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**INSPECTION OF
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LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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INTRODUCTION

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

2. The inspection was based partly on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, and staff in the education, leisure and libraries directorate and in other council directorates. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to all its schools. The response rate was 82 per cent.

3. Group discussions were held with representatives of schools and the LEA's partners. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to two infant schools; two junior schools; eight primary schools; seven secondary schools; and three special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy for school improvement. The visits also considered whether the support that is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the schools, and provides value for money. The inspection also took account of relevant evidence from other HMI visits to East Riding schools.

4. The LEA had undertaken a Best Value review of its assessment activities for student awards and education benefits. Inspection of the review included scrutiny of documentation and interviews with officers and a focus group of students. Attempts to meet parents in receipt of education benefits were unsuccessful.

COMMENTARY

5. East Riding of Yorkshire is the largest unitary authority in England. It is a diverse geographical area, which is largely rural but with an eastern coastline that spans its entire length. Almost half the population of 319, 000 live in the towns of Goole, Bridlington and Beverley. While there are some very affluent areas, there are also some which lie within the most deprived 25 per cent of wards in the country. Unemployment rates vary significantly across the authority, from 2.5 to 28. 4 per cent.

6. There is a high proportion of small schools in the primary sector. The overall performance of schools in national tests is above the national average up to Key Stage 3, and is in line at Key Stage 4. At Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, girls' performance generally exceeds that of boys in English, but is more in line in mathematics and science. The LEA has fewer exclusions and better attendance rates than those found nationally. There are two schools requiring special measures, three with serious weaknesses and one designated as underachieving. Overall, this is a good picture for individual schools and the LEA.

7. The council does not have a single ruling political party. Elected members recognise the importance of education and have evolved a logical political structure with the three main political parties sharing appropriately the responsibility for education decision-making and scrutiny. There are insufficient opportunities for senior staff and governors from all schools to meet members.

8. The school improvement service provides satisfactory or better support for school improvement. The authority's provision is at least satisfactory in most of its other day-to-day services, particularly those for vulnerable pupils. Management support services are sound across a broad range of areas. Following changes to the support for special education needs, there are now generally more strengths than weaknesses in this aspect of provision and is, therefore, satisfactory overall.

9. The LEA has been particularly effective in:

- support for literacy;
- support for numeracy;
- support for the provision of financial services;
- admissions;
- support for school attendance;
- asset management planning; and
- support for children in public care.

10. Since East Riding became a unitary authority in April 1996, the council has been committed to developing effective corporate working. The structure and organisation of its corporate and senior management officer teams reflect this. However, there is ineffective communication between the corporate management team and a significant number of headteachers. Schools are not yet convinced that corporate management fully understands the nature of their needs, or that it gives

sufficient attention to school improvement issues. Overall, the Education Development Plan is not a prominent document within corporate planning.

11. There are two functions that are not exercised adequately and are currently an impediment to the authority's ability to work in partnership with its schools:

- within the authority's corporate planning, its planning for school improvement lacks sufficient clarity, consistency and status; and
- the communication on strategic planning and decision-making is not adequately open and effective.

12. East Riding LEA has made satisfactory progress in supporting its schools in the maintenance of standards and in tackling identified weaknesses. However, whilst the quality of support is satisfactory at an operational level, where day-to-day communication is sound, at a strategic level there are weaknesses. The authority has the capacity to improve, but it must give a greater emphasis to communicating more effectively on major plans as an aid to developing clearer strategic links with all stakeholders, especially schools.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

13. East Riding of Yorkshire became a unitary authority in April 1996. It is a relatively advantaged region, with the proportion of adults in the higher social class categories above that found nationally or in similar authorities. However, the population is socio-economically diverse. There is significant variation in unemployment rates across the authority, with some areas well below and some well above the national average. Geographically, it is the largest unitary authority in England, covering around 2,409 square kilometres. The authority is sparsely populated, with the majority of the population of 319,000 living in the main towns of Goole, Bridlington and Beverley.

14. The authority maintains four nursery schools, 17 infant schools, 15 junior schools, 103 primary schools, seventeen 11 – 18 secondary schools, one 11 – 16 secondary school and six special schools. Forty primary schools have nursery units attached, 15 of which are peripatetic. Two schools are designated as Beacon schools, one secondary and one primary. Five schools have specialist status, three for technology, one for art and one for modern foreign languages. There are 50,975 pupils in East Riding schools: 494 nursery; 3524 infant (including 274 under-fives); 4,906 junior; 18,972 primary pupils (including 1,013 under-fives); 22,627 secondary pupils; and 452 pupils in special schools.

15. Ethnic minorities comprise 0.9 per cent of the school population, compared to 12.1 per cent nationally and 1.4 per cent in LEAs with similar characteristics¹. The percentage population of each minority ethnic group is well below that found nationally. The proportions of primary and secondary pupils with statements of special educational needs, at 2.2 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively, are below the national averages. Over 70 per cent of pupils with a statement are educated in mainstream schools. Entitlement to free school meals, at primary and secondary levels, is below the national average.

Performance

16. The key features of the LEA's statistical profile for schools' and pupils' performance in 2000 were:

- the performance indicators in primary schools data show that on entry to school pupils' attainment is above average;
- at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' attainments are above the national averages in English, mathematics and science. With the exception of Key Stage 2 mathematics, girls generally do better than boys;

¹ East Riding's statistical neighbours are: Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Herefordshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, North Yorkshire, Shropshire, Somerset and Worcestershire.

- at the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment exceeds the national average in all three core subjects. Girls perform better than boys in English, do similarly well in mathematics and achieve less well in science;
- at GCSE, pupils' performance for one or more A* - G, five or more A* - C grades and average points score (APS) per candidate are in line with the national and statistical neighbours' figures. With the exception of a similar performance at one or more A* - G, girls do better than boys. The most recent University of London Institute of Education (ULIE) report shows that half the secondary schools are achieving in line with like schools at GCSE, but the remainder are below;
- since 1996, the rate of improvement of Key Stage 2 pupils achieving Level 4 or above, when compared with national figures, is broadly in line in English, but below in mathematics and science. For the same period, the rates of improvement for pupils achieving one or more A*-G grades and in the APS at GCSE are in line with the national rates. At five or more A*-C grades, it is above the national trend;
- the rate of progress between Key Stages 1 and 2 is above that found nationally. Between Key Stages 2 and 3, and 3 and 4, it is broadly in line;
- attendance in primary schools is above the national average, with authorised and unauthorised absence below the national figures. Secondary attendance is in line with that found nationally as are the rates of authorised and unauthorised absence;
- permanent exclusions in primary schools are below that found nationally. In secondary schools, they are well below;
- two schools are currently in special measures and a further three designated as having serious weaknesses. One school has been declared as underachieving; and
- the percentage of primary and secondary schools graded 'good' or 'very good' in OFSTED inspections is well above the national average.

Funding

17. The Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for school provision in East Riding is significantly below the unitary authorities' average. Education spending was well above the SSA level (109.0 per cent) in the first year of the LEA. This position declined significantly in the period to 1999/2000 (101.8 per cent). However, for 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 the Education SSA increase was fully passed on to education. Education was given significantly favoured treatment in this period, relative to other areas of council spending. Despite this, there were cuts, in real terms, in delegated funding for most schools in 2001/2. Significantly increased budgetary provision for both home to school transport and Standards Fund matched funding was amongst the contributory factors.

18. Arrangements for developing bids for grant aid and co-ordinating submissions are good. Information and advice for individual schools on securing external funding are also good. The council's education capital spending in recent years has included significant contributions from its revenue budget. A major Private Finance Initiative scheme has also been approved.

19. Overall spending on both primary and secondary schools is below the unitary authorities' average, rather more so for secondary than primary.

	East Riding	Unitary authorities	All English LEAs
Primary Local Schools Budget (LSB) per pupil	£2,346	£2,394	£2,484
Secondary Local Schools Budget (LSB) per pupil	£2,948	£3,062	£3,141

Source: 2000/2001 Section 52 returns

20. The proportion of the local schools budget (LSB) delegated or devolved to schools in 2000/2001 was relatively low (83.6 per cent compared to the average for unitary authorities of 84.0 per cent). Key factors here were the comparatively high central spending on home to school transport and the comparatively low proportion of Standards Fund provision devolved to schools. The centrally controlled budgets for statutory and regulatory duties and school improvement are below the unitary authorities' average, the latter significantly so. However, non-devolved Standards Fund monies substantially enhance the central budget for the school improvement service.

21. Delegated funding for East Riding primary and secondary schools is similarly below the unitary authorities' average.

	East Riding	Unitary authorities	All English LEAs
Primary local schools budget (ISB) per pupil	£1,730	£1,807	£1,869
Secondary local schools budget (ISB) per pupil	£2,414	£2,524	£2,559

Source: 2000/2001 Section 52 returns

22. Arrangements for charging the costs of central services to the education budget do not, in all cases, relate the level of charge precisely and transparently to the service received. Changes in apportionment methodology have also complicated the relationship between the charges to schools for traded support services and the amounts delegated for them. Central support service charges will be the subject of an imminent Best Value review.

