

Inspection report
EALING
Local Education Authority

Date of inspection: January 2003

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Basic information

Name of LEA:	Ealing Local Education Authority
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Lead inspector:	Christine Brown HMI
Date of inspection:	January 2003

Introduction

1. This inspection of Ealing local education authority (LEA) was carried out by Ofsted in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities (December 2001)*. The inspection focused on the effectiveness of the LEA's work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.

2. The inspection was based on a range of material, which included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, and data, some of which was provided by the LEA. That material also included school inspection information; HMI monitoring reports; audit reports; documentation from, and discussions with, LEA officers and members; focus groups of headteachers and governors; staff in other departments at that local authority; and diocesan representatives. Other agencies and LEA partners submitted written evidence of participation and joint working and participated in focus groups. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA (published in April 2001). A questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the work of the LEA, was circulated to 92 schools of which 65 schools responded; the inspection team considered its results.

3. For each inspected function of the LEA, an inspection team makes a judgement which is converted into a numerical grade. An inspection team may make up to 52 key inspection judgements. An inspection judgement is made against criteria for each inspected function of the LEA. These criteria, (and the guidance notes on functions of an LEA that may be inspected by Ofsted), can be found on the Ofsted website. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are appended to this report, along with short explanations of what each numeric grade represents. Judgements on inspected functions of an LEA are made during the inspection of the LEA and indicate the effectiveness of the LEA's performance of individual functions at the time of the inspection. The numeric grades awarded by the inspection team complement the areas of the report which comment on the individual functions scrutinised on this inspection, and, as such, must be considered in the light of those comments.

4. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) profile for the education service. It is intended that the CPA for education will be updated annually so that the grades from this inspection will contribute to the next annual assessment.

5. The CPA profile for the education service takes account of the performance of several aspects of the local service, including pre-school and adult education. The CPA profile for education is composed of a number of inspection judgements, as well as other performance indicators, such as improvement trends at Key Stage 3. The assessment, published in December 2002, gives star ratings for each local authority for a range of local services, for example social services, benefits, environment etc, whereas this report focuses on the local authority's work to support school improvement

6. The inspection team considered the LEA's work in 47 schools through focus groups and case study discussions with LEA officers. The inspection also involved studies of the

LEA's support for asylum seekers and refugees through visits to one primary school and one secondary school.

Commentary

7. Ealing has a richly diverse population with over two-fifths of residents from minority ethnic communities and more than a hundred languages spoken by people for whom English is not their first language. The high cost of housing within the area contributes to difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in schools and within the LEA. The borough has above the national average unemployment and some areas of significant deprivation and disadvantage. There are high levels of pupil mobility in some schools and a large and increasing number of asylum seekers and refugees.

8. Attainment of pupils has risen steadily at a rate of improvement mostly in line with or above the national rate. Standards of pupils' attainment in national tests at Key Stage 2 and examinations at GCSE are broadly in line with national averages. Standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 are below average. There is wide variation in the performance of individual schools. The proportion of primary schools that are good or very good is below that found nationally, while the proportion of secondary schools that are good or very good is above the national average.

9. The previous inspection of the LEA, conducted in the spring of 2001, found significant weaknesses, especially in the procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans and in the effectiveness of the arrangements for combating racial harassment. The authority has responded to the findings and has brought about notable improvement in implementing equal opportunity policies and measures to combat racism. Good support for looked after children has been maintained. Corporate planning remains unsatisfactory, especially in terms of communicating the council's vision and plans so that schools and other partners and stakeholders share a common understanding of its priorities for education. At the corporate level, schools and the wider community play too little a part in shaping policy and strategy.

10. Schools welcome the clear direction set by the executive director of learning and ambition and are cautiously optimistic about future developments. The LEA is especially proficient at using performance data and other information to audit needs. Strategic planning and performance management are satisfactory. There is a strong focus on securing continuous improvement and in making use of increasingly thorough Best Value reviews to provide better services for schools. Though it has yet to resolve all problems, admission arrangements are now satisfactory. Asset management planning is very good and the LEA's increased capital resources are being used well alongside alternative methods of funding building projects. There is a clear commitment to promoting social inclusion. Strategies and policies for special educational needs are being developed and implemented in a steady and measured way. Monitoring of education planning is highly satisfactory, but the evaluation by service managers of the effectiveness of strategies and initiatives is under-developed. At an operational level there has been some dramatic improvement in, for example, support for literacy and numeracy, for minority ethnic pupils, including Travellers, for improving attendance and for property services.

11. Of the functions inspected, the LEA now discharges the following particularly effectively:

Strengths

- focusing support on areas of greatest need and the identification of and intervention in under-performing schools;
- support for literacy and numeracy;
- support for minority ethnic groups, including Travellers;
- provision of personnel and property services;
- arrangements for assuring the quality and supply of teachers;
- provision for pupils educated other than at school;
- support for looked after children;
- discharging asset management planning;
- support for attendance; and
- partnership working.

