racial harassment. The equalities task group monitors the progress made to the recommendations in the Macpherson report and also advises on issues of disability and equal opportunities. Governing bodies have been presented with good guidelines on school policies to address racial harassment and advice on recording incidents and contacting parents.

Social exclusion

168.   The lack of clear and coherent strategies for SEN and behaviour support and the high level of fixed term exclusions from schools mean that these and other initiatives and the work of schools and support teams are not having the intended impact upon social exclusion. Visits made to schools during the inspection confirm that schools agree with the principles of inclusion, but they are unclear about the LEA's strategy.

169.   Nevertheless, there are a number of initiatives to reduce social exclusion. The EDP for 2001-2 includes an activity to disseminate the pilot project on the 'index of inclusion' and seeks to link this work with the process of school self-review. Five Harrow schools are involved in this national pilot across five LEAs. Each school is examining its capacity to support inclusion by facilitating learning and reducing the need for exclusions. From the results of questionnaires to pupils, teachers, parents and governors, the school identifies strands to develop within its own school improvement plan that will contribute to supporting inclusion in the school.

170.   The youth justice plan shows good links to the EDP, the Behaviour Support Plan and work with minority ethnic groups. From it, the Harrow mentoring project is linking adults with young people identified as being at risk of social exclusion.

Recommendations

In order to improve the management of school places:
- immediate action should be taken to debate with schools the effectiveness of the present organisation of schools in Harrow.

In order to improve asset management planning:
- communicate clearly with schools asset management plan strategy and inform them on a regular basis of progress on the local authority asset management plan; and
- clearly define and communicate the local authority's landlord role to carry out routine site visits, and share notes of visit with governors to help them in the exercise of their responsibilities.

In order to improve the quality of provision of education otherwise than at school:
- review the facilities required to meet the range of ages and needs of pupils currently registered at the Gayton Road Centre. Set out clearly for schools the plans and procedures to achieve full time tuition by 2002 for pupils excluded for more than 15 school days.

In order to improve support for behaviour:
- devise a clear strategy for behaviour support, in consultation with schools, that addresses the need for preventative work and alternative provision in order to reduce the level of fixed term exclusions;
- use the data available to identify more precisely where support should be targeted, and to identify activities for development within the Behaviour Support Plan and the Education Development Plan; and
- further develop with schools and colleges alternative curriculum programmes at Key Stage 4.

In order to improve support for children in public care:
- devise and implement systems of data collection and analysis for children in public care that enable speedy access to that data across services;
- ensure that all the targets set for the attainment of children in public care are ambitious and match across plans; and
- introduce as soon as possible personal education plans for all children in public care.

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the allocation of resources to priorities:
- complete the implementation of the delegation of SEN funding to schools; and
- match school funding more closely to need.

In order to improve the structures for achieving Best Value:
- provide support and challenge to schools to help them develop as autonomous and discriminating procurers of services; and
- ensure that schools are aware of, and are appropriately challenged on, the application of the principles of best value.

In order to improve compliance with the Code of Practice on LEA/School Relations:
- differentiate and reduce, according to need, the number of core visits undertaken by attached advisers to schools;
- stop providing reviews to schools capable of carrying out school improvement effectively; and
- no longer provide officer attendance at governing body meetings as a core entitlement of schools.

In order to improve support for ICT in the curriculum:
- target support improve learning with ICT at Key Stages 3 and 4; and
- ensure that the strategy for ICT is communicated to schools and implemented.

In order to improve support to management:
- introduce the systematic collection and analysis of data on teacher recruitment and retention to enable support to be targeted at the greatest need.

In order to improve strategic management:
- ensure that elected members rigorously scrutinise progress in all aspects of the work of the education services, particularly focusing on SEN and access issues identified in the report; and
- work with schools and partners, to define and develop a coherent strategy for social inclusion in education.

In order to improve management services to schools:
- complete the administrative ICT strategy and communicate it clearly to schools;
- review the adequacy of funding delegated to schools to assist them to meet their responsibilities for ICT;
- ensure that information about expenditure from the pooled property fund is available to schools, to inform their assessment of the value of the scheme and assess the appropriateness of the deployment of their delegated budget; and
- put in place systematic independent arrangements to quality assure work undertaken within the pooled property scheme.

Urgently improve the quality of leadership and strategic management of SEN by:

- putting in place a comprehensive strategy for SEN which defines the LEA's intentions for inclusion, outlines clearly the distribution of resources and provision to support that intention, and clarifies the role and expectations of ARMS schools and special schools within that strategy;

- examining the appropriateness of the current structure of learning support services taking account of the need to ensure that:

    - provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is co-ordinated within one team, but with a range of facilities and support;

    - the allocation and deployment of learning support provided to schools is clear and efficient;

- ensuring that all contributions are received in time for all statements to be issued within 18 weeks;

- introducing systems of moderation for statutory assessments and levels of SEN support that involve headteachers and special education needs co-ordinators; and

- putting in place rigorous systems for monitoring and analysing the use and effectiveness of delegated SEN funds by schools, and ensuring that the results of this analysis are communicated with schools.

In order to improve the management of school places:
- immediate action should be taken to debate with schools the effectiveness of the present organisation of schools in Harrow.

In order to improve asset management planning:
- communicate clearly with schools asset management plan strategy and inform them on a regular basis of progress on the local authority asset management plan; and
- clearly define and communicate the local authority's landlord role to carry out routine site visits and share notes of visit with governors to help them in the exercise of their responsibilities.

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In order to improve support to behaviour:

- devise a clear strategy for behaviour support, in consultation with schools, that addresses the need for preventative work and alternative provision in order to reduce the level of fixed term exclusions;
- use the data available, to identify more precisely where support should be targeted, and to identify activities for development within the BSP and the EDP; and
- further develop with schools and colleges alternative curriculum programmes at Key Stage 4.

In order to improve support for children in public care:

- devise and implement systems of data collection and analysis for children in public care that enable speedy access to that data across services;
- ensure that all the targets set for the attainment of children in public care are ambitious and match across plans; and
- introduce as soon as possible personal education plans for all children in public care.