Council structure

23. The council has 27 Conservatives, 22 Liberal Democrats, 12 Labour and six independents. The authority moved to a cabinet structure with a leader in spring 2000. The main decision-making body is the executive committee, with three joint leaders, from the three major parties. One member from each political party holds the education portfolio. There are review and scrutiny committees for each of the five community aims, plus one overarching one, corporate review, which takes responsibility for items that do not fall clearly under the remit of the other committees. The lifelong learning review and scrutiny committee has ten elected members, two diocesan representatives, two parent representatives and two teacher representatives, one of whom is a headteacher. There are two parts to their work, general scrutiny of education matters and scrutiny of OFSTED school inspection reports. Overall, this structure is logical and well balanced between elected members and other representatives from across the authority.

24. There are limited opportunities for elected members to meet formally with senior staff and governors from all schools. Schools visited during the inspection indicated that they had no clear understanding of the council's vision for education. School visits by some of the joint chairs of the lifelong learning review and scrutiny committee are a move in the right direction.

The Education Development Plan

25. The Education Development Plan (EDP) is satisfactory. It was approved by the Secretary of State in February 1999. The EDP is in two parts: main text and Annexe 3. The main text contains a detailed overview of the priorities and relevant background data relating to them, while Annexe 3 gives a more detailed breakdown of the range of activities for each priority. Although Annexe 3 has recently been revised and reissued to schools, it essentially retains the content of the original EDP, with the exception that there is now a sixth priority that has been added to the original five. The six priorities are:

- to raise achievement in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology;
- to raise achievement of boys;
- to challenge more able pupils;
- to raise standards at Key Stages 3 and 4;
- to promote and support school self-evaluation and planning for school improvement; and
- support for the implementation of additional local and national strategies to raise achievement.

26. Although the priorities are clearly identified, linking the separate activities where there is a crossover is difficult. The revised Annexe 3 begins to address this problem by placing the separate activities in a more logical order. The intention to begin consultation meetings about the new EDP is appropriate, and is recognised as such by the majority of the schools visited.

27. There is some variation in the quality of success criteria, with a minority insufficiently detailed in terms of measurable outcomes. Although this makes evaluation of progress against some priority activities difficult, the school improvement service has implemented a satisfactory strategy for reviewing the success of the plan. Curriculum project managers and advisers have contributed to a range of evaluative summaries across the priority areas, all of which are of a satisfactory standard. Weekly school improvement service briefing meetings are also used appropriately to update staff on progress in specific EDP activities.

28. The LEA has made good progress in priority one, especially in implementing the national strategies in literacy and numeracy. It is well on line to achieve its targets in both areas. Monitoring and support for schools have been sound, with additional intensive support well matched to those schools in greatest need. Most areas in information and communication technology (ICT) have also been implemented successfully, but the LEA cannot yet show that it is helping to raise attainment in this curricular area.

29. Although the overall performance of boys remains above the national average at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, their performance in English remains below that achieved by girls. There has, however, been some progress in priority two, with the performance gap between boys and girls closing marginally in national tests at the end of all key stages.

30. The LEA has made satisfactory progress in priority three. With the exception of Key Stage 1 English, the LEA has improved the year-on-year percentage rate of pupils achieving the higher levels in national end of key stage tests, in line with its stated objectives. Some good work has also taken place for the more able pupils in science and modern foreign languages.

31. Progress has been made in most aspects of priority four, especially in relation to attendance and exclusions, both of which are at least in line with national figures, often better. There is less evidence available to indicate the progress made in improving assessment procedures, particularly in the moderation and standardisation processes in Key Stages 3 and 4.

32. There has been variable progress in the range of activities in priority five. There has been insufficient training in self-evaluation, but training and support for governors, newly qualified teachers, senior and middle managers, target-setting and data analysis have all progressed satisfactorily.

33. Some aspects of priority six have yet to be fully implemented, but there are early indications of progress in most activities.

The allocation of resources to priorities

34. Overall, the education budget is under control, with the allocation of resources to priorities generally satisfactory.

35. The financial history of the LEA is one of severe spending restrictions and significant cuts in a number of budget areas. Not surprisingly, therefore, the LEA has

had little scope to alter significantly the pattern of education resourcing to reflect developing priorities. However, it did make changes in delegated funding, following extensive discussion of its formula in the autumn term 1999, to address concerns about the resourcing of small primary schools. These changes were made within a fixed budget and involved moving funding in real terms from secondary and special schools. This review fell short of a full activity-led analysis of school spending needs and was relatively limited, in particular, in its analysis of age weighted pupil values and in the treatment of funding for management support services. Also, no clear rationale was provided to schools during the review about the various funding bands for support for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs.

36. Nonetheless, the review did look, in useful detail, at a number of key aspects of schools' spending needs. Significant growth has also been agreed in provision for children educated otherwise than at school, to enable the LEA to meet new statutory requirements. Reasonably effective action is being taken to address the increases in home-to-school transport spending which have limited the scope for growth. A positive feature, also, is the distribution of the major part of the funding for non-statemented special needs, on the basis of an audit of needs. Significant sums are still allocated on the basis of free school meal entitlement, although the relationship between the purposes of the two allocations is not made clear.

37. Consultation on the education budget is poor. Although the LEA looks three years ahead in identifying likely budgetary demands and funding availability, members have been reluctant to give any indication of their spending intentions. Schools do not, therefore, receive much useful information for planning their own spending. More importantly, the LEA has no well-established process of involving schools in dialogue on such matters at a formative stage. The information provided and the opportunities for discussion are unsatisfactory. Schools lack confidence in their ability to influence outcomes.

Recommendation

In order to improve the allocation of resources to priorities:

- involve schools fully in discussion at the formative stages of the budget-making process.

Structures for achieving Best Value

38. The five corporate priorities are reflected in the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP). The external auditor has reviewed the preparation and publication of the Plan and confirmed that statutory requirements have been met. The BVPP for 2001/02 provides relatively limited coverage of the LEA's recent activities and plans for the year to come. It includes the relevant Best Value performance indicators for education as well as a broad range of locally determined indicators.

39. The corporate arrangements for co-ordinating and supporting Best Value reviews are good. Advice for those conducting reviews is good overall, but stronger in the areas of challenge and comparison than consultation and competition. Member involvement in the review process has been positive. The programming of

Best Value reviews affecting education has taken account of other studies undertaken or commissioned by the LEA, and only one review was undertaken in year one. The choice of this review and the selection of traded services for schools as the focus for year two are appropriate. Prior to the start of Best Value, the LEA conducted service reviews on an ad hoc basis. A common framework for the production of individual service plans has, however, been in place for the better part of two years. These plans include the relevant national performance indicators and, also, some that have been locally determined.

40. Schools have been informed about their own Best Value responsibilities, but only limited guidance on how best to meet them has not been provided. Some aspects of support for schools in the procurement of services are unsatisfactory. Information is provided to schools on traded services, via the LEA's intranet, but it does not include information on entitlement to services funded from the LEA's central budget, nor on schools' responsibilities, should they decline to purchase a traded service. The information is also stronger on the range of services being offered than the performance standards to be expected. However, the LEA has recognised the need to assist schools in developing their ability to be effective procurers of services. Useful financial benchmarking data is provided and an extended bursarial service for schools is currently being piloted.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implication of other functions

41. The school improvement service is satisfactorily focusing on school improvement issues primarily, although not exclusively, through the Education Development Plan (EDP). Link advisers are generally working well with schools, with curriculum project managers effectively implementing and supporting a broad range of curriculum initiatives. These services to schools are appropriately managed. Partnership work with the Education Action Zone and the dioceses is also developing satisfactorily, and is moving towards a better recognition of common interests and responsibilities. Support for special needs has developed well since the inception of the council and is well regarded by schools. Management services are providing at least satisfactory, often good quality support for school improvement. However, the authority has not communicated its corporate strategy clearly to schools.

Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support

42. The LEA's provision for monitoring, challenge, intervention and support is satisfactory.

43. Recently, the curriculum and quality development service was restructured into a school improvement service, emphasising that its main function is to help schools further to improve and raise standards of achievement. This is an important emphasis as the LEA's vision and priorities have not always been clear to schools. The service's work is well focused on the code of practice for LEA/School Relations, other national priorities and the EDP. In general, it treats successful schools with an appropriately light touch and provides additional support where it is needed. The service is well led and has adequate numbers of link advisers and curriculum project managers. They have wide expertise in the subjects and aspects of the curriculum and good understanding of the primary phase, but little experience of senior management in secondary schools.

44. Link advisers are assigned to clusters of schools and are mainly effective, some highly so. However, their impact is usually greater in the primary phase than in secondary and special schools, where productive relationships with the LEA have been slower to develop. Their knowledge of their assigned schools is generally good and is based on a range of formal and informal monitoring activities. Every school receives two visits yearly from its link adviser. The first is devoted mainly to target setting. For the past two years, the second visit has concentrated on school self-evaluation. While this is an important topic for many, the visits have had limited value in some schools, other than to confirm their very good practice, and the time could have been used more effectively. Records are made of all visits to schools. Although the quality and impact of these are variable, many contain perceptive judgements and helpful points for development.

45. Six-monthly reviews, involving various teams in the education department, examine a range of data to identify potential weaknesses in schools so that

additional support can be targeted. However, the schools were not initially consulted or informed about these reviews. This omission and the failure to explain the criteria that trigger intervention illustrate that the LEA has not been sufficiently open with the schools. Despite this, the LEA has successfully supported those schools most in need.

