

**Inspection report**  
**HACKNEY**  
**Local Education Authority**

Date of inspection: September 2003

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## **Basic information**

Name of LEA:	London Borough of Hackney
Address of LEA:	The Technology and Learning Centre 1 Reading Lane LONDON E8 1GQ
Lead inspector:	Douglas Thorburn HMI
Date of inspection:	September 2003

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## Introduction

1. This inspection of Hackney local education authority (LEA) 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 (December 2001)*. The inspection focused on the effectiveness of the LEA's work to support school improvement. The inspection also 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 based on a range of material, which included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, and data, some of which were provided by the LEA. That material also included school inspection information; HMI monitoring reports; audit reports; documentation from, and discussions with, LEA officers and members; focus groups of headteachers and governors; staff in other departments at that local authority; and diocesan representatives. Other agencies, community representatives and LEA partners participated in focus groups. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA (published in 2000). A questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the work of the LEA, was circulated to primary, secondary and special schools, and its results were considered by the inspection team. The response rate to the questionnaire was 59%.
3. The inspection also involved detailed studies of the LEA's provision for pupils without a school place, for attendance support and behaviour support, through half-day visits to three secondary schools, and two non-statutory providers of education.
4. For each inspected function of the LEA, an inspection team makes a judgement which is converted into a numerical grade. The inspection team may make up to 52 key inspection judgements. An inspection judgement is made against criteria for each inspected function of the LEA. These criteria (and the guidance notes on functions of an LEA that may be inspected by Ofsted) can be found on the Ofsted website. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are appended to this report, along with short explanations of what each numerical grade represents. Judgements on inspected functions of an LEA are made during the inspection of the LEA and indicate the effectiveness of the LEA's performance of individual functions at the time of the inspection. The numerical grades awarded by the inspection team complement the areas of the report which comment on the individual functions scrutinised on this inspection, and, as such, must be considered in the light of those comments.
5. Some of the grades are used in the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) profile for the education service. It is intended that the CPA for education will be regularly updated so the grades from this inspection will contribute to the next assessment.
6. The CPA for the education service takes account of the performance of all aspects of the local service, including pre-school and adult education. The CPA for education is composed of a number of inspection judgements, as well as other performance indicators, such as improvement trends at Key Stage 3. The assessment, published in December

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2002, gives star ratings for each local authority for a range of local services, for example social services, benefits, environment etc., whereas this report focuses on the local authority's work to support school improvement.

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## Commentary

7. The London borough of Hackney is one of the most deprived parts of England. Many residents experience economic disadvantage, and crime rates are high. It is also a borough with great diversity amongst its population: about 80% of school pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The largest ethnic groups in Hackney schools are those of African and Caribbean heritage, but very many other groups are represented, including those of Turkish and Kurdish background. In all, about half of pupils have English as an additional language.

8. These facts of life in Hackney present a great challenge to schools. However, despite the quality of some, too many schools need improvement and overall standards are consistently low at every key stage. Moreover, there are serious gaps between the educational achievement of certain minority groups and the borough average. Clearly, schools need a great deal of well-targeted support from their LEA if pupils' standards are to improve rapidly and if all social groups are to experience an equal opportunity to achieve prosperity and well-being.

9. In the past, the council did not provide adequate support to schools. Its provision was inspected three times between 1997 and 2000, and on each occasion was found unsatisfactory or worse, largely because the corporate ineptitude of the council made it impossible for its education department to operate effectively. Accordingly, in 2002, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills directed the council to enter into a contract with an independent non-profit-making body, the Learning Trust, to provide its educational services for the next ten years. In that year, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for education placed Hackney in the lowest category.

10. The Learning Trust has been providing Hackney's educational services for just over one year and is making rapid progress. It has done much to establish itself as a force for good. It has sensibly concentrated first on the most important issues affecting schools and pupils. Educational decision-making is now achieved in a calm and considered context, far removed from the previous political and corporate turmoil that used to damage the delivery of services to schools. This has been achieved with the cooperation of the political and executive leadership of the council, which has committed itself to working with the Learning Trust, while maintaining a proper scrutiny of its work. Schools are well aware of the shift of direction in leadership of education in Hackney, and are largely supportive, though many are sceptical about what has actually been achieved as yet on the ground. In general, schools say, as does the inspection team, that improvement is happening but there is still a long way to go.

11. The Learning Trust has been heavily engaged in developing new strategies for support to schools and pupils. These are well founded and likely to bear fruit, though some are at an early stage of development. In many cases they have yet to be supported by detailed operational plans, and in some instances, the speed with which they were prepared left some schools feeling overwhelmed by consultation procedures. However, the Learning Trust is now ready and able to improve its service delivery in line with these strategies, which are linked well to the council's and the local strategic partnership's priorities. The Learning Trust has acted swiftly when schools' weaknesses demanded immediate action,



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but it has also engaged in long-term planning to attract capital investment and to begin to build a skilled workforce in schools.

12. The Learning Trust has benefited from the involvement on its board of a range of non-executive directors representing the wider community. However, beyond the board, its relations with some stakeholders have not always been fruitful or easy. The Trust must find improved ways of working more closely with all sections of the local community. It must also seek to promote amongst schools higher expectations of the LEA: Hackney schools endured a very weak LEA for so long that some expect little except basic service provision. The potential now exists, for the first time, for the LEA to provide genuine leadership to self-managing schools, but schools' capacity to benefit from this needs fostering.

13. At the time of the last inspection, only one function was assessed as good or better, and many were unsatisfactory, poor or very poor. Although this remains the case, the progress made by the LEA is shown by the fact that 18 functions have improved. In the few instances where there has been deterioration, this is generally the result of delays in implementing systems to meet new demands.

### ***Strengths***

There is only one function that is good:

- support to governors.

However, there are also ten functions that are now highly satisfactory:

- the strategy for school improvement;
- support to schools for raising standards at Key Stage 3;
- expertise of staff to support school improvement;
- provision of school places;
- asset management planning;
- admissions to schools;
- provision for pupils who have no school place;
- the clarity, consistency, coherence and feasibility of corporate plans;
- leadership provided by senior officers; and
- the quality of advice given to elected members.

### ***Weaknesses***

The list of weaknesses is still long, but some of these functions show improvement since the last inspection. The following are unsatisfactory:

- progress made on implementing the school improvement strategy;
- overall effectiveness in promoting social inclusion;

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- strategy and value for money in providing for special educational needs;
  - the overall effectiveness and value for money of school improvement;
  - strategy for continuous improvement;
  - focus of support on greatest need;
  - monitoring schools and challenging them to improve;
  - identification of and intervention in under-performing schools;
  - measures to combat racism;
  - meeting statutory requirements regarding health and safety;
  - support for school leadership and management;
  - support for gifted and talented pupils;
  - the overall effectiveness of services to support school management;
  - support to schools for human resources; and
  - the effectiveness of the leadership of school improvement services.

The following functions are poor:

- performance management of school improvement services; and
- meeting statutory requirements regarding support for looked after children.

A further weakness is:

- the strategic relationship between the Learning Trust and the council's social services department.

14. It is clear, then, that the provision of support to schools and pupils is still unsatisfactory, as it was three years ago when the LEA was last inspected. This represents unsatisfactory progress since 2000. However, during the first half of that period, all concerned were involved in negotiations with the DfES about the future of the LEA, and then in planning for and setting up the new body. This delay meant that the potential for progress was reduced. Since the establishment of the Learning Trust last year, progress has been swift, as partners have observed, often with relief.

15. A new direction has been established clearly. It is not surprising that schools hope that the future will bring no further disruption. The Learning Trust, acting on behalf of the council, should now be allowed to continue its work. This report points out many ways in which the Learning Trust, and the council, should improve, but none of these recommendations will require fundamental changes to their current approaches. We judge that the LEA has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve. The improvements made so far have been dependent on the work of particular people but sound systems are now in place that should ensure this work continues. We believe that the LEA's rate of improvement will quicken when: the influence of the key people has entirely percolated all services; improved performance management has ensured that the new strategies are fully embedded in the Learning Trust's work; and schools and the local community are more fully involved in partnership with the Learning Trust.

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## Section 1: The LEA's strategy for school improvement

### Context

16. The London borough of Hackney is one of the most deprived parts of England, as it was at the time of the last inspection. All of its wards are amongst the ten per cent most disadvantaged in the country, and some areas face particularly severe disadvantage. The unemployment rate in the borough is about twice the national figure. The proportion of owner-occupiers among the population is about half of the national average, as is the proportion of car-owners. The incidence of crime is high, particularly violence against the person and robbery. Forty-four per cent of primary school pupils and forty-two per cent of secondary pupils are entitled to free school meals; both of these figures are far above the national rate. The proportion of children in lone-parent households is considerably higher than the national average. Poverty and disadvantage, however, are not the only features of the borough: there are also some areas of high-priced housing.

17. The ethnic diversity of Hackney is far greater than that of most local authorities. Black British groups comprise about a quarter of the overall population, and there are sizeable communities of Indian, Bangladeshi, Jewish, Vietnamese and Turkish heritage, as well as many others that are less numerous. Minority ethnic groups form a high proportion of the school-age population: over 80% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with 21% of African and 17% of Caribbean heritage. About half of school pupils have English as their additional language. There are over 700 pupils from refugee or asylum-seeking backgrounds.

18. There are about 26,500 pupils on Hackney school rolls. The LEA maintains two nursery schools, fifty-six primary schools, and eight secondary schools, of which three have a sixth form. Three of the secondary schools are mixed, four are girls' schools, and one is a boys' school. There are five special schools and two pupil referral units. Fifty-five per cent of three year-olds and seventy-four per cent of four year-olds are on the rolls of nursery or primary schools. The school-age population is growing: the primary-age cohort is forecast to grow by 12% by 2013.

19. A high proportion of children attend schools outside the borough. Partly as a result of the location and type of schools in the borough, there is a particular exodus when they reach secondary age: a third of Year 6 pupils from Hackney primary schools continue their education in secondary schools in other LEAs. In addition, there is considerable mobility within Hackney's schools, mainly resulting from migration into or out of the borough: 27% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2002 had not attended the same school throughout the key stage.

20. Over one quarter of pupils have special educational needs (SEN), a higher proportion than seen nationally. The proportion of primary-age pupils with a statement of SEN, at 2.4%, is in line with the national figure, but the secondary proportion, at 5.9%, is well above the national figure. Fewer primary-age pupils attend special schools than the national average, as a result of a recent increase in inclusion in mainstream education, but

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the proportion of secondary-age pupils in special schools continues to be well above average.

## Performance

21. Ofsted's school inspections show that pupils' attainment on entry to Hackney primary schools at age 5 is much lower overall than the national average.

22. In 2002, the most recent year for which validated comparisons are available, pupils performed well below the national average in all National Curriculum tests at the end of every key stage. They also performed well below the national average in almost every measure at GCSE and GCE A/AS level. However, pupils' performance in 2002 was in line with similar authorities<sup>1</sup> in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2, mathematics at Key Stage 3, and most measures at GCSE. They were also in line at the higher levels in Key Stage 1 writing, and science at Key Stages 2 and 3. Results were below similar LEAs in all other respects.

23. The provisional 2003 results show a very different picture for primary pupils than that for secondary pupils. The overall proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected levels fell in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1, and in all subjects at Key Stage 2. However, standards rose in all subjects at Key Stage 3 and at every measure in GCSE.

24. Validated comparisons in trends are available only for the period 1998 to 2002. Over this period, the rate of improvement at Key Stage 1 was less than it was nationally. However, improvement at Key Stage 2 was faster than the national trend. The trends at Key Stage 3 were variable: mathematics improved faster than the national rate, but English and science improved less in Hackney than they did nationally. Improvement in GCSE was well below the national trend on all measures. The provisional 2003 results therefore show an interruption in Key Stage 2 improvement but improvement at GCSE.

25. Girls perform better than boys on almost every measure across the age-range. Moreover, the gap between girls and boys is greater in Hackney than nationally, especially in English.

26. The academic performance of the various minority ethnic groups varies considerably. Some groups perform comparatively well, but pupils of Turkish heritage, boys of Caribbean heritage, and Traveller children generally achieve lower than other groups. Children in public care also do not reach the LEA average.

27. Primary school attendance in 2002 was well below the national average, and secondary attendance was below average. In both phases, unauthorised absence was well above average. However, attendance improved in 2003. The most recent comparable figures for permanent exclusions from school were at the average for primary schools but were above average for secondary schools.

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<sup>1</sup> The LEA's statistical neighbours are: the London boroughs of Islington, Lambeth and Southwark.

28. Ofsted's most recent inspections showed that 17 of the 56 primary schools were good or very good, as were three of the nine secondary schools inspected. These proportions are well below the national average. However, where schools had been inspected twice there was evidence of general improvement since their first inspection. At the time of this inspection, there were four schools requiring special measures, and three with serious weaknesses.

### **Council structure**

29. In July 2002, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills concluded that the council was failing to perform its main educational functions adequately, and directed Hackney Borough Council to enter into a contract with a new, independent body, the Learning Trust, to secure these functions on its behalf. The Trust is a non-profit-making company, established specifically for this purpose. It has a ten-year contract with the council and receives an annual budget based on the national Education Formula Spending Share (EFSS).

30. The Learning Trust is run by a board of directors. The independent chair was appointed by the Secretary of State in consultation with the council. The board also comprises a chief executive, several executive directors and a larger group of non-executive directors. The non-executive directors represent a range of stakeholder bodies, and include headteachers and a parent governor, as well as two independent directors appointed by the chair. The council is represented on the board by two non-executive directors.

31. The Learning Trust's key responsibilities are to secure continuous improvement in educational standards, to restore public confidence in Hackney's schools and education services, to implement best practice in provision, and maintain effective financial management.

32. The contract between the council and the Learning Trust specifies 28 key performance indicators against which the Trust will be measured. These concern schools' and pupils' performance, and the effectiveness of the support given by the Trust to schools. The contract also specifies many tasks which the Trust must perform. The council monitors the Trust's performance against the key performance indicators. It also has to consider and approve, with conditions if necessary, the Trust's annual plan. Hackney's Education Development Plan is prepared for the council by the Trust.

33. The council necessarily retains the statutory function of chief education officer, which is discharged by its chief executive, supported by a very small team of council officers whose main task is to monitor the Learning Trust contract. It also retains ownership of community school sites and continues to employ staff working in community schools. However, day to day management of these is conducted on its behalf by the Trust. The Trust has to identify long-term investment opportunities and promote these to the council. The Trust is obliged to cooperate with the council in its cross-cutting initiatives in as far as these have an educational element, and in its continuing statutory duties, such as the responsibility to secure sufficient school places.

