



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF
ENFIELD
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

OCTOBER 2000

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

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INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999 insofar as it relates to the work undertaken by the local education authority (LEA) on Best Value. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities* which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information; audit reports and other documentation. Discussions were held with LEA members, focus groups of headteachers, governors and special educational needs coordinators, 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 89 schools and the two pupil referral units. The response rate was 78 per cent.
3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to two infant, nine primary, one special and six secondary schools. A further eight schools were visited as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy monitoring sample. Generally the visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4. Enfield serves a rapidly rising population on the northern edge of London. It has relatively prosperous areas in the west in stark contrast to the inner city characteristics of the south and east of the borough. The government's drive to combat social exclusion and improve educational standards has proved a major challenge to a Council which lacks a well articulated set of priorities. The Education Department has, by contrast, had a strong tradition of planning at individual service level and has made an important contribution to broadening the Council's expertise in performance management in preparation for Best Value. The director, on her arrival in 1995, recognised the need for the LEA to reconfigure itself and had the foresight to commission an external review of services to support school improvement. Enfield LEA enjoys a low staff turnover and high morale in schools and across the Education Department. There is a strong sense of partnership between schools and the LEA. The LEA has shown commendable initiative in respect of capital spending and was the first in London to secure a new secondary school through the Private Finance Initiative(PFI). The borough attracts significant numbers of pupils from neighbouring boroughs into its heavily subscribed schools.
5. The LEA performs the majority of its functions competently and takes reasonable steps to fulfil its statutory duties. Its performance of the following functions is good or very good:
 - communication and consultation with schools;
 - support to schools in special measures and with serious weaknesses;
 - support for literacy and numeracy in primary schools;
 - support to school management;
 - support for newly qualified teachers;
 - support for in-service training;
 - support for governors;
 - the early years strategy;
 - management support services to schools, particularly personnel and financial management;
 - collaboration with external agencies;
 - admissions arrangements;
 - behaviour support;
 - in-school support for ethnic minority and Traveller pupils; and
 - measures taken to combat racism.
6. On such an enviable bedrock, not only standards but expectations ought to be higher, yet standards remain at or below national averages. There is a lingering sense of under-expectation, for which the Council must take some responsibility. Corporate planning has been an under-developed feature of Enfield, until very recently. There has been a lack of detailed policy guidance from members. The schools have been allowed to remain complacent. The revised Education Development Plan (EDP) lacks ambition. Too many schools in Enfield set too modest targets that make little sense in the context of their well-developed assessment procedures and their aspirations for teachers and pupils.

7. On occasion, when faced with hard choices which require a redistribution of funding to target resources where the need is greatest, the LEA has had a tendency to falter in the face of opposition from schools. The special educational needs (SEN) strategy is one such case in point; the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG) another. A more resolute approach is needed. Clearer lines of accountability between LEA services and schools need to be drawn. More can and should be demanded of schools in return.
8. In the face of a rising school population, growing numbers of refugee children and their families and a high degree of mobility in the east of the borough, the provision of school places is highly problematic. Despite their commitment to fund education at or above the Standing Spending Assessment (SSA), members and chief officers do not demonstrate a sufficiently systematic approach to monitoring performance. In particular, little assessment is made as to whether schools or the education department and its services provide value for money. Moreover, the LEA is not yet performing the following functions effectively:
 - the revised EDP;
 - the work of the link advisers in providing challenge to schools, particularly in the use of target-setting and supported self review to raise standards;
 - aspects of support for ICT;
 - the identification of schools causing concern;
 - the strategy and aspects of support for pupils with special educational needs;
 - support for young people in public care; and
 - aspects of support provided by the property services department.
9. Although the LEA has many strengths, there are weaknesses. Some of the latter are significant and of concern. In the light of these concerns, OFSTED will carry out a return inspection of the LEA within the next 18 months to assess progress. The judgement of the team is that the LEA has the capacity to address its weaknesses, but only if urgent action is taken by officers and members to provide a more challenging corporate environment in which schools and the education service can flourish.

SECTION 1: THE CORPORATE STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION

Context

10. Enfield LEA serves a diverse community on the northern edge of London. It is a borough of stark contrasts with its affluent suburban west and its inner urban south and east. The current population of 265,000 is rising at a faster rate than the national average. Approximately 23 per cent of pupils were eligible for free school meals in 1999. Over 40 per cent of pupils are from a range of ethnic minority communities, the largest of which are of Caribbean, Indian, African, Turkish and Greek Cypriot origin. Pupil mobility is an increasing problem. The number of refugee children in Enfield schools is estimated at 2,000 and rising.
11. In January 1999 there were 46,410 pupils in Enfield schools. There are 66 primary schools. Five of the 16 secondary schools previously had grant maintained status and all have an 11-18 range. Most are over-subscribed and admit significant numbers of pupils from neighbouring LEAs. There are six special schools and two pupil referral units. Pupils below compulsory school age represent 20 per cent of the primary school roll. In 1999, 1.1 per cent of primary and 1.7 per cent of secondary pupils had a statement of special educational needs; this is a little less than the national average.

Performance

12. The performance of schools is broadly in line with national averages although in English at Key Stage 2 and the average points scores for pupils' entries for two or more A-Levels, results fall below. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A*-C passes in GCSE examinations is in line with national averages, as are the proportion achieving five or more A*-G passes. The rate of improvement varies. Standards are rising but improvement is slower than the national rate at Key Stage 1 but faster in English at Key Stage 2 and at GCSE.
13. OFSTED data on the first cycle of inspections show that the proportion of primary and secondary schools where the quality of education is good or very good is below that for its statistical neighbours and national figures. Evidence from those primary schools that have been inspected twice suggests that, in line with the national picture, improvements have been made with regard to quality of education, school climate and management. Overall, secondary schools inspected twice have regressed in terms of quality of education and management.
14. One secondary and four primary schools have Beacon status. One secondary school remains in special measures and there are one secondary and six primary schools with serious weaknesses. Unauthorised absence and exclusions are similar to national rates, with the exception of exclusions in the secondary phase which have decreased significantly since 1997, but are still higher than the national average.

Funding

15. Spending on education has consistently been at or around the level of the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for several years. The funding of schools has been relatively stable and seems likely to be so for the immediate future.
16. The Council has passed on in full the increases in SSA for the last two years. During this period there have been significant reductions in other areas of Council spending. Within the education budget, spending on early years is significantly above the SSA, largely at the expense of educational provision outside the school sector.
17. The LEA has shown commendable initiative in respect of capital spending. The Council has supplemented its borrowing and grant income by the sale of assets and by diverting significant sums from its revenue budget. In addition to this, its new secondary school was the first nationally to be provided through a PFI scheme, and in a number of cases Section 106 (planning gain) agreements have been negotiated to increase and improve school provision.
18. The LEA has had varied success in obtaining grants to supplement its spending on schools. In education specific areas (Standards Fund, New Deal for Schools, Infant Class Size Grant) it has been relatively successful. Until recently it has been less successful in attracting potentially significant funding sources such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). Within the education service there are satisfactory arrangements for informing service managers of bidding opportunities, supporting the bidding process, and co-ordinating submissions. Arrangements for consulting with schools on the preparation of bids and the deployment of funds are good. Limited support is available for individual schools in bidding direct for grants and investigating other possible sources of funding for their own initiatives.

Council structures

19. After twenty-five years in opposition, a Labour administration took the helm in 1994 and was subsequently returned in 1998. A new leader of the Council was elected some six months after the election. At the same time the government's modernising agenda was enthusiastically embraced and has been in place in Enfield as Better Local Government (BLG) for the past eighteen months. Education is now one of seven portfolios, which includes Best Value, held by the Cabinet. Major operational decisions are now taken in weekly meetings between the director of education and the cabinet member for education. There is cross-party membership of six scrutiny panels which include the Children and Younger People (C&YP) and the Social Inclusion (SI) panels. To date, the work of the panels has had little impact on the LEA.
20. The group management team of the education department consists of a director of education and four assistant directors with responsibility for: finance and resources, schools and community, planning and human resources and

children's services. The director has exerted quiet and purposeful leadership and the service is well managed.