12. The following weaknesses remain:

Weaknesses

- the clarity and coherence of corporate plans; and
- the grounds maintenance and catering services

13. Progress since the previous inspection has been good and few weaknesses remain. This is now a highly satisfactory LEA and it has good operational performance in the area of service provision despite the weaknesses in corporate planning. This judgement of the overall effectiveness of the LEA is commensurate with the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for education, published in December 2002, that gave the education service two stars (with three being the highest category) for current performance.

14. The LEA is capable of responding to the recommendations in the report, and of continuing to make progress. At the level of the education directorate, the sharply focused audit of need, the increased coherence of planning and the improved targeting of resources to priorities make the potential for improvement good. The education directorate has made good use of its autonomy from the corporate centre in terms of the improvement in its delivery of services to schools and parents. As a result, the weaknesses in the council's corporate planning have not constrained the progress of the directorate's work. However, they do have a bearing on the capacity to improve. That the council can support improvement is reflected in its commitment to social inclusion, and in the rapid progress made in developing its race equalities scheme. The council and the corporate board have yet to show the same resolve in ensuring that the vision and priorities for education are communicated so that all involved understand them and that there are effective links between financial and strategic planning. The LEA's capacity to improve is highly satisfactory. This indicates a stronger position than that reflected in the one star rating given to this LEA for its capacity to improve within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment for education.

Section 1: The LEA's strategy for school improvement

Context

15. Ealing has experienced the highest population growth in the capital over the last few years and is now the third largest London borough. A key feature of the authority continues to be its richly diverse population; over two-fifths of the population are from minority ethnic communities, mainly of Indian origin but also from the Caribbean and West Africa. More than a hundred languages are spoken by people for whom English is not a first language. Ealing is one of the country's largest recipients of asylum seekers and refugees; it is estimated that there are currently between 18,000 and 20,000 asylum seekers and refugees within the borough.

16. The socio-economic context of the borough remains similar to the position at the first inspection. Ealing is an area of relatively high unemployment, significantly above the national average and the average for west London. The borough contains areas of considerable deprivation. Eight of the 25 wards fall within the bottom 25 per cent of the most deprived wards in England; one of these, Dormers Wells, is among the bottom 10 per cent of most deprived wards nationally. The major shortage of affordable housing makes it difficult to recruit and retain key workers within the council and in its schools.

17. The school population is approximately 43,000 pupils. The authority has five nursery schools, organised into two early years education centres in Acton and Southall. All but four primary schools have nursery classes attached. The authority has responsibility for six infant schools, four junior schools and 55 primary schools, as well as 13 high schools and six special schools. Most primary schools are larger than the national average. There are three voluntary-aided Church of England and eight Roman Catholic primary schools. There are five foundation, one Roman Catholic and one Church of England high schools and six community high schools. One of the community high schools will be closed in September 2003, to be replaced by a City Academy specialising in enterprise and sports. The LEA has secured an agreement to include a local primary school in the Academy. The campus also includes a special school for children with physical disabilities and this will continue to work in an integrated way with the Academy.

18. Some 32 per cent of primary and 34 per cent of secondary pupils were eligible for free school meals in 2001. These figures are above the national average for primary aged pupils (22 per cent) and twice the national average for secondary aged pupils (17 per cent). Around 57 per cent of primary pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, a proportion well above the national average of 13 per cent and an increase of four per cent compared with the situation in 1999. Within the secondary phase, 64 per cent of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage compared to 12 per cent nationally. English is an additional language for 46 per cent of pupils. The percentage of 16-year-olds continuing in full-time education has risen steadily since 1999 to 80.4 per cent in 2001. Some schools experience high levels of pupil mobility.

19. In 2001, the proportion of primary-aged pupils with statements of special educational need was below the national average, (2.4 per cent compared with 2.7 per cent nationally). Percentages have been consistently below the national average, despite a rise in

statements from 1.6 per cent in 1999. For secondary-aged pupils, the proportion of pupils with statements (3.6 per cent) is in line with the national average (4.3 per cent). While the proportion of pupils educated in special schools in 2001 was in line with the national average, only 47 per cent of the pupils with statements were educated in mainstream schools or units attached to mainstream schools, which is lower than the national average. The trend has been a decrease in the percentage of pupils with statements educated in special schools, and a corresponding increase of those attending mainstream schools.

20. Ealing joined the Excellence in Cities initiative in September 2000 and, as part of this, an Education Action Zone was established in September 2001. The authority has a Local Public Service Agreement that came into effect in January 2003.

Performance

21. Attainment of pupils on entry to primary schools is below the national average.

22. Attainment in reading and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 is below the national average, but in line with the average in similar LEAs¹. Attainment in writing is below both the national average and the average in similar LEAs. The rate of improvement in reading is below the national trend, and in writing and mathematics is well below the national trend.

23. At the end of Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 and above in English, mathematics and science is broadly in line with national averages, and above the average for similar LEAs. The rate of improvement in mathematics and science is above the national trend; in English, improvement is in line with the national rate.