34. Hackney council is led by a mayor and an executive group of elected members, currently from the Labour party. The executive group includes a portfolio-holder for children, families and young people, with responsibility for educational attainment. Additionally, another elected member is education advisor to the executive. The council has a scrutiny panel for education. The Learning Trust is required to brief the chief education officer and the leading member before council meetings.

## Funding

35. The LEA's funding is well above the national average, as it was at the time of the last inspection.

36. Hackney's Education Formula Spending Share (EFSS) per pupil in 2003/04 was the second highest in inner London and well above the national average, in line with the high levels of deprivation in the borough. In previous years, education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) was also well above average.

37. Additional grant funding for education is also high. The total Standards Fund allocation per pupil is twice the national average, and there is significant funding for educational activities from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, New Opportunities Fund and the Children's Fund.

38. Hackney has spent close to its SSA on education since 2002/03 (Table 1) though it spent 5% below SSA in 2001/02. In 2003/04 Hackney met the target set by the Secretary of State for passing on the increase in education funding to schools.

**Table 1: Education SSA/EFSS and expenditure**

School Year	SSA / EFSS for education £k	Net expenditure on education £k	Expenditure as % of SSA/ EFSS
<b>2001/02</b>	113,378	107,373	94.70%
<b>2002/03</b>	120,745	121,309	100.47%
<b>2003/04</b>	132,149	132,018	99.90%

Source: LEA Form 2

39. The 2002/03 Individual Schools Budget (ISB) for primary and secondary pupils was below the average for inner London boroughs, though it was well above national averages (Table 2). However, Hackney schools also received substantial funding from the Standards Fund.

**Table 2: Primary and Secondary ISB 2002/03**

	<b>Hackney £ per pupil</b>	<b>Statistical neighbours £ per pupil</b>	<b>Inner London authorities £ per pupil</b>	<b>England £ per pupil</b>
<b>Primary individual schools budget (ISB)</b>	2,903	2,889	2,928	2,223
<b>Secondary ISB</b>	3,455	3,707	3,667	2,929

*Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002/03.*

40. In 2002/03, about 86% (DfES data) of funding was delegated to schools. This was close to the England average and that for similar authorities. Hackney devolved a lower level of Standards Fund (74%) to schools at the beginning of the year than its statistical neighbours.

**Table 3: Centrally-controlled revenue spending 2002/03**

	<b>Hackney £ per pupil</b>	<b>Statistical neighbours £ per pupil</b>	<b>Inner London authorities £ per pupil</b>	<b>England £ per pupil</b>
<b>Strategic management</b>	103	151	111	101
<b>Special educational needs</b>	187	244	234	160
<b>School improvement</b>	45	59	55	31
<b>Access</b>	142	145	158	131
<b>Total</b>	477	599	558	423

*Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002/03.*

41. Hackney spent below similar authorities on all four main areas of centrally-provided services in 2002/03 (Table 3). There has been a significant decrease in central expenditure on strategic management over the three years since the last inspection. Early figures for 2003/04, however, show there were above-average increases in expenditure on school improvement and on home to school transport. Taking account of both centrally retained and delegated funding, Hackney's overall expenditure on special educational needs (SEN), at 22% of the overall schools budget in 2002/03, was the highest of all the inner London boroughs and well above the national average (16%). Most of the SEN budget, however, is delegated to schools. Home to school transport expenditure remains particularly high compared with similar authorities.

42. Capital expenditure per pupil is well below the average for similar authorities and below the England average. Spending increased between 1999/2000 and 2001/02, but

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then dropped by 56% in 2002/03, owing to a freeze on borrowing imposed as a result of the council's disastrous financial situation. During negotiations of the contract with the Learning Trust, the council made it clear that it was not then in a position to provide any capital funding for education.

### **The LEA's strategy for school improvement**

43. At the time of the last inspection, the strategy for school improvement was satisfactory, but its implementation was unsatisfactory. The strategy has improved further, and is now highly satisfactory. However, implementation is still unsatisfactory. Two recommendations were made in the last inspection report concerning the coordination of initiatives; these issues continue to require attention. However, the capacity for further improvement is good.

44. The LEA produced its second Education Development Plan (EDP) in 2002, before the establishment of the Learning Trust. The plan met statutory requirements, but Ofsted judged its school improvement programme to be unsatisfactory because it was unclear. The Learning Trust revised the EDP this year. The school improvement programme is now highly satisfactory. Its priorities are in line with pupils' and schools' needs, and give prominence to building support for under-achieving groups into all aspects of work. Significant attention is given to key issues for Hackney, such as the need to improve recruitment and retention of school staff, and to develop collaborative work between schools. However, more focus is needed on early years issues and Key Stage 1, as detailed elsewhere in this report. Themes running through the programme are the dissemination of good practice, and targeted action to support particular schools or groups of pupils. A particularly strong feature of the programme is the emphasis on enhancing young people's experience through an enriched curriculum, in order to increase their participation in education. These features make this a distinctive EDP, well tailored to the local context.

45. The EDP is conceived as the centrepiece of the Learning Trust's work. Alongside its production, the Trust has been reorganising its standards and school effectiveness directorate so that it can deliver the school improvement programme effectively. Contributions by other directorates of the Trust are clearly indicated in the programme, and understood well by officers.

46. The school improvement programme is, in some instances, written at a high level of generality and, though the focus of work is very clear, not all team plans provide the necessary detail. The Trust has recognised that it needs to produce a portfolio of detailed strategies that sets out clearly for schools how the overall aims will be achieved. Some of this has already been done: a useful overarching paper describes the framework for improving pupils' standards and increasing their educational inclusion, and a clear statement of the secondary strategy provides vision and demonstrates coherence in the Trust's thinking. However, much operational planning is yet to be undertaken. Some crucial strategies have not been produced, such as that for raising the achievement of minority ethnic groups, and some of the mechanisms for improvement are unclear. More needs to be done to establish the respective roles of Trust and schools in detailed aspects of school improvement. Equally important, in the light of the effect of pupils' mobility, is the need to strengthen the use of pupil-level data in setting targets.

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*Recommendations***In order to improve the strategy for school improvement:**

- when making future revisions to the EDP, the Learning Trust should give greater attention to:
  - provision for early years;
  - provision for Key Stage 1; and
  - the use of pupil-level data in setting targets.

47. The general relationship with major initiatives, such as Excellence in Cities (EiC), the Education Action Zone (EAZ), London Challenge, and work flowing from the Leadership Incentive Grant, are expressed clearly. The EiC programme has become much more closely established within overall school improvement work since the establishment of the Trust, as has the work of the EAZ. However, the detailed conjunction of the various initiatives in the future has yet to be planned in detail. The Trust does not yet have a sufficiently detailed knowledge of what external funding has gone where, and what effect it has had on pupils' achievement. Too much of the coordination is left to individual schools to manage. In general, the thrusts of these initiatives are congruent, and certainly those currently planned fit well into the overall vision. However, there can be no guarantee that the support given to each school at present matches its needs.

*Recommendations***In order to improve the use of external funding:**

- the Learning Trust should make detailed plans for how its school improvement programme will be supported by Excellence in Cities, London Challenge, and Leadership Incentive Grant work.

48. The implementation of the strategy for school improvement, first by the council's education department and now by the Trust, has so far met with variable success. The lack of clarity in the EDP before its recent revision made precise evaluation of its implementation and effect impossible. Some, though not all, of the planned activities were implemented effectively. However, as explained later in this report, some schools deteriorated despite the intentions in the EDP. The revised EDP is a much better instrument for improvement and as a result the Learning Trust has a strong capacity to make progress in future. There is now a good system for evaluating progress on each EDP activity, and in general work is more closely targeted to schools' needs than in the past. In particular, the development of a working group to support schools causing concern has the capacity to channel support effectively to those that need it most.

49. Attainment at Key Stage 1 did not improve during 2000 to 2003 and, in some respects, fell. The work on the literacy and numeracy strategies appears, however, to have supported the steady rise in Key Stage 2 standards from 2000 to 2002, but the fall in all subjects in 2003 suggests a need for refocus. The Trust did not meet its 2003 target for

reducing the shortfall in the achievement at Key Stage 2 by boys of Caribbean heritage. The LEA did not meet its overall 2002 targets for Key Stage 2, and despite the recent period of improvement, its 2004 targets now look unrealistic.

50. By contrast, improvement at Key Stage 3 has been sustained in mathematics and science since 2000 and after declining slightly, English results rose significantly in 2003. Clearly, this improvement may owe something to the strengths evident in the Trust's support for the national Key Stage 3 strategy. Even so, the 2004 mathematics and science targets appear unrealistic given current rates of improvement. GCSE results fluctuated from 2000 to 2002, and then rose sharply in 2003. The 2002 targets were not achieved, but the recent improvement suggests that the 2004 targets may be achieved. Pupils' attendance fluctuated during the period 2000 to 2002 but improved last year.

### **The allocation of resources to priorities**

51. The last inspection judged the allocation of resources to priorities to be poor. At that time, overspending by the council led the council treasurer to issue a notice under section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to stop all uncommitted expenditure. Although schools' delegated budgets were not affected, some key education support services lost temporary staff and were unable to fill vacancies. The inspection team recommended ensuring that improvements in education be isolated from the potential budgetary failures across the council and strengthening the education finance team. Progress has been good and both these recommendations have been met. Allocation of resources to priorities is now satisfactory.

52. The establishment of the Learning Trust has both stimulated the development of a clear set of priorities for education through its annual plan, and provided a stable financial framework for schools. The Trust has a formula-based budget which passes on the increases in Education Formula Spending Share to schools and therefore provides a good medium-term framework within which resources can be allocated. In 2003/04 schools received an above-average funding increase of 12%. Additional resources were allocated to school improvement and to strengthening the education finance team in line with priorities within the plan. The Trust rightly gives high priority to bringing in additional funding from external sources which currently provide a further £5 million per year, although these initiatives are not well targeted or co-ordinated.

### **Recommendations**

#### **In order to improve the allocation of funding, the Learning Trust should:**

- audit and identify all additional external funding currently committed to supporting schools and other educational agencies; and
- quantify the extent to which each school or agency is in receipt of such support and ensure that this is appropriate to their identified needs and outcomes.

53. The council and the Learning Trust had difficulties clarifying the 2002/03 education budget after the change in responsibilities during the financial year. The Trust took over the budget for the education service in August 2002 and engaged in a robust dialogue with

the council to establish the starting position for its budget for the eight months from August 2002 to March 2003. This has now been satisfactorily resolved but the uncertainties delayed effective budget planning and contributed to a projected overspend on SEN in 2003/04. A good monthly monitoring system has been introduced which gives early warning of variations from projected spending and has led to a savings plan being put in place.

54. A necessary, but very late, review of the school funding formula, including the funding for SEN, is under way but progress has been too slow. Although the Learning Trust has tried to engage schools in discussion through the Schools Forum, no detailed proposals for change have yet been made. A formula that incorporates the necessary changes to reflect current educational need is unlikely to be implemented in April 2004 as planned.

### *Recommendation*

#### **In order to improve schools' management of their budgets:**

- within the limits of the national funding framework, ensure that the new school funding formula is based clearly on current educational need.

### **Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value**

55. This area was not evaluated at the time of the last inspection. However, it was reported that the inadequacy of the council's Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) had triggered a corporate governance inspection. The Learning Trust's strategy for continuous improvement is unsatisfactory because it has not yet been fully implemented.

56. The Trust does not have a statutory duty of Best Value, but it must comply with Best Value principles in its work. The BVPP is produced by the council, and education is one of its seven priorities. Although its arm's length status limits the extent to which educational functions are included in Best Value reviews, the Trust provides the council with accurate and timely information about the progress made towards key Best Value indicators.

57. The Learning Trust gives high priority to delivering improvement through change. It has clear objectives, and monitors regularly the key performance indicators and service outputs within its annual plan. The Trust has carried out a number of fundamental reviews of services which have prompted organisational change. However, these reviews were focused too much on cost and did not incorporate users' views of services. In some cases, actions after reviews led to abrupt changes in service, such as alterations to transport arrangements, with which users were unhappy. Although the Trust's self-evaluation showed it has a sound knowledge of most of its strengths and weaknesses, there was a tendency to judge itself more positively in some areas than this inspection.

58. In the past, insufficient attention has been paid to the performance management of service delivery to schools and the Learning Trust has made little improvement here. Schools' ratings of Learning Trust support in the school survey – though better than in 2002 – were in the lowest quartile on two-thirds of the questions and a majority were less than satisfactory. Schools reported unacceptable variations between individual staff in

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services. There is no explicit planning and performance management system in place and the arrangements for appraisal of Learning Trust staff have not yet been implemented. Directorate plans and objectives are not all translated into team plans incorporating relevant lower-level performance indicators. Combined with the considerable turnover and movement of staff over the last year, this leaves staff delivering services unclear how they contribute to Learning Trust priorities.

***Recommendations***

**In order to embed continuous improvement at all levels of the organisation:**

- ensure that staff at middle management level and below are involved in the development of team plans which specify their own performance objectives and service outputs; and
- ensure that senior managers monitor the implementation and outcomes of team plans.

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## Section 2: Support for school improvement

### Summary

59. The Learning Trust has recently published a strategy for the application of monitoring, challenge, intervention and support, differentiated according to identified needs. It gives prime attention to schools causing concern and clarifies the respective roles of the Trust and the schools in general matters of school improvement. The strategy is satisfactory and is in line with the national Code of Practice on LEA/school relations, but it has not yet been fully tested. The effectiveness of services to support school improvement and the support for school leadership and management are still unsatisfactory, but have improved in some respects. The Trust's effectiveness in securing management services is unsatisfactory, and the quality of individual services is variable. However, the support for governors is good and the support for raising standards at Key Stage 3 is highly satisfactory. Support for the following areas of school improvement is satisfactory: literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), minority ethnic pupils, and the supply and quality of teachers. Support for gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory. After the previous inspection, there was a period of little progress but schools have noted an improvement in recent months and are guardedly optimistic about the quality of support they will receive in the future.

### The effectiveness of services to support school improvement

60. At the time of the previous inspection, the school development and review unit had been too slow to organise and provide effective support for schools. Most of the outsourced school improvement functions were discharged in an unsatisfactory way. Until the restructuring of the service into the standards and school effectiveness directorate in 2003, little progress was made. Hence, the overall effectiveness of support for school improvement is unsatisfactory. The previous report recommended that consistent staffing for the school development and review unit should be maintained and developed. This has proved difficult to achieve because of problems in recruiting permanent staff of high quality to some posts, such as primary link advisers. However, in most such cases, the Learning Trust has succeeded in making satisfactory interim arrangements by appointing temporary staff with relevant experience and expertise.

61. The support for school improvement is now driven by a clear vision and appropriate priorities that are understood by the staff of the Learning Trust and by schools. However, the revised approach is so new that procedures to evaluate its effectiveness have not been implemented. Most team plans scrutinised link effectively to the EDP and to corporate priorities, but individual plans and targets have not been developed for most members of staff. The deployment of link advisers and national strategy consultants is now beginning to be differentiated according to individual schools' needs.