46. Strong support is provided by the link advisers and by the curriculum project managers, whose work is focused effectively on a range of relevant and imaginative projects across the curriculum. The school improvement service staff pool their expertise well for the benefit of schools. A helpfully flexible service level agreement enables the schools to purchase additional support at a level that is appropriate to their needs and priorities, and virtually all do so. The extent to which schools are challenged is more variable. Most experience an appropriate degree of challenge through the target-setting process but the schools visited were rarely able to indicate other aspects of their relationship with the LEA that they found challenging.

47. The school improvement service has a suitable system of line management. The management of performance in relation to targets is at an early stage but there are satisfactory arrangements for the induction of new members of staff, for the review of workloads and for identifying and meeting professional development needs.

Collection and analysis of data

48. The LEA's support for the collection and analysis of data is satisfactory. It is valued more highly by primary schools than by those in the secondary and special phases.

49. In its day-to-day work, the school improvement service makes effective use of a wide range of data. Schools are provided with a good range of accessible performance and management data that are useful expansions of national data and which contain helpful local comparisons and benchmarks. They are of value to schools in planning, budgeting and target setting. However, although pupils' performance is analysed by gender, there are no analyses of the performance of other groups, such as children in public care. The LEA acknowledges that its arrangements for the electronic transfer of data are inadequate and it intends, belatedly, to implement significant improvements in the near future.

50. Link advisers have been thoroughly trained in the analysis and use of data for the annual target-setting visits to schools in the autumn term. Overall, the LEA adopts a realistic approach to the circumstances of individual schools and takes appropriate account of pupils' prior attainment in reaching an agreement between its indicative targets and the ones proposed by the school. The process is usually challenging but there are occasions when link advisers agree targets that are well within a school's reach and insufficiently rigorous.

51. The LEA has also provided appropriate training for headteachers and governors in the use of national and local data for setting targets. Appropriately, the LEA is encouraging schools to build their overall target-setting process on effective classroom practice in which the work of individual pupils is assessed on the basis of

targets agreed with them by their teachers. This has been the focus of training and guidance in the primary phase and is now being developed in secondary schools. The LEA is also working productively with the special schools to develop appropriate targets.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for the collection and analysis of data:

- it will be necessary to include information about the local performance of different groups of pupils.

Support for literacy

52. The LEA provides good support for literacy. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 is above that found nationally. In the national English tests in 2000, 80 per cent of Key Stage 2 pupils attained Level 4 or above. This exceeded the LEA's target by two per cent and indicates that the 2002 target of 87 per cent is attainable.

53. The support for the National Literacy Strategy is planned well. In the main, the target-setting process for literacy is thorough and challenging, with the LEA's target set at the top of the DfES range. However, the schools' aggregated targets for 2002 fall short of the LEA's target by four per cent and the LEA, sensibly, is providing focused support for the schools whose targets are significantly lower than the LEA's indicative targets. The monitoring processes are thorough and schools that would benefit from intensive support are identified appropriately. Appropriate training and support are available for all schools and are well received by them

54. The strategy is well managed and the staffing, supplemented by LEA funding, is sufficient in number. The primary and secondary English advisers and the three consultants form an effective team and are supported by 20 leading literacy teachers who disseminate good practice through model lessons and involvement in training and development. Four headteachers have also been identified to offer advice and support to schools, particularly on planning and managing literacy. A good resource centre is underused, chiefly because of the wide geographical spread of schools. However, the literacy team is sensibly considering ways of addressing this problem.

55. The appropriate current priority is to raise standards in writing. Attention is also being given to the performance of boys, although the comparison with that of girls is less unfavourable than is often found. The provision for more able pupils, although an EDP priority, is limited.

56. There are several helpful networks for schools, including termly development groups for literacy co-ordinators and meetings to consider the particular issues faced by small schools. Strengths of the LEA's provision are the imaginative links that have been formed with other curricular areas, such as humanities and the visual arts, enabling pupils to produce creative writing of high quality. Productive links have also been established with other services and agencies, especially the library

service, the special educational needs support service and the Education Action Zone.

57. The literacy strategy for Key Stage 3 is well advanced in its planning and development, with a consultant appointed from January 2001. Literacy summer schools are well established and effective links with the Key Stage 2 strategy include the development of units of work that bridge Years 6 and 7 and are available on the East Riding intranet for learning (ERiL). The LEA places an appropriate emphasis on literacy across the curriculum. All the secondary schools have appointed Key Stage 3 literacy co-ordinators and some have literacy teams.

Support for numeracy

58. The support for numeracy is very good. The attainment of pupils at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 is above the national average. In the national mathematics tests in 2000, 76 per cent of Key Stage 2 pupils achieved Level four or above. This was four per cent higher than the LEA's target. On the basis of the schools' confident aggregated targets, the LEA has raised its 2002 target by four per cent, to 84 per cent. This is challenging but attainable.

59. The planning of numeracy support is good. The target-setting process is thorough and rigorous. Monitoring is carefully carried out and schools in need of intensive support have been identified appropriately. Link advisers' reports and data analysis are used to identify coasting schools, which are given intensive support. Other schools are supported, if need arises, and all have access to training. Courses are provided centrally, in clusters and in individual schools; they receive very positive evaluations. The training programme reflects national imperatives, but also gives attention to local priorities, such as mathematics across the curriculum. Sensibly, differentiated training is also provided to deal with the particular circumstances of small schools, with training materials appropriately trialed in mixed-age classes. Specific support, which emphasises learning skills as well as numbers, has been given for early years. Special school staff have been trained in co-operation with other LEAs.

60. The strategy is well managed and staffed. Schools appreciate the work of the mathematics adviser and three consultants. Eighteen leading mathematics teachers, whose lessons were observed frequently last year, support them. This year, there has been an appropriate change of focus; leading teachers are providing support in other schools and their own lessons are being observed by classroom support assistants. The numeracy team produces helpful teaching materials and shares a good but underused resource centre with the literacy team. Schools are also supported by a half-termly numeracy newsletter and termly development meetings for numeracy co-ordinators. Useful links exist with several agencies and services, including the community education service and the special educational needs support service.

61. The strategy for numeracy at Key Stage 3 is developing well. A consultant has been in post since April 2001 and the LEA also funds a part-time project manager to develop teaching materials. There is effective liaison with a neighbouring LEA that was involved in the Key Stage 3 pilot project last year and

with a university that provides a mathematics website for gifted and talented pupils in the age group. A national project that encourages creative approaches to mathematics education has been established in two-thirds of the secondary schools. Leading mathematics teachers for Key Stage 3 have been trained and the training for other mathematics teachers of 11 to 14 year-old pupils began during the inspection. Links between primary and secondary mathematics co-ordinators are well established. This is also true of numeracy summer schools, seven of which will be held in the current year.

Support for information and communication technology

62. The support for curricular ICT is satisfactory. The evidence from OFSTED inspections shows that progress in ICT in the primary schools compares favourably with that found in the LEA's statistical neighbours and the nation as a whole. However, this is not the case in the secondary schools, where there is significantly more poor progress.

63. The staffing is sufficient in number, with an adviser and three curriculum project managers. The support has mainly been focused on the primary schools but, sensibly, increased attention is now to be given to the secondary phase. The plans for supporting ICT are sound, with important emphases on curricular development and raising attainment. However, in current practice, attainment receives insufficient attention. Schools are not given adequate guidance on assessing pupils' work and it is therefore difficult for them and the LEA to know the extent of pupils' attainment and progress. The LEA has had some success in strengthening teachers' confidence and, consequently, capability but it rightly continues to identify the quality of teaching as an important area for improvement. The curriculum project managers' main function is to provide support and training in schools and centrally. Most schools find this helpful, although a few primary schools feel that it is pitched at too high a level. Schools appreciate the termly development group meetings for co-ordinators.

64. Every school is connected to the East Riding intranet for learning, which contains useful curriculum and management material. This is a developing feature of the LEA's provision, with considerable further potential to enhance teaching and learning in this widespread authority. Advisers with subject responsibilities and curriculum project managers have co-operated effectively in using ICT to raise standards in some subjects. Other curricular links are being developed, for example through a data-handling project of good quality and through schools publishing on EriL examples of the successful use of ICT within subjects. Video conferencing is being used successfully by modern foreign language assistants and this also has wider applicability and potential. Largely effective links are being developed with further and higher education, with learning partnerships and, particularly, with a local ICT company. The schools have suitable arrangements for technical support, chiefly through cluster agreements and local suppliers. The LEA leads the regional broadband project, involving 15 LEAs, to which the ICT adviser has been seconded part-time.

65. Evidence from the schools indicates that phase 1 of the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) was not well implemented. The LEA has made improvements for

stages 2 and 3, although some difficulties remain. Schools' development plans are of variable quality and LEA monitoring indicates that ten per cent are weak. In particular, those of phase 1 NGfL schools need revision and the LEA provides helpful exemplars. It also offers useful guidance on adopting and adapting schemes of work. Most schools have been involved in basic skills training and about 70 per cent are now in the New Opportunities Fund training programme, having received appropriate guidance from the LEA.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for information and communication technology in the curriculum:

- give guidance on the development of schemes of assessment so that pupils' attainment and progress can be judged accurately.

