INSPECTION OF

HACKNEY

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

November 2000

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

1. This is the third inspection of Hackney LEA carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The two earlier inspections, conducted in 1997 and 1999, revealed significant weaknesses in the work of the LEA. The second inspection, which took place in 1999, noted some improvement, but concluded, “This is an LEA, which is still failing, well over a year after a highly critical first inspection, to provide key elements of the help which schools need. If the LEA can stabilise its management, recruit and retain good staff at all levels and secure its basic systems, then further progress is no doubt possible”.

2. The first and second inspections reported that the education department and the schools had suffered badly from the management difficulties of the corporate centre. In particular, reports noted the negative effects of the lack of a clear priority for education in the council’s strategic planning and the poor service provided by the council’s systems on finance, information and communication technology and in the management of central trading units.

3. Following the second inspection, the Secretary of State exercised his powers under section 497A of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by section 8 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998). He directed the director of education to enter into a contract on behalf of the LEA for the school improvement services and ethnic minority support from 1 July 1999 and 1 April 2000 respectively until 31 July 2002. The contract has been let and the contractor has established a school development and review unit, which is charged with the responsibility of implementing the requirements specified in the contract.

4. This inspection evaluated the progress which had been made in implementing the recommendations of the second inspection. It also inspected the work of the contractor in discharging the school improvement functions, which include the implementation of the Education Development Plan (EDP).

5. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the education department and in other council departments and representatives of the LEA’s partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA’s work was circulated to 74 schools. The response rate was 66 per cent.

6. Inspectors met small groups of headteachers, which included the headteachers of all but one secondary school, about one third of primary schools and all special schools and pupil referral units. Short visits were made to 11 primary and three secondary schools. The views of governors, headteachers and other staff were gained on the key aspects of the LEA’s strategy and whether the support, which is provided by the LEA and the contractor, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school.
 Hackney schools work in a challenging context, with very high levels of cultural and linguistic diversity, pupil mobility and poverty. To be effective in such a context demands high levels of skill from headteachers and teachers. Standards in schools are low but improving. In this context, any weaknesses in the infrastructure of support services make the task of schools even more difficult.

8. This is the third inspection of Hackney LEA in three years, which in itself demonstrates a high level of concern. The two previous inspections depicted an LEA in a parlous state, where basic management and administrative practices were not in place and most services provided poor support to schools. These inspections highlighted the dysfunctional corporate management of the council, which acted as a significant impediment to improvement in education.

9. The inspection found evidence of hard won improvement and, overall, about two thirds of the key aspects of the work of the LEA are satisfactory. The following aspects of the LEA’s work continue to improve and are securely satisfactory:

- performance data;
- literacy;
- numeracy;
- leadership of senior officers of the education department;
- the quality of advice provided by officers of the education department to members;
- human resources;
- admissions and supply of school places; and
- support for school governors.

10. Improvements have been made and support is now, on balance, satisfactory, although fragile and sometimes inconsistent, in the following:

- planning of the school improvement strategy;
- support for information and communication technology;
- support to schools in special measures especially primary schools;
- control and management of the education department’s budget;
- the speed and openness of decision-making;
- support for information and communication technology for administrative purposes;
- strategy for and administration of special educational needs;
- asset management planning;
- support to improve attendance;
- the reduction in the number of pupils excluded from school;
- provision of education otherwise than at school;
- support for ethnic minority pupils; and
- combating racism.

11. The following are unsatisfactory:

- implementation of the school improvement strategy;
• the provision of monitoring, support, challenge and intervention;
• support for school management;
• the council’s corporate planning and financial management;
• leadership of elected members;
• the extent to which resources are targeted on priorities;
• financial support to schools;
• property maintenance;
• the co-ordination of support for behaviour; and
• support for the education of children in public care.

12. The outsourced school improvement functions have been too slow to take effect and are currently, with the exception of support for ethnic minority children, literacy and numeracy, still discharged in an unsatisfactory way. The contractor was not able to establish appropriate staffing for the school development and review unit in the first twelve months. However, a sound interface between the contractor and the LEA has slowly developed, although it still requires continuous attention. The conditions are now set for improvement. Effective senior management has been secured and some recent developments, such as in allocating support in line with need in a transparent way, have potential. Moreover, the contract is largely protected from the uncertainties of the council’s financial arrangements.

13. This inspection, which took place in very unusual circumstances, demonstrates graphically how education cannot isolate itself from corporate difficulties. These difficulties have again created instability for the work of the education department and for schools. The director of education, her deputy and the education finance manager had resigned and were working their notice. In the light of a critical and high budgetary deficit, a notice had been served under section 114(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, curtailing all expenditure across the council. This crisis is one of many which Hackney has faced over recent years.

14. The council has provided some protection of education budgets over the last three years. However, the corporate context still does not provide conditions which are sufficiently stable, secure or supportive to education. This is dramatically illustrated by the current circumstances in the authority. Sudden and unpredictable budgetary constraint across the council has created nervousness and insecurity among teachers. Poor handling of issues, such as those which led to the resignation of the director of education, who was the principal architect of improvement and who had won the trust and confidence of the schools, officers and elected members, impedes progress and undermines schools’ confidence. Too much of the time of senior management in schools is still spent in attempting to compensate for poor performance in some services. The morale of some headteachers is consequently very low, and the recruitment and retention of teachers create significant problems for many.

15. This situation is all the more injurious to morale, because the education department’s current senior management team has provided effective leadership and has successfully brought increasing discipline and stability, together with pertinent and rigorous analyses of the problems. More than that, the team brought a degree of hope to Hackney schools that the LEA was in the process of becoming a source of support, rather than a burden. Elected members and schools had begun
to trust the senior officers and had more than a glimmer of the benefits, which a successfully functioning partnership could bring. What should be a period of stability and consolidation of improvements has become a time of further turmoil.

16. The agenda for improvement set by the previous two inspections has been immense. We found evidence of progress which has been hard won. That progress is not sufficient to enable us to conclude that the LEA is now functioning effectively overall. Nor do we believe that the progress made can be sustained. The resignation of the director of education and her senior colleagues is only the latest in a series of crises resulting from the continuing ineptitude of the corporate management of the council. We do not believe that Hackney LEA has the capacity to provide a secure, stable context for continuous educational improvement. The time has come for radical change.
SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

17. Hackney is among the most disadvantaged boroughs not only in London but also in the country as a whole. The people of Hackney are ethnically and linguistically diverse, highly mobile, predominantly young and much more likely to be unemployed, poor and live in over-crowded housing, than those of other similar boroughs and nationally.

18. Hackney maintains two nursery, 58 primary, nine secondary, five special schools and two pupil referral units. The school-aged population is rising. In January 2000, the school population numbered 18,099 in primary schools, 7,802 in secondary schools, 389 in special schools and 54 in the secondary pupil referral unit. In January 1999, 44 per cent of primary school pupils and 50 per cent of secondary school pupils were eligible for free school meals, with both figures being higher than the inner London average of 40 per cent and 44 per cent respectively. These figures are about three times the national average.

19. In January 1999, over 80 per cent of Hackney's pupils were from black and other ethnic minorities, well above the figure in similar LEAs, and many times the national average. Fifty three per cent of pupils in primary and secondary schools spoke English as an additional language. This is higher than the inner London average of 43 and 42.6 per cent respectively. Over 100 languages are spoken in Hackney schools.

20. There are estimated to be 2,737 refugee children in Hackney schools. Mobility is generally very high, so that of the pupils taking Key Stage 2 tests, one in three had not been at their primary schools for the full four years of the Key Stage. More than one in ten GCSE candidates joined their school during the two years of Key Stage 4.

21. The proportion of pupils of primary school age with statements of special educational needs (SEN) was 1.6 per cent, lower than the figure for similar LEAs (2.0 per cent) and lower than inner London LEAs (1.8 per cent). The proportion of pupils of secondary school age with statements was lower than the average in similar LEAs (3.5 per cent) and higher than the national figure (2.5 per cent). In 1998-99, the percentage of pupils on the roll of a special school was 0.91 per cent. This is higher than the average for similar LEAs (0.77 per cent) and the national average (0.86 per cent).

The performance of schools

22. Standards of attainment on entry to primary schools are low compared with similar LEAs and nationally. Standards are significantly lower than the national average in core subjects at each Key Stage. Thirty-nine and forty-five per cent of primary schools achieve National Curriculum results in Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics respectively which are better than their benchmarked groups. At Key Stage 3 and GCSE, attainment is broadly in line with similar authorities.

23. Standards are rising in core subjects at Key Stages 1-3 and at GCSE. Over the past four years, standards of attainment have generally risen at or above
national rates.