62. Performance management is poor. Although current performance is honestly analysed and shared through one-to-one discussions with managers, individual members of staff do not have performance targets and no consistent system of termly reviews or annual appraisal is yet in place. Induction of new staff members is largely informal in nature and

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variable in practice. Although a professional development programme has yet to be developed, individual members of staff have satisfactory training opportunities.

63. Staff supporting school improvement have relevant expertise. A sensible balance of phase and subject needs has been achieved. The Learning Trust has insisted upon candidates meeting demanding criteria when making new appointments. This has sometimes meant that vacancies are filled temporarily rather than by permanent staff, or that existing staff cover aspects of vacant posts. In some aspects where recruitment has been difficult, for example ICT, external consultancy is used but the strategy manager retains line management. In general, the approach to filling vacancies is being managed successfully, but the Trust is aware that its sensible insistence on high standards could slow the rate of improvement. At the time of the inspection, vacancies included those for the head of the attendance service, the head of the ethnic minority achievement service, a literacy consultant, a Turkish consultant, some Key Stage 3 consultants, and some speech therapists.

64. The standards and school effectiveness directorate is being restructured to support closer partnership between consultants, strategy managers and link advisers. The Learning Trust is aware of the need to maintain a balance between strategic and operational responsibilities in the work of the management team.

65. In general, the initiatives introduced by Learning Trust have been so recent that their overall effectiveness and value for money cannot yet be demonstrated.

### **Monitoring, challenge and intervention**

66. At the time of the previous inspection, the LEA's definition of monitoring, challenge and intervention was poor and not understood by schools. Since the establishment of the standards and school effectiveness directorate, this unacceptable situation has been remedied. Good progress has been made in recent months. This aspect of the Learning Trust's support for schools is now satisfactory.

67. Two publications were produced in the summer term of 2003 following consultation with schools: *The Strategy for Schools Causing Concern* and *The Role of the Link Adviser*. They distinguish clearly between the Trust's functions of monitoring, challenge, intervention and support and explain the circumstances in which each will be used. In particular, they make clear the criteria that will lead to intervention. The roles and responsibilities of link advisers are closely linked to the national standards for school improvement officers. Sensibly, in co-operation with headteachers, the two documents are now being brought together as *The Hackney Learning Compact*, which stresses the responsibilities of both the Learning Trust and the schools in bringing about school improvement.

68. The innovations are so recent that they have not yet been fully implemented. However, there has been a generally positive response from schools. Those causing concern are working, at varying rates of progress, with link advisers to plan the provision of appropriate support and challenge.

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**The focusing of LEA support on areas of greatest need**

69. The previous inspection report stated that support was provided on demand and not on the basis of an analysis of need. The report's related recommendation has been met in that there are now clear proposals for allocating support and providing challenge in relation to the needs of schools in all phases. However, until the current year, progress on implementing this recommendation had been too slow. The situation is still unsatisfactory as the system is not fully implemented.

70. A cross-directorate education improvement group has begun to determine the categorisation of schools, according to relevant qualitative and quantitative data. This is intended to lead to the deployment of support in relation to each school's needs. The seven categories range from very good schools in the first category, to those that have serious weaknesses or require special measures, in categories six and seven respectively. The degree of support varies from light touch to intensive. Sensibly, the Trust has created the fourth and fifth categories in an effort to identify at an early stage those schools that are in difficulties. It intends then to intervene so that they will not deteriorate and possibly fall into one of Ofsted's formal categories of concern. The rationale for deployment makes a suitable distinction between the support to which schools are entitled and that which they may purchase.

71. Implementation of the strategy has sensibly commenced with the lowest four categories, because those schools' needs are greatest. They are now receiving properly differentiated support. The remaining schools have not yet been categorised. Therefore, the system, although it has considerable potential, is not yet operating at a satisfactory level. Nevertheless, the allocation of consultancy support to schools through the national strategies is already well differentiated and is provided in accordance with schools' needs.

**The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring and challenging schools**

72. At the time of the previous inspection, schools were not clear about the way in which monitoring, challenge, support and intervention were provided. The quality of the provision was inconsistent and depended largely on the individual contributions of link advisers. The provision of performance data to schools was, however, consistently effective. The overall effectiveness of the strategy for monitoring and challenge is still unsatisfactory. Although significant improvements have been introduced recently, progress since the previous inspection has been limited. However, the systems and structures that are now in place indicate that the capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Schools detect signs of improvement and, although much remains to be done, are cautiously optimistic.

73. Hackney's monitoring has been inconsistent, its intervention has often been too late and its monitoring and challenge have been insufficiently differentiated. *The Hackney Learning Compact* makes clear that monitoring is intended to identify needs, that intervention, challenge and support will be differentiated according to those needs, and that the responsibility for school improvement will be shared between the Learning Trust, schools and other stakeholders. Although not yet implemented fully, the approach has strong potential and its transparency and fairness have been welcomed by schools. The

attention now given by the Learning Trust to schools causing concern is beginning to be effective: weaknesses are now being identified as a result of the Trust's monitoring. Crucial to the success of the new system is the role of the link advisers who, with headteachers and chairs of governors, will identify, plan and co-ordinate the challenge and support needed. However, this co-ordination currently lacks the backing of a consistent approach to school self-evaluation.

74. The amount of support that each school will receive in a year will depend on its identified needs. Following their visits to schools, advisers write useful qualitative and quantitative reports for headteachers. Since the beginning of the current school year, these are also copied directly to the chairs of primary governing bodies to support effective governance. However, this very helpful practice has yet to be introduced in the secondary phase.

#### ***Recommendation***

##### **In order to support effective governance:**

- ensure that records of visits to schools are copied directly to chairs of governors.

75. The performance data produced by the Learning Trust for schools have many strengths, particularly in their analyses of the performance of local groups of pupils. Primary schools find the data particularly helpful, whereas the secondary schools have developed their own systems and make less use of what the Trust provides. Guidance and training in the application of data are provided for schools, governors and link advisers but the target-setting process, although satisfactory, is weakened by the fact that advisers are not provided by the Trust with individual pupil data in similar detail to those possessed by the schools. Systems for the electronic transmission of data are available but not fully used and schools have expressed some dissatisfaction with the transfer of data between the primary and secondary phases.

#### ***Recommendation***

##### **In order to improve the target-setting process:**

- provide link advisers with detailed performance data on individual pupils.

#### **The effectiveness of the LEA's work with under-performing schools**

76. The quality of support for schools causing concern was mixed at the time of the previous inspection. It was satisfactory for primary schools but unsatisfactory in the secondary phase. A period of deterioration followed and the number of schools judged by Ofsted to have serious weaknesses or to require special measures increased. Although there have been recent improvements, progress has been insufficient. Work with under-performing schools is unsatisfactory. However, with the recent implementation of *The Strategy for Schools Causing Concern*, the capacity for improvement is good.



77. The strategy was sorely needed as there is much for the Learning Trust to do. Although it has had some success in reducing the numbers of schools in Ofsted categories of concern, there are still too many. There are four schools in special measures and three with serious weaknesses, all in the primary phase. They constitute almost ten per cent of Hackney schools and a further proportion, approaching 15%, have been identified as causing concern to the Trust. The strategy seeks to remedy previous weaknesses by giving priority to consistently accurate monitoring, early identification of problems, and targeted, co-ordinated intervention to prevent further deterioration. However, there is no agreed process for reducing support as schools improve.

#### *Recommendation*

**In order to provide appropriate levels of support for schools when they emerge from categories of serious concern:**

- devise and implement a policy for a graduated reduction in the level of support offered by the Learning Trust.

78. Schools in categories of concern report that the Learning Trust's support for them has improved over the past year, in line with contributions of a more consistent high quality from link advisers. In the past, the support has been too variable, ranging in quality from incisive to ineffective. Some schools have continued to require special measures for too long and the average time for primary schools is higher than it ought to be, at 24 months. The progress of schools causing concern is now reviewed regularly by the education improvement group and its sub-group with responsibility for schools causing concern. Reports are made to the headteachers and governing bodies of these schools and there are sensible plans to report regularly to the board of the Learning Trust.

79. The Trust has correctly identified the improvement of its work with under-performing schools as a priority of the highest importance. It has acted with firmness and has not hesitated to use the full range of powers available to it. As judged necessary, under-performing schools have been closed, headteachers have left their posts, delegated budgets have been removed, and experienced governors have been added to boards.

#### **Support for literacy**

80. The LEA's support for literacy was satisfactory at the last inspection. No detailed fieldwork was done during the present inspection, but schools judged support to have continued to be satisfactory. This is corroborated by the LEA's self-evaluation and HMI monitoring. Standards at Key Stage 2 rose faster than the national rate until 2002. The indications, therefore, are that support is still satisfactory, although the slight fall in attainment in 2003 suggests a need to consider refocusing the strategy.

#### **Support for numeracy**

81. At the time of the last inspection, support for numeracy was satisfactory. From 2000 to 2002, standards rose considerably at Key Stage 2, although they remained broadly static at Key Stage 1. Support for numeracy continues to be satisfactory.

82. The Learning Trust had perceived the steady rise in standards at Key Stage 2 as confirmation that its work in this area was effective. Primary schools rated support for numeracy as at least satisfactory, and two-thirds rated it as good or very good. However, there was a sharp drop in Key Stage 2 standards in 2003. This has led to a prompt re-focusing of the work of the strategy manager and consultants for the autumn term 2003. If standards do not rise in 2004, a more fundamental review will be required.

83. The Learning Trust acknowledges that attainment remains unacceptably low at both key stages. It recognises that there has been insufficient support allocated at Key Stage 1 and that support at Key Stage 2, though targeted at areas of greatest need, has not always had the desired impact. It has evidence to demonstrate the positive effect that small, individual projects have had on attainment for specific groups of schools and pupils. However, schools and the Learning Trust have not yet worked together to develop procedures for analysing individual pupils' performance in order to identify specific areas for improvement.

84. The Learning Trust has put in place further strategies designed to raise standards. However, these are at an early stage of implementation and have not had time to have the desired effect. The education development plan and the numeracy action plan identify relevant and well-received training programmes and describe well-targeted support and intervention activities. The strategy manager has initiated improvements in the links between the work of the numeracy team and the ethnic minority achievement service, the action zones and other related projects. Consultants are well managed and they are deployed in relation to schools' needs. The work of leading teachers is being harnessed to support that of the strategy.

### **Support for information and communication technology**

85. The LEA's support for the curriculum use of information and communication technology (ICT) was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Nevertheless, it was recommended that schools should be given more support in improving the use of ICT across the curriculum. Sound progress has been made with this recommendation, but provision continues to be only satisfactory.

86. Ofsted's inspections of schools indicate that most make satisfactory use of ICT, and that pupils' learning in ICT is also generally satisfactory. However, there are relatively few schools whose provision or results are good. Given the strength of ICT hardware provision in the schools, this suggests that the investments have not yet produced good value for money.

87. Hackney has a strong tradition in supporting schools in their acquisition of a good ICT infrastructure: there are a large number of modern computers in the schools, all schools have some form of ICT suite, many have up-to-date electronic teaching accessories, and all have access to broadband connectivity. This is a very strong basis on which to develop use across the curriculum. The central ICT team has concentrated on building schools' capacity to improve their teaching and learning by observing lessons and advising on ICT development plans. It has collated its analyses of school provision into a summary review which has considerable strategic potential. The team has also provided training for

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schools on assessing pupils' standards, a crucial prerequisite for the target-setting which will begin next year. The early signs are that the team is focusing on the new demands made by recent revisions to the National Curriculum. These are all very positive developments, but more still needs to be done to improve pupils' use of ICT.

88. The ICT team has not gone sufficiently far in tailoring its support to schools' particular needs, although it has given some help to schools in major difficulties. The organisational framework is not helpful. The work of the ICT team is not integrated into other school improvement work such as that provided through the national Key Stage 3 strategy. The work of the ICT-based City Learning Centre is also separated from main school improvement work. The Trust is aware of these issues and is reviewing the structure of ICT support with the intention of linking it more closely to the routine work of monitoring and challenge.

### **Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3**

89. Support to schools for raising standards at Key Stage 3 was not inspected in the last inspection. It is now highly satisfactory.

90. Standards at Key Stage 3 have risen over the last three years and in 2003 showed a substantial increase, particularly in English. This may be attributed, at least in part, to the support provided by the Key Stage 3 strategy. Nevertheless, there is a considerable way to go to meet the 2004 targets, and an increased rate of improvement will be required if they are to be achieved in mathematics and science.

91. The strategy is well led and managed. Plans are focused, relevant and reflect the Learning Trust's priorities. Thorough evaluation of the implementation of the 2002/03 plan has informed the EDP priority for Key Stage 3. Support to schools is well differentiated and funding sources are used effectively for increased support, for example in science. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the strategy are now firmly established. These include termly evaluations of consultants' support to schools, a review of training evaluations, analysis of school attainment data, and regular monitoring and challenge to schools by the Key Stage 3 strategy manager. An effective training programme is well established, and there is an emerging strategy for the dissemination of good practice in primary/secondary transition as well as from Years 7 to 9, through the work of lead practitioners and a proposed website.

92. The Learning Trust is committed to organisational changes to bring about further improvement. In future, link advisers are intended to work more closely with the consultants, and the Key Stage 3 team will be required to take more account of the expertise of the ethnic minority achievement team and the behaviour support services. The EDP for 2003/04 identifies the need to improve curricular transition between Key Stages 2 and 3, building on existing initiatives.

### **Support for minority ethnic groups, including Travellers**

93. At the time of the last inspection the LEA gave satisfactory support to minority ethnic pupils, but a recommendation referred to the need to make better use of target-setting. The

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Learning Trust continues to make satisfactory provision, and some progress has been made on that recommendation, but, in general, improvement since the last inspection has been too slow.

94. Ofsted's school inspections show that work with pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is unsatisfactory in more primary schools than is seen nationally, and that very good practice is rare. The Trust's own evidence also suggests that there is a need to improve the skill levels of some EAL support work. The attainment of the different ethnic groups varies from year to year, but there is a strong tendency for Caribbean heritage boys and Turkish heritage boys and girls to under-perform at GCSE, particularly at higher grades. Additionally, Caribbean boys are more likely than other groups to be excluded from school, though less markedly so than nationally.

95. The significance of narrowing the gaps between the different groups is well recognised in the revised EDP. In particular, the theme of enhancement, running through many aspects of the school improvement programme, is sensibly intended to improve minority groups' performance by encouraging better links between schools and communities, more family learning, and better out-of-hours provision. This, and the specific activities intended to improve schools' capacity to identify and meet the needs of under-performing groups, are good starting points for future strategy.