24. The percentages of pupils achieving level 5 and above in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 are below the national averages and broadly in line with averages in similar LEAs. The rate of improvement is: well above the national trend in mathematics; above the national trend in science; and broadly in line with the national trend in English.

25. At the end of KS4, the percentage of pupils achieving one or more A*-G at GCSE is well above the national average and the average in similar LEAs. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE is broadly in line with national averages and the average in similar LEAs. The average points score at GCSE is broadly in line with the national average and above the average in similar LEAs. The rates of improvement are well above national trends.

26. The average points score of pupils at A level is below the national average but in line with the average in similar LEAs. On a three year rolling average performance has shown a steady upward trend.

¹ The borough's closest statistical neighbours are: Hounslow, Brent, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Merton, Croydon, Harrow, Reading, Wandsworth and Haringey.

27. There is evidence of some underachievement by boys, especially at Key Stage 3, and by black Caribbean and black African heritage groups. There is also wide variation in the performance of schools; for example, in 2002, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C ranged from below 20 per cent to well over 70 per cent.

28. Data from Ofsted inspections indicates that the percentage of primary schools judged to be good or very good is below both the national average and the average in similar LEAs. The percentage of secondary schools judged to be good or very good is above the national average and well above the average in similar LEAs. The proportion of primary schools requiring some or significant improvement in standards is in line with the national average. At secondary level, a smaller proportion than average require some or significant improvement. Three primary schools are currently in special measures and one primary school has been designated as having serious weaknesses. There are currently four primary and two secondary schools that have Beacon status. Six secondary schools have specialist status.

29. Attendance is in line with the national average in secondary schools but below the national average in primary schools. The percentage of sessions missed due to unauthorised absence remains broadly in line with the national figures for both primary- and secondary-aged pupils but fell significantly in 2001. The rate of permanent exclusion is below the national average for primary schools. For secondary schools, the rate of permanent exclusion is in line with the national average.

Funding

30. Ealing LEA receives a higher level of revenue funding through the standard Spending Assessment (SSA) than most similar authorities. For the last three years, Ealing's total education standard spending assessment has been about two per cent above the average for the borough's statistical neighbours and between six and seven per cent above the average for outer London boroughs. SSA has increased by 11.3 per cent since 2000-01, compared with a 10.5 per cent increase across England as a whole.

31. The council has consistently funded the education service at the level of SSA for the last five years. The total net revenue budget for the education service for 2002-03, including grants and other income, amounts to some £156.8 million. The local schools budget represents about 93 per cent of this sum, a slightly lower proportion than the average for outer London boroughs, reflecting the well above average costs of placing pupils with statements of special educational needs in schools outside the borough.

32. The LEA has historically funded sixth form students at a relatively low level. The transfer of sixth form funding from the LEA to the Learning and Skills Council in 2002-03 therefore resulted in a reduction relative to Ealing's comparators in the funding available for pupils aged 11 to 16. The local schools budget for secondary schools increased by about five per cent per pupil in 2002-03 and is marginally below the average for Ealing's statistical neighbours. The local schools budget for primary schools increased by about 13 per cent per pupil and is now well above the average for Ealing's statistical neighbours.

	Ealing £ per pupil	Statistical neighbours £ per pupil	Outer London Boroughs £ per pupil
Primary local schools budget (LSB)	3364	3205	3087
Secondary (LSB)	4081	4163	4003

Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002-03.

33. Funding delegated to schools in the individual schools budget reflects the trends in the local schools budget. While the individual schools budget for primary schools is well above the average among Ealing's comparators, and has risen by about nine per cent since 2002-03, that for secondary schools is slightly below average and increased by about six per cent.

	Ealing £ per pupil	Statistical neighbours £ per pupil	Outer London Boroughs £ per pupil
Primary individual schools budget (ISB)	2579	2435	2395
Secondary (ISB)	3171	3214	3183

Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002-03.

34. The LEA provides the necessary matched funding to enable it to take up its full allocation of the standards fund. The total grant for 2002-03 amounts to £315 per pupil, well above the average for statistical neighbours and outer London boroughs. Income from other specific grants is also well above average.

35. Capital funding to improve the quality of school buildings has increased substantially recently. The gross total available for 2002-03, excluding capital expenditure from revenue, amounts to £625 per pupil, more than double the average for statistical neighbours and outer London boroughs. In addition, the LEA has recently concluded arrangements for a Public Finance Initiative scheme that has attracted credits worth over £33 million to refurbish a secondary school and three primary schools. In partnership with local business, the LEA has also secured the funding necessary to open a City Academy in September 2003.

Council structure

36. Ealing council has established a cabinet structure, which comprises the leader of the council and eight councillors with portfolio responsibilities, as well as a shadow cabinet. In addition there are advisory committees, area panels and four scrutiny panels. Political control continues to rest with the Labour party.

37. Three cabinet members have particular responsibility for different elements of the work of the education directorate. These are the councillors with responsibility for

developing young people; for leisure and learning; and for community regeneration. The cross-cutting portfolio responsibilities are deliberately designed to promote and enhance working across directorates and across divisions. This is already having the desired effect in areas such as promoting social inclusion. The leader of the council chairs the corporate parent committee, which monitors and acts on achievements and standards in relation to looked after children.