24. The judgements made by OFSTED inspections of schools confirm the general picture of attainment, which is well below national standards and similar LEAs. The quality of education, the climate of the school, and management and efficiency are judged more favourably than attainment. In schools which have been inspected twice, these aspects have greatly improved, although much more so in primary than secondary schools. Nevertheless the percentage of schools rated very good is still lower than that found nationally.

25. Attendance in primary schools in 1999 was 92.6 per cent, marginally below the figure for similar LEAs (93 per cent) and well below the national figure (94.1 per cent). Attendance at secondary school in 1999 was 90.2 per cent, which was in line with the rate in similar LEAs and below the rate nationally.

26. The number of permanent exclusions is not out of line with national figures and is reducing. In line with the national trend, boys of African-Caribbean origin are over-represented in permanent exclusions.

Funding

27. The LEA’s Education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) per pupil is high compared with national and inner London average figures, as would be expected, in view of its high levels of deprivation.

28. Education spending has been falling against SSA in recent years, and in 2000/01 is 98 per cent of SSA. Spending on the main SSA blocks in 2000/01 is 22 per cent for highways, 98 per cent for education, 98 per cent for other services, 113 per cent for personal social services and 154 per cent for capital financing.

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<td>Education SSA (£000)</td>
<td>99,147</td>
<td>103,652</td>
<td>108,704</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education budget (£000)</td>
<td>99,121</td>
<td>102,452</td>
<td>107,586</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget as % SSA</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>99%</td>
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29. Central education spending is moderate and under control. Comparative figures for 2000/01 are not yet available, but in 1999/2000 the pattern of central spending in the LEA was broadly similar to other inner London boroughs, as shown below. Low SEN central expenditure is off-set by high delegation, to give an average overall figure. The above average figure for access is largely due to high spending on home-to-school transport.

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<th>Strategic Management £ per pupil</th>
<th>Central SEN £ per pupil</th>
<th>School Improvement £ per pupil</th>
<th>Access £ per pupil</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hackney</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inner London average</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>232</td>
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<tr>
<td>National average</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>153</td>
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30. During the last two years, the LEA has given priority to schools’ budgets by increasing delegation. Schools’ delegated budgets at £2,813 per pupil in Hackney are below average for inner London (£2,937). The LEA has, this year, raised the
proportion of the schools' budget that is delegated by 13.1 per cent, which is well in excess of the national average of 9.8 per cent. The level of delegation in the authority is now 83.2 per cent, very close to the 83.3 per cent average for inner London and not far below the national figure of 84.2 per cent. This represents a marked improvement in schools' spending power since the last inspection and by comparison with the funding available to schools nationally.

31. Within the overall education SSA, the formula for the local management of schools is comparatively favourable to the primary sector, by comparison with the SSA sub-blocks and other inner London authorities.

32. Resources to provide capital developments in education have increased considerably from around £1.6m 1996/97 to £5.2m in 1999/2000. In addition, vigorous efforts have secured substantial additional revenue and capital resources from a range of grant-related funds, particularly Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), Education Action Zones (EAZs) and Excellence in Cities (EiC). However, due to the council’s financial position the majority of the planned new capital schemes for 2000-2001 have been frozen.

**Council structure**

33. The council works on the basis of an informal understanding between members of the Labour and Conservative parties. The political structure of the council continues to be organised on traditional committee lines, and this includes an education committee. Some time ago, proposals were devised to modernise the political structure, but no progress has been made on consulting on or implementing them.

34. The officer structure has changed since the last inspection. The resignation of the chief executive in 1999 led to a period in which an executive director acted in the post. However, a new managing director has been appointed. Faced with an inappropriate structure left over from “Transforming Hackney” and the loss of several directors of key departments, he has reorganised the departmental structure from 1 September 2000. The new arrangement includes eight directorates of which two, education and community and learning, discharge the functions for schools, and adult, youth and lifelong learning respectively.

35. Changes have been made to the responsibilities of the education department. Most notably, the Children in Public Care Team which helps to fulfil the LEA’s responsibilities as corporate parent for raising the educational attainment of children in public care, will transfer to the social services department. Service directors are expected to take responsibility for specific elements of the corporate agenda. This includes fulfilling roles as neighbourhood champions with responsibility for coordinating elements of activity.

**The Education Development Plan**

36. The Education Development Plan (EDP) has been approved, and statutory requirements are met in a satisfactory way. Appropriate consultation took place with schools, although this was somewhat elongated because of the number of
amendments which were necessary. The priorities of the plan are appropriate and are based on a very detailed audit of school performance. The schools know the priorities, and they perceive them as relevant to their needs. A significant number of schools have related the priorities to their own school development plans. The seven priorities are:

- literacy;
- numeracy;
- management and governance;
- special educational needs;
- teaching;
- behaviour; and
- attendance.

37. The content of activity plans still does not provide a sufficiently clear and incisive strategy. The strategy to address two major areas of under-achievement of boys and of Turkish and African and Caribbean children is not clearly defined and does not permeate activity plans for each priority. The recommendations of the last OFSTED inspection report have only been partially met. The activity plans are cumbersome and complex. Appropriate actions are set out for the priorities, but their differentiation and sequence over the three-year period are not sufficiently sharp. The activity plans now take account of the role of initiatives such as the EAZ and EiC in school improvement work, although this is not consistent for each priority area. EiC and EAZ plans do not always reflect the links with the EDP.

**Implementation of the Education Development Plan**

38. Implementation of the priorities of the EDP varies from good to unsatisfactory. A recent audit of activities reflects considerable slippage, particularly for the priorities of management, teaching and numeracy. Implementation of the activity plan for literacy is good. Activities in relation to governance, special educational needs, behaviour and attendance have mostly met the timescales.

39. The management of the implementation of the EDP has been weak, but is now improving. There is still some way to go before it is consistently satisfactory or clear to all schools. A steering group has been established. Lead officers or an employee of the School Development Review Unit are accountable for implementing each major priority. Increasingly, support and inservice courses are overtly linked to EDP priorities. Schools refer to the EDP in order to find out what the LEA is planning to do, but the document is often not sufficiently clear or accessible for this purpose.

**Excellence in Cities, the Education Action Zone and other strategies for regeneration**

40. Progress in developing and managing national initiatives and regeneration strategies for educational purposes has been very mixed. Although unsatisfactory overall, it has improved in most aspects and shows greater promise. The draft regeneration strategy, developed by the Hackney 2020 partnership, contains a strong, but aspirational educational dimension. The educational component of
regeneration work has increased substantially with the appointment of a coordinator within the education directorate. Good external links have helped support education projects, notably with the Education-Business Partnership, business partners such as British Telecom and the Corporation of London. Effective joint working with East London and the City Health Authority and local trust has ensured that the importance of health in raising standards is clearly understood.

41. The proposal for an EAZ has been re-submitted, this time successfully. In contrast, EiC programmes have had a difficult and fragmented start, and are poor. Ineffectual management and changes in personnel have weakened the impact of this latter initiative. Poor guidance and monitoring have given schools too much latitude, which has, in some cases, resulted in unsatisfactory outcomes. Partnerships between schools to develop initiatives for mutual benefit have proved hard to establish.

42. However, recent developments justify cautious optimism. The EAZ has overcome initial tensions over membership and has the potential to make a difference in schools. The EiC programmes have been re-shaped, with a better strategy for implementation and a successful re-bid for their extension to primary schools. School involvement in the development is now greater. There is an emerging sense in schools that collaboration can be mutually beneficial. Schools continue though to lack confidence that, the planning, though improved, will actually lead to activities which support their main priorities.

43. Although there are signs of improvement, only in a few cases have initiatives been translated into actions which will raise standards. Some good projects, such as family learning developments, mentoring of primary pupils by secondary pupils, and the City Learning Centre, are in place which link initiatives effectively. However, the programmes for most schools do not add up to a set of convincing and coherent practical strategies to raise standards and promote social inclusion. In some cases, they are no more than a source of funds for the school. In others, they absorb precious teaching and management time for little benefit.

**The allocation of resources to priorities**

44. The last inspection noted that improvements in the budget planning in education were overshadowed by the daunting financial challenge facing the whole council. In the event, the council has managed to prevent significant reductions in the education budget and has passed on increases in education SSA to schools. Although it has not achieved its stated aim to fund education at the level of the SSA, it has moved closer in 2000-2001.

45. The education department has successfully implemented the recommendations in the previous OFSTED report to establish a finance team within the department. It has gained control of its own budget against a background of inadequate corporate financial systems. The education finance team has tackled the backlog of work vigorously and made good progress in resolving the disputed and unpaid accounts in schools, and in the difficulties with payroll. The difficulty of working in an inhospitable corporate financial climate, including attempts at council-wide control which were onerous and bureaucratic, has reduced the staffing
available to support and monitor schools, and as a consequence financial management in schools is not secure. (See Section 3, Financial support to schools).