96. The Learning Trust is very well equipped with data about the achievements of the different ethnic groups, and has recently used this to good effect. The analyses have, for example, been influential in supporting the Trust's emphasis on the need to strengthen EAL teaching, and were also a powerful source of evidence to a recent council scrutiny into provision for pupils of Turkish heritage. These data helped to support the Trust's wise decision to appoint a Turkish-speaking consultant.

97. The Learning Trust's small central team gives guidance and training to schools. The work of this team is satisfactory, and its training provision is regarded well by schools. However, the strategic development of work has stagnated recently, while the team has lacked permanent leadership. A number of potentially useful projects are in place, such as action research to investigate the academic success of Caribbean heritage pupils, but the outcomes of these have not yet been built solidly into an overall approach to raising standards of achievement, though work on this is currently in hand. The Trust is intending to restructure the management of the team to involve it more closely in improving teaching and learning across all schools. The number of refugees and asylum-seekers in the borough is not reflected in the extent of the Trust's work, although some useful guidance has been provided to schools.

### *Recommendation*

#### **In order to ensure that the needs of refugee and asylum-seeking children are met:**

- expand the support provided to these children and the schools that they attend.

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98. Another small team supports Traveller pupils. This team works well at increasing Travellers' involvement in education and liaises effectively with other support agencies.

### **Support for gifted and talented pupils**

99. The support for gifted and talented pupils has not been inspected previously. Although there are good features within the work of the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative and the Education Action Zone (EAZ), the support given overall by the Learning Trust is currently unsatisfactory.

100. The Learning Trust clearly faces a huge challenge if it is to help pupils to reach national standards. Hackney pupils do not do well at the higher levels of the National Curriculum or GCSE. The proportion gaining higher levels is almost always well below national averages at each key stage, and the proportion gaining GCSE grades A or A\* is consistently well behind the national figure. These gaps are not narrowing. The most recent data for the numbers of pupils entering higher education were the lowest for any London borough. However, the proportion of pupils continuing in education after 16 has risen steadily in the last three years.

101. The introduction of the EiC initiative has brought expertise and vigour to the scene. Schools have been helped in identifying gifted and talented pupils, and a considerable range of staff training has been provided on relevant topics. There is a good range of enrichment events. The advice given to schools by the EiC team focuses well on key issues, and is intended, for instance, to guard against any possibility of cultural bias. This all provides the basis on which schools' provision should grow. The EiC partnership has been alert in challenging two schools' use of the additional funding they received. The EAZ has also proved to be a source of valuable support to schools. Its self-evaluation shows there have been improvements in provision and in attainment in some schools. Although the main focus of both initiatives has been on academically able pupils, a potentially useful range of opportunities has also been provided to those with talents in sport or creative arts.

102. These two initiatives do not amount to a borough-wide programme of support and challenge targeted to meet schools' needs. Many primary schools are involved directly neither in EiC, nor in the EAZ. Although some of the training of those initiatives is made available to other schools, it does not substitute adequately for a comprehensive programme of support. Support for gifted and talented pupils is not yet built sufficiently firmly into the work of the standards and school effectiveness directorate of the Learning Trust, and aspects such as the planning and evaluation of summer schools and the use made of the City Learning Centre are left too much to chance. There is no broad-reaching strategy for supporting pupils with particular sporting or creative talents.

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*Recommendations***In order to provide coherent support for gifted and talented pupils:**

- introduce a system for monitoring all schools' success in promoting the achievement of gifted and talented pupils;
- ensure that link advisers challenge schools to improve their provision where necessary; and
- develop a strategy for supporting talented pupils, building on existing work with partners.

**Support for governors**

103. When the last inspection was carried out, the support for school governors was satisfactory. Since then, satisfactory progress has been made and the support is now good.

104. The governor support service is now part of the Learning Trust's standards and school effectiveness directorate, recognising the important role of governors in school improvement. The service has stable, experienced and skilled staff, who are well led, responsive and effective. The service is fully involved in the school improvement strategy and procedures, and the head of the service is a member of the directorate's senior management team. Information for governors is well targeted to schools' needs and is kept to manageable proportions. The improvement of governance is a thread throughout the priorities of the EDP. Governors have been provided with a helpful brief overview of the EDP actions in which they have a clear role and involvement.

105. Over three-quarters of schools purchase the clerking service, recognising the experience and expertise it brings to meetings. Central and school-based training are also purchased by high proportions of schools. The training is well focused on governors' strategic role in school improvement. It includes effective induction for new governors and receives very favourable evaluations. Governors receive helpful data on performance and finance, with good guidance on their use.

106. The proportion of vacancies on governing bodies is higher than that found nationally but the position is improving and the number of vacancies for LEA governors has almost halved in the past year. The proportion of governors from minority ethnic groups is too low, but the Trust has begun limited action to increase their recruitment. The Trust takes a firm stance on the qualities required of aspirant governors and on improving weak governance. A group of experienced governors has been used to assist the governing bodies of schools causing concern and has begun to meet termly for advanced training.

**Support for school management**

107. Support for school leadership and management was poor at the time of the previous inspection. The report recommended: that new headteachers should be appropriately inducted and mentored; that a clear and coherent strategy should draw together the various

strands of support for management; and that an effective structure of school networks should be devised to share good practice. The first two recommendations have been implemented and the third has been met in part, with further development needed. Clear progress has been made in some aspects but the quality of support is unsatisfactory.

108. Evidence from Ofsted school inspections shows that the proportion of Hackney schools requiring improvement in management is above that found nationally. The Learning Trust analyses school inspection reports and also, through the reports of advisers and consultants, and through procedures related to the Leadership Incentive Grant, identifies schools where leadership and management need improvement. This information is used in the categorisation of schools and the consequent allocations of support. Some schools have had management reviews, either at their request or at the instigation of the Trust, which have led to further intervention or support.

109. The importance that the Learning Trust attaches to the improvement of leadership and management is clear from its identification as one of the unifying strands that link the first four priorities of the EDP. This provides a firm foundation for a coherent strategy. However, the Trust is not in a strong position to help schools to develop their capability for self-management as there is no consistent approach to school self-evaluation. The extent and quality of practice vary from school to school and this has been recognised as a key issue for the current academic year. The importance of developing leadership and management in schools has also been emphasised in the requirement that all link advisers should have headship experience. An important part of their role is to give advice on matters of leadership and management, where necessary.

### *Recommendation*

#### **In order to improve schools' ability to be autonomous and self-managing:**

- promote a reliable and consistent approach to school self-evaluation.

110. Schools confirm that provision for new headteachers is now good and includes induction and mentoring. Established headteachers are encouraged to participate in national training programmes, although the ways in which their expertise will be used to best effect have not yet been identified. Support groups are in place for deputy heads and the provision for middle managers includes school-specific training for subject leaders in primary schools. Partnerships between schools have been used effectively to pair inexperienced senior managers with more experienced colleagues. There has also been some sharing of good practice through, for instance, EiC and the EAZ. However, there is scope for further development of such co-operative working between schools: the Learning Trust's secondary strategy recognises this by encouraging collaboration, partnership and the dissemination of good practice.

### **The effectiveness of services to support school management**

111. The overall effectiveness of services to support school management was not inspected previously, although a number of detailed recommendations for individual services were made. These included continuing with initiatives to provide a consistent

standard of basic service and working with schools to build their understanding of their role as clients. Relatively little progress has been made in this area and the strategy is unsatisfactory. However, the Trust plans to set up an enhanced procurement and contract monitoring service.

112. A new *Schools Support Services Handbook* sets out the core services to all schools, and those that schools can purchase, but it lacks sufficient detail to help schools make purchasing decisions. Schools have become accustomed to seeking services externally due to the poor quality, or total lack of services offered by the LEA. Although guidance about other sources of expertise is sometimes given by advisers and consultants, there is as yet no formal system of brokering services provided by external suppliers. The services secured externally are not all of good quality and schools have insufficient advice about effective procurement. The Trust is developing its capacity to support procurement with a recent appointment and through surveys of schools' views of services but these developments are at an early stage.

113. The Learning Trust currently offers to schools only human resources and ICT support services. Most schools purchase these services. Much of the information on the services offered and on the respective responsibilities of schools and the Trust is found in the separate service level agreements (SLAs). These, though generally clear, are in different formats and are sent to schools by each service separately, after the financial year has begun. This is too late to allow schools to make comparisons with other providers and make decisions as informed purchasers.

114. Management support services are variable in quality and none are better than satisfactory. Service standards across the Learning Trust are not adequately monitored and consultation with schools is not well co-ordinated. The headteachers' business forum has not met for several months, and there is no consultation forum with bursars.

### *Recommendations*

#### **In order to improve the effectiveness of management support services:**

- revise the *Schools Support Services Handbook* to include clear information on Learning Trust service standards, details of the respective responsibilities of schools and service providers, and information on services offered by external providers where these are not available from the Learning Trust;
- ensure this information is available by early January to allow schools to make informed purchasing decisions; and
- monitor service standards across the Learning Trust and survey the views of schools in a co-ordinated fashion.

115. **Financial services.** At the time of the last inspection financial services were unsatisfactory, but improving. The recommendation focused on the level of staffing of the education finance team to meet its statutory responsibilities. This has been achieved: five staff now work closely with schools and this team provides a satisfactory core financial



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management service. The National Bursars' Association (NBA) is used to provide useful additional support and training.

116. Schools have variable capacity for financial management, reflected in their budget outturns and late budget returns. However, the Trust does not offer a financial support service for purchase by schools and most schools use in-house staff whose expertise varies, especially in primary schools. The Trust is aware of the weaknesses and is taking appropriate action to address these, for example, by encouraging school finance staff to undertake NBA bursar training.

117. The finance team has improved budget and Standards Fund documentation and the timescale for giving schools information about their budgets, as well as financial reporting arrangements. They gave effective support to secondary schools in planning for the changes to Standards Funding in 2003/04. Schools are encouraged to plan in the medium term and a small sample of schools is trialling five-year budget-monitoring software with NBA support. The finance team has excellent links with internal audit: finance officers attend the exit meeting with the headteacher and the auditor to agree the action to be taken.

118. Although the numbers are reducing, too many schools still have deficits or excessive balances. Schools with budget deficits have deficit reduction plans which are closely monitored and two have recently had budget delegation withdrawn. Budget surpluses are also challenged. Financial benchmarking information is not, however, provided for schools. The finance team is fully involved in supporting schools causing concern through the regular meetings of the education improvement group.

119. Despite these improvements, schools still rated the quality of financial support and advice between satisfactory and poor, the lowest rating of all the LEAs surveyed. The finance team has made valiant efforts to establish its credibility with schools but this suggests it has some way to go.

120. **Human resources** services to schools were judged to be sound and improving in the previous inspection. The quality of the services has since declined, and is now unsatisfactory.

121. In the light of Hackney's difficulties with recruitment and retention, the Learning Trust has rightly made human resources a high priority and the board of directors includes an executive director of people management. The Trust has recognised the need to provide more active support to schools on human resources issues by creating school focused advisers. However, this structure is at an early stage of development. Changes in the leadership of the service to schools and high turnover of human resources staff have reduced the continuity of the support provided to schools with casework. The schools team is now fully staffed, but most officers are new, and a significant minority of schools are yet to be convinced about the quality of advice offered.

122. The setting up of the Learning Trust made major internal demands on the people management directorate, distracting its attention from the services provided to schools. This delayed introduction of many of the planned improvements, such as the new human resources manual, and support in implementing policy changes, such as workforce remodelling. Training on personnel procedures is not offered to new headteachers. The

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team carries out annual light touch monitoring of schools' personnel policies and procedures but this lacks challenge and is not universally valued by schools.

***Recommendation***

**In order to improve the human resources service to schools:**

- focus the light touch monitoring visits more sharply on the improvement of school human resources systems.

123. There are some early signs of improvement of the service. Better links with the schools' main payroll providers have led to more accurate information on sickness absence of school staff. The revised SLA for personnel services provides a good choice of service levels and three-quarters of schools now buy some form of support. Well-planned support was provided to staff of the schools which closed in summer 2003 and the team is involved in advising schools causing concern.

124. Protracted discussion on changes to consultative arrangements led to strained relationships with the professional associations and trade unions. The Trust has recognised that there is an urgent need to rebuild relationships locally, though in some cases informal communication is improving.

125. **Property services** were not inspected previously. They are satisfactory.

126. The condition and suitability of many schools are a major concern, but the council has not been in a position to borrow funds to make improvements. Most schools understand they have the responsibility to fund building maintenance from the delegated budget they receive and the most urgent needs have been dealt with. The annual visit by staff from the property team provides good advice and effective monitoring of each school site. The Trust does not carry out maintenance for schools but it does provide a list of approved contractors, suitable to work on school sites. Schools are well used to using local contractors to carry out essential repair work.

127. The Learning Trust will obtain, for a fee, technical services to manage the building projects commissioned by schools. Most projects are managed satisfactorily. It has also brokered support for the annual servicing of equipment, and about half the schools purchase these contracts. There is a property manual for schools but this is out of date and in the process of being revised.

128. **Information management** was not inspected previously, although the use of information technology and the sharing of management information were weak. Information management has improved and is now satisfactory, but the quality of technical support has declined.

129. The Learning Trust has a clear and practically-focused strategy for ICT which covers both ICT in the curriculum and in administration. It has made good progress in its implementation, and has ambitious plans to move to a web-based database system so that data only have to be entered once. Schools have benefited from funding from National Grid for Learning, and from extra investment in ICT through the EAZ, the City Learning

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Centre and other aspects of EiC. Electronic communication between schools and the Learning Trust's management information system is effective for pupil data but is less well-developed for financial and staffing information.

130. Although the Learning Trust website is well-organised and accessible, the information it holds is limited. The Trust's intranet is used extensively by schools.

131. The great majority of schools buy management information systems support from the Learning Trust, but generally rate as less than satisfactory the quality of technical support for ICT, the one area in the school survey where ratings had decreased significantly since 2002. Although the Trust has made sound arrangements to widen the support it provides for the different software packages used by schools, the quality of the service has declined. This reflects the limited capacity of the support team to meet the demands of schools as well as supporting internal Learning Trust initiatives. The majority of schools buy ICT equipment through the Learning Trust's good value procurement service.

132. The services for **cleaning, caretaking and grounds maintenance** were not inspected previously. The Learning Trust does not offer these services and schools purchase either from the council or external contractors, or employ their own staff. Monitoring by the Trust of the quality of services and of schools' satisfaction has only just begun. The Trust has not yet put in place systematic brokerage of facilities maintenance services for Hackney schools.