The allocation of resources to priorities

21. The allocation of growth money in recent years (arising both from SSA increases and savings within the education budget) has reasonably reflected the LEA's stated educational priorities. Overall spending on primary and secondary schools is marginally above the outer London borough average. Schools appreciate what they see as a strong commitment from the LEA to transparency and dialogue with them on budget matters. Schools have a genuine opportunity to influence outcomes and that their views have indeed been influential in a number of recent decisions. Budgetary control in recent years has been sound, although there has been significant growth in the budget for supporting pupils with statements of SEN.

	Primary Local Schools Budget [LSB] per pupil	Secondary Local Schools Budget [LSB] per pupil
Enfield	£2,497	£3,229
Outer London boroughs	£2,442	£3,138
All English LEAs	£2,293	£2,987

Source: 1999/2000 Section 52 returns

22. The LEA delegates a slightly lower proportion of spending on schools (81.0 per cent of the LSB in 2000/2001) than the average for outer London boroughs and all English LEAs (81.8 per cent and 81.3 per cent respectively). Schools are generally content with the range of responsibilities delegated, although there is pressure from secondary schools in particular for the delegation of the funding for support for pupils with statements of special educational needs. Centrally-controlled spending on statutory and regulatory duties is significantly lower (£48/pupil in 2000/2001) than the outer London borough average (£60). Spending on school improvement is close to the average.
23. Charges for the services of other Council departments are calculated in a way which reasonably reflects the levels of activity involved. At present there are no precise descriptions of expected service range and level which are negotiated between departments and against which actual performance can be compared. Work is underway to develop service level agreements.
24. Delegated funding for Enfield primary and secondary schools is very close to the average for outer London boroughs.

	Primary Individual Schools Budget [ISB] per pupil	Secondary Individual Schools Budget [ISB] per pupil
Enfield	£1,899	£2,613
Outer London boroughs	£1,898	£2,606
All English LEAs	£1,733	£2,433

Source: 1999/2000 Section 52 returns

25. The LEA has made a number of limited revisions to its funding formula. However, the basic underpinning of the local management of schools (LMS) funding formula is still essentially the 'replication' of existing resourcing patterns which was the aim at the outset of LMS ten years ago. A considerable amount of collaborative work was undertaken during 1995/96 in developing a detailed model of spending needs for primary and secondary schools. For primary schools this extended to prioritising needs within the model to the point that it matched the funding then available. For secondary schools the same progress was not made, partly at least because of an over-reliance on headteachers in undertaking the development work involved. The overall exercise failed to reach the point where it could inform a fundamental review of the funding formula.
26. This said, the analysis undertaken has informed decisions on where to target limited growth in the ISB in recent years and has provided a sound basis for the further analytical work which is now in train. The LEA should ensure this time that the process is followed through to a conclusion. There are some indications that the current formula may not be fully reflecting the differing needs of Enfield schools. For example, the proportion of the ISB distributed on the basis of age weighted pupil numbers is significantly higher (80.8 per cent and 86.7 per cent in the primary and secondary sectors respectively) than the average for outer London boroughs (75.3 per cent and 82.0 per cent). This, despite the LEA's own description of the borough as having great extremes in terms of the socio-economic nature of its school intakes.

The Education Development Plan

27. In 1997 the director had the foresight to commission a review of its services. Some of the recommendations such as the urgent need to improve both data provision and analysis, and school monitoring and evaluation, were subsequently included in the first Education Development Plan (EDP). In April 1999 the EDP received approval for three years from the DfEE. Despite being based originally upon a sound and balanced audit, the current EDP does not reflect accurately the impact of changes in performance and the context of the LEA.
28. The EDP describes a structured and systematic process by which LEA and school targets are set and monitored and the relationship between them. However, the targets are not sufficiently challenging. The GCSE targets and Key Stage 2 mathematics targets included in the April 1999 plan (i.e. year 2000: 44.4 per cent five or more A*-C GCSE or equivalent and 65 per cent Key Stage 2 Level 4 or above) were modest by comparison with the 1998 performance. Almost all of the 2000 targets have already been exceeded. The April 2000 draft plan has increased 2001 targets slightly. In many respects LEA practice has moved beyond what was proposed in both the EDP and its subsequent revision in year two. Both lack ambition and focus. Many schools aspire to, or should aspire to, more sustained improvement.
29. The LEA identified the following six priorities for school improvement:

1. raise standards in relation to national targets;
 2. enhance curriculum leadership and development;
 3. develop school review, monitoring and evaluation strategies;
 4. enhance the quality of teaching and learning;
 5. enhance and support leadership and management of schools; and
 6. increase access to mainstream education for vulnerable and socially excluded pupils.
30. There is too much emphasis on processes and not enough on how to improve outcomes. The relationship between priorities, actions, performance measures and success criteria for many of the priorities is weak. Overall, it is difficult for schools individually or collectively to discern clearly the intended impact of EDP priorities on school activity. It is therefore not surprising that the evidence of the school survey and school visits indicates that primary and special schools are ambivalent about the relevance of EDP priorities to their school while secondary schools are critical.
31. Some of the weaknesses have been tackled in the revised EDP. However, the link between the actions and intended outcomes is still weak in too many areas. For example activity 4.4 (intended to assist in the elimination of poor teaching) contains too many actions framed generally such as 'continue to provide training' and 'provide support for weak teachers'. The priorities do not reflect well national priorities. For example, there is insufficient importance accorded to the use of ICT in supporting teaching and learning, which is included under Priority 2 relating to curriculum leadership and development. The action in relation to support to schools causing concern is too diffusely distributed across the activities in the first five priorities.
32. There are some strengths. Priority 5 has established an effective strategy for the systematic support of school management. The responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation are clearly set out within the plan. The cross-referencing between the EDP and other statutory plans is clear and well set out.
33. The overall strategy and structure of monitoring are sound, and the performance management measures within individual services, particularly the advice and development service (ADS), are sufficient to ensure adequate progress in the majority of actions. However, the quality of monitoring information produced to date for senior officers and members is unsatisfactory.
34. Arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of the EDP are neither systematic nor rigorous. There is little attempt to present an overview of overall progress against individual targets and success criteria. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the EDP is a key role of the cabinet member for education and the group management team. The processes are too descriptive and not sufficiently evaluative. This is evident in the lack of challenge in the revised EDP. Evaluating the effectiveness of the EDP is also one of the key tasks of the C&YP scrutiny panel. To date it has produced one report which was wholly lacking in evaluative detail.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the quality of strategic planning for school improvement, in consultation with schools and other stakeholders, revise the Education Development Plan for 2001/02 and ensure that it is based on a clearer recognition of the differential needs of schools by:

- providing a clearer link between EDP priorities and activities and the LEA policy on identifying and supporting schools causing concern;
- addressing more clearly the differences in primary, secondary and special schools and reflect these more accurately in the funding formula;
- providing more explicit targets for EDP actions;
- giving greater emphasis to ICT within EDP priorities, particularly in relation to realising the potential of the National Grid for Learning; and
- provide more robust and systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the progress on EDP activity to members, headteachers, staff and governor representatives.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions

35. Overall, the LEA exercises the majority of its relevant functions effectively in order to improve standards in schools, although there is scope for further development, particularly in the use of targets to raise standards.