46. There is conscious targeting of education department central funds within tight revenue constraints. The formula for distributing delegated funds to schools is reviewed annually in consultation with them, but a full review based on educational need is overdue.

47. The council does not have a clear capital strategy which sets out its policies for accessing, prioritizing and using funds. To date, such decisions have been based on expediency, rather than sound strategic planning, and this has contributed to the present backlog of repairs on school buildings. The condition surveys show a significant need for expenditure in the second year of the Asset Management Plan (see Section 5), which has not yet been addressed in financial plans. Rather, hope has been placed in the new government capital funding regime. There is significant scope for raising capital through disposals which needs to be seriously addressed to bring the education property portfolio up to standard. Failure to do this will result in a continuing drain on schools’ finances as they seek to conduct major repairs from their own resources on building elements overdue for replacement.

48. The last inspection report commented that it was difficult to see how education could be isolated from the potential for budgetary failures across the whole council. This is aptly illustrated eighteen months later by the council’s current difficulties. This inspection took place against a rapidly changing situation of financial turmoil in the council. The council’s treasurer issued a notice under section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 on 17 October 2000 to stop all uncommitted expenditure. The council’s spending was out of control and well beyond its financial resources. A special council meeting was held on 6 November to agree reductions to the council’s budget and put in place controls and corrective action. Cuts will be made in the education budget through reductions in expenditure for early years, the portage service and a moratorium on appointing vacant posts within the education department and its services until April 2001.

49. The managing director reported to that council meeting that the budgetary crisis is “a serious condemnation of the management practice and approach across most of the council” but that “the education budget stands out as being managed to within the targets that members set.” The extent of the council’s budgetary difficulties has created widespread concern and insecurity about the future in schools. The chair of education wrote to schools on 31 October 2000, stressing the council's determination to protect schools' budgets and Standards Fund monies in 2000/2001. The letter apologised for disruption to schools caused by the section 114 notice.

50. Schools’ delegated budgets are unaffected by the section 114 notice, but expenditure where there is matched funding from the council, including elements of the Standards Fund and the SRB, are affected. For these activities, schools are prevented from filling vacancies, and must let agency and temporary staff go. In some cases, school transport and provision for pupils with SEN have been affected. An essential step, because of the strict conditions and implications of the section 114 notice was to give stark warnings to headteachers about their personal liability
for expenditure incurred in contravention of the notice caused alarm during the half term break preceding this inspection.

51. The education finance manager and two other senior members of staff in the finance team are currently working their notice. Three temporary members of staff were released due to the section 114 notice. This makes the work of the education finance team vulnerable, and it is important that this team is bought up to strength quickly. Not to do so will risk inadequate monitoring and control of school and education budgets. Filling these vacancies before April 2001 will require special agreement from the managing director under the terms of the section 114 notice.

Recommendations

In order to improve the strategy for school improvement and its implementation:

- use the very recently created initiatives board, including representatives of headteachers, to coordinate initiatives and identify good practice; and

- devise short and straightforward termly briefings of the inservice and other activities taking place, the prospective audience, how the activities can be accessed and how these may lead to future developments to improve the focus of activity plans and communication and coherence of school improvement initiatives.

In order to strengthen the existing work on monitoring and control of budgets for education:

- ensure that the education finance team is appropriately staffed in a way which continues to build on the improvements which have already been made; and

- take steps to ensure that improvements and developments in education can be isolated from potential budgetary failures across the council.
SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention

52. The contractors’ planning documents show a shift in the rationale and relationships between schools and school improvement support services which is in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice for LEA-School Relations. Translating this written statement into effective working practices in Hackney requires a substantial shift of culture. It necessitates a shared understanding with schools that they are autonomous and self-improving, and that their progress is monitored and challenged by school improvement services. Support will be applied in inverse proportion to success and, apart from schools which are causing concern, school support is largely brokered, where necessary, with the advice of school improvement services, and purchased by the school.

53. Schools are not clear about the way in which monitoring, challenge, support and intervention are to be provided. Provision is better in primary schools than in secondary and special schools, where arrangements have been fragmented, inconsistent and inadequate. However, in primary schools, challenge, support and monitoring depend largely on the individual contributions of link consultants. Their contribution has not been guided by a clear definition of functions. Support has been provided on demand and not on the basis of an analysis of need. In the primary schools visited, the contribution of the link consultant is helpful and in particular, in providing good support, particularly for post-OFSTED action planning, target-setting and school self-review. In the best examples, this support is also challenging. Examples of written feedback illustrated that pertinent issues were highlighted and appropriate targets set for improvement.

54. In the week of the inspection, new proposals, devised in consultation with schools, provide a clear system for monitoring primary school performance statistically. The identified school needs are related to an indicative allocation of school development and review link consultant time to primary schools in a clear and transparent way. The proposed system makes good use of the statistical performance data. It also collates the evidence available across the whole education department in a way which provides a good basis for statistically monitoring schools’ performance on a range of indicators in order to inform the LEA of any need for intervention. On the basis of this information, schools are assigned to one of four broad bands, with an indicative allocation to advisory support in proportion to need.

55. These proposals have received a very varied response. Some schools visited found difficulty in understanding the significance of arrangements and resented the way in which classifications had been made. For the most part, however, the schools saw the developments as a step in the right direction in clearly highlighting the schools’ needs and allocating link adviser time in a way which can be readily understood.

56. The contractor has an appropriate grasp of how these early developments may be developed into a sophisticated, holistic system. The schools’ own procedures for school self review will confirm the statistical monitoring so that there is shared
understanding of schools’ needs. This should be translated into more tightly focused school development plans and inform better procedures for contracting of purchased support. Similar developments are planned, but as yet not fully developed, for special and secondary schools.

The management of services for school improvement and the contractual arrangements for out-sourcing of school improvement functions

57. The contract for these services specifies the following areas:

- provision of advice and guidance from a position of expertise on school improvement issues; and
- responsibility for the formulation of policy on school improvement; and
- dissemination of good practice.

58. Key performance indicators are specified which cover the following service elements:

- educational planning;
- school development planning;
- support to schools causing concern;
- education standards;
- professional support to teachers;
- school leadership and management;
- ethnic minority achievement; and
- support services including the management of external funds.

59. The school development and review unit has been too slow to establish the organisation and delivery of effective support for schools. Clear management plans have been developed on an annual basis, as required by the Secretary of State. These translate the contractual obligations and key performance indicators into a workable programme for implementation. Support to primary schools and for literacy, numeracy and for raising minority ethnic attainment has been at least satisfactory. Support for secondary and special schools has been inadequate and plans to secure a framework of effective support are still unclear. A consultant for special educational needs has recently been appointed, but the similar post for secondary education is filled on a temporary basis.

60. Not all timescales of the original plan, devised until March 2000, have been met and some are still outstanding at the time of the inspection. In particular, the following developments have been delayed:

- late approval of the EDP;
- the introduction of a new system of school self-evaluation, although draft guidance had been circulated in February 2000, the finalised version was circulated to all schools in the week of the inspection and inservice training courses on school self review were offered during the summer term;
- monitoring of the schools’ compliance with the National Curriculum – particular areas of weakness include information and communication technology (ICT) which is a priority for the LEA and for which there has
been considerable recent investment, and science where National Curriculum assessments show significant weaknesses;

- implementation of a comprehensive management development programme. In particular, new headteachers have received no induction and have not been allocated mentors;
- monitoring and support for primary schools have been satisfactory although a suitable framework for the allocation of support, monitoring, challenge and intervention has only recently been circulated to primary schools. Arrangements for secondary and special schools continue to be insufficient.

61. Currently, two major key performance indicators are not being met. These include the operation by all schools of a process of school self-evaluation (although a recent framework has been circulated in the week of the inspection). Secondly, there is no process for disseminating good practice in teaching and learning which is accessible to all teachers and recognised by them as effective. Shortfalls also exist in the continuing professional development programme to meet the needs of headteachers and other senior managers and also for all teachers, especially in science and ICT, although the programme overall has gradually improved.

62. The contract is understandably a complex document. Responsibility for matched funding of the Standards Fund was not clearly specified. Nevertheless, other difficulties have been comparatively minor and have been solved in a process of negotiation. The key performance indicators, however, are not sufficiently tightly specified.