133. Although schools rated the quality of facilities maintenance services as satisfactory in the school survey, some contractual arrangements are unsatisfactory. Few schools remain with the grounds maintenance service offered by the council, which performs badly. Most schools are satisfied with the support from other contractors. There is no emergency caretaking service and little provision locally. About half the schools buy into a cleaning contract with an out-sourced Hackney council company, which ties the schools in for five years until the end of 2004 with no opt-out clause. Prices are high and the recent monitoring shows that the quality of work is variable due to poor supervision. Schools do not receive the contract monitoring support from the company which they pay for. The Trust is now beginning to intervene on behalf of schools.

134. **Catering** was not evaluated in the last inspection; it is now satisfactory.

135. There is no borough-wide contract for school meals, following the unexpected collapse of the previous contract. Given the tight timescale, schools were given reasonable support by the LEA to make alternative arrangements and all now buy catering services through individual contracts. Some are very good arrangements. The responsibility for nutritional standards is delegated to schools, but the Trust does not monitor compliance.

### **The LEA's work in assuring the supply and quality of teachers**

136. This aspect of the LEA's work was not examined fully in previous inspections, although the last report noted a range of weaknesses in professional support for teachers. Its recommendation has been met satisfactorily and other improvements have been made.

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Action on recruitment and on assuring professional quality is now satisfactory, and the capacity for further improvement is secure.

137. The borough has had difficulties in recruiting a sufficient number of qualified teachers to permanent posts in schools and, as recently as last year, its unfilled vacancies were well above the national average. The turnover of headteachers was also higher than nationally, last year. Moreover, the quality of the work of Hackney teachers, as shown in Ofsted's school inspections, is slightly lower than the national average, although it has improved in recent years.

138. The Learning Trust has tackled the recruitment of teachers determinedly, and this work is well received by schools. There are indications of a reducing trend in the number of vacancies, but at the beginning of this school year the number was still too high. The recruitment team is working with schools to identify vacancies and to fill them with qualified teachers on permanent contracts, wherever possible. Positive recruitment strategies such as a marketing campaign to promote working in the borough, and support for additional training for teachers with overseas qualifications, are improving the situation. Support is also given to individual schools in recruiting staff. The recruitment team has made a useful start on monitoring new entrants and forecasting future recruitment needs.

139. Schools report that the provision of professional development by the Learning Trust has improved significantly. The activities in the revised EDP include a considerable range of professional development opportunities, to be delivered, for instance, through dissemination of good practice or through targeted intervention. This overall strategy focuses well on schools' needs, though the details are sometimes unclear. The number of headteachers involved in management training is above the national average. Secondary middle managers also have a high take-up of training, though primary middle managers, whose need may be greater, have only an average take-up. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers covers key topics and is evaluated positively, although participation has sometimes been low. However, areas for further development, where the Trust has been slower to respond, include the brokerage of external training provision, the use made of advanced skills teachers, and the dissemination of expertise from beacon and specialist schools.

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## Section 3: Special educational needs

### Summary

140. The overall strategy for meeting special education needs (SEN) has served schools and pupils reasonably well in the past, and some aspects of the Learning Trust's work are currently satisfactory. However, the strategy is insufficiently detailed for present needs and is therefore now unsatisfactory. Work is under way to establish a new way of meeting present and emerging needs. Statutory obligations are met securely and the support to schools to improve their own capacity to manage SEN has improved. However, the central SEN budget is not yet under control and the requirements of value for money are not currently met. Weaknesses in that area are having a detrimental effect on provision for some children with SEN. Vacancies for speech therapists have been frozen and sensible changes to the criteria for home to school transport have been implemented too quickly. Progress on the recommendations of the last inspection report has been inconsistent: sometimes slow but broadly sufficient.

### Strategy

141. In 2000, the strategy for SEN was satisfactory. However, the current strategy has been in place since 1999 and the Learning Trust intends to consult this term on a new strategy, covering the period until 2007. The main priorities for action are identified, but the specific targets and timescales for development, and the cost of implementation, are not known precisely. The Trust's planning for future improvements is therefore currently unsatisfactory.

142. The proposals build on a satisfactory evaluation of activities and developments between 1999 and 2003. They take careful account of a recent and thorough analysis of need which shows that Hackney does not have sufficient provision for the known growth in the numbers of children with complex needs, those on the autistic spectrum and those with speech and language difficulties. The draft strategy proposes an increase in inclusive provision, a review of the role of special schools, an increased emphasis on early intervention and a reduction in the reliance on statements by delegating funds to schools. Schools are responding positively to these proposals.

143. The Learning Trust has yet to identify, and share with schools, targets, resourcing and timescales for key developments. For example, an analysis of placement and need shows that 29% of pupils with statements attend out-of-borough or independent nurseries, mainstream and special schools, often because the provision required is not available within Hackney. The proposed strategy is to reduce the reliance on out-of-borough and independent school places through, for example, increased provision in secondary schools and the development of special schools to meet complex needs and support inclusive schooling. Special schools are keen to be involved in further discussion to take these proposals forward. However, there are no firm proposals about where further provision will be located and which needs it will meet. Similarly, there are no targets for a reduction in the number of out-of-borough and independent school placements or in the amount of

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money to be saved or redirected into new provision. Furthermore, it has not been made clear how special schools will be funded to support inclusive schooling.

### **Statutory obligations**

144. When last inspected, the LEA was taking reasonable steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN. The Learning Trust continues to do so and the capacity for further improvement is sound.

145. The percentage of children with a statement of SEN is broadly in line with the national figure for primary schools, but well above that for secondary schools. In 2002, 60% of statements issued for the first time were prepared within the recommended 18 weeks, excluding those involving other agencies. This is in line with the national completion rate and the rates of similar authorities. Between April and August 2003, this increased to 100%. Where other agencies are involved, 73% of statements were issued within the recommended time. Progress in completing statements is monitored effectively on a monthly basis and the Learning Trust is working with other agencies to reduce the time taken to provide their advice. Statements specify clearly the provision necessary to meet a child's needs. Arrangements for making, reviewing and amending statements are satisfactory and the Learning Trust acts promptly on recommendations from annual reviews.

146. Criteria used for making statutory assessments are consistent with the original Code of Practice and schools have been provided with appropriate guidance. The Learning Trust is participating in a regional review of criteria in the light of the revised Code of Practice. It has established a pre-assessment panel that meets fortnightly to consider requests for statutory assessment, but this system does not always work effectively. The number of appeals to the SEN tribunal panel, often relating to decisions by the pre-assessment panel not to assess a pupil, is high and takes up a substantial amount of officers' time. The Trust is attempting to improve the initial information provided by schools in order that all significant evidence is available to the pre-assessment panel.

147. Parents involved in the assessment, statement and annual review processes receive helpful advice and support from the parent partnership scheme which maintains a suitable degree of independence from the Learning Trust. The scheme is publicised widely to parents and schools and provides a variety of informative leaflets in a range of community languages. The Trust has established a service level agreement with a local association for carers to provide an independent parental supporter.

148. Consultation is belatedly about to begin on a draft Accessibility Strategy intended to meet the requirements of the SEN and Disability Act 2001.

### **SEN functions to support school improvement**

149. Support to schools to improve their capacity to manage SEN was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. The recommendations focused upon improving the LEA's monitoring and evaluation. Proposed developments lost momentum as the Learning Trust was being established, but sufficient progress has now been made and support is

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satisfactory. Roles and responsibilities have been defined and are increasingly clear to schools. The approach to monitoring, challenge, support and intervention being implemented currently in mainstream schools has been adapted appropriately to special schools and is also being implemented from this term. The capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

150. Action taken by the Learning Trust to monitor the consistency and implementation of SEN statements has been noted above. It is now working to strengthen moderation where pupils do not need a statement, in order to increase consistency across schools and achieve a transparent and fair distribution of resources. A pilot exercise has taken place and training for all special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) is planned for this term. Support for co-ordinators is satisfactory. They report that training is of high quality and that network meetings are productive. A draft new handbook contains helpful information on indicators of good practice and useful materials for self-evaluation.

151. The last report recommended the development of a coherent approach to challenge and support for special schools. Support is now suitably differentiated and well matched to need. The Learning Trust provided effective support to the pupil referral units after identifying them as causing concern. Both have subsequently had positive inspection reports. The Trust is providing similar support to a special school currently. Special schools welcome the inclusion of self-evaluation on this term's agenda for link advisers' visits. The Learning Trust has also increased the emphasis on SEN and inclusion issues in the self-review process for mainstream schools.

152. Support services are managed and allocated centrally. Schools are more positive about the effectiveness of the learning support and educational psychology services than they were during the previous inspection.

### **Value for money**

153. Systems for ensuring value for money in SEN are unsatisfactory. This was the case at the time of the previous inspection and insufficient progress has been made. There is a projected overspend of the central budget. The monitoring of schools' spending on SEN is not yet sufficiently consistent or thorough.

154. Since the last inspection, the SEN strategy has been supported through increased delegation of resources to schools and this is now at a relatively high level. The current deployment of resources is transparent. Alongside consultation on the new draft strategy, the Learning Trust is proposing a fundamental review of formula funding, focusing, in particular, on support to pupils with SEN. This aims to reduce the pressure for statements but no firm proposals have yet been put forward. The Learning Trust intends to implement the new arrangements in April 2005, after consultation. The Trust has recognised that the proposal to increase further delegation requires more secure monitoring of schools' spending than is currently the case. It introduced a new system at the beginning of July 2003 designed to focus on schools' use of resources. However, at the time of the inspection not all schools had returned the required information on spending. It also published a timetable of future developments necessary to enable an evaluation of the cost effectiveness of provision in relation to pupil progress.

155. The LEA had a high-cost SEN function before the establishment of the Learning Trust. Despite a significant increase in the SEN budget for 2003-4, an overspend is projected. The budget for home to school transport has been regularly overspent. The Learning Trust is attempting to make financial savings within the current year by implementing the recommendations of a recent review of school transport and by freezing vacant posts. However, some of the posts frozen are those that are most needed, for example for speech therapists. Both this and the transport review are having a detrimental effect on provision for a minority of children with SEN. A more rigorous enforcement of existing criteria for entitlement to transport was implemented very quickly, and although the changes themselves are sensible, parents and children were given very little time to make alternative arrangements. The Trust intends to review support for all pupils and to develop support for pupils to become independent travellers. In the meantime there is evidence that the transport problem is affecting the rates of attendance of a very small number of younger pupils.

***Recommendation***

**In order to inform the future development of policy on home to school transport for pupils with special educational needs:**

- monitor the effect of the change in the home to school transport policy and take action where the effect is detrimental to the attendance of children.

156. The learning support and educational psychology services use annual surveys to assess schools' satisfaction. In the case of the psychology service this has clearly resulted in changes to the way in which time is allocated to schools. However, the Learning Trust is not yet able to judge the effectiveness and value for money of its support services for SEN. It does not have sufficient information on the progress made by individual pupils in relation to the support allocated.

***Recommendation***

**In order to improve value for money in SEN:**

- establish procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of support services, with particular reference to the progress made by individual pupils in relation to the support allocated.



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## Section 4: Promoting social inclusion

### Summary

157. Strategies to promote social inclusion have some strengths, but they are not fully effective. The council and the Learning Trust have not yet solved the problems of social exclusion experienced by various groups of young people in Hackney. Progress has been made in using data to identify need and in obtaining support from external agencies. Work with partners has considerable promise, and the planning being developed within the Learning Trust is well conceived. Nevertheless, there are still major issues concerning the effect of ethnicity and gender on the achievement of young people. The progress made in recent years in providing for pupils without a school place, and in helping schools to promote better attendance and behaviour, is creditable, but contrasts with the continuing weakness in provision for looked after children.

### The strategy to promote social inclusion

158. The council and the Learning Trust's strategies to promote social inclusion are not yet having sufficient effect on pupils' achievement.

159. The mayor's priorities are explicit about the need to challenge under-achievement and support the most vulnerable children. This commitment is also expressed in the council's corporate plan and the local strategic partnership's objective of tackling social exclusion and deprivation. Much external funding has been attracted to the borough to support regeneration, and there is a significant educational element within this, targeted at certain parts of the borough.

160. The Learning Trust's contract and its annual plan are imbued with a commitment to social inclusion, and the EDP is founded on the principle of identifying and meeting the needs of particular groups that under-achieve. Good use of data by the Trust has shown the need to target pupils not fluent in English, those newly arrived in school, and certain ethnic groups. The EDP provides mechanisms for doing this. The Trust's capital investment strategy intends to provide new schools in parts of the borough that, at present, have too few good facilities, and in particular, to improve opportunities for boys. The new system of task groups to channel support to schools causing concern is rightly seen as a way of boosting the performance of the weakest schools. Support to schools to extend their out-of-hours provision holds much promise.

161. The Trust has now produced a strategic paper that shows how all the initiatives currently in hand will be supported by a broad-ranging attempt to improve teaching and learning in the interests of all pupils. The Trust also expects to encourage schools to extend their work and become a point of focus for local communities. In addition, the 14-19 strategy is designed to offer broader opportunities to disaffected young people.

162. Taken together, this range of work shows vision and purpose. However, much is at a very early stage, and weaknesses remain. The early years strategy is unsatisfactory, as explained elsewhere in this report. The use of external funding is insufficiently well co-

ordinated. The council's oversight of children who are particularly vulnerable, that is, those being looked after, is inadequate. Strategic planning with the Social Services Department is under-developed. Links with minority ethnic communities, although developing, are not yet comprehensive. Finally, much has to be done to realise the potential of schools and the Trust to tackle under-achievement by transforming teaching and learning and enhancing the schools' curriculum. Overall, therefore, although the strategy to promote social inclusion has strengths, it requires much work before it will be comprehensive and convincing.

### **The supply of school places**

163. The planning of school places was judged to be effective and improving in the last inspection. It remains highly satisfactory, and the capacity for further improvement is secure.

164. The Learning Trust has shown good leadership in using school reorganisation to improve education in Hackney. There is considerable cross-borough movement at secondary transfer: thirty per cent of Year 6 pupils go outside the borough for their secondary education. Apart from the traditional cross-borough movement to denominational schools, this exodus is also due to the perceived poor quality of some of the borough's secondary schools, and to the relative lack of mixed provision. To address this, the Trust has established close and effective links between its school improvement strategy, its school organisation plan and its asset management strategy. A key plank of the Learning Trust's secondary strategy is to increase the number of mixed non-denominational places available in order to retain more pupils in borough. It plans to build three new academies over the next five years.

165. The Learning Trust has made a decisive start by closing one secondary school which had a high level of surplus places and required special measures following inspection, despite considerable opposition locally and from some groups on the School Organisation Committee (SOC). This was a sensible decision given the extremely low number of pupils choosing the school, but it exacerbated the overall lack of secondary school mixed places and had an adverse effect on other mixed schools, which had to take additional pupils in September 2003.