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention

36. Monitoring and support are satisfactory overall and good in relation to literacy, numeracy and schools in special measures and with serious weaknesses. The challenge offered to a significant minority of schools through target setting has been unsatisfactory. The head of the ADS has only been in post since 1999 and is well aware of the weaknesses in offering sufficient challenge to schools and has begun to change the culture of his team from curriculum specialists to school improvement advisers. The senior team of sector advisers, with the assistance of advisory colleagues and external consultants, already work in this way in schools with serious weaknesses. The need to intervene earlier in schools in difficulty and more effectively is also acknowledged by the head of the ADS.
37. The ADS is large considering the size of the LEA, but is sustained by the extent of services bought back by primary and special schools in the main. Secondary schools are more discerning in their purchase of services, and most would welcome greater delegation. The ADS currently employs 18 full time equivalent (FTE) service managers, sector advisers and general advisers, 12 FTE curriculum advisers, four literacy and numeracy consultants, six advisers' administrative staff and 11.5 FTE staff based at the Professional Development Centre. The sector advisers record the advisers' workloads for analysis, and school visits are followed by written reports that are valued by most headteachers. There is no separate reporting to chairs of governing bodies. The team is organised into three management groups to coordinate work plans and to undertake appraisal interviews.
38. The ADS shows increasing signs of effectiveness, particularly in primary schools. It is appropriately focused on raising standards and has adequate expertise in major aspects of school provision. All schools continue to receive three half-day visits: on target setting, development planning and other initiatives such as the literacy and numeracy strategies. Advisers deliver many of the curriculum development courses centrally with some input into school-based customised training. The LEA has designed its own scheme for supporting schools to become more self-managing, which is a key strategy of the second EDP priority: to develop school review, monitoring and evaluation strategies. Forty-two schools have had these supportive self-reviews (SSR) led by advisers. There is a degree of collusion, particularly on the part of primary headteachers who feel comfortable with the current arrangements. Primary headteachers in particular are appreciative of a process that they rate highly, precisely because it is supportive rather than challenging. This does not help the ADS in making a critical assessment of the effectiveness of its SSR

arrangements. In two schools, governors were concerned that the findings of the LEA's SSR had not anticipated the major shortcomings identified by the subsequent Section 10 inspection, six months later.

39. The majority of secondary headteachers do not support these arrangements made by the ADS; some rely increasingly on their own autonomous networks. The LEA has given little account of this changing picture in its revised EDP. No plans exist for a planned reduction in the size of the ADS in the face of the challenge to its relevance by secondary headteachers or in the increasing effectiveness of its strategy to improve the governance of schools. The ADS currently has a business plan that includes funding from secondary, primary and special schools. The LEA argues that it would be unable to fulfil its commitment to schools who have purchased the service level agreement.

Support to schools on target setting

40. The LEA provides useful and relevant performance data to schools. The LEA's Management Information and Research (MIR) section and the Curriculum Adviser (Assessment) have produced together accurate and increasingly pertinent analyses of national and Enfield performance information to complement information provided to schools by the DfEE, OFSTED and the QCA. In 1999 the performance information included analyses by ethnicity and gender and allowed schools to compare their performance with schools with similar levels of free school meals. However, the information is less useful where there is a high level of mobility or there are new arrivals who are not fluent in English.
41. Support for target setting to raise standards is unsatisfactory. The LEA has provided insufficient challenge to a significant minority of schools who set modest targets. However, the fault lies as much with schools as with the ADS. Since 1998 target setting has been the focus of an autumn visit by link advisers to test the robustness of the methodology used by each school to establish performance targets. Some advisers have found it difficult to switch from their role as supportive curriculum specialist to a more challenging school improvement brief. Equally, some schools have resisted this shift. Others resent the ADS getting involved in what is seen as a school matter, and question the credibility of advisers with no recent experience of headship.
42. On visits to schools, a very different picture of target setting emerges. Good use is made of the performance data provided by the LEA. In one case governors set more demanding targets for the headteacher because they felt the targets agreed with the LEA were too low and at odds with what they were pushing the school to achieve. Schools are striving to improve individual pupil's performance through well-developed assessment procedures and using resources to provide smaller teaching groups or additional specialist expertise. Nevertheless a comparison of 2000 and 2001 Key Stage 2 targets with 1999 performance indicates the lowest performing schools set largely demanding targets while the highest performing schools generally set modest targets lower than 1999 performance. This position must not be allowed to continue.

Support for literacy

43. Support for literacy is good. The LEA has an effective and well-articulated strategy for raising the standards of literacy. The LEA is making sound overall progress towards achieving its Key Stage 2 targets for 2002. There are considerable variations in the performance of individual schools.
44. The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) is managed effectively by the primary sector adviser, ably assisted by three primary consultants; two funded under NLS and one funded by the LEA. The team is competent and hard working and responses to the priorities in the NLS are positive and confident. Training for literacy coordinators, governors and classroom assistants is well resourced and well matched to the schools' needs. Both the general training provided by the NLS staff and the particular support given are regarded by schools as having been highly effective. In addition to meeting the requirements of the NLS, literacy coordinators meet in local partnership groups which are well supported by the literacy team. These provide effective forums for sharing ideas and good practice. Links with the language and curriculum access service to support bilingual learners are well established and highly regarded.
45. Support for literacy is well received in primary, secondary and special schools. In many schools schemes of work and action plans have been reviewed and updated, resources have improved and used to good effect and monitoring of the literacy hour is well established. Schools particularly praise the support given to literacy coordinators, individual teachers, classroom assistants and governors as well as the guidance on learning resources.
46. Link and sector advisers have been trained to monitor, support and challenge their schools, although their confidence and quality of advice are variable. In common with many LEAs nationally, there is still more work to be done to raise pupils' writing skills, and to challenge under-achievement amongst boys. Some schools have not set sufficiently demanding literacy targets. Booster lessons for Years 5 and 6 and an increasing number of literacy summer schools are aiming to tackle these deficiencies. The LEA is also targeting those schools where there is a significant gap between reading and writing. In the summer term, teachers from identified year groups have been given additional training and support. The secondary schools visited derive considerable benefit from literacy conferences and in some cases from working closely with their partnership primary schools. English departments in some secondary schools are beginning to collaborate effectively with partnership primary schools to ensure continuity of literacy skills.

Support for numeracy

47. Support for numeracy in primary schools is very good. Although the National Numeracy Strategy only commenced in September 1999, many mathematics coordinators had previously benefited from the DES 20 day courses. As a consequence, it was easy to identify 24 lead mathematics teachers (LMT) to receive extensive training.

48. The LEA's strategy for supporting numeracy is clear and effective. The LEA is committed to raising the standards of numeracy in all key stages and it has begun to implement the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). A new strategy manager and line manager, appointed in January 2000, is also the general adviser for mathematics. Profitable links have been made with the Barnet and Camden strategy managers. In addition, three numeracy consultants provide effective support. They work well as a team giving demonstration lessons, lead school-based twilight sessions, hold meetings with headteachers and mathematics coordinators, as well as delivering central training. The team provides link advisers with very good guidance, including a checklist of what schools should have done or should be doing in terms of implementing the NNS as well as prompts for lesson observation.
49. Targets for numeracy are unambitious and were set in advance of the NNS. Some schools, for example, having achieved above or close to the national average, have set substantially lower targets for years 2000 and 2001. This is clearly unacceptable.
50. Primary schools receiving intensive support are very appreciative of the high quality support provided by the consultants. In many cases action plans have focused on the strengths and weaknesses identified by the curricular audit of the current mathematics provision. The focus of support has included higher and lower attaining pupils, greater emphasis on thinking skills and the language of mathematics. This has led to greater cooperation between the numeracy team and other partners such as the language and curriculum access service (LCAS). The impact of various initiatives on teaching and learning are reviewed once a term and findings fed into subsequent planning and teaching.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

51. Support for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The LEA's strategy for the development of curriculum ICT is limited and not understood by most schools. The key concern for schools is not about equipment, but its use and application across the curriculum. This weakness has been noted in a significant number of Section 10 reports, but is not sufficiently prioritised by the LEA in the EDP.
52. However, the introduction of the NGfL has generally been well managed. The LEA has secured Standards Fund monies to support the phased introduction of the NGfL, which is proceeding smoothly with over 90 per cent of the schools benefiting from improved computing facilities and access to email addresses. The LEA's advice and development service has provided appropriate training to IT coordinators to enable them to access the full range of commonly used hardware and software. Primary schools buy back IT technician support but most secondary schools have their own technical support. Where the schools have made progress, there has been evidence of LEA support in curricular planning, in the preparation of a detailed scheme of work and training which provides teachers with appropriate skills and knowledge to teach the necessary elements of the ICT course. In most schools it was too early to find evidence of

the impact of the NGfL on standards, but most IT coordinators were expressing increased confidence in applying ICT to enhance teaching and learning.