63. On letting the contract, the contractor made early progress in establishing and consulting on a suitable structure for the unit and in assessing and developing the competencies of staff who transferred under the contractual arrangements. However, leadership of the school improvement strategy has been poor and has changed three times over the contractual period. A period of consistent and satisfactory management assisted the development of the contractual interface with the LEA. New leadership of the strategy for school improvement has only been appropriately secured since September 2000. The current postholder has the necessary expertise and experience and has worked to ensure that lost time is being made up. Schools have welcomed the appointment, and recognise that developments are at long last coming to fruition. However, high expectations are placed on the ability of this postholder to tackle several significant issues and, in addition, to provide weekly support to the interim management of a secondary school in special measures.

64. Staffing has been too changeable and fragmented to be able to work effectively in the volatile context of Hackney. This has not helped in the development of a coherent approach to supporting schools. Communication with schools about the difficulties and prospective developments has been poor. With the exception of literacy, numeracy and ethnic minority support, other senior posts have only been filled since September 2000. There are still two vacancies for a senior secondary consultant and a professional development and training consultant. The contractor has faced difficulties in attracting suitable staff, particularly for the post of special educational needs consultant, but, this does not account for the delay in placing
advertisements for key posts. Postholders, therefore, have only taken up post in September instead of by Easter, as they might have done. The contractor has now appointed consultants who have relevant and senior management experience in schools.

65. The interface with the LEA and other services of the education department is now satisfactory, although this has not been easy and has taken considerable time and effort on both sides. Outsourcing of the school improvement functions has considerable implications for the linkages and mutual dependencies with other aspects of the LEA’s work and services. To be effective, these linkages have had to be made explicit, analysed and developed into a clear system of workable protocols. This early work is beginning to come to fruition, although it still needs continuous nurturing and scrutiny. The relationship between the education department and the contractor is now appropriately developing the characteristics of partnering arrangements, rather those of a client-contractor. The school development and review unit manager is a full member of the education department’s senior management team. The emergence of a clear monitoring framework for primary schools and of improved arrangements for supporting schools causing concern shows that this coordination across all services is now working well. The schools visited reported few problems.

66. Regular meetings between representatives of the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), the education department and the contractor have scrutinised the operation of the contract. This has been an effective and appropriate scrutiny which, while it has not always been comfortable, has helped to ensure appropriate working relationships and the improved discharge of contractor’s obligations. Schools have not been involved in the arrangements for contract monitoring.

67. This is the first direction by the Secretary of State to outsource a service. Clearly, much has been learned which is of wider benefit nationally, although this will not be of much comfort to the schools of Hackney. Advantages include the flexibility to respond to new priorities and needs, although this advantage has not been used sufficiently profitably to date. The contractual arrangement has also provided a degree of protection from aspects of council mismanagement, as illustrated by the current financial crises and senior management changes.

68. After a very difficult start, arrangements are now on a better foundation and appropriate developments are taking place. There is now sufficient evidence, with the proviso that current staffing remains stable and vacant posts filled, of capacity and capability to improve.

**Performance data**

69. The LEA’s provision of performance data is effective and almost universally valued by schools. All the recommendations in the previous report have been addressed, and a comprehensive analysis of data has been produced for every school as part of Hackney’s autumn package. The data is drawn from a wide range of sources, including inspection reports and DfEE evidence, of local and national comparisons. Target-setting in schools has been significantly improved as a result of
access to a range of data. The link consultants have been able to challenge primary schools over the interpretation of performance statistics.

70. Training sessions have been provided for both headteachers and governing bodies on performance data, and guidance notes provided to support the interpretation of national and local statistics. The use of performance data has been developed on courses provided for senior and middle managers in primary and secondary schools using OFSTED materials on school self-evaluation, linked to the Hackney framework.

**Support for literacy**

71. Support for literacy is satisfactory. The improvements noted at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Satisfactory progress has been made on the implementation of recommendations from the last inspection. The progress made is confirmed by the positive response of schools in the school survey.

72. Provisional results for the year 2000 indicate that the LEA has met its target for literacy in Key Stage 2. Strategic planning for literacy within the EDP is appropriate. Attention has been paid to the key issues of the attainment of ethnic minority pupils and pupils with special educational needs. A strategy has been produced to close the gap between schools and targets for 2001 in literacy. Criteria for the identification of schools receiving intensive support have been clarified and agreed.

73. Training, which is well regarded by schools, now includes SENCOs and support teachers for SEN and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service. Training is planned cooperatively across services and a small sample was observed by HMI, and judged to be good. Opportunities to share good practice are developing.

74. Good progress has been made in developing and extending the National Literacy Strategy into Key Stage 3. A consultant has recently been appointed and a strategy produced and incorporated into the EDP. Schools have been introduced to the implications of the National Literacy Strategy for Key Stage 3, and three schools are piloting literacy programmes in Year 7. Four secondary schools ran summer schools in 2000. An audit of literacy has been conducted and training identified as a result. Headteachers speak with enthusiasm of the work undertaken by the secondary consultant.

75. The literacy team has been assimilated into the school development and review unit. There has been a turnover of staff and a reduction to the central team over the year. Nevertheless, management arrangements have improved. Coordination between the literacy team and school development and review consultants attached to primary schools has improved since September 2000. The literacy team works closely with other support teams, the deployment of consultants has improved, and consultants negotiate targets for improvement with schools. Literacy coordinators meet regularly, and eight teachers have been identified as good practitioners across a range of settings. Consultants are well regarded by schools for their expertise.

76. Some limited progress has been made in training librarians and in sharing
information with other providers of literacy initiatives, for example adult education.

Support for Information and Communication Technology

77. The provision of hardware for ICT is good. Targets are being met in line with the post-inspection action plan. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant improvement in both the organisation of facilities in schools through the National Grid for Learning initiative and the provision of inservice training for teachers through the New Opportunities Fund. The implementation plan has been well managed, and schools are generally positive. Most of the development has taken place within the last twelve months. Schools now have internet access and up to date equipment. The ratio of computers to pupils in both primary and secondary schools is in line with national averages, and, in contrast to many other LEAs, no obsolete equipment has been included in the audit.

78. A massive and important investment has been made in hardware, particularly in primary schools, and provides great potential for future imaginative developments. Hackney was the first LEA to install a broadband high speed internet connection to all schools through a partnership with British Telecom. As part of EiC, the LEA has established its first City Learning Centre, based at Hackney College. This is an exciting environment, fully equipped with state of the art hardware and software which supports teaching and learning for both teachers and pupils from all phases. It acts as a base for ICT curriculum initiatives which have been made available on the schools’ intranet.

79. The LEA has provided an appropriate structure for schools to select a suitable provider of training funded by the New Opportunities Fund. Appropriate links have been made to co-ordinate ICT developments with the EAZ, numeracy and literacy strategies and for schools causing concern.

80. The provision now constitutes an excellent foundation for schools to develop teaching and learning in a variety of ways. The use of the provision to improve teaching and learning across the curriculum is, however, still at an early stage of development. The EDP does not adequately reflect the importance of ICT development needs and strategies for curriculum areas beyond the core areas of literacy and numeracy. There is insufficient monitoring of school standards.

Support for schools causing concern

81. Support for schools causing concern is satisfactory for the primary phase but unsatisfactory for secondary. Action has been taken on all the recommendations of the previous inspection. New proposals for statistical monitoring of schools and using this as a basis to allocate support and challenge have the potential to identify difficulties at an early stage and prevent the slide into special measures. Until these proposals are implemented, however, there are no detailed mechanisms to identify and tackle the various issues that could arise.

82. In the last academic year, good progress has been made in reducing the number of primary schools in special measures. Two schools no longer require special measures and a further school has been the subject of is a Fresh Start.
Schools report that they received focused and co-ordinated support, and that the time required for school recovery has not been too long. Effective arrangements for supporting the school include regular meetings of lead officers for relevant services to co-ordinate the support provided by the contractor and LEA services. The schools have received continuing support after the removal of special measures.

83. Currently, three schools require special measures and no school has serious weaknesses. One of the three schools is designated for closure, and good support has been provided to another. However, the remaining school has not made progress. Appropriately experienced interim senior management has not been secured, and the circumstances at the school continue to give rise to serious concern. However, in the week of the inspection, the school development and review unit manager was in the process of securing more suitable alternative management arrangements.

Support for school management

84. Support to school management is unsatisfactory. Little progress has been made in implementing the recommendation to provide coherent and effective support to senior managers, middle managers and teachers in schools, or on the priorities within the EDP. A few aspects of support are sound, and recent documentation suggests that action is emerging, in line with the appropriate activities planned within the EDP. The progress, which has been made since September 2000, has not had time to have had any impact on schools.

85. Primary schools have just received a well-conceived “Framework for Self-Evaluation and School Development Planning”. School development and review consultants attached to primary schools have begun to work in a more consistent way, and have monitored teaching in conjunction with headteachers, provided support to action planning following OFSTED inspections, and in some cases helped monitor and set targets for weak teachers.