166. As a result of the parental preferences noted above, there were about 100 Year 7 pupils without a secondary school place in mid-September 2003, a little higher than in previous years. All had been informed of available places elsewhere, but many were waiting for places in their preferred school. A school attendance adviser visits those pupils, and seeks to help parents find a place urgently. The shortage of Year 7 places should be alleviated in September 2004 when the first new academy opens. The Trust already has initial approval to bid for a second academy on the site of the closed school. However, the planned opening of a new maintained Jewish girls' school has been delayed by difficulties in gaining access to the site.

167. Surplus places in the primary sector have continued to decrease. The Trust is engaged in an effective rolling programme of primary reviews which are focused on reducing surpluses by closing weak or unviable schools. As a result, two weak primary

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schools were closed in July 2003 and arrangements made to expand two popular schools. Consultation on the closures was good and the SOC approved the proposals. There are good relationships with the dioceses.

### **Asset management**

168. In the last inspection, asset management planning was not evaluated in detail, but it was described as improving from a low base. It is now highly satisfactory and has good capacity to improve.

169. Schools in Hackney need a significant level of investment to improve the condition and suitability of the buildings. The council continues to own the school buildings, but is currently unable to borrow the funds for the investment necessary. The Learning Trust has responsibility for identifying and directing investment, and has produced an ambitious property strategy which is focused on attracting external capital investment with the aim of replacing or refurbishing all schools over the next ten years. The plan sensibly concentrates on the secondary schools, where the need is greatest. The strategy has been discussed thoroughly with schools and the DfES. The Trust's capital strategy team is developing effective links with the DfES, both through the London Challenge and the Building Schools for the Future programme, and has made bids for funding the secondary school programme. However, the Trust has not yet identified funding to improve primary school buildings.

170. The capital strategy team has also established good working links with the council's housing and property strategy groups. These are essential in anticipating new demand and identifying sites for new school buildings in a borough with little vacant land.

171. The education asset management plan was judged to be satisfactory by the DfES, though links with the school improvement strategy are not explicit enough. Condition and suitability surveys have recently been updated. The council and the Learning Trust have been successful in attracting capital grants for improving school buildings. These have been used effectively to tackle the worst problems.

172. Schools have been brought into the asset management planning process through the useful annual programme of visits to schools carried out by the property team. These visits focus on helping schools to improve the condition and suitability of their site. They are supported by clear documentation which summarises the work needed and possible funding sources. The visits have been effective in raising the awareness of primary schools of their role in the asset management process. However, not all secondary schools have been visited and they are less well informed. Schools generally spend their devolved formula capital in line with asset management plan priorities, sometimes through jointly funded projects, and this work is monitored effectively.

### **Admissions**

173. The last report judged the management of admissions to be generally effective. It has improved and is now highly satisfactory. The capacity for further improvement is secure.

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174. The Learning Trust is well prepared to comply with the changes in the Admissions Code of Practice and the proposals for co-ordination across London from 2005. It has a co-ordinated admissions scheme for all Hackney secondary schools and primary schools from the September 2004 admissions round. The primary arrangements are new and, although the preparations are good, primary schools have concerns about how well they will work in practice.

175. There are good working relationships with neighbouring boroughs as well as wider links through the pan-London admissions forum. Parents' views are canvassed through the admissions exhibition and appeals hearings, and an exit survey of the September 2003 admissions round is planned. The admissions forum works satisfactorily and includes the headteacher of the new academy which will open in September 2004.

176. The criteria for admissions to community schools are clear and simple, and give priority to children with SEN and looked after children. The Trust has consulted effectively with the governing bodies of voluntary-aided schools and the dioceses to ensure their admissions criteria are easy to understand and fair. A useful protocol on admission of vulnerable pupils will be discussed at the next admissions forum, with the aim of ensuring that these pupils have fair access to all schools. The admissions timetables have been adjusted to fit with the new Code of Practice.

177. The admissions booklets have been substantially revised with the help of the admissions forum and are now much more clear and attractive. Appeals are mostly for places at the mixed community school and those arising from the admissions process are completed by the first week in July so that pupils can visit their new schools. Only 65% of parents applying for a place at a Hackney community school obtained their first preference. However, many had also applied to other admissions authorities, including denominational schools, or to schools in other boroughs.

### **Provision of education for pupils who have no school place**

178. At the time of the last inspection the provision for pupils educated otherwise than at school was sound. In line with the recommendations in the report, the Learning Trust has continued to consolidate this work. Provision is now highly satisfactory and current planning indicates a sound capacity to improve further.

179. Provision for excluded pupils or those at risk of exclusion is good. A wide range of school-based support is available to prevent pupils from being excluded. When necessary, schools work closely with Learning Trust officers to ensure that procedures are used appropriately. Few decisions to exclude a pupil are later overturned. Officers from the Trust regularly attend disciplinary meetings held by governing bodies, and make a comprehensive analysis of exclusions data.

180. Procedures are in place so that pupils who are permanently excluded benefit from good quality, full-time education, from the first day of exclusion, at the primary and secondary pupil referral units (PRUs). Both PRUs have management committees and the progress of excluded pupils is carefully monitored. Pupils are successfully reintegrating into mainstream schools from the primary and secondary PRUs through planned

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programmes. Following exclusion, a meeting is convened with the parents or carers, the Learning Trust and the head of the PRU, to set targets and agree a plan that will support pupils towards successful reintegration into mainstream education whilst admission to another school is being sought. Excluded pupils are given priority in admission to schools. Full-time provision is also available for pupils on fixed term exclusions. The level of these exclusions in the authority is appropriately monitored.

181. A wide range of alternative provision is in place at Key Stage 4, and the Learning Trust maintains quality assurance of this. This is available for pupils at risk of exclusion and those at the secondary PRU whose needs may be best met through vocational and work-related learning. Referrals are made through a multi-agency panel which matches pupils' needs to provision, and monitors their attendance and progress. Schools speak highly of the quality and range of the programme available. EAL courses are also provided for Key Stage 4 pupils who are new arrivals to the country and who require such provision.

182. Pupils with medical needs that prevent them attending school receive home tuition for at least five hours per week. This may increase as pupils are more able to take advantage of a higher level of provision or are preparing for examinations. The service has established links with other agencies to improve referral procedures, and an SLA is in place with the Connexions service to ensure that pupils receive appropriate career support.

183. The Learning Trust maintains a database of children whose parents choose to educate them at home. Comprehensive guidelines are provided for parents. The nature of the provision is monitored routinely by advisers.

184. Since the establishment of the Learning Trust, schools are more positive about the future. They are working effectively in partnership with the Trust to support pupils who have no school place, and excluded pupils are regularly admitted by schools. Schools have confidence in the multi-agency panel and the programme of alternative provision provided.

## **Attendance**

185. At the time of the last inspection, the LEA's support to schools for improving attendance was satisfactory. The Learning Trust has since met the recommendations of that report. Although attendance levels remain lower than national averages they are improving, and provision is still satisfactory.

186. The Learning Trust made a fundamental review of the work of the education welfare service last year, resulting in a reorganisation of the service. It is now known as the education attendance service and has a clearer focus on addressing school practices and procedures to improve attendance and achievement. A separate team within the service will manage individual case work. Although the Learning Trust already uses its legal powers of prosecution, the new service is better prepared to make speedier use of this option in the future.

187. The LEA, and latterly the Learning Trust, have provided clear guidance to schools on registration and attendance. This includes procedures for following up children who

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might not be on school rolls or are long-term non-attenders. Sound guidance is given to schools about the circumstances in which pupils might legitimately be removed from the school roll. The procedures are thorough. The decision is taken only when there is concrete evidence that the pupil has changed school, or when a range of possibilities have been explored by both the school and the service and when checks have been made with the social services department and the police about potentially vulnerable pupils. These procedures are used consistently by schools.

188. Hackney experiences high levels of mobility, but there are clear procedures for admitting and following up pupils needing a school place mid-term. They are supported well by two full-time admissions staff and placements are monitored closely. All applications are registered on a central database which is regularly circulated to schools for updating as they admit pupils. The list is regularly reviewed and where there is evidence that the pupil is not on a school roll, the parents or carers are contacted to establish if pupils are attending school. There is close liaison with neighbouring LEAs.

189. The school attendance advisers work closely with schools to follow up those pupils with attendance problems. Each school and pupil referral unit has an allocation of service support which is appropriately based on need and delivered through SLAs. Named attendance officers have been allocated to work with pupils attending schools in other LEAs. Schools follow up unexplained absence with a first day telephone call but, if absence continues or is persistent, the service makes a home visit, sometimes accompanied by a police officer. The Learning Trust provides in-service training on registration and attendance law and has taken robust action where it is demonstrated that there are attendance issues within a particular school. Schools value the traditional work of the education welfare officer and some express concern over the change to the education attendance service.

190. The education attendance service works well with the police on truancy sweeps and home visits regarding school attendance. In addition, a very effective partnership with positive outcomes is being built around the Safer Schools Project which focuses on improving attendance, and on reducing street crime and disorder around targeted schools.

191. The education attendance service makes close checks on school registers. It analyses school attendance data, and has also used information from Ofsted's school inspection reports to good effect in informing practice and targeting support to schools. In addition, effective survey work has been undertaken to highlight differences in attendance rates between the different ethnic groups and to examine the factors which influence attendance. There are now agreed working procedures through which link advisers address issues of attendance in specific schools which are causing concern.

192. Attendance issues have a high profile within the authority and schools are very aware of the need to promote attendance. They use a range of strategies to increase attendance rates and frequently use additional funding streams to add to this work. Both authorised and unauthorised absence levels are reducing.

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**Behaviour support**

193. At the time of the previous inspection, behaviour support to schools was unsatisfactory. The report recommended that the LEA should develop, in consultation with schools, a comprehensive behaviour support strategy. This has been implemented, steady progress has been made, and provision is now satisfactory. The range of initiatives in place to support behaviour management, together with the new Behaviour Support Plan (BSP), provide a sound platform for further improvement.

194. A new BSP has been drafted in consultation with a range of stakeholders, and provides a good foundation for partnership work. It describes the various types of behaviour support available to schools and individual pupils and explains how schools can obtain support. The BSP establishes a framework and a set of expectations within which schools and the Learning Trust can work together. The links with the other strategic plans are clear; for example, the EDP includes work to improve pupils' engagement in education, and the 14-19 strategy supports the work of schools in managing behaviour.

195. A range of behaviour support is available to schools from external funding for EiC, the behaviour improvement programme, and the EAZ. Support is also available from the learning support service and by outreach from the primary PRU. The number of excluded pupils is slowly reducing. However the rates of exclusion are still high for certain groups, such as Caribbean heritage boys. A good, varied range of initiatives is available, targeting particular groups of pupils, families or schools, involving work with community groups, voluntary organisations and the police service. Significant amongst these is a scheme for community mentoring of Black young people. Together, these initiatives are beginning to address some of the wider issues of vulnerability and social exclusion.

196. During the year in which the Learning Trust has been in operation, it has taken decisive action, when necessary, to address the needs of schools and pupils with poor behaviour. Existing provision has been reassessed; it has been expanded at secondary level; and a new site has been identified for the primary PRU. The educational psychology service has been reviewed. The reporting and management structures of EiC and the behaviour improvement programme are now more formal and secure. The outcomes from the initiatives are more visible and schools are now positive about the effectiveness of behaviour support.

**Health, safety, welfare and child protection**

197. When last inspected in detail in 1997, these aspects of the LEA's work were poor. Sufficient progress has been made in relation to child protection and this is now satisfactory. The Learning Trust and the social services department of the council are developing an increasingly effective working relationship, although progress until recently was slow and no formal protocols have yet been agreed. Belatedly, schools have received a clear and up-to-date statement on the respective roles of schools, the Learning Trust and the social services department in line with the recommendation in the last inspection report. Limited and slow progress has been made in support for health and safety and this remains unsatisfactory.

198. The Learning Trust recognises that it has much to do in relation to health and safety. It does not currently meet statutory obligations exercised on behalf of the council, but is putting procedures in place to remedy this. It has recently appointed a health and safety manager. A health and safety committee was established at the beginning of 2003 and a draft policy and manual are to be distributed to schools this term. However, risk assessments undertaken by schools are not monitored. This important weakness has been recognised and there are satisfactory plans to address it.

199. There are currently 160 children on the council's child protection register. A principal officer in the Learning Trust has access to the child protection register held by the social services department. Within the Learning Trust, a vulnerable pupils' service has recently been created to give a sharp focus to work with specific groups of pupils that have a high engagement with social services, including children on the child protection register. The Learning Trust is appropriately represented on the area child protection committee.

200. All schools have designated persons for child protection. Guidance and procedures have been up-dated as necessary. Arrangements for the dissemination of new London-wide child protection procedures are in place, and a comprehensive range of training, differentiated to meet the needs of the range of professionals, is provided in collaboration with other agencies. Attendance by designated persons is monitored carefully and cases of non-attendance are followed up.

201. Discussions with headteachers and teachers during the course of this inspection revealed a range of experiences in working with social services from very effective and quick responses to confusion about responsibilities and difficulties in making initial contact.

### **Looked after children**

202. When this aspect was evaluated in the last inspection, it was very poor. It remains poor. Insufficient progress has been made in addressing the recommendations of the previous report, partly as a result of the time taken to establish the Learning Trust, and then to develop an effective working relationship with the social services department. Furthermore, these developments were required during a period when the social services department itself had fundamental weaknesses and was subject to ministerial Directions. However, collaboration between the social services department and the Learning Trust is now improving and the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

203. Hackney council has the statutory corporate responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked after children, but elected members have not discussed this in the last 12 months. This is unsatisfactory. Unusually, the social services department is responsible for providing educational support for looked after children. The Learning Trust is charged with regarding them, along with other groups of vulnerable pupils, as requiring more highly targeted services. It has recently created a discrete service to focus on their educational needs. However, the Learning Trust is not yet fulfilling its responsibility to provide an annual report on the progress of each individual looked after child who is educated in the borough.



204. At the time of the inspection, 251 children and young people of statutory school age were being looked after, of whom 71 were being educated in the borough. During the inspection, the social services department was still in the process of finding out which schools 18 looked after children currently attend. This is clearly unacceptable.

205. Poor progress has been made on two key recommendations in the last inspection report. A unified database on looked after children that includes their educational targets has still not been established. Educational targets for individual looked after children are included in personal education plans where they exist. However, the social services department has not yet produced personal education plans for all looked after children and the Learning Trust does not have copies of those plans that do exist. The Learning Trust's vulnerable pupils' service is working with the social services department to establish reliable and complete information on all those children who are being looked after and educated in Hackney schools. The current lack of this is a significant weakness.

206. The last report also recommended the establishment of a single strategic plan, by April 2001, to ensure that educational targets were achieved through a co-ordinated approach across the council's services, its voluntary partners and its schools. The Learning Trust has supported the social services department in drafting a policy and good practice guidelines that include a clear statement of the expectations that schools, the Learning Trust and social services should have of each other with regard to these children. This development is welcome but it is late. Furthermore, it has not been informed by a specific analysis of what is needed to improve current levels of achievement.