Support to schools causing concern

53. Once a school has been judged to have serious weaknesses or to require special measures, LEA support is effective. Three schools (one special and two primary), formerly in special measures, have improved sufficiently to be removed from this category within two years. One secondary school is subject to special measures. Seven schools are judged to have serious weaknesses (six primaries and one secondary).
54. The LEA's capacity to identify schools in decline is unsatisfactory. The policy for schools with priority needs – schools causing concern to Enfield LEA – was established in 1997, in consultation with school representatives. It sets out the procedures for designating priority needs and managing the intervention process. However, there is too little distinction between those that need support because of exceptional circumstances, for example amalgamation, and those where poor performance suggests a need to challenge school management and practice. None of the four schools that were judged to have serious weaknesses this year were designated as having priority needs at the time of their inspection.
55. However, once a school has been designated as having priority needs, support is increasingly well organised and customised to the needs of the school.

Support to headteachers and senior managers

56. Overall strategies to enhance and support the leadership and management of schools are appropriate and actions clear. Headteachers value the effective support provided on personnel and financial management.
57. The LEA offers a good range of in-service training which is linked to the priorities within the EDP, and in the primary schools visited is well matched to the needs identified in their school development plans. The programmes offered by the Professional Development Centre reflect the emphasis on leadership and management. Effective links have been established with the London Institute and Cambridge University. Most primary schools were able to demonstrate the impact of in-service training on teaching, resource development and management. Headteachers' appraisal has continued until recently and they are well prepared for performance management reviews in the future. Opportunities are provided to meet in local borough networks, at which management and curricular issues are discussed. However, many secondary heads of department prefer to seek professional support from other providers such as examination boards.

Support for newly qualified teachers (NQTs)

58. Support for the newly qualified teachers (NQTs) is good and is rightly valued by schools. The LEA meets its statutory duties and has ensured that schools

understand the requirements relating to NQTs. There are good published guidelines for NQTs and their mentors. Newly qualified teachers spoke highly of the in-service training provided by the LEA on behaviour management, assessment and on pastoral matters, such as child-protection procedures. The LEA ensures the continuous professional development of these teachers. For example, in the second and third year of teaching, in-service training is offered on curriculum leadership for aspiring heads of department. There is a well-established partnership scheme between Enfield LEA and Middlesex University.

Support to governors

59. The support for school governors provided by the member-governor service (MGS) is very good. Actions for improving the quality of governing bodies are clearly identified in the EDP. The LEA has an effective strategy that focuses on the governors' role in helping to secure school improvement. Communication with governors in Enfield is very good. Chairs of governing bodies generally feel that their views are listened to and used to shape LEA policies. The director of education and the cabinet member for education meet representatives from the member-governor forum to share vision and goals and to consult on emerging educational issues. Two key weaknesses remain. Firstly, chairs of governing bodies only receive feedback from advisers' visits from the headteacher and secondly there is clearly a need for governors to be more challenging with regard to performance targets.
60. The quality of information provided to governing bodies is highly regarded. A regular newsletter and meetings with governors are helpful in spreading information. A number of well-planned conferences are held for governors to address national and local developments.
61. The MGS and the planning and human resources team provide expert advice and good support in administering meetings, training and a telephone helpline to enable governing bodies to meet their statutory responsibilities effectively and efficiently. Most governing bodies receive efficient administrative support. Clerks are well informed on LEA procedures, legal requirements and current issues. The MGS produce induction packages for new governors and other literature to raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities of governors. The LEA has been successful in recruiting minority ethnic governors. The majority of schools use the MGS, which provides very good value for money.
62. There are effective procedures for identifying governors' training and support needs. A wide range of training opportunities are greatly valued and well attended by governors. The chairs of governors meet with the LEA to review the programme and evaluate training sessions. Governors value the training they received. Support for setting and managing a budget and on personnel matters is good.
63. Governors feel generally well supported by the link partners (typically members of the ADS) who act as the director's representative and attend all meetings of the governing bodies. However, the cost effectiveness of these arrangements

would repay further consideration since the advisers appear to offer the kind of advice which could easily be provided by the headteacher.

Early years

64. Support for early years is one of the EDP priorities and the LEA aims to provide accessible, affordable and child-centred education. The LEA has developed a clear and convincing strategic approach which is well articulated through the Enfield early years and childcare development plan (EYCDP). This is further complemented by the LEA's Early Years Social Inclusion Project. The LEA's approach is based on a thorough analysis of needs. Specific targets, such as the extension of provision for three-year-olds and raising the number and competence of child-minders, are appropriate to the growing and changing needs of the community.
65. Currently the LEA has places available for all four-year-olds and over 60 per cent of three-year-olds. The LEA carries out appropriate local surveys to collect detailed information to help to monitor supply and demand. The service has made a good start in bringing together a range of statutory, private and voluntary providers to secure good quality pre-school education. The partnership arrangements are effective and efficient. According to the last quarterly report submitted to the DfEE, targets for places for out of school childcare and pre-school childcare were exceeded by the service. The information provided to parents is good. Through its successful Sure Start bid, the LEA is developing a comprehensive system of parental and family support, although arrangements to involve parents in the early assessment process are not sufficiently developed.
66. The LEA's contribution to improving early years provision is good. The evidence from school visits indicates that the LEA's support has helped to enhance curricular planning and assessment procedures, has provided training and assisted in the development of a closer partnership between schools and families. The introduction of a consistent assessment scheme for four-year-old pupils has provided potentially valuable data. In some schools the work of bilingual home-school liaison officers is much appreciated.
67. As reported earlier, the Council provides substantial funding to this area yet quality assurance procedures are under-developed. However, with the exception of two settings, recent OFSTED reports have been satisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In consultation with headteachers and governors, review the size, focus and deployment of the Advice and Development Service to ensure that it is delivering its key task of challenging schools to raise standards.
- Improve the effectiveness of the performance evaluation and target-setting processes by:

- agreeing protocols for target setting in consultation with headteachers, advisers and governors; and
- strengthening the effectiveness of the link adviser in evaluating and challenging the performance of schools.
- In order to improve support for ICT:
 - improve the quality of guidance and support provided to schools on the use and application of ICT across the curriculum; and
 - give greater priority to improving ICT in the revised EDP.
- In order to ensure that support to schools causing concern is more in line with the revised Code of Practice on LEA/school relations:
 - develop more open, transparent and sensitive triggers for challenge, intervention and support by the LEA;
 - review the category of priority need to ensure more timely and firmer challenge to schools which are making insufficient progress; and
 - secure access to relevant and recent senior management expertise to compliment the support and challenge provided to secondary schools causing concern.
- ensure that chairs of governors receive feedback from visits by advisers and other officers to assess the performance of the school; and
- evaluate the role of the director's representative and ensure that link advisers' time is used more productively.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

68. Corporate plans in Enfield are so generally expressed that it is difficult for individual services to identify priorities. Technically, the processes and procedures appear comprehensive but in practice there is no articulated vision coming from the Council and no detailed written priorities to guide individual services in seeking to deliver the Council's aspirations. Although education is seen as a priority, the evidence is in the Council's actions, rather than in formal policy guidance from members. Similar concerns about the lack of vision and direction were echoed in a recent review of the Council by the Improvement Development Agency (IDeA). The Council has acknowledged its weakness in this area in its response to the auditor's report in June 2000.