86. Appropriate use is made of national training programmes. Seventeen deputy headteachers and nine serving headteachers are currently being supported to undertake national qualifications. A programme of continuing professional development has been published, which relates to the priorities within the EDP and is overseen by a reference group of headteachers. There is a low take-up of courses for management, with 80 per cent of courses being cancelled in 1999-2000. Support for newly qualified teachers has improved and an appropriate range of courses has been well received.

87. New headteachers have received no induction over the last year, other than the support provided by the school development and review consultant in primary schools only. Support for middle management is not planned until April 2001, which is too late. Arrangements to identify and share good practice across schools are in place for literacy, numeracy and SEN but are underdeveloped elsewhere. The planned actions to establish deputy headteacher and subject phase groups have not been implemented.

88. There has been little support for management in secondary and special
schools, and intentions to support primary schools have been poorly communicated and are not perceived by schools as a part of a coherent and consistent approach. The paucity of provision over the past year is unlikely to encourage the stated intention in the EDP to improve and support recruitment and retention of senior staff and teachers.

Support for governors

89. The Governing Body Support Service provides good support. Good progress has been made on implementing the recommendations of the previous report. The EDP action plan has reinforced and extended the range of support services available. There is now better interaction and discussion to set agendas for meetings, which ensure the number of items is manageable. There is a good range of inservice provision, and recent courses for governors have covered their new responsibilities for performance management. Newsheets and briefing papers are clearly set out and informative. However, the lack of an induction guide for new governors is a shortcoming.

90. The service has succeeded in enrolling more LEA governors. It has also provided additional LEA governors and much-valued additional training to schools with serious weaknesses and those in special measures. The clerking service provides good quality guidelines and briefing papers on school performance, as well as standards and schedules of formal procedures and policies to meet statutory responsibilities. However, some shortcomings in communication with governors, for instance over the implications of the section 114 notice for school budgets, have left some governors in doubt. Some documents, such as the EDP, which have been circulated to governors, are barely comprehensible to a lay reader, and no help to governors in discharging their responsibilities.

91. Working relationships between governing bodies and the LEA have improved. There is an improved level of trust and the sense of partnership is slowly developing. Governors and their representatives are clearly concerned that the progress which has been made should not be jeopardised by senior staff changes.

Recommendations

In order to improve support to schools for school improvement, current strategies and initiatives require continuous consolidation to provide a firm, transparent, consistent system. In maintaining, consolidating and developing the current approach, particular attention should be paid to the following:

- maintaining and developing consistent staffing for the school development and review unit;
- implementing the proposals for allocating support and challenge in relation to school need and extending these to include proposals for secondary and primary schools;
- supporting schools in the appropriate use of the investment of ICT hardware to
improve teaching and learning across the curriculum;

- ensuring as a matter of urgency that new headteachers are supported by an appropriate induction and mentoring programme;

- devising and communicating to schools a clear and coherent strategy which draws together various strands for support to improve the management and efficiency of all phases of school; and

- devising an effective structure of school networks which can work in a more supportive and collaborative way to share good practice in different curricular subjects and aspects of education.
SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

92. The contribution of education to the vision for the development of Hackney developed in the 2020 vision statement is narrow. The strategic significance of education as a foundation for the successful regeneration of the community and expansion of opportunities is not well articulated. The role of education in contributing to the other priorities such as making Hackney a healthy and inclusive community, a good place to live, a good place to work and do business and a confident and secure community, is not sufficiently well-developed. Although progress has been made within the education department in developing educational initiatives which support reintegration, the wider understanding of the potential and importance of education is under-developed.

93. The council’s Best Value Performance Plan was the only plan of any local authority in England to be referred to the Audit Commission by the District Auditor because it was inadequate. This led in October to an inspection of the council’s corporate governance, which was conducted by the Best Value Inspectorate.

94. There has been little progress in implementing the recommendation concerned with promoting effective joint working between the education and the learning and leisure directorates. There are, however, some examples of profitable joint work between the two departments, notably the education business partnership. However, the contributions, for instance, of the youth service to the strategy to improve behaviour and tackle pupil disaffection, and of libraries and adult education to the development of the literacy strategy, are less than in most LEAs.

95. The managing director, on taking up post, recognised the need to strengthen management capacity and drew up proposals to move executive directors and replace them with service directors. Faced with the loss of several directors of key departments, the re-structuring of the council’s departments has been brought forward. The restructuring continues to separate the education department, which is effectively a schools and early years directorate, from the directorate which has responsibility for services of youth and lifelong learning. In addition, the proposals will result in additional provision being made for the corporate oversight of the local authority’s policies and support for personnel and finance. The support team, which has responsibility for raising the educational attainment of children in public care, will transfer to the social services department. (The latter is discussed in further detail in Section 5 of this report.) Neither decision seems to us well-considered, although there are arguments on both sides. What is incontestable, however, is that the managing director has not succeeded in his stated intention of strengthening management capacity, at least so far as education is concerned. Instead, the highly respected director of education, together with several of her senior colleagues, has resigned in reaction to the continued corporate incompetence of the council, which is amply attested to in a report recently published by the Best Value Inspectorate.
The speed openness and effectiveness of decision making, particularly financial decision-making

96. Appropriate action has been taken to meet the recommendations of the last OFSTED inspection. A suitable structure for consultation with schools has been developed through reference groups on the major aspects of the LEA’s work. A headteachers’ steering group, which includes all chairs of reference groups, meets the director of education on a monthly basis. Meetings are regular and formally minuted. By and large, decisions have been taken in a timely way, and schools recognise that, until the recent resignations, there had been much greater stability and security.

97. Communication with schools, however, is still not consistently satisfactory with either the school development and review unit or the education department. There is still an undercurrent of misunderstanding and low-level confusion. This is caused by a combination of too much information, mostly written, and too many developments for schools and governors in already busy and hard-pressed circumstances to digest easily. In the case of the school development and review unit, there has been an absence of information on developments until recently. It has not proved possible to timetable communication with schools in a manageable way, because of the number and urgency of the improvements that need to be made. The pace of change has had to be fast, and schools have not been able to register the significance of all developments.

The quality of leadership given by elected members and senior officers

98. A number of recent reports, most notably from Improvement and Development Agency (IdeA) and the Best Value inspection of corporate governance, portray a dysfunctional corporate context in Hackney. Political leadership is fragmented, members are largely inexperienced and there is a climate of mistrust between members, officers and schools. Little progress has been made in developing a suitable approach to modernisation of political arrangements and in particular to developing an appropriate scrutiny role for members.

99. Against this turbulent corporate context, the director of education and senior officers of the department have worked effectively and closely with lead members for education. Together they have been successful in developing a political culture within the education committee and relevant sub-committees which is different from most other departments in that it is both democratic and functional. Officers brief members on major issues at regular timetabled meetings. Members are provided with clear and accurate information, relevant options and the full consideration of likely consequences are identified. Agenda meetings are held to review the draft reports and to expedite decisions, ironing out issues which are likely to create conflict, before they reach the public committees. The director of education and senior officers have won the respect and trust of members.

100. The director of education has provided excellent leadership. She has brought stability and calm and has been the principal architect of improvement. The senior management team, under her leadership, has ably led the developments with determination. Their work shows the characteristics of good team-work, which is
underpinned and unified by the fundamental priority for school improvement. Significant improvements have been made in some areas, but these are understandably still fragile, disjointed and in need of continuing detailed attention.

101. Headteachers feel, and we agree, that a period of further change in senior management, combined with an unpredictable financial climate, is likely to jeopardise the improvements. Schools reported that they had invested time in working with the education department to make improvements and currently have little disposition to invest further. Headteachers and their representatives raised these concerns with the inspection team, made an unprecedented request to be removed from the control of the LEA. The schools’ concerns are entirely justified. This is the third inspection which has reported that difficulties in the corporate context inhibit improvements in schools. After a period of stability and improvement, this further crisis is one too many. Measures have been taken to secure interim management arrangements and a new permanent director, but we do not believe that a simple restoration of the status quo is either possible, or, looking to the future, desirable.

Management support services

102. Management support services have improved from the time of the last inspection, but in some cases, particularly in financial support and the use of ICT for administration, that improvement is fragile. The adequacy of current provision is variable between services, but far from satisfactory taken as a whole. Services for human resources, finance and administrative ICT are now provided and managed by the education department. A folder is issued to schools with details of traded services, although this is a pale shadow of that produced by many other authorities and does not form an integrated portfolio of good quality services.