38. The *'individual scrutiny committee'* takes the lead role in scrutinising education responsibilities. In addition to elected members, this committee also includes three parent governors and representatives nominated by the Anglican and Roman Catholic diocese in the borough. The *'individual scrutiny committee'* contributes to developing policy as well as reviewing the managerial decisions taken by cabinet and monitoring the council's performance. The school standards panel functions as part of scrutiny. This panel meets quarterly to monitor school improvement activities and the implementation of key plans and initiatives.

39. The officer structure comprises the chief executive and six executive directors, one of whom is the executive director of learning and ambition.

The LEA's strategy for school improvement

40. The strategy for school improvement, which includes the education development plan (EDP), is satisfactory. At the previous inspection the EDP was unsatisfactory. Since then, the LEA has obtained approval for its education development plan 2002 – 2007 (EDP 2). This is a satisfactory plan with more strengths than weaknesses. It has the following priorities:

Priority A: Creating a learning culture – creating effective schools;

Priority B: Raising attainment in primary numeracy and literacy;

Priority C: Raising attainment in Key Stage 3;

Priority D: Raising attainment in Key Stage 4 and progression through Post-16;

Priority E: Developing inclusive schools;

Priority F: Early years education; and

Priority G: Raising expectations and standards in ICT.

41. The audit for the EDP 2 is thorough, drawing on a range of data including a comprehensive evaluation of the previous development plan. Very good account has been taken of local circumstances, issues of particular concern to the LEA, recommendations from the previous inspection and from the LEA's other statutory plans. The school improvement programme has been framed well to incorporate the national priorities, to reflect local needs and to build upon previous development planning. Priorities in the EDP 2 work in parallel with the Excellence in Cities and the Education Action Zone programmes.

42. The strength of the school improvement strategy lies in the good match between priorities and activities. Activities cover the key strategic issues identified by the audit and cover areas identified as requiring improvement within the previous LEA inspection report, such as the need to improve the attainment of boys. Responsibility for implementing activities has been assigned to individuals, timescales have been set and appropriate resource levels identified. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are sound.

43. The strategy also has weaknesses. Expected outcomes have been identified usefully for each priority area, but these are not always sharply defined nor clearly enough linked to activities. Some of the tasks, especially within priority E (Developing inclusive schools), are not well defined and do not state clearly what needs to be done nor how it should be accomplished. Criteria for success are variable and, whilst a number are relevant and purposeful, there are too many that do not identify intended effect clearly and some that are merely a rephrasing of the task.

Recommendation

In order to improve the effectiveness of the EDP 2:

- reduce the number of criteria for success and ensure that those remaining are sufficiently measurable to enable effective monitoring and evaluation.

44. Performance targets are challenging. The borough has met its 2002 targets, except for the target for English at Key Stage 2 where there was a shortfall of four percentage points. The targets for 2004 are realistic, albeit requiring acceleration in the rate of improvement, especially at Key Stage 3.

45. The implementation of the strategy for improvement is highly satisfactory. There have been some notable successes in implementing the priorities for literacy and numeracy, in devising an induction programme for new headteachers and in improving attendance. There has been some slippage; for example in completing the LEA model for school self-evaluation and in reducing fixed term exclusions. The LEA is well aware of activities that are not on target and has appropriate strategies for furthering developments in these areas.

The allocation of resources to priorities

46. The allocation of resources to priorities was highly satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and remains so. The inspection team carried out only limited fieldwork in this area.

47. Budget setting at corporate level has tended to follow historical patterns, with budgets for most services reflecting standard spending assessment rather than council priorities. The council will benefit in 2003-04 from the government's new education funding system, permitting planned growth in the education budget that would otherwise have been jeopardised as a result of financial difficulties in other directorates. The basis of charges to the education directorate for central services is becoming more transparent, especially in areas that directly relate to services to schools.

48. The education directorate has made good use of efficiency savings in its centrally-retained budget to target additional resources to areas of identified need, such as the development of its information and communication technology systems. Budget setting and budgetary control within the education directorate are generally effective, especially in areas of unpredictable demand such as special educational needs.

49. Schools are more positive than at the time of the previous inspection about the effectiveness of the LEA's consultation concerning the planning and review of the education budget and the rationale behind the school funding formula. The formula is clear, with funding targeted appropriately and transparently. Most schools rate these aspects as being at least satisfactory. The level of surplus balances in primary schools has grown from almost £3 million at the end of 2000-01 to £4.1 million at the end of 2001-02. This represents about seven per cent of schools' planned budget share. About 55 per cent of primary schools had uncommitted surpluses exceeding five per cent of their budgets. However, LEA officers and elected members are aware of this situation, and the LEA is taking appropriate steps to challenge schools and to target assistance to those schools that appear to need support in their financial management.