Best Value

69. In the past, performance management systems which pertained to the education service in Enfield were largely informal. However, the Council has recently implemented a comprehensive performance management system covering all departments. This comprises a combination of annual service centre management plans and five yearly fundamental service reviews to fulfill the requirements of Best Value legislation. The principles of Best Value underpin both processes, which have been woven together skilfully and are explained clearly in Council documentation. Guidance for those undertaking planning and review is similarly clear and comprehensive. It is too early to see any evidence of the impact in education.
70. The external auditor has affirmed that the Council's Best Value performance plan has been prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements and guidance. However, he has expressed the opinion that the Council's priorities have not been clearly formulated and recommends that the Council should set out a statement of member priorities to inform planning at service group and service centre levels.

Education planning

71. In establishing its performance management processes the Council has drawn on practice developed within the education group by the director of education and her team. The group has had, ahead of practice in other departments, an overarching three year plan since 1995, which is updated annually. The education group management team sets priorities for more detailed service plans and monitors progress on a quarterly basis. Members ratify the three year plan.
72. The LEA thus has, in principle at least, sound processes. Planning is strongest at the service centre level. Whilst these plans could be improved in matters of detail, they do provide a useful record of action planned and a framework for monitoring subsequently. Practice thereafter tends to be stronger in the areas covered by statutory plans. These plans are agreed by members prior to

submission and do give some clear direction to service managers. It is in other planning, at the service group and most clearly at corporate level, where there is a failure to ensure coherence, consistency, and a sharp focus on priorities.

73. Attempts have been made to cross-refer the group and service centre plans with statutory plans and with the budget-making exercise. This has not been successful in providing coherent overall direction for the service and there is no real sense of 'policy drive' and focus in the planning documentation. This neither helps the LEA's internal management processes, nor its ability to communicate policy priorities to schools and other partners. The most serious implications for this are for members and the corporate centre of the Council, since within the education department the more regular contact between senior officers and other staff (and communication in such respects is good) requires less reliance on planning documents.
74. The work of the Children and Young Persons Scrutiny Panel in reviewing service planning and delivery is not fully developed. Its role in respect of fundamental service reviews is clear but reviews occur infrequently and are not supplemented by a systematic and comprehensive programme of scrutiny in the intervening periods. This is particularly important given the considerable authority now delegated to officers at service centre planning level.
75. Within the education group a programme of quality service reviews (essentially consultation in depth with representative client groups) has been operating since 1997. Alongside this there has been a wide range of activity, including headteacher working groups, aimed at canvassing schools' views on the design and performance of support services. This has been particularly intense during the last year as part of the preparations for delegating significant additional funding to schools. There is a real sense of overload on the part of schools, which the Education Department has acknowledged. A review of the authority's consultation procedures is already planned for this autumn.
76. Progress in the systematic collection and analysis of data has been slow and has constrained the implementation of the LEA's management information strategy. A considerable amount of work has been undertaken since 1998 on developing a pupil database system but this is not yet operational. One consequence is that schools continue to receive requests for the same information from different parts of the LEA.

Partnerships

77. The LEA is effective in building strong relationships with schools, other departments and with external agencies such as the police, the health authority and church bodies.

Evaluation

78. Arrangements for evaluating the effectiveness of the LEA are unsatisfactory. These points are echoed by the district auditor in his assessment of the Council's Best Value Performance Plan. Members are vulnerable to the charge that they

are failing in their duty to ensure that schools are using resources to good effect.

79. Members are kept generally informed of developments and financial decisions made by officers on a regular basis in writing through the member governor forum and through meetings and briefings from the cabinet member for education. However, members appear less comfortable with the scrutiny role that is also part of their remit. Too much of the onus falls on the shoulders of the cabinet and shadow cabinet member for education. The Council has no tradition of receiving Section 10 reports or other feedback on the performance of individual schools. Early indications reveal little evidence that members take a robust role in evaluating the performance of either the education service or its schools under the new Better Local Government arrangements. Currently, schools enjoy all the benefits of partnership without any reciprocal accountability.

Management services

80. The information provided to schools on each service is good. It has the particular strength of including details of both centrally-funded and traded services. The LEA has rightly decided that centrally-funded services should be accountable to all schools, whether or not they buy back services. However, the performance standards expected are not specified clearly. A clear statement outlining any statutory requirements for those schools not buying a service from the LEA is not currently included. Without this it is not possible for schools to make a fully informed decision on whether/where to purchase services, and ensure that statutory duties are met.
81. Support for financial management is good. The accounting and payroll systems meet all basic needs. Information to support school budget planning and review is good and advice is available on request. Staff are generally regarded as responsive and helpful. Appropriate contact is maintained with schools with financial difficulties. Very few schools have had significant deficits in recent years. The provision of financial benchmarking data is good and well appreciated by schools.
82. Support provided by the personnel service is excellent. The service is proactive in the provision of information and advice. The manual of guidance provided is comprehensive, updated regularly and is supplemented by information bulletins. Schools regard casework support as reliable, robust, and focused on school improvement. The service manages successfully to balance the management interests of schools with genuine concern for the interests of individuals.
83. The LEA has recently produced a draft ICT development plan embracing, for the first time in one document, all aspects of provision for ICT and its uses to support the work of schools. This has recently been discussed with heads in the policy coordinating group and is soon to be issued for consultation. That this exercise is only now taking place reflects the limited degree to which developments in the administrative and curricular uses of ICT have hitherto

been coordinated within the LEA. It also highlights the fact that significant progress still needs to be made in developing and implementing a coherent management information strategy. Nevertheless, the separation of administrative and curricular systems has not been problematic for schools thus far. However, as the use of ICT develops further it may at least lead to missed opportunities to make the most cost effective use of systems. This is already the case with the electronic links established (separately) for administrative and National Grid for Learning (NGfL) purposes.

84. The LEA recognised last year that radical action was needed to address deficiencies in its ICT support for schools. This had partly arisen through under-investment over an extended period. The corporate client role was established in a new "IT Bridge" section and a 10-year contract for technical support is provided in a significant partnership with a private provider. Technical support for school-based administrative systems was included in the contract.
85. The contractor faced a significant backlog in work for schools, mainly in the provision and installation of new/replacement hardware and software. The LEA responded to this by allocating additional resources and by prioritising schools' work within the contract. Some progress is now being made in clearing the arrears of work, but schools have now had a poor service for a very long period of time. Responses to repair and fault-finding requests have been given priority and the service in such respects has been better. Schools acknowledge that the LEA's activity is better managed than hitherto and that some good work is being done.
86. Whilst there have been difficulties with aspects of ICT support, the provision of hardware and software to schools to meet basic pupil record and accounting requirements has been satisfactory. User support for the software concerned is also satisfactory. A programme of installing ISDN lines in each school for administrative purposes has been completed, although installation has been problematic in many schools. At present the use of these lines is limited, although the installation of an e-mail facility is imminent. Newsletters are sent to schools which provide both information and advice. Training provision for new software meets schools' needs and steps have been taken to establish a programme of regular meetings for school administrative officers at which issues can be discussed and good practice spread.
87. The take-up of school meals is broadly comparable with that in other outer London boroughs, as are costs of production. Only a few primary schools have opted for the delegation of funds but service level agreements are being developed to apply in all schools. These should allow schools greater influence over the nature of the provision made. The LEA offers a client support service for meals and cleaning which is separate from its DSO. Reservations were expressed by some schools about the degree of independence of the client service in monitoring the contracts. A fundamental service review is currently being undertaken. The consultation planned is broadly based although potential alternative suppliers have not been included.

88. Transport provision for SEN pupils is reliable and reasonably punctual. Appropriate steps are taken to ensure value for money in the delivery of the service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council should:

- communicate corporate strategies in clear and simple terms to service managers;
- monitor and evaluate progress against education policy objectives and the Education Department's work more systematically by the scrutiny committee;
- ensure that consultation on service planning and delivery is closely coordinated to ensure reasonable consistency of approach and to avoid undue demands on the time of school staff, governors and other stakeholders; and
- revise the ICT development plan to include clearer indications of the timelines envisaged, the resource implications at school and LEA level, and the criteria for assessing success.