103. Consultative arrangements have been improved, but many headteachers, particularly those who are not represented in consultative groups, feel isolated from information about how to access services, how to make effective complaints and how to secure services that are well-tailored to particular needs. The head of strategy planning and resources commands the respect of schools and has worked effectively with contractors to make improvements. He has led improvements with drive and skill. These improvements include the successful brokering of an alternative payroll service for schools; developing the ICT broadband network to provide an excellent platform for effective information management; out-sourcing the new school meals contract, which has been welcomed by schools; and developing the in-house education human resources service, which is now of good quality.

104. Headteachers have to deal with each service separately, and many do not know how to do so, or what is a reasonable expectation. Inadequacies, particularly in payroll, finance and property, are a constant distraction for headteachers from their primary task of educating children. Schools have developed self-sufficiency and have become used to fending for themselves and accepting reluctantly, but not always pointing out assertively enough, the inefficiencies. However, this self-sufficiency does not necessarily always imply that schools have sufficient confidence and capacity as clients. Joint work has taken place in out-sourcing of payroll and catering, but schools’ expertise as clients still needs greater development.
The head of strategy planning and resources has resigned, and at the time of the inspection is working his notice. There is a risk that in the hiatus of staff changes the progress made to date will not be secured and that further developments will not occur.

Financial support to schools

The financial support to schools, although much improved since the last inspection, still has some way to go before it is satisfactory. Support, although greatly improved in quality, is not yet sufficient in quantity. Schools noted these improvements in their response to the school survey, although the response was below average for the LEAs surveyed. Financial staff have rightly given priority to building secure foundations for the education department, but now need, with some urgency, to concentrate on improving the performance of schools.

The recommendation in the last report to create schools as the prime record of account has been implemented successfully. The DfEE monitored the standard of the LEA’s support to, and monitoring of, school finances, and declared itself satisfied in the summer term 2000. However, although systems are in place, schools are not submitting monitoring returns sufficiently reliably. Their own financial management and control, although improved, are still in many cases not sufficiently secure.

Overall, school balances show an improving picture. They are increasing from their previous perilously low level, and currently stand at three per cent overall, which is, though low, reasonably secure. In the current year, the number of schools with deficits and the total level of deficit have declined. Internal audit reports were commissioned and executed promptly on all schools with new deficits, revealing a variable practice. The LEA has put in place a licensed deficit scheme and it is running satisfactorily. In some schools, the new or extended deficit resulted from the resolution of long-standing uncertainties in accounting records. Significant progress has been made in the daunting task of resolving uncertainties in school budgets arising from central accounting failures going back a number of years. However, the work is not yet complete.

As a result of the LEA’s efforts, there is an increasing standardisation in schools’ financial systems. However, a significant minority of schools still use local spreadsheets and even pencil and paper, with unacceptably variable degrees of success. Only just over half the schools purchase the LEA service, and, while this is a 100 per cent increase on the previous year, it is well below the level of take-up for most authorities. Some schools buy from alternative suppliers, with varying degrees of success, and the LEA is rightly starting to work collaboratively with the two main suppliers of financial systems. Some headteachers reported that regular visits, specified in the service level agreement, were not being delivered. Officers are aware that support is not at the level that it needs to be, and hope in the future that a dedicated schools support team can be established.

The finance team has put considerable effort into resolving difficulties with payroll, as recommended in the last inspection report. The difficulties, however,
proved intractable and the opportunity of Fair Funding was used to broker a service from alternative suppliers for schools. Early signs are promising, although there have been transitional difficulties. This process has been managed through a partnership approach between headteachers and education finance staff.

**Human resources**

111. Human resources services to schools are sound and improving. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, and the recommendations within the inspection report have now been met. As a result, the level of buy-back by schools of personnel services has increased from 60 to 90 per cent. The school survey confirms that advice and guidance, personnel administration and casework are now regarded as sound or better.

112. Planning for the service identifies appropriate activities and is linked to the priorities within the EDP. Targets, timescales and actions are clear and monitoring procedures are well spelt out. The LEA is now meeting its statutory duties in this area. For example, almost all employees now have a contract of employment, compared with 55 per cent previously. A weakness remains in the transfer of information between payroll and personnel. This is due to the lack of a common ICT database for information on staffing. A human resources handbook provides clear and comprehensive guidance, and model policies, to schools on their legal requirements with regard to the recruitment, employment and dismissal of staff. Service standards have been defined, and service level agreements are in place with schools.

113. The service is well managed; staff have clear targets related to service standards. The interface between the school development and review unit and human resources over the important issue of improving the quality of the teaching force is developing, and partnership arrangements are under active consideration. These arrangements have not been formalised in a written partnership agreement. Arrangements are in place for advice and support to be provided to governing bodies on the appointment of headteachers and deputy headteachers, and for supporting schools causing concern.

114. Light touch monitoring visits ensure that schools comply with employment requirements and recommend improvements; schools value them. Plans are in place, in line with the Code of Practice on LEA-School relations, to differentiate this monitoring as schools become more autonomous.

115. There are a large number of formal personnel proceedings, currently 84, taking place within schools and the education directorate, of which seven are currently referred to employment tribunal. In the past, the authority has shown an inclination to settle out of court. This is reported to have changed for the better. The LEA has not lost any employment tribunal cases initiated after the establishment of the new education resources management. Those cases lost at tribunals after the new management team was established were part of a backlog from the previous regime.
116. The recruitment and retention of teachers are critical issues for the schools in Hackney. A recruitment manager has been appointed and vacancies are monitored in schools. A strategy has been put in place which is beginning to have an impact on the quality of the newly qualified teachers appointed to the LEA’s pool of teachers and recruitment is taking place actively in New Zealand. However, for a substantial number of schools this remains a crucial and unresolved problem.

**ICT for administration**

117. There has been an improvement in the provision of equipment. All schools now have facilities for the electronic transfer of data. Visits to schools revealed satisfaction with both provision and training, although the use of systems is still not sufficiently consistent across all schools. However, the difficulties do not relate to the platform of ICT equipment, but to the quality of management information and the need to promote use in schools when staff are not sufficiently skilled or confident. Administrative systems are currently being rationalised to facilitate greater efficiency and effectiveness and should result in better procedures for sharing of data across and within schools in the LEA. The electronic transfer and collation of data such as might be entailed in a central database for tracking individual pupil progress are still not sufficiently well developed.

**Recommendations**

**In order to improve corporate planning:**

- enable schools to enjoy a much needed period of stability by protecting their budgets;

- re-build the confidence and trust of schools by ensuring that education is clearly articulated in all planning documents as the council’s priority;

- ensure that the education department can continue to make developments in line with existing plans and work to make the improvements which have been made, more consistent; and

- develop strategies to enable other council services to provide an acceptable standard of service.

**In order to improve the speed of decision making:**

- continue to develop the effectiveness of consultation with schools to strengthen an emerging partnership; and

- develop ways of improving and streamlining communication with schools.

**In order to improve management services:**

- continue with the programme of planned developments and initiatives to provide a consistent standard of basic service;
• work with schools to build their understanding of the implications of local management of schools for their role as client in the effective procurement and management of services;

• ensure that the education finance section is appropriately staffed to continue to meet statutory responsibilities; and

• develop and agree partnership agreements between the contractor and human resources services over mutual responsibilities of services for improving the quality of teaching.
SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

118. Progress on implementing the recommendations to improve the LEA’s work on special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory. In some areas, progress has been good, but there are still significant shortcomings in the LEA’s ability to monitor and evaluate some of the changes it has introduced. In the school survey, all aspects of the LEA’s SEN activity - including support work - was graded, on average, less than satisfactory. In comparison, surveys carried out by the educational psychology service and learning support service showed high levels of school satisfaction with the support they received from those services, a view confirmed by the schools interviewed during the inspection.

119. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing the LEA’s strategy, by linking the LEA’s SEN Plan coherently to the EDP and the OFSTED Action Plan. The clarity of guidance and other communications to schools has improved and training has been provided for inclusive developments. The reorganisation of special schools was completed in September 2000, with the intention of developing the relationship between special and mainstream schools.

120. Criteria for stages of the SEN code of practice have been developed and implemented. The percentage of statutory assessments completed in 18 weeks has risen to 85 per cent and continues to raise. The LEA is represented at about 40 per cent of annual reviews, selected on the basis of published priorities. Changes have been made to the structure and working practices of both the education psychological service and the learning support service. The LEA is currently consulting on its approaches to resourcing for SEN in mainstream schools, including the further delegation to schools of learning support service budgets.

121. The LEA’s monitoring and evaluation of the impact of its SEN work, particularly the developments described above, remain unsatisfactory. An analysis has been completed on schools’ use of SEN funding. However, a significant number of schools did not make returns. The analysis has not been circulated to schools. Attendance at annual reviews is not evidently leading to a closer scrutiny of statements.