Support for Schools Causing Concern

66. Although the LEA's support for schools causing concern is satisfactory overall, its failure to share the criteria for concern with schools is a weakness.

67. The LEA uses four categories to classify schools that are causing concern. The first two relate to the OFSTED criteria for special measures and serious weaknesses. These are clear and well known to schools. Six schools have been judged to require special measures and seven to have serious weaknesses since the start of OFSTED school inspections. Currently, there are two schools in special measures and three with serious weaknesses. One school has recently been declared as underachieving. The level of intervention and support has improved and is now generally appropriate to meet the needs of these schools. Monitoring by link advisers is sound and progress reports are clear and evaluative. Recent monitoring visits indicate that satisfactory progress is being made in all these schools. The LEA has appropriately intervened in two schools requiring special measures, appointing additional governors and assuming responsibility for the management and budget.

68. The third category, vulnerable schools, relates to written criteria that have not been shared or discussed with schools. Although the criteria include well-defined performance, curriculum, management and special needs triggers, most schools are unaware of how the LEA uses these to intervene and target support, when needed. School visits confirmed this. A cause for concern, however, would be reported to the school by the link adviser following a visit and would be identified on a record of visit. There is also no indication of the relative weighting given to the criteria, which makes the identification process susceptible to inconsistency of use. The head of the school improvement service meets with the headteacher and chair of governors of the most vulnerable schools to discuss the areas of concern, and clarify the LEA's support. The resulting action plans from these meetings are of a satisfactory standard. The fourth category, with no specific criteria, is used in the event of unforeseen circumstances that may give rise to short-term concerns, for example, the LEA gave additional and timely support for a primary school that was relocated after fire destroyed the entire building.

69. This failure to make its criteria for schools causing concern clear and transparent is out of character for a school improvement service that is making satisfactorily progress with those schools most in need.

Recommendation

In order to improve the support for schools in need:

- share the criteria for schools causing concern with all headteachers and governing bodies.

Support for governors

70. The LEA's support for governors is satisfactory.

71. Governors' training and development are organised by a link adviser and are available to schools through the school improvement service level agreement, to which all but two schools contribute. Clerking advice and support are provided through another service level agreement, which is contributed to by all but ten schools. In April 2001, the clerking service transferred from the resources and educational support team to the school improvement service. This is a sensible move, aiding communication and emphasising that the main focus of governor support is on school improvement. However, at the time of the inspection, governors interviewed were not aware of the change.

72. The training is delivered by link advisers and appropriate specialists. It is focused on national and local priorities and provided flexibly, according to need, in individual schools and clusters, with occasional central courses. It receives positive evaluations, although some governors would like more extensive provision. Schools' link training governors receive a termly newsletter from the LEA and a training item is included on the agenda of all governing body meetings.

73. The Governors' Index, which involves governors in school self-review, has been piloted successfully in three schools. However, overall, there is insufficient training and support to help governors to evaluate and take increasing responsibility for their schools, and to develop them as autonomous institutions. Similarly, while the LEA encourages headteachers to provide chairs of governors with copies of records of visits by advisers and officers, it does not provide these important pieces of management information routinely.

74. The clerking is provided by eight trained officers, seven from the governance team. Governors rate the service very highly, describing the clerks as accessible, courteous and procedurally knowledgeable. They provide an effective link between governing bodies and the various council services.

75. There are satisfactory arrangements for informing and consulting governors. New governors receive a suitable induction pack and the LEA makes several relevant national publications available. All governors receive a termly newsletter and are members of the governors' forum that meets every term in three different

geographical areas to aid attendance, which is usually good. The forum's steering group meets termly with officers to arrange provision for governors' needs. An annual conference is attended by about two hundred governors and addressed by speakers of national repute. The LEA knows governors well and is able to allocate additional members to the governing bodies of schools causing concern, if required.

76. The proportion of vacancies for LEA governors is below average but, especially in rural areas, there is some difficulty in recruiting co-opted and parent governors. The LEA has advertised in the council's newspaper, but it accepts that further initiatives may be needed.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for governors, it will be necessary to help them to take increasing responsibility for their schools:

- by providing more training and support for school self-evaluation, and by providing chairs of governing bodies with copies of all records of visits to schools by LEA staff.

Support for school management

77. The LEA's support for school management is satisfactory. The evidence from OFSTED inspections indicates that the quality of leadership and management in primary schools is broadly in line with the averages for statistical neighbours and the nation as a whole. In the secondary schools, it is better than that found elsewhere.

78. Procedures for informing and consulting with headteachers are improving. Headteachers are consulted through their representation on a number of working groups, for example on funding, in addition to their termly phase meetings with the director of education, leisure and libraries. There is also a headteacher development steering group that surveyed headteachers' needs and views, developed a strategy for management development and works with the LEA on a related programme that receives a positive response. However, although most individual schools collaborate well with the LEA, there is still some way to go before relationships with the secondary headteachers as a whole could be described as thoroughly positive and productive. With some justification, headteachers in all phases feel that they have not kept fully in the picture about the LEA's actions and intentions, for example when the school improvement service was created, and that some things are done to them rather than with them.

79. There are numerous examples of good support by link advisers for school management in all phases, but it is variable in quality. It is most effective in the primary schools. The school improvement service lacks secondary senior management experience and is, rightly, considering ways of compensating for this, such as an associate programme to extend management expertise. This would be an appropriate extension of its effective current practice of using a variety of external providers to broaden the range of curricular and other expertise available to schools. Senior managers in schools have responded positively to the LEA's promotion of the

National Professional Qualification for Headteachers and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers. Good numbers of schools have gained, or are working towards the Basic Skills quality mark and the Investor in People award. However, the LEA is at an early stage in its dissemination of good practice and has made limited use of the expertise gained from involvement in these national accreditation schemes.

80. Link advisers take the main responsibility for the induction of new headteachers. They are introduced to LEA procedures and linked with appropriate mentors but the system lacks consistency. A mentoring system has, however, been used successfully with the headteachers of vulnerable schools. The LEA arranges occasional meetings for secondary deputy headteachers and training by a local university is provided for aspiring deputies. The provision for middle managers is limited, although the termly development groups for subject leaders give some attention to management issues. The flexible service level agreement for continuing professional development was devised by the LEA with headteachers. It provides effectively for the individual needs of schools and encourages them to plan their continuing professional development carefully. It is purchased at various levels by all but two schools and the support and training provision receives positive evaluations. The support for newly qualified teachers meets their needs and the training of their induction tutors is effective.

81. The LEA has identified school self-evaluation as an area requiring much improvement and it has, rightly, sought to improve schools' practice through a number of initiatives, including an LEA handbook and core visits by link advisers. Schools have been encouraged to participate in the OFSTED school self-evaluation course provided by a neighbouring LEA but only five have done so. Although there has been some effective work, the LEA's support is not sufficiently focused or coherent to be of full benefit to schools at very varied stages of development.

82. The recruitment of both full-time and supply teachers is beginning to emerge as a problem for the LEA, which is working with various other bodies on a range of appropriate measures to deal with it. The LEA has supported the graduate teacher programme, and has established links with a local university for recruitment of newly qualified teachers. There is also a satisfactory link with the Teacher Training Agency in the region on gathering information on recruitment to secondary posts.

Early years

83. The LEA's support for early years is satisfactory.

84. The Early Years Development and Childcare Plan (EYDCP) is helping the LEA to improve its links with the voluntary and private sectors, and is providing a more strategic overview of provision for under-fives across the whole authority. Relationships between the partners are good, with a developing EYDCP organisational structure that is providing more opportunities to share expertise and experience. The LEA is committed to developing further the provision for under-fives. A LEA officer, who works for both education and social services, appropriately undertakes the management responsibilities for the partnership. The early years

adviser from the school improvement service plays an active part within the partnership. The use of part-time teacher mentors, from LEA schools, to visit each private and voluntary setting for one half day per year is a sound strategy that is helping to raise the profile of the early years. The full-time appointment of a curriculum project manager for special educational needs in the early years from September is a positive addition to the LEA provision.

85. There are currently sufficient places for all four-year-olds who want a part-time place. In schools with an early admissions policy, full-time places are available. The rural nature of the authority has led to the provision of peripatetic nurseries in 16 primary schools. While this is a creative response to both the need in the early years and the rural nature of the authority, there is a lack of clarity with regard to the line-management of the peripatetic cluster teachers, and in monitoring the quality of provision made. The LEA is aware of this and has begun to address the issues.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

86. Overall, the strategic management of the authority has a balance of strengths and weaknesses. In operational matters, the day-to-day service delivery to schools is mostly satisfactory. In contrast to this, however, the authority has not communicated its corporate strategy clearly to all its schools, or yet fully addressed the concerns of schools with regard to consultation on some major plans.