Structures to ensure continuous improvement, including Best Value

50. The LEA's strategies to promote continuous improvement were unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The corporate planning framework and the council's Best Value procedures were insufficiently robust, and progress in conducting Best Value reviews within the education directorate was slow. The council has made considerable progress and its performance is now highly satisfactory.

51. As in previous years, the council's external auditors have judged that the Best Value Performance Plan for 2002-03 is satisfactory, though they have identified inaccuracies in some of the authority's performance information and continuing weaknesses in aspects of its performance management arrangements. Most of the performance indicators relating to the education directorate and to schools show an encouraging trend of improvement.

52. The council has built capacity within directorates to improve performance management and to ensure that there is less slippage in conducting Best Value reviews. Most services within the education directorate have now undergone Best Value reviews, whether singly, as part of broader reviews within the directorate, or as part of council-wide cross-cutting reviews. The scope of reviews has been determined largely by the need to cover all services over a five-year period rather than on the basis of a risk assessment. However, their quality and rigour have improved with time. Good use has been made of previous inspection judgements in reaching conclusions and formulating improvement plans. The review of special educational needs support services has contributed to efficiency savings that are being recycled to increase inclusion, and the review of the admissions service has already improved the speed and accessibility of the services received by schools, pupils and parents.

53. Improvement plans resulting from Best Value reviews are of generally good quality. They are detailed and comprehensive in scope, and increasingly contain criteria for success defined in terms of measurable outcomes. Progress in implementing improvement plans is monitored satisfactorily and reported to managers and to the council's scrutiny committee.

Section 2: Support for school improvement

Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's support for school improvement

54. The effectiveness of the LEA's support for school improvement was satisfactory in the previous inspection. It has improved and is now highly satisfactory.

55. Services for school improvement provide well-structured support. Standards of pupils' attainment in national tests and examinations are broadly in line with national averages at Key Stage 2 and GCSE. Standards in the core subjects at Key Stage 3 are below national averages. The LEA's support is good for literacy, for numeracy, the effectiveness of intervention in under-performing schools, the extent to which support is focused on greatest need and the extent to which strategies are successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers. There is also good support for school improvement through personnel and property services, through the education social work and the educational psychology services and through the special educational needs support service. Payroll, grounds maintenance and catering are the only services providing less than satisfactory support.

56. Strategic planning of services to support school improvement is satisfactory. All services understand the need for continuous improvement. A Best Value review of the school improvement services in 2001 led to improvements in the service level agreements offered to schools and to the structure for the inspection and advisory service. Centrally retained costs of school improvement services, and especially for the advisory service, are slightly above average. This reflects an appropriate decision to invest in time and resources to build school profiles and to become knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of schools. Costs are reducing, largely because of the different and more creative solutions that are being found to filling vacancies for inspectors and advisers and because the LEA now knows its schools well. School improvement services provide highly satisfactory value for money.

57. Leadership of school improvement services, strategic planning, the standard of expertise and deployment of staff to support school improvement were satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The LEA's self evaluation and other documentary evidence confirm that work in these areas remains satisfactory and no detailed fieldwork was carried out. Performance management of staff in the advisory service has improved and is now highly satisfactory. Service objectives stem from key plans and, in particular, the EDP 2. There are good links between the targets for the service as a whole and those set for individual members of staff. All inspectors and advisers have access to appropriate professional development opportunities.

Monitoring, challenge, and intervention and the extent to which the LEA's support is focused on areas of greatest need

58. The LEA's arrangements for monitoring, challenging, intervention and supporting schools were satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The understanding by schools of the LEA's model of monitoring, challenge and support has been consolidated and

consequently arrangements are now highly satisfactory. The criteria for intervention are clear and the action taken is proportional to need.

59. There is good use made of performance and other data to identify schools with needs and to target the work of the advisory service. Schools understand and agree with their allocation of support for a range of services including literacy, numeracy, the key stage 3 strategy and for intervention in under-performing schools. Service level agreements are open and transparent. There is a clear distinction between schools' entitlement and the further support that is purchased, although for high achieving schools the definition within the service level agreement for routine monitoring visits has yet to be revised to match the recently reduced number of such visits.

The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring and challenging schools including the use made of performance data

60. The LEA's work in monitoring schools, in challenging them to improve and the use made of performance data were satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The LEA's self evaluation and other documentary evidence confirm that work in this area remains satisfactory and no detailed fieldwork was carried out. The model of providing support has been refined to reduce the number of visits to effective schools, in line with the recommendation in the previous report.

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

61. The LEA's work in schools causing concern was good at the previous inspection and remains so. Two primary schools are currently in special measures and one primary school has been designated as having serious weaknesses. Since the previous inspection three primary schools have been removed from special measures, two of them well within the projected timeframe and under two years. The one primary school that has remained in special measures for longer than two years is now making reasonable progress. In addition a secondary school has been designated as being in challenging circumstances. This school is scheduled to become a City Academy in September 2003.