122. The recent special school reorganisation will lead to a change of role; both in terms of links and relationships with mainstream schools and the range of SEN catered for. The schools are experiencing a degree of uncertainty regarding their future. The LEA and its contractor have not developed a coherent approach to challenge and support special schools. Monitoring of the education psychology service is dependent on time-consuming completion and analysis of spreadsheets. The learning support services monitors staff deployment but monitoring is not systematic. This monitoring information does not lead to an evaluation of the effectiveness of the support for individual children.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that the progress made in its work on special educational needs is continued:
• continue to maintain and consolidate the current programme of implementation in line with the proposals in the SEN development plan and the EDP; and

• develop approaches to monitoring and evaluation which include:
  
  • publishing a clear statement of the roles of a school’s link adviser, the SEN adviser, the adviser for inclusion and the educational psychologist in relation to challenging and supporting its work with non-statemented SEN pupils;
  
  • developing a coherent approach to challenge and support for special schools;
  
  • publishing annually an overall analysis of schools’ use of SEN funding, identifying those schools which have provided data for the analysis;
  
  • providing effective systems for monitoring of the education psychological service;
  
  • including in an annual report circulated to schools the deployment of the educational psychology service and its impact in the quality of teaching and learning; and
  
  • monitoring and evaluation of the work of the learning support service in a way which is appropriate to the outcome of the consultation on further delegation.
SECTION 5: ACCESS

Planning of school places and admissions

123. The management of the planning of school places was judged effective at the last inspection, and has continued to improve. Surplus places have been further reduced, to 13 per cent in secondary and nine per cent in primary schools. Links with corporate capital financial planning needed to develop then, and still do. The LEA, with the personal involvement of the director, has been energetic in pursuing public and private partnerships, particularly with the Corporation of London. If maintained, these promise well for the future. Secondary school pupil numbers have increased by 400 in the last two years and the authority is now, appropriately, starting to consider ideas for a new secondary school, if possible including sponsorship and private finance.

124. The management of admissions continues to be generally effective. Ninety-two per cent of primary schools and 88 per cent of secondary schools rated information on the admissions satisfactory or better, a 14 per cent improvement on the school survey for the last inspection. The management of admission appeals was perceived as average compared with the LEAs which have been surveyed.

Asset management planning

125. Asset management planning is improving, albeit belatedly from a low base. Condition surveys were completed within the DfEE’s timescales, and give a good basis for planning expenditure on maintenance. Suitability surveys will provide a good position to prioritise capital developments. The education estates section was re-organised following the last inspection, with almost a complete change of staffing. This restructuring spanned the time that most authorities were able to concentrate on asset management planning and the delegation of property maintenance. The timing was unfortunate, although perhaps unavoidable. During this period, the service rightly concentrated on giving priority to compiling the Asset Management Plan. As a consequence, there has not been the capacity to work closely enough with schools over the delegation of funding.

126. The Asset Management Plan provides a reliable estimate of future funding needed to bring the building stock up to standard for the first time. The figures, (excluding voluntary aided and foundation schools, where governors are responsible for maintaining the building) are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Timing - within</th>
<th>Cost estimate £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>3.6m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>28.0m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>15.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>2.1m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

127. Links between the Asset Management Plan and other plans of the department including the School Organisation Plan, capital and revenue finance
plans and the EDP are not in place.

128. Suitability and sufficiency surveys are currently underway, and are expected to meet DfEE deadlines. The recommendation to broker or offer support for schools in drawing up their own premises plans has only recently been tackled. The work for this, although orderly and of good quality, is by no means complete and is a year too late. Written guidance to schools, clarifying responsibilities, giving useful guidance on important tasks and lists of technical consultants and building contractors, is in draft, but not expected to be issued to schools until the spring term 2001. Plans for monitoring are, however, in place.

129. Although foundations for a better future are in place, the delegation of building maintenance has not been well handled. There has been lack of clarity in explaining the division of responsibility, inadequate explanation and discussion with schools early in the process, and no brokering of ongoing technical support and advice for schools in managing their new responsibilities. Officers have visited every school to discuss the condition survey, to agree a programme of work, to clarify responsibilities and negotiate joint working. Nonetheless the efforts officers have made have not been enough to overcome history, and headteachers are still unclear about the division of responsibilities and unwilling to accept the adequacy of delegated funding to meet the new responsibilities. Schools’ views are reflected in their response to the school survey where building maintenance is perceived as the lowest of all LEAs surveyed.

Provision of education otherwise than at school

130. Provision of education otherwise than at school is sound. The LEA has made good progress in dealing with these recommendations and has established a ‘Disaffected Pupils Working Group’ with broad representation to improve the coherence of planning and operations. A closer specification of the contribution of voluntary sector providers has consequently improved monitoring of the attendance of pupils at those projects.

131. A primary phase pupil referral unit has opened with additional capacity for home tuition when required. New management and working practices have been implemented at the secondary pupil referral unit.

Attendance

132. The LEA is making good progress on the recommendations related to improving attendance and implementing appropriately targeted approaches. Support to schools for improving attendance is sound. On average, schools regard the LEA’s work in this area as broadly satisfactory. Nonetheless, rates of attendance in Hackney schools continue to give cause for concern, and the drive for improvement will need to be maintained.

133. As a result of the education welfare service’s review of its structure and working practices, schools now feel better consulted and involved in the development of the service’s work. The service’s activity and published guidance are targeted, as required by the EDP and OFSTED Action Plan, on key issues and
in schools with particularly low attendance. The quality of data and its use have improved. The LEA is prepared to, and does, use prosecution when necessary.

134. Schools report unsatisfactory relations with Hackney social services department over matters of attendance. The expectations held by schools may not be reasonable but, in the absence of a clear statement of respective roles and responsibilities, this confusion creates tension and misunderstanding.

**Behaviour support**

135. The LEA has made good progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous inspection. Plans are well focused on the key issues. The LEA’s work on behaviour support is increasingly effective, although not always efficiently organised. Permanent exclusion rates have been reducing, including those in the secondary phase which are below that of comparable LEAs; primary school rates are now in line with those in comparable LEAs. Schools for the most part regard the LEA’s advice on exclusions, and on practice intended to reduce them, as satisfactory or better.

136. The range of individuals and services contributing to support schools in this area is puzzling to schools and to some of the providers. A school looking for advice on teaching or management responses to behaviour difficulties might turn to one, or possibly all, of: its link adviser, the SEN adviser; advisory teachers for behaviour support, learning support service, education psychology service, education welfare service or pupil referral unit. The current arrangements are not sufficiently well understood or co-ordinated to take full advantage of their best elements. The LEA has, however, begun the process of ensuring better coordination and realigning its resources.

137. The relatively large number of Afro-Caribbean boys who are excluded from school continues to cause particular concern and increasingly specific support for that group has been developed, based on key issues identified in a project involving Christ Church College, Canterbury with schools and community organisations.

**Children in public care**

138. Despite a considerable amount of work, support for children in public care is unsatisfactory. However, the LEA is now confident that it knows the educational placement of all the young people who are in Hackney’s public care. A network of contacts is established within the council, including the education and social services departments jointly, which should contribute to further improvement in this area. Each school has a nominated teacher leading its work with these pupils.

139. The LEA has not set targets for these pupils at a level which could contribute to a detailed strategy which, in turn, could be a supplement to the Children’s Services Plan, the EDP and the Management Plan for Quality Protects. Still less does the council have a co-ordinated approach for dealing with the common concerns of its various services and its schools.

140. The LEA has established an appropriately sized and experienced team to
promote this area of its work and to deal with the recommendations of the previous inspection. Progress in meeting the recommendations has been slow owing to the dearth of accurate information on these children held by the social services department. Extraordinary steps needed to be taken by the education service to identify who the children were, where they were living and where they were going to school. This information had not been available on a unified database, and reports of the team’s work and minutes of meetings between officers of the education and social service departments show that it was a difficult and time consuming task to reach a definitive answer. A number of sources had to be used including contact with all the carers on the authority’s payment lists and trawls through social service files.

141. The time taken on this exercise has delayed the LEA’s response to the recommendations of the previous inspection. Nevertheless a range of appropriate activities has been initiated. There is widespread concern that the transfer of this team from the education department to the social services department, which is contrary to the trend nationally, might delay that response further. It may also reduce the capacity of the education department and schools to enhance and develop their role as corporate parent in raising the attainment of children in public care.

Ethnic minority children

142. Support for the achievement of ethnic minority pupils is sound and improving. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and in the implementation of the recommendations for action. This is confirmed by the school survey and by interviews and visits to schools undertaken as part of this inspection.