87. The authority does not yet have a strategic planning structure that is fully transparent and understood by all stakeholders, particularly schools. The current major plans for the authority are the community plan, individual service plans, the Best Value Corporate Plan (BVPP) and draft strategic plan for education. The BVPP is essentially the authority's corporate plan. The linking of these plans into a consistent and clear planning process is evolving, and is the subject of some current cross-directorate work. The community plan's five aims have consistently formed the basis of published corporate objectives and targets for the council and have been appropriately costed. The draft strategic plan for education is intended to link the community plan to individual service plans within education, but its seven key aims and priorities are written as aspirations for existing areas of work, rather than as a strategic overview for education and the authority as a whole. It does not, for example, reference the BVPP, or how Best Value will affect the strategic work of the separate services with the education directorate. The majority of schools visited during the inspection were uncertain about the status of the draft plan or its links with the EDP. The authority intends to include specific action plans for each community aim within individual service plans, but these are not yet complete.

88. The personnel and performance directorate has the major responsibility for monitoring the progress of the BVPP and, in turn, how it is impacting upon other plans. Appropriate monitoring is being undertaken in relation to the BVPP.

89. The quality of leadership given by elected members is generally satisfactory, but there are weaknesses. Members have worked appropriately to give education sufficient prominence, but this was neither recognised nor appreciated by all the schools visited during the inspection. There is appropriate scrutiny of major education policies, and of individual schools' performance in OFSTED inspections. In these aspects, elected members are making sensible decisions, in good time. However, there has been a reluctance to give clear and early indications of their spending intentions, which has created difficulties for schools in planning their spending. There has been insufficient financial information provided, and too few opportunities for discussion. The schools' survey showed that all phases in the authority were significantly more critical of consultation on the planning and review of the education budget than in other LEAs inspected so far.

90. Corporate management does not command the confidence of all schools that it recognises sufficiently clearly their needs. From its inception as a unitary authority, the East Riding of Yorkshire has developed a corporate approach in all aspects of its work. The management structure, comprising a corporate management team (CMT)

and senior management team (SMT), has been organised to reflect the corporate nature of the authority. Overall, this is a satisfactory structure that provides an exchange of relevant information between different directorates, as well as with elected members. The majority of this information is timely and sufficiently detailed to provide members with a satisfactory overview of the issues to be discussed. There are weekly meetings between the director of education, leisure and libraries and senior education personnel. These follow the agenda from the CMT meetings. However, the authority has not yet successfully convinced all schools, particularly secondary, that the corporate management gives sufficient attention to their needs, or is prepared to work in partnership with them. The schools' survey showed that both secondary and special schools were significantly more critical than other LEAs on the extent to which they influence policies, plans and procedures. Although the response from the primary schools was not significant, it was still lower than the mean for other LEAs. However, support from those officers who deal directly with enquiries from schools is at least satisfactory, and occasionally good, in most areas of school improvement, special educational needs and access for vulnerable pupils.

91. Currently, communication between the corporate management team and some schools is unsatisfactory, and has resulted in strained relationships. The management of the single status agreement for non-teaching staff was an example of ineffective consultation, inappropriate decision-making and a failure to recognise sufficiently the autonomy of schools. It led to widespread criticism from headteachers that the context of schools was not well understood by the LEA, and it remains a highly topical issue and the focus for continuing criticism. There are insufficient opportunities for schools to develop a shared sense of understanding of the authority's needs and priorities vis-à-vis those of schools, either through consultation on major plans or through planned meetings. Consultation on the EDP, for example, was graded significantly lower by all phases in the schools' survey. Overall, the EDP is not a prominent document within corporate planning. This has led to a feeling from four schools visited that the corporate management team is not fully committed to school improvement issues.

Recommendation

In order to improve strategic management:

- relate corporate planning more clearly to school improvement issues.

92. Relationships with secondary schools have been recognised as problematic by the chief executive and the director of education but there have been no regular meetings between the CMT and schools to discuss concerns. However, a recent meeting with secondary headteachers was helpful in addressing an identified budget issue, but this was arranged in response to strongly expressed concerns from schools. The intention of the CMT to meet with primary headteachers is appropriate, but there are no plans to formalise these arrangements. The director of education meets regularly with headteacher groups. This provides a satisfactory arrangement for the exchange of information. The limited direct contact, however, between schools and the chief officers would be less problematic if schools had confidence

that the CMT fully understood or appreciated their needs or circumstances, in particular those related to school improvement issues.

Recommendation

In order to improve consultation at a strategic level:

- involve schools at an earlier stage in corporate policy making and action planning, as an aid to developing a shared vision and understanding for education.

93. The LEA is linking satisfactorily with a number of partner agencies. Links with the social services are good concerning access to education by vulnerable pupils and for pupils with special educational needs. Business education links are also good. Contact with diocesan representatives is generally sound, and the recent joint appointment of a curriculum project manager with the Diocese of York is helping to develop further the very positive links with the school improvement service. Helpful termly meetings are also held with the director or other senior officers from education. There is also diocesan representation on the lifelong learning review and scrutiny committee, which provides a useful link with elected members. Links with the Education Action Zone have also been established. An elected member representative and the head of the school improvement service both sit on the Education Action Zone forum. This is providing a sound basis for exploring further links in the school improvement areas that impact upon both the Education Action Zone and the LEA. Joint consultative committees provide reasonable opportunities for LEA and union representatives to meet. Links with further education colleges and the health authority are well established and well focused. Suitable structures exist which result in sensible cycles of meetings, with the different services clear about their responsibilities with regard to action on cross-cutting initiatives.

Management services

94. Many of the individual support services for schools are rightly well regarded by them. A number of initiatives have been taken in recent years to survey schools' views, including questionnaires, meetings, and visits. Overall, however, the LEA has recognised the need significantly to improve both the customer orientation of its service provision and the capability of schools themselves to be effective procurers of services. Sound arrangements are in place to ensure that support services contribute to the monitoring of school performance, although the exclusive focus of discussion among officers about schools causing concern limits the scope for spreading good practice.

95. A key issue to be addressed by the LEA is clarifying the distinction between traded and centrally funded provision in some areas of work. At present this is not always clear in practice. Some small schools, for example, receive levels of support well beyond the price that they pay for traded services. While this may, in part, reflect a reluctance on one or both sides to let go of old relationships, it may well also indicate problems with the delegation of funding.

96. Day-to-day support for **administrative ICT** is satisfactory and the LEA has taken a number of steps to provide a satisfactory infrastructure for electronic data collection and exchange. The quality of electronic links is about to be improved significantly. However, the LEA has yet to draw together a comprehensive information management strategy and share it with schools. Existing planning documents are of limited value for communication with schools, or as a basis for performance review, but steps have now been taken to co-ordinate developments within the LEA centrally and to begin to engage schools in discussion on future plans.

97. Schools do not have on-line access to the LEA's central ICT systems but there is an e-mail facility that is contributing to some aspects of administration. The LEA has a target date of April 2002 for establishing a central school and pupil database, but there is no project plan for this. The LEA has yet to establish clear arrangements for managing a number of aspects of data collection and exchange. This has caused particular difficulties in the transfer of data on pupils' performance between primary and secondary schools. The principal reservation schools have about day-to-day information and communication technology (ICT) support services is speed of follow-up action, rather than the quality of assistance provided. A great majority of schools purchase training and user support for SIMS software, but the take-up of advice on ICT development is significantly lower. The service is understaffed.

98. Support for **financial management** is good. The great majority of schools purchase the accountancy and payroll services. Support for the processes of school budget planning and review is good and schools are encouraged to plan over a three-year period. All the funding flows to schools, both delegated funding and devolved grant, have recently been brought together and schools are encouraged both to plan holistically and to have proper regard to value for money issues. The payroll and internal audit services are good. Staff in all the services are responsive and helpful. Monitoring of school spending is appropriate. Very few schools have either deficits or large surpluses. There is a good manual of advice for schools on accounting issues, but this does not include advice on managing resources in the wider sense. Accounting arrangements meet all schools' basic needs but are still largely paper based.

99. Day-to-day support for **personnel management** is satisfactory. However, the recent implementation of a single status agreement for white and blue-collar staff was little short of a disaster in terms of relationships between the LEA and schools. It did not take sufficient account of the autonomous nature of schools, and it also had damaging consequences for motivation, recruitment and retention. Job evaluations within the chosen scheme led to lower pay rates for a number of key staff, for which schools were unprepared. An initial combination of shock and affront was the result, followed by the loss of significant numbers of valued staff. Subsequently, ground has been recovered to some extent by the provision of better advice to schools on the job evaluation scheme, enabling them to redraft job descriptions to reflect more accurately the full responsibilities of staff. Had such advice been provided at the outset, much of the disruption and damage to relationships could have been

avoided. Consultation was not adequate, there was insensitivity to schools' needs and circumstances, and communication, both in content and style was poor. The use of spot salaries, rather than salary ranges, for each type of post remains, for some schools, an unwelcome restriction on flexibility to recognise staff experience and expertise.

100. Most schools purchase the personnel support service. Staff respond promptly to requests for help from schools and their advice is valued. Casework support is reliable and robust. There is a manual of guidance that is comprehensive in coverage of generic personnel issues. It has not been customised in any way, however, for the school context. Neither does it seek to offer advice on developing good practice. The strictly corporate approach adopted has failed to embrace fully the diversity of schools' needs.

101. Schools are supported well in fulfilling their **property management** responsibilities. The operational services directorate offers a full range of client support services, and annual visits to schools are made to discuss service satisfaction and future needs. Take-up by schools of the building and grounds maintenance services is particularly high. Staff turnover in the former service has been high in recent years and this has affected continuity of support to schools. There is a useful guidance manual for schools on property management.