The Audit Commission should:

- consider whether a corporate governance inspection is required.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

Strategy

89. The LEA's approach to promoting more inclusive education for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is unsatisfactory. The LEA has adopted a cautious piecemeal approach whereby it is tackling various strands without the benefit of a fully articulated vision and a clear policy steer to achieve it. Consultation was sought in February 2000 on both the revised SEN policy and a strategy for SEN (1999-2002) which commits the LEA to develop a more inclusive education system. However, at this late stage, the approach outlined in the strategy is still one of consciousness raising and improving existing arrangements, rather than a radical approach which tackles the real challenges the borough faces in delivering its objectives. The strategy does not set out in sufficient detail how access and entitlement will be facilitated in mainstream schools, how resources are to be deployed, the future role of special schools in Enfield and how partnerships with parents are to be developed. Targets for the transfer of pupils from special to mainstream schools are modest. The arrangements for in-school support for pupils with special needs are unwieldy, and with a staff of 265 (full time equivalent) increasingly difficult to manage. Both the In-School Support Service and SEN services are subject this year to a fundamental Best Value review, but there has been slippage in the timescale. The current arrangements are no substitute for a comprehensive and urgent review of provision, involving all schools and key stakeholders and leading to a properly articulated plan of implementation.
90. The SEN strategy is merely 'tinkering at the margins' and does not do justice to the increasing diversity of both need and provision. The borough's provision has grown significantly in recent years and includes special schools, resource units attached to mainstream schools and a complex array of in-school support from non-teaching professional and other agencies. The LEA has been successful in reducing the number of pupils placed outside the borough. However, the current funding formula no longer reflects the increasingly complex range of needs special schools are being asked to meet, and additional roles, for example in outreach work. There are a number of unfilled places at present in special schools and staff are unclear about the LEA's plans for their future. The funding of some of the special schools is being sustained by setting planned place numbers which are well in excess of current roll but which cannot be justified by the needs of the schools in terms of class organisation. Whilst this may have the benefit of sustaining the staffing of the schools through a period of change, it can only be justified as a short-term measure.

Statutory obligations

91. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its statutory obligations. The completion rate of statements within the 18-week timescale has improved. The procedures allow parents, at the draft stage, to indicate a preference of school for their child. Annual reviews are timely and are monitored by officers. It is most unusual, though, for a statement to cease to be maintained, or any

significant changes to be made. A parents' centre, initially funded by the LEA and now with charitable status, provides guidance, support and advocacy to parents. Parental appeals to the SEN tribunals are rare. Of the 12 tribunal cases in 1999/2000, nine were withdrawn.

Support for school improvement

92. Aspects of the support for pupils with SEN are good, such as the work of the educational psychology service (EPS). Others are more variable. The EPS is located within the multi-disciplinary child guidance service in Enfield, which works with children and their families. Educational psychologists (EP) provide very good support which is well regarded by schools. With the current emphasis on additional support at Stage 5 of the Code of Practice schools are seeking EP time to assess pupils with a view to referring them to the SEN panel, leaving little time for earlier intervention and support.
93. Special educational needs coordinators are well-supported through the local partnership networks, facilitated by SEN advisers. There are some useful initiatives, including action-research projects with effective support from the special sector adviser and good professional development opportunities linked with higher education establishments. The LEA is working on an innovative accreditation scheme for effective SEN practice with a number of schools. Training has tended to be organised centrally, although there is evidence that the LEA is beginning to take account of the differential needs of schools, many of whom would prefer more in-school consultancy from the specialist advisers.
94. The arrangements for in-school support for pupils with statements are unwieldy. The support service which provides teachers and learning support assistants for pupils with statements has grown to the full-time equivalent of 265 staff working with a very wide range of needs managed by one head of service and deputy. The service is difficult to manage centrally. Schools view the provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties as insufficient, despite the quality of support provided by the behaviour support service and individual learning support assistants. Arrangements vary. Some schools manage staff as if they were on their establishment, others feel little ownership of the type and timing of the support provided. Planning is non-existent in some cases and raises serious questions about whether pupils' entitlement is being met.

Value for money

95. SEN funding represents a broadly similar proportion of the LEA's schools budget to that in other outer London boroughs. Expenditure on special school placements out of borough is relatively high and this is also reflected in the associated budget for home to school transport. Expenditure on supporting children with statements of SEN in mainstream schools has grown significantly in recent years, but as a percentage of overall school spending was still significantly below the average for outer London boroughs in 1999/2000. Whilst the budget for such expenditure increased substantially again for the current year, this was mainly the result of introducing new contractual

arrangements for the staff involved. Growth to reflect further increases in statementing was modest. The steps taken by the LEA to manage the situation are taking effect and are appropriate.

96. The LEA is making useful progress in identifying clearly to schools the funding delegated to them under various headings for SEN support and in asking them to indicate how they plan to use this funding. This information has been circulated alongside a very clear and informative account of spending overall on SEN in the borough and how it has changed over recent years. In future, schools will be asked to account precisely for how they have used their delegated funding, so that its effectiveness can be evaluated.
97. The LEA has developed criteria to define the stages of the Code of Practice on SEN. These are used in considering requests for full assessment, in deciding on statementing, and to a lesser degree in the annual review of statements. However, it is not clear that the criteria are being consistently applied within schools and local partnerships across the borough. The LEA is aware of this but has not been sufficiently robust in addressing the issue of consistency. These concerns were raised some years earlier, when data on pupil needs were collected for use in the funding formula. At that time it was felt necessary to abandon the methodology and return to the use of mainly proxy indicators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve provision for special educational needs:

- conduct an audit of need and a wide-ranging, urgent review of all aspects of provision is needed, rather than a focus on individual parts;
- review existing support arrangements for pupils with statements in mainstream schools, with a view to delegating the funding to schools;
- continue to work with schools to develop the criteria defining the stages of the Code of Practice on SEN and to ensure their consistent application by LEA and school staff; and
- develop its funding formula for special schools to target resources more precisely on the needs of current pupils and any additional roles for the schools concerned.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The supply of school places

98. Despite sound practice and initiative in planning over a number of years the supply of school places is extremely problematic in Enfield. The LEA has had to respond to significant increases in school rolls in recent years. Most of the borough's secondary schools are over-subscribed and admit significant numbers of pupils from neighbouring LEAs. Furthermore, the arrival in the borough of significant numbers of refugees and other homeless families (placed by other authorities) has added an element of unpredictability and high mobility to an already difficult situation.
99. In the primary sector in the south east of the borough there is an acute problem in finding school places for new arrivals within a reasonable distance of home. The situation here is borderline and worsening. The next nearest schools with available places for new arrivals are over 1.5 miles away. In the secondary sector there are, at any one time, between 100 and 150 pupils for whom a place is not immediately available and for whom only very limited tuition is provided in whatever temporary accommodation (for example rooms in libraries) the LEA can secure. The turnover within this group is high. Significant numbers of pupils spend only a few months in Enfield before moving to other areas. The remainder find places within Enfield schools within a few months as a result of existing pupils moving elsewhere. Nonetheless, despite the LEA's best efforts, the position is clearly unsatisfactory. There can be no doubt that the current 'substitute' provision is inadequate and that the pupils' best interests would be served by placement, with additional support if necessary, in a school.
100. Liaison with schools and other agencies on the prediction of need has been good and forecasts have been largely accurate, at least over the short term. A number of major schemes to expand school provision have been undertaken, including a PFI project to provide a new secondary school which was one of the first nationally. Good use has also been made of Section 106 ('planning gain') agreements to expand and enhance provision. Cooperation with the voluntary sector has been good, as has liaison with individual schools on planning and intake issues. The first school organisation plan was produced on time and after full consultation and provides a clear summary of projected need and the action planned.
101. In both the primary and secondary sectors numbers substantially exceed capacity. Rolls are predicted to rise further to a peak in 2003/2004. The opening of the new secondary school this year will not be sufficient to deal with the additional demand and a significant shortage of places in Year 7 is predicted by 2002.
102. Schools have already been very cooperative in agreeing to intakes of pupils in excess of their standard numbers and have also taken significant numbers of pupils in excess of planned admission numbers at the request of the LEA. The scope to deal with further roll increases by this means is now extremely limited.