207. Some improvements have taken place: for example, looked after children now have first priority in the criteria for admission to community schools. Schools, in particular secondary schools, report an improvement in the effectiveness of support for children in public care. Despite this, in the school survey, the response from all schools placed that support in the lowest quartile nationally.

### *Recommendations*

#### **In order to improve support for looked after children:**

- urgently complete the development of a reliable database on looked after children that includes school attendance, exclusions, current levels of attainment and educational targets set for each individual child;
- establish agreed protocols to underpin and secure the working relationship between the Learning Trust and the social services in relation to vulnerable pupils;
- establish a single strategic plan to ensure that educational targets are achieved through a co-ordinated approach across the council's services, its voluntary partners and its schools; and
- ensure that elected members have regular opportunities to discuss the educational attainment of looked after children and enough information on which to base future decisions about support and provision.

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**Measures to combat racism**

208. This aspect of the LEA's work was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, although a recommendation was made regarding the frequency of monitoring of racist incidents. The recommendation has been met. However, the Trust's work is now unsatisfactory because of failings in one aspect.

209. Since the last inspection of the LEA, the Commission for Racial Equality has served a Non-Discrimination Notice on the council as a result of an investigation which found that it had contravened the Race Relations Act 1976. The Learning Trust, as well as the council, has to meet the requirements of this Notice.

210. The Learning Trust has initiated a procedure for auditing the ethnicity of the workforce and monitoring the welfare of members of its own staff or schools' staff from the various ethnic groups. It has analysed the first results, which show under-representation of some ethnic groups relative to their proportion in the school population. It will be repeating this exercise quarterly. However, crucially, it has not set equality targets for staffing, and has not undertaken enough positive action to support staff from under-represented groups.

***Recommendation*****In order to promote greater diversity amongst the workforce:**

- the Learning Trust should set equality targets for staffing, and increase positive action to support staff from under-represented ethnic groups.

211. The Learning Trust has, however, acted effectively in several important respects. It has appointed an equalities officer, who works with council officers and the local multi-agency forum, and who encourages and monitors progress in achieving equal opportunities within the Trust and across the school system. The Trust has a forthright policy on equalities, and has made very clear to schools that they too have a legal duty to establish a race equality policy. Schools have been offered relevant training and all have been given some support. All now have such policies. Similarly, the Trust has reminded schools firmly that they are required to provide a summary of any racist incidents that occur, and the Trust is not to blame for the incomplete response that has so far resulted. However, the incident reporting form has some weaknesses, and the Trust does not make sufficient strategic use of the data.

212. Hackney currently lacks a council for race equality, following the disbandment of this body by the Commission for Racial Equality. There is therefore no formal opportunity for either the council or the Learning Trust to consult local community groups. However, the Trust has undertaken significant work that has the potential for influencing community relations. It has supported the transition of several independent faith schools to maintained status, thus promoting diversity within the maintained school system. It has given valued professional support to the Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE), encouraging it to develop a programme of activities that

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can broaden teachers' and pupils' understanding of religious diversity. And most significantly, it has established a supplementary schools forum at which senior officers discuss with representatives of minority communities means of improving support for those groups, and strategic issues concerning diversity and race equality. This forum is valued highly by representatives interviewed during this inspection as an indication of the Trust's commitment to reduce barriers between groups and to promote good working relations between all agencies supporting young people's education.

### ***Recommendations***

#### **In order to further improve community relations:**

- the Learning Trust should establish a standing consultative group concerned with race equality and educational matters affecting minority ethnic groups; this group should call on representatives of the SACRE and the supplementary schools forum; and
- the Learning Trust should organise and encourage further collaboration between mainstream schools, supplementary schools, and other representatives of minority communities.

## **Section 5: Corporate issues**

### **Summary**

213. The corporate context for the provision of support to schools has been transformed beneficially since the last inspection. The Learning Trust has established itself as a forward-looking body with the right priorities. Relations between the council and the Trust are now very constructive; this is to the credit of all concerned. Decision-making within the Trust is calm and well focused on school improvement. The Trust has made rapid progress on developing a range of strategies, but much remains to be done in producing operational plans. There are examples of very good leadership within the Trust, but there has been some inconsistency of quality in the implementation of its work. Elected members have shown maturity in exercising their new role, though there is a need for them to formalise their arrangements, and to improve monitoring the experience of vulnerable children. The council's exercise of its education scrutiny function has shown considerable promise and has earned respect from various stakeholders. The Trust's work with partners has some strengths, but its relationships with stakeholders are not uniformly good, partly because of the speed at which it has had to develop as an organisation and the difficult decisions it has had to make. Its communications are improving, as is its system for consulting schools and other stakeholders. Strategic planning between the Trust and the council's social services department is unsatisfactory.

### **Corporate planning**

214. At the time of the last inspection, corporate planning and the implementation of corporate plans were both very poor. Now, in a vastly different context because of the Secretary of State's Direction, planning for education is highly satisfactory and the implementation of these plans is satisfactory. The last report recommended that education should be given a higher priority within the corporate context, to ensure that the then education department could continue to improve. The report also recommended that schools' budgets should be protected. Through the new arrangements, these objectives have been met in full. This represents very good progress since the last inspection. The capacity for further improvement is also good.

215. The mayor's priorities for the borough give clear significance to education, and to the need for the council to work with the Learning Trust. These priorities are more specific about educational issues than the previous corporate priorities. A number of broad issues are identified that require collaborative work between the council and the Learning Trust. There is a good level of harmony between the objectives of the Trust and these priorities. The Trust contributes well to the work of the local strategic partnership and responds well to its objectives.

216. The Learning Trust has worked rapidly and effectively to establish itself as an organisation. In the early stages it was given strong support by an external consultancy funded by the DfES. This enabled the Trust's leadership to develop a change strategy that focused on the purpose of the new body, and on meeting the many challenges that it faced. There were initial problems, particularly concerning the management of human resources,

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but the success in establishing the Trust in an environment not totally receptive, is of credit to all concerned. The Trust has been very positive in its approach. It has reviewed some of its own functions and, with good use of another external consultancy, has restructured its school improvement work significantly, bringing the organisation of this work better into line with its objectives. It has also created new posts as needs arose: for instance, it appointed a manager for communications as this became an area needing improvement. In its first few months, the Trust was inevitably rather focused on constructing itself; since then, it has become much better connected to the local educational community and is increasingly being seen, as it should be, as offering leadership to schools.

217. The Learning Trust set out its purposes and objectives clearly in its first corporate and annual plan. This is focused on the need to meet the key performance indicators specified in the contract with the council, which are monitored frequently. The Trust recognises that much of its work is long term, as with its effort to promote social inclusion or its capital development strategy. Nevertheless, the Trust maintains an urgent commitment to year by year improvement. It has shown itself to be responsive in the way it clarified some aspects of the plan after it was scrutinised by the council. Equally, in that process, the council demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that planning is comprehensive and effective.

218. After the rush to establish itself and to produce its first annual plan, the Learning Trust has produced a series of policy statements and strategies in a more measured way. Even so, schools have sometimes reeled under the extent of the new developments, but, on balance, the Trust seems to have made the right judgment in going forward rapidly. It now has a portfolio of compacts, strategies and plans in existence or under preparation. These form a coherent body of policy, well attuned to Hackney's needs. At the apex is the *Hackney Learning Compact*, which sets out the Trust's view of the tasks for itself and schools respectively in improving educational provision and standards. This is entirely in line with national policy and is a good foundation for all other work. Good attention has been given to addressing some fundamentals: an equality statement and a race equality policy have been produced, designed to govern the way in which the Trust acts. Serious attention has been given to drawing policies together: the draft secondary strategy provides a clear vision of long-term developments, and is to be followed by a primary strategy.

219. The Learning Trust has a process by which the annual plan is reflected in directorate plans, and then in team plans, which themselves are intended to lead to individual staff objectives. This process, which is designed to establish a link to key high-level documents such as the EDP, is as yet incomplete. Nevertheless, there is a good framework for the development of all plans, and of policy development, using strategic staff meetings which draw in middle managers to work alongside senior staff.

220. There are many positive aspects to the way in which the Learning Trust fits into the wider world of regeneration and recovery in Hackney, and some are detailed later in this report. In general, relationships between the Trust and the council are good at the highest level, with mutual commitment to make the new arrangements work, but with no reluctance by the council to challenge the Trust appropriately when necessary. There is

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much secure operational working between Trust and council officers on cross-cutting initiatives. However, strategic links between the social services department and the Learning Trust are unsatisfactory as they do not lead to joint planning of work concerning vulnerable children.

### *Recommendation*

**In order to improve collaboration between the Learning Trust and the council's social services department:**

- the portfolio-holder for children, families and young people and the chair of the Learning Trust should establish an action plan for improved joint working concerning vulnerable children.

### **Decision-making**

221. Educational decision-making was unsatisfactory when the LEA was last inspected. It is now satisfactory, and the recommendations made then concerning consultation and communication with schools have largely been met. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, and the capacity for further improvement is sound.

222. Negotiation between the council and the Learning Trust is conducted within a secure framework. Decisions are made in the spirit of the contractual relationship: each party has a good understanding of mutual roles. In the early days of the new arrangements, some partners observed tensions in the relationship between council and Trust. This appears to have been more evident in operational working than in strategic decision-making, and it seems to be diminishing as the new systems become embedded and mutual understanding develops.

223. The decision-making process within the Learning Trust is good. Non-executive directors have a significant voice within the board and all, whether council representatives, members of the educational community or independent directors, provide useful challenge to the executive directors. School funding is now firmly protected from pressures on the council's budget, and the arrangements for consulting schools about their forthcoming budgets are sound. The key decisions about educational developments in Hackney, many of them very difficult indeed, are now made by the Trust in a calm and well-informed context, far from the corporate and political turmoil of several years ago. This is a very significant improvement, and is welcomed by the generality of stakeholders. It has led to sound decisions, though some have been tough. In general, the Trust has shown itself ready to act firmly in the interests of children's education, whether in internal reorganisation, closing unsuccessful schools, or supporting changes in school leaderships. This has sometimes left bruises. It is to be hoped that bruising will be less likely in future as such firm action becomes less necessary and the local educational system improves. Sometimes, though, the Trust has rushed change excessively, as with the recent review of SEN transport. It is now in a position to develop a more considered approach to discussing change with schools and other stakeholders.

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224. The board of the Learning Trust has established a stakeholder reference group, to provide advice and oversight. This has slightly lost its way, partly because it has been overburdened with a separate function: namely, its work as a sub-group of the local strategic partnership, concerned with planning the use of regeneration funds. Some of its members also feel that the Trust has been using it too much as a sounding board for its proposed actions, rather than reporting to it regularly and seeking the benefit of its oversight. The Trust is aware of these difficulties and is preparing to resolve them by allocating more time to the group's oversight function in order to increase its own accountability to stakeholders.

225. Policy consultation with schools and the wider community is varied in its effectiveness but has improved since the establishment of the Learning Trust and continues to improve. Consultation with headteachers is now extensive, and uses a good number of standing and working groups. However, schools report that the reference groups set up by the directorates do not always meet as expected and that evaluation of schools' experiences of services does not always lead to improvement. A very good recent example of consultation is a protocol for partnership between the Trust and governors in order to raise standards. This lists clearly the expectations that the Trust and governors can have of each other, and was produced with active participation by governors. Consultation with governors is undertaken through open meetings and discussion with a representative body. However, strategic consultation with chairs of governing bodies does not take place. Efforts have been made to develop formal consultation with parents but these have been unsuccessful.

### *Recommendations*

#### **In order to make consultation with parents and schools more effective the Trust should:**

- fund the establishment of a parents' consultative group, linked to other developments within the Lifelong Learning Directorate; and
- while continuing existing arrangements for consultation with the school governors' association, establish a separate arrangement to meet all chairs of governors at a regular forum, and to discuss strategy with an executive group of chairs chosen by them on a basis of geographical and phase representation.

226. Although communication with schools and the wider community was limited at first, the Learning Trust has improved this significantly. Members of the public can attend the parts of board meetings determined by the board to be of general interest, and minutes of all of its meetings are distributed to schools and made publicly available. The regular bulletin produced by the Trust has been welcomed by schools. Some policy documentation is available in community languages, and some progress has been made in meeting with representatives from minority communities, as reported elsewhere in this report. However, information to support elections of parent-governors is not consistently made available in community languages.

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**The leadership provided by officers and elected members**

227. At the time of the last inspection, the leadership of elected members was poor. In a dramatically changed environment, it is now satisfactory. Good progress has therefore been made and there is good capacity for further improvement.

228. Elected members now have a very limited role in educational provision. Their main tasks are to maintain oversight and scrutiny of the work of the Learning Trust through: approval of the Trust's main plans; non-executive membership of its board; oversight of the contract monitoring process; and formal scrutiny of the education service. Despite its constrained role, the council still maintains a view on the general direction of education in the borough, expressed clearly in the corporate plan and in its work within the local strategic partnership. These general aims are very sound.

229. The mayor and leading elected members have acted with considerable maturity in this unusual situation. The mayor and the executive's adviser for education cooperate well with the leadership of the Learning Trust, and represent appropriately the council's views on strategic direction. The adviser is involved in quarterly meetings of the contract monitoring group, and thus maintains awareness of the Trust's progress towards its targets. However, the executive portfolio-holder does not attend these meetings and information from this process is not reported to the executive or to the scrutiny panel as a matter of course.

230. The education scrutiny panel has approached very seriously its main task of appraising the Learning Trust's corporate and annual plan, and the draft EDP, and passing these to the full council for approval. It has also undertaken a major enquiry into the achievement of Turkish heritage pupils, which has influenced further work undertaken by the Trust. Building on this success, the panel is to go on to enquire into the achievement of Caribbean heritage pupils. These are indications of the vigour of this body and its ability to add value to educational provision within the current arrangements. It has gained respect for this within the educational community. It does not, however, have a forward plan for further work which could help it to establish its priorities.

231. The council has not yet come to grips with its responsibility within the new arrangements for the educational attainment of children in public care. This matter has not been discussed by the executive and neither the portfolio-holder nor the adviser to the executive monitors the progress of these children and reports formally to the executive.



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*Recommendations***In order to establish a more formal structure for its oversight of educational provision:**

- the council executive should ensure that the portfolio-holder for children, families and young people is more involved in oversight of the work of the Learning Trust;
- the council should establish a more formal system through which it will receive reports from its adviser for education or the portfolio-holder for children, families and young people; and
- the education scrutiny panel should produce an annual forward plan for its enquiries.

232. At the time of the last inspection, the leadership of senior officers was highly satisfactory. In very changed circumstances, it continues to be highly satisfactory, and the capacity for further improvement is good.