102. The provision of **school meals** for primary and secondary schools is unsatisfactory. Provision is by a private contractor. There have been industrial relations difficulties that have affected service delivery. Schools' concerns include food quality and choice. Little attention has been given to the promotion of healthy eating. Expenditure by the LEA is comparatively high, despite pupils' entitlement to free school meals being relatively low. While this can partly be explained by higher delivery costs in a relatively sparsely populated area, there is also a significant level of subsidy by the LEA for paid meals. The LEA has taken reasonable steps to identify a more cost-effective approach. A recent extension of the current contract has included a much less prescriptive specification, closer working with the contractor on the pricing of meals, and the phasing out of the paid meal subsidy over a two year period. For special schools, the LEA's direct services organisation provides meals and apart from concerns about cost, the service is well regarded.

103. **Home-to-school transport** provision is generally good. Expenditure is comparatively very high, but this is partly inevitable in a sparsely populated area. However, subsidies for pupils not entitled to free travel have also been an important factor. The LEA has recently decided to reduce, but not eliminate, such subsidies. A key issue, as for many other LEAs, has been escalating expenditure. This is partly because of inflation and partly because of increasing numbers of pupils. The increase in expenditure for pupils with special needs has been particularly marked. The special educational needs managers responsible for placement decisions are not the budget holders for this element of the transport budget. This is a weakness. The LEA has, appropriately explored the options available for more cost-effective delivery.

Recommendations

In order to improve support for management services:

- establish consultation arrangements with schools to ensure that the provision of information is full and timely; that consultation on service planning and review is appropriate and well co-ordinated; and that formula funding fully reflects both schools' needs and current market rates;
- produce and circulate to all schools a single strategic development plan for information management and ICT support, covering planned activities, time scales, resource implications, performance indicators and targets; and
- make those officers responsible for special education needs placement decisions the holders of the associated transport budget.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Strategy

104. The LEA's strategy for special educational needs is satisfactory. The LEA is currently rewriting its special educational needs policy to take account of the proposed new Code of Practice, and to make clearer its intentions for the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. It has been circulated for consultation, and the LEA is taking account of comments received before finalising the document and embarking on a five-year plan to implement it. Schools strongly support the principles of the new policy and the consultation process has been good. Nevertheless, many schools feel that without sight of the action plan, they do not have a clear understanding of the LEA's long-term vision and strategic direction for special educational needs. One of their major concerns relates to the LEA's future provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Within the residential special schools, which cater for many of these pupils, tensions exist because of the uncertainty surrounding their future. There is also unease in some schools, particularly in the secondary sector, that should these special schools close, the EBD pupil population will rise in mainstream schools. This is a situation for which they feel inadequately prepared at the moment and which they feel will create initially significant resource and financial problems for them.

105. Although the Education Development Plan makes specific reference to special educational needs, schools and particularly special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) have little knowledge of this. They feel, however, that the LEA keeps them satisfactorily informed through frequent visits of project managers to monitor the effects of special educational needs in-service work, and the development of new initiatives within the authority

106. Under the existing policy, the LEA is making good progress in matching provision to pupils' needs. It is already promoting its policy of inclusion well, and over 70 per cent of pupils with statements of special need are educated in mainstream schools. Pupils from one special school are using the facilities in a nearby high school and taking part in some mainstream lessons, for example, in drama and physical education. Under the new policy, the LEA is proposing that some special schools will be co-located with mainstream schools to enhance further the opportunities for inclusion. Final details have yet to be decided, but elected members have approved the principle.

Recommendations

In order to establish a more effective strategy for special educational needs:

- provide schools with an action plan detailing the long-term vision and strategic direction; and
- clarify the emotional and behavioural difficulties provision, particularly in residential and mainstream schools.

Statutory obligations

107. Overall, the authority meets its statutory obligations well. The number of pupils with statements, at 2.2 per cent of primary age and 1.1 per cent of secondary age, is lower than that found nationally and in similar authorities. The earlier intervention strategies of the educational psychology service and the special educational needs support service (SENSS) are having a beneficial effect in reducing the number of referrals.

108. Last year the authority processed 100 per cent of statements within the required time, when exceptions were not counted, and 70 per cent when these were included. The delay in processing the 30 per cent was due mainly to other agencies, such as the health service, not being able to provide sufficient staff, particularly in the area of speech therapy, to complete the task within the given time. The situation is improving, however, and the speed of completion is now very good. For the most part, the quality of statements produced by the LEA team is also very good. Almost all statements reflect fully the individual needs of pupils and thereby provide a good basis for schools' planning.

109. The LEA has an effective management strategy for monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs. It makes effective use of information and communication technology in the monitoring process. The authority carries out annual reviews of pupils' statements in a timely manner. Officers attend a high proportion of reviews, prioritising their attendance appropriately. Specialists from several agencies usefully attend some reviews. Educational psychologists monitor effectively special educational needs registers in both primary and secondary schools and the SENSS team and link advisers monitor individual education plans. A LEA officer sits on a number of related groups, such as the 'special educational needs focus group' and the 'portage team'. This enables the LEA to monitor children from a very early age and to project likely future needs, which helps planning and efficiency.

110. The LEA is efficient and effective in providing appropriate support for parents whose children have special needs, and few cases have gone to the local ombudsman or to tribunals. Communication between the LEA and parents is very good and the LEA responds well to parents' needs and concerns. A parent forum is in the process of being set up and a parent/partnership officer has been appointed to commence work in September. Education department central teams liaise well with the multi-agency family support service, which is a new initiative led by the social services section and the healthcare trusts.

Recommendation

In order to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs:

- agree protocols with the health authority to speed up their contribution to the statutory assessment of pupils with special educational needs.

School improvement

111. The service provided to schools by link advisers, educational psychologists, curriculum project managers and the special educational needs support service (SENSS) team since the inception of the authority has been well received, and has been a significant influence in the development of the special educational needs provision within the LEA. The curriculum project managers, who act as the first line contact with schools, have appropriate specialist experience in the special needs field. They are well supported by the SENSS team. Overall, the support system works effectively.

112. Accredited courses for particularly special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), aligned to the National Standards and DfES guidance, are of good quality and valued by participants. They have improved the management and provision of special educational needs in schools. Local authority meetings, including termly forums provide useful updating and training for special educational needs co-ordinators. Senior officers frequently attend forums, making valuable training inputs. Training in the writing of individual education plans has improved the quality of target setting, and schools' skills in setting measurable targets have shown significant improvement over the past two years. SENCO working groups have produced very good guidance material for schools on the writing of individual education plans and for parents on other aspects of special needs provision. Co-ordinators report that LEA officers provide very good support, responding quickly and efficiently when required to do so.

113. The educational psychology service (EPS) provides good support to schools. The service is very strong on promoting inclusion and is a prime mover, within the LEA, in the individual placement of pupils in mainstream schools, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties. The service also does a thorough annual audit of all special educational needs registers and the work of special educational needs co-ordinators. The service is continuing to look for ways to make more guidance and counselling inputs to schools in an effort to improve the effectiveness of its work. Both schools and the service anticipate a rise in demand for EPS support and skills as the inclusion initiative gathers momentum over the next few years. Currently, the team has a well-balanced approach to intervention work, statutory assessment work and training.

114. The sensory services are provided regionally by another authority. They are providing good support in meeting pupils' needs, and are making a significant contribution to the raising of standards.

115. The LEA works well with other authorities and other agencies in improving provision. Working arrangements with social services and the health authority are strong. It has also established a good working partnership with KIDS, an

independent agency, in developing playgroup provision and holiday schemes for pupils. KIDS also supply an independent advice and support agency for parents whose children have special needs within the LEA and links, between this agency and the LEA's statementing administration, are particularly strong.

116. Overall, the LEA has intervened appropriately in its special schools experiencing difficulties.

Value for money

117. The LEA achieves good value for money in its spending on special educational needs. Spending represents a significantly lower proportion of overall spending than in similar LEAs or nationally. Part, but not all, of the spending on statemented pupils in mainstream schools is delegated. Because of the special schools' provision within the authority, spending on out-of-authority special school placements is very low, with some income generated from the placement of pupils from other authorities in East Riding special schools. There is a net inflow of pupils from other authorities to East Riding special schools. Resources for special educational needs are well managed.

118. Schools are generally content with the level of funding for special educational needs. They welcomed the delegation of funding for support work, but the LEA has not yet audited the overall use of special educational needs funding and evaluated this against outcomes. However, through training programmes and monitoring other aspects of provision, such as statements and individual education plans, the LEA is making a valuable contribution to schools' abilities to evaluate their own effectiveness in this provision.

Recommendation

In order to ensure that the LEA can assess value for money:

- establish a system for auditing the outcomes of special educational needs funding in schools.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The Supply of school places

119. The forecasting of numbers of pupils, particularly in the secondary sector, is a weakness. In other aspects, however, the LEA has a sound grasp of the processes involved in planning school provision, and has demonstrated the ability to take the necessary action when required. For the coming school year there were doubts that all children choosing their catchment area school could be offered a place. Understandably, there has been disquiet amongst parents and schools.