62. The inspection and advisory service knows its schools well and difficulties are increasingly tackled promptly and incisively. In particular the LEA has intervened appropriately in schools where weaknesses in leadership have been identified. There is a well-planned and suitably differentiated programme of co-ordinated support for individual schools causing concern. Schools are well supported by a task group that includes representatives from the school as well as experienced LEA officers. There are clear strategies for each school, agreed with the LEA, to ensure a graduated and appropriate reduction in LEA support. Officers are prepared to intervene and use statutory powers where necessary. Elected members are kept closely informed and receive regular reports on schools.

Support for literacy

63. The support for literacy was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The recommendation to give a sharper focus on improving the attainment of boys in literacy has

been addressed in the EDP 2. The support provided by a well led and experienced team is now good.

64. Standards at Key Stage 1 have remained static at around 81 per cent for the pupils attaining level 2 and above, three percentage points below the national average. A high proportion of children entering schools in Ealing has English as an additional language; it is a measure of the success of the LEA and its schools that the majority of these pupils attain the national average at the end of Year 6. Standards at Key Stage 2 rose steadily to 2001 but dropped in 2002 from 77.2 per cent at level 4 and above to 74.8 per cent. This partly reflects a slight deterioration in reading standards similar to the national trend. Those schools that have had additional support have, on average, made better progress than other schools in the borough. The 2004 target for the proportion of pupils attaining level 4 and above is challenging and requires an acceleration in the rate of improvement; the target for level 5 and above is realistic.

65. More detailed use of pupil performance data is allowing the effective identification of need in terms of specialist skills support, and in challenging schools which had not recognised pockets of underachievement. As a consequence, the criteria for the identification of schools requiring intensive support have changed. This has resulted in fewer schools being involved and more time for the consultants to develop new initiatives and to be more flexible in their allocation of time; for example, when new literacy co-ordinators are appointed to schools. In a move welcomed by schools, those not involved in intensive support are entitled to a minimum of a half day visit per year by a consultant.

66. Headteachers and governors are kept well informed of developments. There has been a focus on additional training on developing early writing, grammar for writing and early literacy support, all of which have helped in the professional development of teachers. The training programmes have been well received and helpfully repeated to cater for the turnover of both classroom teachers and co-ordinators. Dissemination of good practice is built appropriately into the network meetings of co-ordinators and through the work of the consultants and the leading literacy teachers.

67. The team has established strong links with other strategies and initiatives. Officers have been involved in the family learning project, in joint training with the early years team and the ethnic minorities achievement team as well as working closely with the numeracy, information communication technology and Key Stage 3 teams.

Support for numeracy

68. At the time of the previous inspection, the support for numeracy in primary schools was satisfactory; it is now good. The standards achieved in mathematics at Key Stage 2 have continued to rise and are above the national average. Since 2000 the proportion of pupils gaining level 4 and above has risen from 71 per cent to 74.5 per cent and there have been similar improvements at level 5 and above. The rate of improvement is above the national trend. Attainment at Key Stage 1 is below the national average but in line with statistical neighbours. The LEA is on track to meet its challenging targets for Key Stage 2 in both 2003 and 2004.

69. The consultants are well managed, effectively deployed and have developed good working relationships with senior managers and mathematics co-ordinators in schools. The consultants and leading mathematics teachers are seen as credible practitioners and the latter are now extending their professional expertise by delivering training. There are very close links with the literacy and Key Stage 3 strategies. The consultants are actively encouraging the use of information and communication technology in the teaching of numeracy. The support in nursery and reception classes is being strengthened and training is being offered to other early years providers.

70. Schools targeted for intensive support have made considerable progress, but many of those not receiving additional support either made no improvement or even saw their results decline. Sensibly these schools are now provided with a half-day of support early in the school year to focus on priorities for action. More detailed use of performance data for pupils is allowing schools not previously identified as underachieving to be included in group of schools receiving intensive support, and the analysis also provides information relating to specific groups of pupils so that their needs can be addressed.

71. Headteachers are kept well informed of developments through termly briefings. Additional training is available for returning teachers, those from overseas and those who change year group. Good practice is disseminated appropriately through the network of co-ordinators' meetings where this is part of the agenda, through demonstration lessons by members of the team and in co-operation with Beacon schools.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

72. The LEA's support for raising standards in the curriculum use of ICT was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. There has been considerable improvement in addressing the areas of weakness, such as the need for a comprehensive plan for ICT and greater clarity in the strategy for phase four of the National Grid for Learning and its links with the London Grid for Learning. The level of support is now satisfactory and is improving steadily.

73. Following consultation with schools, there is now a 'Strategy for ICT', which sets out clear aims and the methods by which they will be achieved. Although the links with the EDP 2 are implicit, the strategy forms a strong foundation for the future development of both curriculum and administrative use of ICT.

74. Schools understand the method of distribution of funding received through the National Grid for Learning. The computer to pupil ratio in all phases is in line with national targets. A new post of 'ICT Communications Project Manager' has been created to co-ordinate the connection of schools to the London Grid for Learning. However, this work has been hampered by delays that are beyond the control of the LEA and sensible interim provision is being introduced.