143. The ethnic minority achievement service is well managed. The central team is largely new, detailed job descriptions are in place, a good range of team building events have taken place and targets are set for the team on a termly basis. Progress has been hard won. The delegation of funds to schools has resulted in reductions to the central team, and much of the manager of the service’s time has been committed to dealing with a number of industrial tribunals. A headteacher reference group and a headteacher steering group provide guidance on a wide range of issues.

144. The deployment of the team is well targeted at schools identified with weaknesses. School development and review consultants will monitor other schools. However, progress has been constrained by changes in staff and by difficulties in recruitment to this team. Good links have been developed with the literacy team. The analysis of data on the attainment of ethnic minority groups has improved, and challenging targets have been set by the authority for improvement overall, although not all schools are reported to be setting targets for these pupils, and the LEA targets have not been met for some ethnic groups, specifically Caribbean heritage pupils.

145. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that schools make appropriate use of the funds delegated to them through the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG). All schools have to produce, and submit to the central team, an
ethnic minority action plan that is linked to the school development plan. This is monitored by the central team and adjusted accordingly. Three schools were visited where action planning was seen, in all three of which it was well focused on raising attainment. Headteachers report that the scrutiny of the central team and the monitoring visits they conduct are helpful.

146. Professional development opportunities have increased, and are well linked to other national strategies, for example literacy and numeracy. Schools have been invited to bid for funds to put in place curriculum projects to improve ethnic minority achievement. Bids are scrutinised centrally, and the central team monitors and provides support to implementation. This is designed to lead to a range of approaches which can be shared across schools.

147. The service is aware that in a number of areas progress is fragile and is not sufficient. This is due in part to the low base from which improvement has been made, and to the culture that exists within the borough. It has been difficult to develop links with a wide range of community groups, in line with a recommendation in the last report, despite meetings with the Commission for Racial Equality, and the establishment of a community database, which has been shared with schools.

148. There are regular meetings with the Hackney Association for Racial Equality and a member of that group has recently been recruited to the team. Black mentors have been established in some schools, and the formula for allocation of EMTAG to schools recognises the underachievement of boys of Caribbean heritage. Nevertheless, the service is aware that more has to be done to plan for, and target support to, these pupils and to reconsider whether the allocation of the grant is sufficiently well differentiated to recognise the underachievement of particular groups of pupils.

**Combating racism**

149. The LEA’s efforts to combat racism are satisfactory and welcomed by schools. Following a critical report by the Commission for Racial Equality in 1997, Hackney established its own review, published as the ‘Crawford Report’. A recent report to the scrutiny panel identified a number of employment initiatives and the establishment of a system across the LEA for the monitoring of racist incidents in schools “in accordance with the conclusion of the Lincoln Crawford Report and building on the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry”.

150. A racist incident monitoring form and guidance to go with it have been developed in consultation with schools and circulated earlier this term. Training in the use of the form is being offered and the LEA presently intends to begin monitoring on an annual basis. The results of the survey will be used to inform the system of statistical monitoring of schools used by link consultants and to prepare reports for elected members. Annual returns will be too infrequent for the former purpose. Each governing body is recommended to nominate a governor with responsibility for ethnic minority achievement. The relatively large number of boys of African and Caribbean heritage who are excluded from school continues to cause concern.
Recommendations

To maintain its improved work in attendance, behaviour and support for children in public care and ethnic minorities:

- continue to maintain and consolidate the current programme of implementation in line with the proposals in service development plans and the EDP;

- draft a clear statement of the expectations which schools, the education department and social services department should have of each other over areas of joint work such as child protection and children in public care;

- develop, in consultation with schools, and implement a comprehensive behaviour support strategy which describes the operational contribution made by all of the LEA’s departments, its contractors and its voluntary partners to the Behaviour Support Plan;

- set educational attainment targets for individual children in public care and make these available to the education and social services departments on a unified data base;

- collate the individual targets at the level of year cohorts to provide the basis for a strategic plan for ensuring the successful attainment of those targets;

- draw the priorities arising from analysis of this individual and cohort data together into a single, strategic plan, ensuring a co-ordinated approach across the council’s services, its voluntary partners and its schools and that the implementation of this strategy can begin not later than April 1st 2001;

- improve the quality of target setting for ethnic minority pupils in schools; and

- consider the rate of frequency with which schools are required to make returns of racist incidents in order to ensure that officers, contractors and elected members have the information needed to fulfil responsibilities.
APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 1

In order to improve the strategy for school improvement and its implementation:

- use the very recently created initiatives board, including representatives of headteachers, to coordinate initiatives and identify good practice; and

- devise short and straightforward termly briefings of the inservice and other activities taking place, the prospective audience, how the activities can be accessed and how these may lead to future developments to improve the focus of activity plans and communication and coherence of school improvement initiatives.

In order to strengthen the existing work on monitoring and control of budgets for education:

- ensure that the education finance team is appropriately staffed in a way which continues to build on the improvements which have already been made; and

- take steps to ensure that improvements and developments in education can be isolated from potential budgetary failures across the council.

Section 2

In order to improve support to schools for school improvement, current strategies and initiatives require continuous consolidation to provide a firm, transparent, consistent system. In maintaining, consolidating and developing the current approach, particular attention should be paid to the following:

- maintaining and developing consistent staffing for the school development and review unit;

- implementing the proposals for allocating support and challenge in relation to school need and extending these to include proposals for secondary and primary schools;

- supporting schools in the appropriate use of the investment of ICT hardware to improve teaching and learning across the curriculum;

- ensuring as a matter of urgency that new headteachers are supported by an appropriate induction and mentoring programme;

- devising and communicating to schools a clear and coherent strategy which draws together various strands for support to improve the management and efficiency of all phases of school; and

- devising an effective structure of school networks which can work in a more
supportive and collaborative way to share good practice in different curricular subjects and aspects of education.

Section 3

In order to improve corporate planning:

- enable schools to enjoy a much needed period of stability by protecting their budgets;
- re-build the confidence and trust of schools by ensuring that education is clearly articulated in all planning documents as the council’s priority;
- ensure that the education department can continue to make developments in line with existing plans and work to make the improvements which have been made, more consistent; and
- develop strategies to enable other council services to provide an acceptable standard of service.

In order to improve the speed of decision making:

- continue to develop the effectiveness of consultation with schools to strengthen an emerging partnership; and
- develop ways of improving communication with schools.

In order to improve management services:

- continue with the programme of planned developments and initiatives to provide a consistent standard of basic service;
- work with schools to build their understanding of the implications of local management of schools for their role as client in the effective procurement and management of services;
- ensure that the education finance section is appropriately staffed to continue to meet statutory responsibilities; and
- develop and agree partnership agreements between the contractor and human resources services over mutual responsibilities of services for improving the quality of teaching.

SECTION 4

In order to ensure that the progress made in its work on special educational needs is continued:

- continue to maintain and consolidate the current programme of implementation in line with the proposals in the SEN development Plan and the EDP; and
• develop approaches to monitoring and evaluation which include:
  • publishing a clear statement of the roles of a school's link adviser, the SEN adviser, the adviser for inclusion and the educational psychologist in relation to challenging and supporting its work with non-statemented SEN pupils;
  • developing a coherent approach to challenge and support for special schools
  • publishing annually an overall analysis of schools’ use of SEN funding, identifying those schools which have provided data for the analysis;
  • providing effective systems for monitoring of the education psychological service;
  • including in an annual report circulated to schools the deployment of the service and its impact in the quality of teaching and learning; and
  • monitoring and evaluation of the work of the learning support service in a way which is appropriate to the outcome of the consultation on further delegation.

Section 5

To maintain its improved work in attendance, behaviour and support for children in public care and ethnic minorities:

• continue to maintain and consolidate the current programme of implementation in line with the proposals in service development plans and the EDP;

• draft a clear statement of the expectations which schools, the education department and social services department should have of each other over areas of joint work such as child protection and children in public care;

• develop, in consultation with schools, and implement a comprehensive behaviour support strategy which describes the operational contribution made by all of the LEA’s departments, its contractors and its voluntary partners to the Behaviour Support Plan;

• set educational attainment targets for individual children in public care and make these available to the education and social service departments on a unified data base;

• collate the individual targets at the level of year cohorts to provide the basis for a strategic plan for ensuring the successful attainment of those targets;

• draw the priorities arising from analysis of this individual and cohort data together into a single, strategic plan, ensuring a co-ordinated approach across the council’s services, its voluntary partners and its schools and that the implementation of this strategy can begin not later than April 1st 2001;

• improve the quality of target setting for ethnic minority pupils in schools; and
• consider the rate of frequency with which schools are required to make returns of racist incidents in order to ensure that officers, contractors and elected members have the information needed to fulfil responsibilities.