120. Forecasting secondary demand is complicated by fluctuating inflows from neighbouring LEAs. The more significant issue, however, is the migration of families, both into and within the LEA. The projections for secondary school rolls have recently been revised significantly upwards, with a 15 per cent increase over the next five years now forecast. The LEA has taken steps to strengthen its forecasting activity and to improve communication between directorates and with other agencies. This action is timely, as forecasting for both the primary and secondary sectors at the local area level has, in several cases, been significantly outside guideline error rates.

121. The LEA has produced its school organisation plan, and subsequent annual updates, on schedule. There has been full consultation. The plan now provides a clear assessment of projected primary and secondary school rolls in each local area. The coverage of developments planned is restricted, in the main, to indicating the areas where pressure is expected to be greatest and where developments are likely to be necessary. As such, the plan is limited in providing a focus for meaningful local debate. It has weaknesses in the coverage of special educational needs, education otherwise than at school, post-16, and under-fives provision. There is also no indication for reviewing the position of small schools, although consultation in the near future is promised. While these may, in some cases, be covered in other planning documents, the implications for primary and secondary schools' provision are not explored sufficiently clearly in the plan.

122. The absence of coverage of plans for special needs provision reflects a history of continuous and inconclusive review, which has been unsettling, particularly for the LEA's special schools. There has been no clarity of either timetable or process for review. The developing pressure on places in the mainstream sector means that the planning processes need to be particularly carefully co-ordinated.

Recommendation

In order to improve the provision of school places:

- make clear plans for special educational needs provision, whether in special schools or otherwise, and share these with schools.

Admissions

123. Admissions arrangements for both primary and secondary schools are good. Where problems exist, for example in the comparatively high parental success rate at appeals, they are due to the planning difficulties referred to above. Co-operation with other admissions authorities is good. The provision of information and advice to parents works satisfactorily and, while some minor improvements could be made to the admissions brochure, other aspects are particularly good. Parents' views are invited and the LEA has responded appropriately to comments received. The timetables for admission to school are appropriate, and the processes work to schedule. Arrangements for the transfer to mainstream secondary schools of children with statements are satisfactory.

Asset management

124. The LEA's asset management planning is very good. Deadlines for submitting policy statements and data on school buildings to the DfES have all been met. Arrangements for consultation with schools are good, with the exception of overall priorities for the use of funds. Steps are being taken, however, to address this. A much-expanded building programme is being delivered. All this has been achieved despite expenditure on the planning processes being significantly lower than in most other authorities. Staffing provision did not keep pace with the rapidly increasing levels of activity and workloads have been correspondingly high. However, the LEA team has been very effective, both in terms of the extent of investment achieved and the continuing high regard of schools.

125. Schools are confident that the condition surveys undertaken by the LEA identify the appropriate priorities for future works. The survey reports are, however, limited in relation to specifying clearly the work required, and the division of funding responsibilities between schools and the LEA. Accordingly, they are of restricted value to schools in terms of commissioning work and estimating what their budgetary provision should be. These limitations are mitigated, to a degree, by a programme of annual meetings at each school to discuss progress and future priorities.

126. While planning has been good, the level of investment remains a key focus. One of the LEA's early priorities was to improve the condition of its schools' buildings. Capital spending in its first few years was, however, low. This reflected the constraints on its budget, the capital programme inherited from the predecessor authority and the limited funding provision nationally. Thereafter, the LEA's capital spending increased rapidly. It is now significantly above the unitary authority average. However, some two-thirds of this money relates to the provision of additional school places, rather than investment in the replacement and repair of the existing stock. The annual investment needs identified in this latter area are still significantly higher than the total revenue and capital provision. When desirable improvements to provision are included, the gap is much wider. Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure that value for money is received. The management of major building projects is generally good.

Provision of education otherwise than at school

127. The provision for pupils educated otherwise than at school is satisfactory.

128. Although the number of permanently excluded pupils is low, the rural nature of the authority makes alternative provision for these pupils problematic. The pupil referral service is satisfactorily supporting the re-admission of excluded pupils at the original or other LEA schools. At Key Stage 4, schools and the LEA have been successful in providing alternative education packages for pupils who have been excluded, or are at risk of exclusion. Appropriate plans are also in place to open a Pupil Referral Unit, during the autumn 2001, to provide full-time education within 15 days for those pupils who have been permanently excluded at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.

129. Referrals to the home tuition service are authorised by the health authority for those pupils who are unable to attend school for medical, psychiatric or psychological reasons. The amount of home tuition time available after four weeks of absence, up to a maximum of six hours per week, does not take adequate account of the pupil's needs. The number requiring this type of provision is very low and links between schools and the home tuition service are satisfactory.

130. While overall responsibility for education otherwise rests with the education welfare service, good links exist with other authority staff and agencies. These include education psychology, the health authority, social services, and school advisers who assess the suitability of provision. The education welfare service maintains a good up-to-date database, which includes reports of home visits and the current state of interaction with the family. Guidance on procedures and responsibilities has recently been reviewed comprehensively.

Recommendation

In order to improve the educational opportunity for those pupils who are educated at home because of medical reasons:

- increase the time provided to more adequately take account of their needs.

Attendance

131. Support for attendance is good. Attendance in primary schools is above the national average, with authorised and unauthorised absence below. Secondary attendance is in line with that found nationally, with authorised and unauthorised absence also in line with national averages. The attendance figures for both the primary and secondary phases were slightly above the EDP targets for 1999/00 and 2000/01.

132. Each school has adequate entitlement to time from an education welfare officer, based upon its needs in relation to the needs of all LEA schools. The allocation of education welfare service time has been made transparent to secondary

schools and there are plans in hand to do so for primary schools. Data of good quality are used by the principal education welfare officer to monitor and supervise the work of the education welfare service (EWS) team.

133. Schools are empowered to carry out their responsibility to secure good levels of attendance. Good guidance is given by the EWS to tackle poor attendance. Absence rates are closely monitored through electronic records, with sound initiatives put into place to support those schools with pupils who have attendance problems. The (EWS) is effective at sharing good practice, and has recently issued a good model attendance policy for schools.

134. The Standards Fund has been used creatively to involve schools in preventive measures and early intervention work. As a result, there is progressively less reliance on active casework by the education welfare service.

135. Decisions to use legal action are carefully considered, but are applied with vigour, when necessary. However, family conferences are used effectively to minimise the need for the LEA to resort to legal action. Satisfactory relationships exist with the police, who helpfully assist the LEA in periodic truancy sweeps.

136. Overall, the service offers good value for money.

Behaviour support

137. Support for behaviour is satisfactory.

138. The behaviour support plan is now nearly an historical document as it covers the period 1998 to 2001. The rationale and philosophy that underpins the plan is not well articulated, but nevertheless it is helpful in providing practical guidance and points of service contact for schools. While the plan is satisfactory overall, it has been superseded by recent developments in the LEA, in particular, the vision of social inclusion that is currently being shared with schools.

139. The behavioural support service is well led, but is short of resources and beset by staffing difficulties. There are appropriate references in the Education Development Plan to the purpose of the pupil referral service, measures to help pupils at risk of exclusion, and work with schools in addressing the needs of disaffected pupils. Satisfactory progress has been made in all these areas.

140. The LEA's advice on specific behaviour issues, including multi-disciplinary behaviour support to schools and the intensive support for children who have an individual behaviour plan, is satisfactory. This includes the support for those pupils permanently excluded, or those likely to be excluded. In 1999/2000, there were 25 permanent exclusions, which is close to the three-year rolling target of 23 and is a substantial reduction from 35 in earlier years.

Recommendation

In order to improve behaviour support:

- review the behaviour support plan to identify more clearly the strategy for social inclusion.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

141. The LEA endeavours to meet its responsibilities for safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of pupils. It provides schools with clear information and guidance. Appropriate measures are in place to support schools with health and safety information. Schools are appreciative of the support provided by the LEA for health and safety. Guidance, training and support on child protection procedures are comprehensive and well regarded by schools and other agencies.

142. Child protection training is sufficient and of good quality. Links with Social services and other agencies, through the area child protection committee are excellent. The LEA maintains a regular and up-to-date child protection register, including appropriate details of recent and relevant training.

Children in public care

143. Arrangements for supporting children in public care are good, and are continuing to improve.

144. There are 194 children in public care, most of whom attend East Riding schools. Two education programme workers are in post, one paid by social services who works primarily with children in residential care, and the other paid by education, through the Standards Fund, for children who are adopted or in foster arrangements. This support is working well. The majority of children benefit from personal education plans, which are reviewed regularly and relate to the care plan and any statement of special educational need. The plans name a key worker who liaises with designated teachers in schools and co-ordinates support. There are also positive contributions from the multi-agency family support service, which was established in the early autumn of 2000.

145. Following agreement on information sharing between education and social services, an excellent electronic database was recently established which is used actively to track personal information, attainment, attendance and, when applicable, exclusion from school for children in public care. The corporate procedure for monitoring pupils' progress operates efficiently, within a strong inclusive culture that is shared by officers and members. Personal data is reviewed weekly to keep schools fully up-to-date with changes to the status of children in public care.

146. LEA targets for end of key stage attainment, and for GCSE and vocational qualifications, are appropriately challenging. The attainments of pupils in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2001 were above those found in similar LEAs, but in line nationally.