75. The LEA no longer provides technical support; it has instead procured the service, including training, from external providers on behalf of schools. The LEA monitors effectively the delivery of the contract. This change has allowed the ICT consultants to concentrate on delivering curriculum support and assisting school management. In the

recent past, secondary schools have taken up relatively little support and the LEA does not have a full picture of the levels of attainment in these schools. The Key Stage 3 strategy is beginning to address this and the newly appointed ICT consultant is working closely with schools.

76. The majority of schools opted for an external provider for the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training that worked in partnership with the LEA. This has enabled much of the emphasis of the training to be related directly to the curriculum needs of Ealing schools with specialist assistance from the LEA's consultants. Links at primary level with the literacy and numeracy teams have been particularly strong. The completion of NOF training by teachers in both primary and secondary schools is well above average. The LEA's knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in ICT management has been enhanced by the use of its own consultants in the NOF programme and this allows it to offer additional support from a range of costed options.

77. The LEA recognises that it needs a more detailed knowledge of the standards in ICT across its schools and that schools themselves need assistance in moderating and agreeing assessments made by teachers. This work has already started in many schools but needs to be extended as a matter of urgency to all schools, particularly those in the secondary sector.

Recommendations

In order to improve support for information and communications technology:

- develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to determine pupils' standards; and
- provide assistance in the moderation of assessments made by teachers.

Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3

78. This is a new area of inspection. The support given to schools is highly satisfactory and is improving rapidly. Raising standards at Key Stage 3 is a major priority within the EDP 2. Actions and activities are focused appropriately on co-ordination with other strategies, ensuring curriculum continuity between key stages and improving challenge through target setting. The new team is well led, but the LEA has encountered difficulties in recruiting a consultant for the teaching and learning in foundation subjects and a second consultant for literacy. In these cases the LEA is sensibly using alternative provision, including from within its schools. This has the added benefit of assisting in the sharing of good practice. A weakness identified in the previous report regarding the electronic transfer of data between Year 6 and Year 7 has been successfully addressed.

79. Some schools were initially reluctant to be involved in the Key Stage 3 strategy but the focused work of the team and the availability of more detailed and challenging value added performance data have ensured that all schools now are actively involved. The team is working closely with the attached link inspectors and there is strong co-operation with other national strategies and the Excellence in Cities teams. The majority of Key Stage 3 strategy managers are members of school senior management teams, reflecting both national advice and the increased priority being given to raising performance.

80. Since the previous inspection, standards in mathematics and English have improved at a similar rate to the national rate. The standards in mathematics at level 5 and above in 2002 were 62 per cent against a national, unvalidated, average of 68 per cent. The comparable figures for English were 60.7 per cent against 67 per cent. There was a major improvement in science between 2000 and 2001 and a further slight improvement in 2002. However, even here the standards of 60.7 per cent for the proportion of pupils attaining a level 5 and above are 7 percentage points below the national average. Nonetheless, in the majority of schools given additional support in 2001-02, standards rose. The LEA has a detailed analysis of the Key Stage 3 results and indications of progress towards the targets. Officers and teachers are confident that considerable progress towards the 2004 targets will be made, but recognise that a substantial acceleration in the rate of progress is required. The Local Public Service Agreement includes a target to improve attainment in English.

81. Schemes to aid the transition between primary and secondary schools have been in place in the borough for some years. The good practice learned has been adapted to fit the new guidelines, and schools report that the transition arrangements between the two phases are improving. Performance data is now transferred very quickly and officers, rather than individual schools, follow up missing data. Pupil projects, devised especially for the transfer, provide further valuable information for high schools of the standards of work being achieved in Year 6 and secondary teachers are visiting primary schools as part of sharing practice.

82. The training provided centrally, including that for literacy and numeracy across the curriculum has been well received by teachers. More intensive support is taking place in schools with assistance in auditing provision and the development of schemes of work. Leading teachers have been identified and are supporting developments well, particularly where schools experience difficulty recruiting specialist teachers and retaining experienced middle managers. The LEA is actively encouraging the development of subject networks to strengthen links between schools and to enable the sharing of good practice. Satisfactory support is developing for special schools.

Support for minority ethnic groups, including Travellers

83. Support for minority ethnic children and Travellers was satisfactory at the previous inspection. Support has improved and is now good. The LEA responds well to the many challenges presented by the high levels of cultural and linguistic diversity and the increasing inflow of refugees and asylum seekers. Most minority ethnic groups are attaining standards that are in line with, or above, national averages

84. New appointments have been made to provide increased support for schools. There are continued good links with the teams providing literacy and numeracy support for schools. Comprehensive policy guidance and support has been provided for schools on the implementation of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Appropriate systems are in place to monitor standards, attendance and exclusions from school. The LEA recognises the need to address the over-representation of minority ethnic groups among permanently excluded pupils from schools, particularly boys of black ethnic heritage groups, and is already providing additional training and support for learning mentors.