233. The chief executive of the council has maintained a good relationship with the Learning Trust, and has provided a useful element of challenge. Working with a small team of council officers, he maintains proper monitoring of the Trust's contract and is thereby able to influence its annual plan if necessary. Although not yet tested by any major issues, this system appears to work well.

234. The chair of the Learning Trust has demonstrated a clear sense of purpose and earned wide respect. He has been supported very well by non-executive members of the Board who have brought breadth of view and particular expertise. The chief executive of the Trust, and its corporate management team, particularly the finance director, have given a firm and confident lead in setting up the Trust.

235. The Learning Trust has developed its strategy and established its operational systems rapidly, and sometimes in a very challenging context. In many cases, the operational systems have yet to be fully implemented and tested, but, in some instances, senior officers have acted to improve the provision of services to schools when the skill levels of junior staff have not been satisfactory. Throughout this work, there has been a sharp focus on the key objectives of the Trust. The long-term effectiveness of senior officers will depend on the extent to which they can ensure that what they have already initiated is embedded in the day-to-day work of all the staff of the Trust. As yet, the Trust has not built entirely secure relationships with schools and other partners, although most perceive significant improvement from the previous provision.

236. The majority group of elected members is well briefed by formal and informal contact with the Learning Trust. However, there is no system for ensuring that opposition members are informed regularly of the progress of the new arrangements.

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*Recommendation***In order to ensure that opposition group elected members are well informed:**

- the council should institute a system of routine briefings by the Learning Trust for opposition spokespersons.

**Partnership**

237. At the time of the last inspection, partnership between the LEA and external bodies was unsatisfactory. Good progress has been made and it is now satisfactory. The capacity for further improvement is secure.

238. The council has achieved strong strategic relationships with educational partners through the local strategic partnership. This body has coordinated good working relationships with the full range of statutory bodies and other agencies. The Learning Trust fits well into this framework, and partners now value its contribution after a difficult initial period. New and mutually beneficial relationships are now being formed. The Trust is actively involved in the education group of the local partnership, and also in other related groups such as health and social care, and crime and disorder.

239. There is some good working at operational level with the business community, the primary care trusts, the police and the voluntary sector. The scheme for mentoring of pupils by business leaders is particularly strong. Much of this work is actively supported by the lifelong learning directorate of the Trust, which co-ordinates many of these initiatives and involves partners well in providing extra support and services for schools and pupils.

**Support for early years**

240. Support for early years is unsatisfactory but improving. There is currently no coherent strategy in place that brings together and emphasises the importance of early years provision in raising standards of achievement, promoting social inclusion and ensuring the early identification and intervention for children with SEN.

241. The early years development and childcare partnership (EYDCP) did not get off to a good start in Hackney. It lacked clarity of purpose, members were unsure of their roles and the processes of decision-making were not transparent. The partnership experienced difficulties in drawing up its plans in such a way as to gain DfES approval. The Learning Trust has taken steps to remedy this. It reconfigured the partnership, redefined its membership and held elections which resulted in the director of lifelong learning becoming the chair of the partnership. It also revised the partnership's terms of reference and clarified procedures for reaching decisions. However, there remains understandable confusion and some suspicion amongst providers in all sectors about the intentions of the Trust and about the funding available, how it is obtained and allocated. There is still a lack of clarity amongst providers about the respective roles of the partnership and the Learning Trust, and of directorates within the Trust. Regular meetings of Trust staff from all services involved have only very recently been established in order to ensure that support is targeted to settings that need it most.

242. The EYDCP is demonstrating an increasing capacity to fulfil its role. The partnership is now organised into specialist sub-groups. The SEN and training sub-groups are working well with the Learning Trust to improve provision. The implementation plan for 2003-04 was accepted by the DfES, although it is currently presented in such a way as to be inaccessible to many providers and practitioners. There is now a free, part-time place for every four-year-old whose parent wants one. However, places exist for only 68% of three-year-olds, compared with the government target of 85%. The Trust and the partnership have been slow to acquire sufficient evidence to confirm whether or not more places are actually required.

243. Despite these difficulties, the Learning Trust and the partnership are beginning to demonstrate some shared priorities. The EYDCP is addressing low attainment on entry to primary schools through its work to ensure relevant training for foundation stage practitioners. Through the EDP, the Learning Trust has recognised the need to support teaching and learning in the early years, in order to improve attainment in the foundation stage and Key Stage 1.

### *Recommendations*

#### **In order to improve support for early years:**

- the Learning Trust should work in partnership with stakeholders to establish a coherent strategy that:
  - emphasises and promotes the importance of provision for young children in raising standards of achievement, promoting social inclusion and ensuring early identification and intervention for children with SEN; and
  - clarifies the respective roles of, and the connections between, the early years development and childcare partnership and the Learning Trust, and of directorates within the Learning Trust.

### **Support for 14-19 education**

244. In implementing Hackney's 14-19 strategy, the Learning Trust has established relations with the local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) very successfully. There are regular contacts at various levels and the LLSC has recently allocated significant funding to support the strategy.

245. The Learning Trust has developed good working relationships, not only with schools, colleges and training providers, but also with financial institutions and higher education establishments, in an attempt to raise pupils' aspirations. The link with the Connexions service is developing, for example in seeking to ensure that all pupils in Years 9 to 11 receive information on the full range of provision available in Hackney. Beneficial outcomes of partnership working include: a move to common timetabling arrangements in

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secondary schools to increase the range of option choices; alternative, work-related curricular provision by a range of providers for vulnerable groups of pupils; and the provision of support by the sixth form college and the community college for the former pupils of a secondary school that has closed.

246. There are several signs that the 14-19 strategy and this partnership working are beginning to have positive effects. The progress pupils make from Key Stage 3 to GCSE has improved. The new sixth form college, the three school sixth forms and the community college have all experienced increased numbers on roll, and Hackney's post-16 participation rate is now over 80% for the first time. However, there remain areas for development, all recognised by the Learning Trust. There is a major need to extend the provision of basic skills courses in secondary schools, and the teaching of key skills at 14-19 is not well established. Strategies to improve post-16 course completion rates are limited, as is the use of performance data to track students in the 14-19 sector.

## **Appendix 1: Recommendations**

The report makes a number of recommendations.

The following recommendations should be acted upon as a **matter of urgency**:

### **In order to improve support for looked after children:**

- urgently complete the development of a reliable database on looked after children that includes school attendance, exclusions, current levels of attainment and educational targets set for each individual child;
- establish agreed protocols to underpin and secure the working relationship between the Learning Trust and the social services in relation to vulnerable pupils;
- establish a single strategic plan to ensure that educational targets are achieved through a co-ordinated approach across the council's services, its voluntary partners and its schools; and
- ensure that elected members have regular opportunities to discuss the educational attainment of children in public care and enough information on which to base future decisions about support and provision.

### **In order to embed continuous improvement at all levels of the organisation:**

- ensure that staff at middle management level and below are involved in the development of team plans which specify their own performance objectives and service outputs; and
- ensure that senior managers monitor the implementation and outcomes of team plans.

### **In order to improve schools' management of their budgets:**

- within the limits of the national funding framework, ensure that the new school funding formula is based clearly on current educational need.

### **In order to improve schools' ability to be autonomous and self-managing:**

- promote a reliable and consistent approach to school self-evaluation.

### **In order to improve the human resources service to schools:**

- focus the light touch monitoring visits more sharply on the improvement of school human resources systems.

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**In order to improve collaboration between the Learning Trust and the council's social services department:**

- the portfolio-holder for children, families and young people and the chair of the Learning Trust should establish an action plan for improved joint working concerning vulnerable children.

**In order to further improve community relations:**

- the Learning Trust should establish a standing consultative group concerned with race equality and educational matters affecting minority ethnic groups; this group should call on representatives of the SACRE and the supplementary schools forum; and
- the Learning Trust should organise and encourage further collaboration between mainstream schools, supplementary schools, and other representatives of minority communities.

**In order to promote greater diversity amongst the workforce:**

- the Learning Trust should set equality targets for staffing, and increase positive action to support staff from under-represented ethnic groups.

**In order to make consultation with parents and schools more effective the Trust should:**

- fund the establishment of a parents' consultative group, linked to other developments within the Lifelong Learning Directorate; and
- while continuing existing arrangements for consultation with the school governors' association, establish a separate arrangement to meet all chairs of governors at a regular forum, and to discuss strategy with an executive group of chairs chosen by them on a basis of geographical representation.

**In order to improve the effectiveness of management support services:**

- revise the *Schools Support Services Handbook* to include clear information on Learning Trust service standards, details of the respective responsibilities of schools and service providers, and information on services offered by external providers where these are not available from the Learning Trust;
- ensure this information is available by early January to allow schools to make informed purchasing decisions; and
- monitor service standards across the Learning Trust and survey the views of schools in a co-ordinated fashion.

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**In order to improve support for early years:**

- the Learning Trust should work in partnership with stakeholders to establish a coherent strategy that:
  - emphasises and promotes the importance of provision for young children in raising standards of achievement, promoting social inclusion and ensuring early identification and intervention for children with SEN; and
  - clarifies the respective roles of, and the connections between, the early years development and childcare partnership and the Learning Trust, and of directorates within the Learning Trust.

However, the following recommendations are also fundamental in that they affect the LEA's overall capacity for improvement:

**In order to improve the allocation of funding:**

- audit and identify all additional external funding currently committed to supporting schools and other educational agencies; and
- quantify the extent to which each school or agency is in receipt of such support and ensure that this is appropriate to their identified needs and outcomes.

**In order to improve the use of external funding:**

- the Learning Trust should make detailed plans for how its school improvement programme will be supported by Excellence in Cities, London Challenge, and Leadership Incentive Grant work.

**In order to improve the strategy for school improvement:**

- when making future revisions to the EDP, the Learning Trust should give greater attention to:
  - provision for early years;
  - provision for Key Stage 1; and
  - the use of pupil-level data in setting targets.

**In order to support effective governance:**

- ensure that, in all phases, records of visits to schools are copied directly to chairs of governors.

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**In order to improve the target-setting process:**

- provide link advisers with detailed performance data on individual pupils.

**In order to ensure that the needs of refugee and asylum-seeking children are met:**

- expand the support provided to these children and the schools that they attend.

**In order to inform the future development of policy on home to school transport for pupils with special educational need:**

- monitor the effect of the change in the home to school transport policy and take action where the effect is detrimental to the attendance of children.

**In order to improve value for money in SEN:**

- establish procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of support services, with particular reference to the progress made by individual pupils in relation to the support allocated.

**In order to establish a more formal structure for its oversight of educational provision:**

- the council executive should ensure that the portfolio-holder for children, families and young people is more involved in oversight of the work of the Learning Trust;
- the council should establish a more formal system through which it will receive reports from its adviser for education or the portfolio-holder for children, families and young people; and
- the education scrutiny panel should produce an annual forward plan for its enquiries.

**In order to provide appropriate levels of support for schools when they emerge from categories of serious concern:**

- devise and implement a policy for a graduated reduction in the level of support offered by the Learning Trust.

**In order to provide coherent support for gifted and talented pupils:**

- introduce a system for monitoring all schools' success in promoting the achievement of gifted and talented pupils;
- ensure that link advisers challenge schools to improve their provision where necessary; and
- develop a strategy for supporting talented pupils, building on existing work with partners.



**In order to ensure that opposition group elected members are well informed:**

- the council should institute a system of routine briefings by the Learning Trust for opposition spokespersons.

## Appendix 2: Record of Judgement Recording Statements for the inspection

No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
<b>SECTION 1 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY</b>			
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	7	
2	The performance of schools	7	
3	Funding, including the co-ordination of external funding	1	
4	The LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	3	
5	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	5	
6	The extent to which the LEA targets its resources on priorities	4	
7	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement including Best Value	5	
<b>SECTION 2 SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT</b>			
8	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge, and intervention and shared those understandings with schools	4	
9	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	5	
10	the effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	5	
11	The effectiveness of LEA identification of and intervention in under-performing schools	5	
12	Support to schools for raising standards in Literacy		NI
13	Support to schools for raising standards in Numeracy	4	
14	Support to schools for raising standards in and the curriculum use of information and communications technology	4	
15	Support to schools for raising standards at Key Stage 3	3	
16	Support to schools in raising standards of ethnic minority and Traveller children including the effective deployment of the ethnic minority and Traveller achievement grants	4	

17	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	5	
18	Support for school leadership and management including support for schools effort to achieve Best Value	5	
19	Support to school governors	2	
20	The effectiveness of its services to support school management	5	
20a	Financial services	4	
20b	Human resources	5	
20c	Property services	4	
20d	Services for ICT in school administration	4	
20e	Cleaning and caretaking	0	
20f	Grounds maintenance	0	
20g	Catering	4	
21	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	4	
22	The effectiveness of the leadership of services to support school improvement	5	
23	The effectiveness of the deployment of staff to support school improvement	4	
24	The effectiveness of strategic planning of services to support school improvement	4	
25	The effectiveness of the performance management of services to support school improvement	6	
26	The standard of expertise of staff to support school improvement	3	
27	The effectiveness of services to school improvement	5	
28	Value for money of services to support school improvement	5	
<b>SECTION 3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS</b>			
29	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for SEN	5	
30	The effectiveness of the LEA in taking steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	4	

31	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	4	
32	The extent to which the LEA has exercised its SEN functions to meet the requirements of value for money	5	
<b>SECTION 4 PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION</b>			
33	The overall effectiveness of the LEA in promoting social inclusion	5	
34	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	3	
35	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	3	
36	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	3	
37	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to provision for pupils who have no school place	3	
38	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to school attendance	4	
39	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to behaviour at school	4	
40	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to health and safety, welfare and child protection	5	
41	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to children in public care	6	
42	The effectiveness of the LEA in combating racism	5	
<b>SECTION 5 CORPORATE ISSUES</b>			
43	The clarity, consistency, coherence and feasibility of corporate plans	3	
44	The effectiveness of the procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans	4	
45	The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making (particularly financial decision-making)	4	
46	The quality of leadership provided by elected members	4	
47	The quality of the leadership provided by senior officers	3	
48	The quality of advice given to elected members	3	

49	The effectiveness of the co-ordination of actions in support of priorities involving collaboration between several agencies	4	
<b>OVERALL JUDGEMENTS</b>			
50	The progress made by the LEA overall	5	
51	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	4	
52	The overall effectiveness of the LEA	5	

**JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 1 to 7 point scale:**

- Grade 1 – Very good
- Grade 2 – Good
- Grade 3 – Highly satisfactory
- Grade 4 – Satisfactory
- Grade 5 – Unsatisfactory
- Grade 6 – Poor, significant weaknesses
- Grade 7 – Very poor, fails to provide effective support to schools