Minority ethnic children, including Travellers

147. Support for minority ethnic pupils, including Travellers, is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. Kingston upon Hull LEA had lead responsibility for minority ethnic services in a consortium deploying support to East Riding schools up to the 1 April 2001. The East Riding leads on a similar consortium for Travellers' children.

148. The LEA has less than one per cent of pupils of minority ethnic heritage. These pupils are spread over many schools. Staffing levels to support these pupils are satisfactory, and all schools buy back the service, following the delegation of Standards Fund money.

149. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant action plan indicates a service which is endeavouring to meet the needs of as many learners of English as an additional language as possible, while remaining alert to the wider issue of under-achievement by certain ethnic groups. Sound data on the performance of pupils in English exists. However, the collection and interpretation of more accurate data on ethnicity and attainment would provide a better basis for the development of a targeted strategy for raising attainment, including where appropriate a contribution to screening procedures to assist the special educational needs services.

150. Travellers' children are generally well supported through outreach work in schools. Assessment of the needs of pupils arriving on both authorised and unauthorised sites is carried out promptly, and any attendance problems are assiduously followed up. Improvements to the monitoring of attainment and progress of travellers have been made following a service review in 2000. The service has a clear sense of direction with good awareness of, and response to, its developmental needs. The service contributes positively to school improvement.

151. There are appropriate references in the Education Development Plan (EDP) to support for minority ethnic pupils in the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy. There are also satisfactory links to aspects of language development within the context of cultural arts in the 'Creative Contexts' initiative. The EDP also takes good account of the needs of Travellers' children. Progress in all these areas has been satisfactory.

Gifted and talented children

152. Overall, the LEA's support for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory, it has many strengths. The LEA anticipated the need to target support for these pupils in its original EDP. Support work has focused on raising standards of higher performing pupils in the core subjects, especially science, Key Stage 4 electronics, modern foreign languages and the arts. Progress has been made in most areas, but is most evident in the increased number of pupils achieving the higher levels in end of key stage tests.

153. The LEA has run three dedicated summer schools for gifted and talented pupils. None were based specifically on literacy and numeracy, but these two areas and information and communication technology were the key features of the activities undertaken. The LEA actively supports orchestras, which are open to talented players from maintained and private schools within the LEA. Some combined work has also taken place for gifted and talented pupils in art and design and music, with 82 pupils attending a recent LEA course in France. Support for talented pupils in sport is less clear, although there are links between schools and the LEA's sports development section relating to pupils who have reached county or higher standards.

Social exclusion, including measures to combat racism

154. The LEA has been keen to develop a greater awareness and provision for social inclusion, as part of its support to pupils and schools. It has consulted schools on the basic principles underpinning inclusion, and although the LEA's intentions are not fully clear, it is a positive step. There is a social inclusion forum, which meets quarterly and includes officers from different council directorates. Elected members also participate in the forum, which monitors and challenges the work of each council service involved in the support and provision for schools and pupils. There are also proposals for the establishment of three learning support units in three secondary schools, which will add to one other that is being created by a secondary school using its own resources.

155. The LEA has a satisfactory overview of its provision for vulnerable pupils. The support services for attendance, behaviour, children in public care, education otherwise than at school and minority ethnic pupils are at least satisfactory, occasionally better. The formation of multi-agency family support teams, with staff from social services and the health authority, is also providing coordinated help to support the inclusion of vulnerable pupils. However, the strategic overview of these services is neither communicated well to schools nor understood by them.

156. The LEA has formally accepted the recommendations of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. It has formulated appropriate policies on equality of opportunity and combating racism, drawing extensively on the recommendations made after the inquiry. The equalities working group is ensuring that the strategy is well co-ordinated across service areas. Governing bodies and headteachers have recently been presented with an appropriate policy on equal opportunities in employment, guidelines on school policies to address racial harassment, and advice on defining and recording racial incidents. These are all helpful developments.

157. Targets for minority ethnic recruitment to central services have been set. Ethnic monitoring in employment is conducted by human resources, both for central services and for schools. Incidents of racial harassment in schools are recorded and are reported to the LEA. However, there is currently no training for staff in relation to dealing with racism and racist incidents. The Education Development Plan does not give sufficient attention to promoting the positive use of multi-cultural education, beyond the performing arts and multi-faith perspectives in religious education.

Recommendation

In order to support schools in combating racism:

- provide a training programme that develops teachers' competence in dealing with racism and racist incidents; and
- plan and promote the positive use of multi-cultural education across the LEA.

APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS

This report makes a number of recommendations. However, the following are fundamental in that they affect the LEA's overall capacity for improvement in aspects of strategic planning.

In order to improve strategic management:

- relate corporate planning more clearly to school improvement issues.

In order to improve consultation at a strategic level:

- involve schools at an earlier stage in corporate policy making and action planning, as an aid to developing a shared vision and understanding for education.

We also make the following recommendations:

In order to improve the allocation of resources to priorities:

- involve schools fully in discussion at the formative stages of the budget-making process.

In order to improve support for the collection and analysis of data:

- it will be necessary to include information about the local performance of different groups of pupils.

In order to improve support for information and communication technology (ICT) in the curriculum:

- give guidance on the development of schemes of assessment so that pupils' attainment and progress can be judged accurately.

In order to improve the support for schools in need:

- share the criteria for schools causing concern with all headteachers and governing bodies.

In order to improve support for governors, it will be necessary to help them to take increasing responsibility for their schools:

- by providing more training and support for school self-evaluation, and by providing chairs of governing bodies with copies of all records of visits to schools by LEA staff.

In order to improve support for management services:

- establish consultation arrangements with schools to ensure that the provision of information is full and timely; that consultation on service planning and review is appropriate and well co-ordinated; and that formula funding fully reflects both schools' needs and current market rates;
- produce and circulate to all schools a single strategic development plan for information management and ICT support, covering planned activities, time scales, resource implications, performance indicators and targets; and
- make those officers responsible for special educational needs placement decisions the holders of the associated transport budget.

In order to establish a more effective strategy for special educational needs:

- provide schools with an action plan detailing the long-term vision and strategic direction; and
- clarify the emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) provision, particularly in residential and mainstream schools.

In order to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs:

- agree protocols with the health authority to speed up their contribution to the statutory assessment of pupils with special educational needs.

In order to ensure that the LEA can assess value for money:

- establish a system for auditing the outcomes of special educational needs funding in schools.

In order to improve the provision of school places:

- make clear plans for special educational needs provision, whether in special schools or otherwise, and share these with schools.

In order to improve the educational opportunity for those pupils who are educated at home because of medical reasons:

- increase the time provided to more adequately take account of their needs.

In order to improve behaviour support:

- review the behaviour support plan to identify more clearly the strategy for social inclusion.

In order to support schools in combating racism:

- provide a training programme that develops teachers' competence in dealing with racism and racist incidents; and
- plan and promote the positive use of multi-cultural education across the LEA.

APPENDIX 2

The Best Value Review of financial support

The review covered two related services: student support and pupil support. These two services administer assessments of eligibility for student awards and loans, free school meals, clothing grants and home-to-school/college transport. The review did not cover the LEA's policy for discretionary student awards or for home to school transport because this was the subject of concurrent consideration by a members' working group. It did, however, cover policy on clothing grants. The area of work was selected for review in response to significant changes to the national framework for student support and the receipt of a number of complaints about the local service.

The resulting improvement plan focuses primarily on reducing the costs of assessing eligibility and issuing awards. However, some of the changes to be implemented or investigated further, for example, the use of smart cards for free school meals, could make the service more sensitive to the feelings of pupils and parents. The plan is only in the early stages of implementation and it is not yet possible to assess its impact on the quality of services. The review team, however, made a conscientious attempt to apply Best Value principles.

The review team consulted students and parents by means of questionnaires, as well as a sample of schools with regard to free school meals and home to school transport assessments. They consulted colleges and the student loans company by letter. The consultation process produced a series of useful practical findings, which informed the outcome of the review.

Reasonable steps were taken to compare the performance of the services over time and with those of other LEAs. Existing sources of data were explored and steps are being taken to develop a more extensive range of performance measures. Challenge was applied primarily to the location of administrative responsibility and to the processes involved. Given the statutory nature of some of the responsibilities, for example free school meals and higher education awards and the rapidly changing national framework for support for further education students, this was reasonable. The policy for clothing grants was, however, challenged and a recommendation made to discontinue it.

Exploration of the options for applying the competition element of Best Value was limited. The review team made good use of clear corporate guidance on how to conduct Best Value reviews. The leadership of the review by a member of the corporate performance and service development team provided both expertise and an independence from staff directly involved in the area under scrutiny. The authority has learnt from the experience and has, for example, ideas about how the challenge element may be more effectively addressed and how the role of elected members extended.

On the basis of the limited data available, which includes the time taken to deal with applications and the number of further and higher award applications dealt with per member of staff, the LEA compares well with other authorities. Other evidence from the review and the inspection indicates that aspects of performance more generally

are satisfactory. The action agreed is likely to reduce the administrative costs of the various schemes. The degree to which pupils, students, and parents will benefit in terms of an improved service is less clear and will depend substantially on the outcomes of further work planned. Action plans and the setting of targets for improvement are, as yet, too imprecise to judge the extent of improvement likely. The focus of this work is, however, appropriate.

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