The LEA's capital programme has been dominated for many years by the need to increase school places; relatively little money has thus been available to improve existing buildings and to deal with overcrowding.

103. Nevertheless, the LEA has so far been unable to persuade the DfEE that further capital funding or PFI credits should be allocated on 'basic need' grounds. A review of capital assets is currently underway to establish what further funding might be realised. The LEA can already point to significant transfers of money to the capital budget in recent years.

Admissions

104. The LEA has very well managed admissions arrangements for both primary and secondary schools. For the service to be as well regarded by schools as it is, given the pressure on places locally, is a considerable achievement. There is close and harmonious working with the voluntary and foundation sectors on admissions policies and the LEA co-ordinates a secondary transfer process which encompasses all local schools. An admissions forum with wide representation of interested groups will begin meeting next term.
105. The administration of admissions processes undertaken by the LEA is both efficient and sensitive to family and school needs. The provision of information to schools during these processes is particularly good. The administration and handling of appeals is well regarded by schools. Improvements could be made in the admissions literature for parents to meet best practice standards, but overall the provision of information and advice to parents works well. The timetables for admission to the main reception years meet nearly all minimum standards and some best practice. Appeals for reception class places should be brought forward to the Summer term to allow children to receive induction following appeal.
106. Arrangements for the transfer to mainstream secondary schools of pupils with SEN statements are well designed to support inclusion. The process of considering children's needs starts in Year 5 and there is close collaboration with parents. The choice of school available is at least equal to that for others.

Asset management

107. The LEA is on schedule to meet the government's asset management planning (AMP) requirements. Full condition surveys have been conducted of all school buildings, capacity data is up to date, and suitability assessments are taking place this term. Schools overall have not been satisfied, however, with the conduct of the condition surveys. Poor communication between surveyors and schools was a key element of the problem and this has been acknowledged by property services. Schools have been offered individual discussions on outstanding issues and, if appropriate, additional survey visits. Improvements are also planned to the format and content of survey reports to make them more useful to schools in planning their own property management responsibilities.

108. The LEA's practice of involving school representatives and voluntary sector partners generally in this area of work is good. Reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that costs of work compare acceptably with those incurred by other LEAs.
109. Prior to delegation in 1999/2000 revenue spending on repairs and maintenance was well above the average for outer London boroughs. The proportion of that budget spent on planned rather than reactive maintenance was well above the recommended level, suggesting the situation overall was under reasonable control. Capital spending has fluctuated widely from year to year because of necessary commitments to expanding provision but has generally been above the outer London borough average. Because of the need to find substantial sums to increase the number of places locally, however, a key problem has been in securing funding for the improvement of existing premises. The LEA's estimate is that centrally-controlled funding at current levels is sufficient to deal with high priority replacement and repair needs only. On the other hand, delegated funding levels overall are broadly in line with schools' needs in all the priority repair and maintenance categories used in asset management planning. This balance in the distribution of available maintenance funding between central and delegated budgets puts a particular onus on the sound management of resources at school level.
110. A sharp contrast can be drawn between the good quality of the LEA's planning and consultation activities and the delivery of technical support by property services. Schools see the key issue in the latter respect to be a slow transition towards a 'client culture', manifested in poor communication and lack of responsiveness generally. Concerns have mainly related to the commissioning of work and lack of supervision of maintenance work. Liaison on the design of major projects has been generally satisfactory, although there have been some concerns over poor contract specification and supervision (although not in all cases). Overall, there has been an unacceptable variation in the quality of support provided. This is accepted by the current head of service, who has instituted a programme of changes and tighter management supervision which should, if followed through rigorously, bring significant improvements. A fundamental service review of property management across the Council is also currently underway. Much needs to be done to win back the confidence of schools.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

111. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its statutory duties with regard to the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff. Child protection procedures are known and understood in schools and there are regular opportunities for training and updating knowledge. Health and safety procedures are thorough.

Young people in public care

112. The LEA is at a very early stage of developing its mechanisms for the support of young people in public care. Although a database is maintained by the social services department (SSD) and the LEA is updated on a regular basis,

schools report that they are not told which children are looked after by the local authority. There are no systems for monitoring their progress in school, apart from the normal pastoral and reporting systems common to all pupils. It is important that the LEA provides guidance to all schools and training for designated teachers.

113. The Council has a strong commitment in principle to supporting the most vulnerable children in its care and appreciates the contribution that schools and the Education Department make in this area. There is evidence of a positive and constructive working relationship with the director of social services. In practice, however, the Council (in common with many other urban authorities) faces a serious problem in discharging that commitment at an operational level because of its inability to recruit social workers in Enfield. It is unlikely that the Council is fully discharging its role as 'corporate parent' to young people in the care of the local authority. As a consequence, the education department has developed compensatory strategies which involve the education welfare service (EWS) acting as a point of referral between schools and social services. Each children's home in the borough has an allocated education welfare officer (EWO) to ensure that appropriate educational provision is made for all young people in public care.

Attendance

114. The LEA has taken reasonable steps to ensure that its statutory duties with regard to school attendance are met. In both primary and secondary schools in Enfield, attendance is broadly in line with national figures. However, unauthorised absence is above average in primary schools, but in line with national figures in secondary schools. The EWS works closely with the Police in tackling truancy. The number of pupils taking extended leave is a concern for a small minority of schools in the borough, not all of whom were aware of the LEA's guidance.
115. The EWS was reviewed in 1997 and many of the significant concerns raised about the rigour of the service have been systematically addressed by the head of service. In the past, schools with the most pressing problems reported high staff turnover and lack of continuity compared with schools with fewer problems. The service has now built in a tier of senior officers who offer a degree of flexibility in responding to crises. The management of the EWS is increasingly effective and in most cases the work of officers is satisfactory or better. However, entitlement and the service standards are still not clear.

Behaviour support

116. In Enfield's education service there has been significant progress in promoting social inclusion. The behaviour support plan (BSP) assigns issues relating to social exclusion high priority and provides a reasonably clear and coherent strategic overview. Guidance from the DfEE on social exclusion is an integral part of the plan that links well with other LEA plans such as the EDP, early years development plan and the youth justice plan.

117. The quality of support provided by the LEA to improve pupils' behaviour in school is good. The behaviour support service (BSS) for primary aged pupils, and the secondary tuition centre (STC) with its support team for secondary pupils, are very well regarded by schools. Staff offer a wide range of specialist skills. Much of this good practice is now embedded in schools and has led to some innovative projects.

Provision of education otherwise than at school (EOTAS)

118. The LEA takes its responsibilities seriously but, for a variety of reasons, aspects of the provision of education for pupils otherwise than at school are unsatisfactory. The number of permanent exclusions has varied over the last four years. Overall the trend is declining, although secondary exclusions are still above the national and neighbouring LEAs' averages. The LEA analyses permanent exclusions by gender and ethnic origin; the number of black pupils of Afro-Caribbean heritage remains significantly high despite a steady decline in the rate of exclusions. This remains a matter of concern. Recent data provided by the LEA indicate a high level of fixed-term exclusions. Five secondary schools consistently account for 65 per cent of all exclusions from the secondary schools.
119. The district auditor reported very positively on the LEA "providing speedy and effective alternative education". Both pupil referral units (PRUs) have had positive Section 10 inspections. Exclusion processes are handled effectively and there is little delay in offering cost-effective, part-time alternative education to excluded pupils. The LEA has been successful in introducing 'hard to place' mechanisms. Schools agree to admit excluded pupils above planned admission numbers.
120. Since September 1999, the demand for secondary places outstripped the provision available, leaving a significant minority of pupils unable to gain access to a school. While the number has changed on a daily basis, the demand is high. At the time of the inspection 112 pupils were without a place across the 11-16 age range. Alternative education is being offered to these pupils. A special course is being provided at Southgate College for twenty Year 11 pupils who have little or no English. Pupils in other year groups are being offered five and a half hours of education in libraries and in a community house. The Secondary Tuition Centre coordinates provision and liaises closely with the admissions service. The LEA is rightly concerned about these emergency measures which it acknowledges are unsatisfactory.
121. The LEA provides useful information for parents which outlines their responsibilities if they choose to educate their children other than at school. At the time of the inspection, 27 pupils were withdrawn by parents and were being educated at home. The LEA issued appropriate guidance and there are systematic and efficient arrangements in place to ensure that the education provided at home is efficient and suitable for the age, ability and aptitude of children.

Support for ethnic minority and Traveller pupils

122. The Language and Curriculum Access Service (LCAS) is highly regarded and gives good support to the large, diverse and growing ethnic minority population within the LEA's schools. Support for ethnic minority children within schools is closely aligned with the EDP priorities aimed at improving attainment. The LCAS works closely with ADS staff, particularly in schools that are designated with priority needs. Challenging attainment targets for ethnic minority achievement are being set, and the centralised pupil database to be introduced later this year should enable the LEA to monitor and track trends effectively.
123. The proportion of black and ethnic minority children has risen from just over a third to almost a half of the total population. To date only performance at GCSE has been subject to systematic ethnic monitoring and trend analysis. These analyses provide limited insight into the relative attainment of ethnic minority groups but they highlight the relative under-performance of black and Turkish pupils and the slow rate of improvement of these groups over time.
124. Reference to the needs of ethnic minority groups permeates the entire EDP. The activities cover an impressive range of issues including; literacy; numeracy; discrimination; a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum; exclusions; and the needs of Travellers. The targets set within the EDP and Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG) action plan – to ensure that there is no comparative underachievement by any ethnic, linguistic or gender group – are very challenging.
125. The EMTAG action plan outlines good strategies linked to need, including innovative projects in relation to ethnic and Traveller groups. However, the arrangements for the delegation of funding were not well handled and were made more difficult by the LEA having insufficient data on the achievement of ethnic minority pupils. First, the fairness of the original formula was criticised by headteachers and governors of schools in the east of the borough. The revised formula was then challenged by headteachers and governors in the north and west of the borough. An uneasy compromise was struck and a moderated formula has evened out the distribution of EMTAG funding for this year but it is still a bone of contention and is not sufficiently targeted to need. The LEA hopes, through the planned centralised pupil database, to provide a more accurate basis for allocation of funds in all future targeting of underachieving groups. Schools have also challenged the purpose of the 15 per cent retention of delegated funding recommended by the DfEE for the central LCAS team.
126. There is a good balance between INSET and in-school training for staff and governors. Publications and training materials are of a high quality and effectively disseminated. There is a relatively small but growing number of Traveller children in the LEA. The needs of this vulnerable group of children are clearly addressed in the EDP. The support for Traveller children at schools visited was judged to be effective. The LEA provides good value for money in this area.

Measures taken to combat social exclusion

127. The Single Regeneration Bid (SRB) funded activities in the Edmonton area have in recent years been effective in supporting schools in promoting social inclusion as part of an attainment focus. The description of a coherent, comprehensive and long-term approach to promoting social inclusion contained within the recent bid for further SRB funding indicates that the strategic focus that has been lacking in the past is emerging.

Responses to the Macpherson Report

128. The Council has accorded a high priority to tackling racist incidents and these were the subject of the first community debate in 1998. The Council funds the Racial Incidents Action Group, a multi-agency partnership, which has been praised by the Home Office as a model of good practice. A positive school ethos and a commitment to racial harmony were strong features of schools visited during this inspection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The supply of school places

- take action to ease the pressure on primary school places in the south east of the borough; and
- increase the number of secondary school places, both to address the existing problem of children out of school and to provide for the further increases in roll which are forecast for the years to come.

Admissions

- revise the timetable for primary reception admissions process to ensure that appeals are completed before the end of the preceding summer term at the latest.

Asset management

- follow through rigorously the programme of action planned to improve the support for schools provided by property services.

Young people in public care

- ensure that its provision to support the educational attainment of young people in public care and those educated otherwise than at school is more effective and guarantees pupils' entitlement to full time education.

Education welfare service

- review the deployment of the EWS to ensure:

- that its resources are targeted more effectively at schools in most need;
 - that the boundaries between EWOs and social workers are properly maintained; and clearly communicated to schools
 - guidance for schools on pupils taking extended leave is provided
 - service standards are agreed and met
- target and challenge schools more effectively to reduce the number of exclusions

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the quality of strategic planning for school improvement, in consultation with schools and other stakeholders, revise the Education Development Plan for 2001/02 and ensure that it is based on a clearer recognition of the differential needs of schools by:

- providing a clearer link between EDP priorities and activities and the LEA policy on identifying and supporting schools causing concern;
- addressing more clearly the differences in primary, secondary and special schools and reflect these more accurately in the funding formula;
- providing more explicit targets for EDP actions;
- giving greater emphasis to ICT within EDP priorities, particularly in relation to realising the potential of the National Grid for Learning; and
- provide more robust and systematic procedures for monitoring and evaluating the progress on EDP activity to members, headteachers, staff and governor representatives.
- In consultation with headteachers and governors, review the size, focus and deployment of the Advice and Development Service to ensure that it is delivering its key task of challenging schools to raise standards.
- Improve the effectiveness of the performance evaluation and target-setting processes by:
 - agreeing protocols for target setting in consultation with headteachers, advisers and governors; and
 - strengthening the effectiveness of the link adviser in evaluating and challenging the performance of schools.
- In order to improve support for ICT:
 - improve the quality of guidance and support provided to schools on the use and application of ICT across the curriculum; and
 - give greater priority to improving ICT in the revised EDP.
- In order to ensure that support to schools causing concern is more in line with the revised Code of Practice on LEA/school relations:
 - develop more open, transparent and sensitive triggers for challenge, intervention and support by the LEA;

- review the category of priority need to ensure more timely and firmer challenge to schools which are making insufficient progress; and
- secure access to relevant and recent senior management expertise to compliment the support and challenge provided to secondary schools causing concern.
- ensure that chairs of governors receive feedback from visits by advisers and other officers to assess the performance of the school; and
- evaluate the role of the director's representative and ensure that link advisers' time is used more productively.

The Council should:

- communicate corporate strategies in clear and simple terms to service managers;
- monitor and evaluate progress against education policy objectives and the Education Department's work more systematically by the scrutiny committee;
- ensure that consultation on service planning and delivery is closely coordinated to ensure reasonable consistency of approach and to avoid undue demands on the time of school staff, governors and other stakeholders; and
- revise the ICT development plan to include clearer indications of the timelines envisaged, the resource implications at school and LEA level, and the criteria for assessing success.

The Audit Commission should:

- consider whether a corporate governance inspection is required.

In order to improve provision for special educational needs:

- conduct an audit of need and a wide-ranging, urgent review of all aspects of provision is needed, rather than a focus on individual parts;
- review existing support arrangements for pupils with statements in mainstream schools, with a view to delegating the funding to schools;
- continue to work with schools to develop the criteria defining the stages of the Code of Practice on SEN and to ensure their consistent application by LEA and school staff; and
- develop its funding formula for special schools to target resources more precisely on the needs of current pupils and any additional roles for the schools concerned.

The supply of school places

- take action to ease the pressure on primary school places in the south east of the borough; and
- increase the number of secondary school places, both to address the existing problem of children out of school and to provide for the further increases in roll which are forecast for the years to come.

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

Tel: 020 7421 6800

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Enfield LEA
PO Box 56,
Civic Centre
Silver Street
Enfield
EN1 3XQ

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