85. Almost all of the grant funding (92 per cent) for supporting minority ethnic achievement is devolved to schools on the basis of an agreed needs-based formula that takes account of the prime objectives of the grant. Schools' use of the grant is monitored satisfactorily and evidence indicates that pupils, in general, are making good progress. The collection and analysis of minority ethnic attainment data is comprehensive and is used well to identify and set targets for underachieving groups. Targets are appropriately differentiated, with greater challenge added to those groups with the most noticeable underachievement, such as Black Caribbean and Black African heritage groups.

86. The Traveller education service, a centrally funded team, provides very good support for around 250 Traveller children, their families and the schools that they attend. The team has been successful in securing additional grant aid funding and provides much appreciated in-service training to promote an awareness of Traveller culture and to assist in the development of whole school policies. The team has helped raise the attendance of Traveller pupils in both primary and secondary schools and has provided streamlined admission procedures.

87. The LEA has an effective record keeping system to monitor the progress of individual Traveller children and indicative targets have been set for different cohorts. Good use is made of data and information to provide increased support and access to education, especially for roadside Travellers. As part of a highly innovative initiative, the team has recruited members of the local Traveller communities to act as educational support staff. This has contributed to improved attendance and has helped ease the transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools. A Traveller outreach worker, attached to the Southall early years centre, is working closely with families to encourage enrolment in nursery school.

88. Ealing offers well planned but flexible support to schools receiving refugees and asylum seekers. The peripatetic team for refugees and new arrivals provides teaching and bilingual support for children for whom English is an additional language, as well as much valued training and support for staff in schools. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress, and, in general, the attainment of bilingual pupils is improving faster than for those pupils whose first language is English. A sub group of high school headteachers has been meeting with LEA staff to develop clear admissions procedures and information exchange for new arrivals.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

89. This is a new area for inspection. The strategy is in place and the support is highly satisfactory. The LEA and its schools are making satisfactory progress towards the objectives and priorities set out in Ealing's Excellence in Cities plan and within the EDP 2. Support for talented pupils is embedded into the practice of the vast majority of schools. Although all schools accepted the need to raise attainment for the most able, not all were initially enthusiastic about the identification of gifted pupils and the response to the first cohort reflected this. In the second year the benefits of offering additional support to gifted pupils have been accepted, though there is still reluctance in a few schools to share the programme of support with parents. The Excellence in Cities co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils has worked hard to bring about this change in approach and many teachers

now recognise that insufficient challenge and support was previously being given to gifted and talented children.

90. The LEA has not yet been able to recruit its complete team of consultants and, as an interim measure, is sensibly using good practitioners from its high schools to provide training and support. A main emphasis of the programme at secondary level is to review the differentiation of schemes of work and to encourage revised teaching and learning styles to accommodate the needs of the most able. This is being supported by enrichment opportunities. At primary level most of the impact of the strategy is in the form of enrichment activities, but there are strongly developing links with the national literacy and numeracy strategies.

91. A range of activities, well received by schools, has included summer schools for Years 6 and 7, mathematics classes at Key Stage 3 and Saturday Clubs for Key Stage 2 pupils. In addition, master classes for A-level students have been organised in association with neighbouring boroughs and using specialist staff and interesting venues, and a series of excellence classes for vocational courses is being planned with Thames Valley University and the local college. A range of programmes for the arts and sport are provided to help develop and enhance pupils' broader talents.

Support for school management

92. The support for school leadership and management was previously satisfactory. The LEA's self evaluation, the views of senior management within schools and other documentary evidence confirm that work in this area remains satisfactory and is improving; no detailed fieldwork was carried out. The appointment of an experienced headteacher as a consultant with a brief covering both effective teaching and leadership and management has enhanced the capacity of the LEA to support senior and middle managers.

Support to governors

93. At the previous inspection, support for governing bodies was satisfactory. Since then, there have been improvements in consultation and communication procedures, a broadening of the training that is offered and examples of effective intervention strategies. Support is now highly satisfactory. The recommendation to send copies of reports following visits by LEA officers and advisers to chairs of governing bodies has been implemented, but the reports lack a consistently rigorous approach.

Recommendation

In order to improve support governing bodies:

- improve the quality of written feedback for chairs of governors by providing clear judgements and, where appropriate, sharply focused recommendations.

94. The LEA has taken positive action to recruit governors more representative of Ealing's minority ethnic groups. Although the vacancy rate for LEA governors is below the

national average, there is an identified problem regarding attendance and commitment which makes effective governance difficult in at least a quarter of schools that were interviewed in focus groups. The LEA is to review its procedures for recruitment.

95. A consultative group reviews the training needs of governors to ensure that the programme reflects their needs. Induction procedures for new governors, chairs and governors with specialist responsibilities are effective. The governors' support unit provides bespoke training to individual governing bodies and this has been especially beneficial in improving governor understanding of their strategic role in schools causing concern. Procedures for communication have improved and are now good; the termly executive director's report is very comprehensive and there is a responsive service for governors' enquiries.

96. The LEA has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of its governing bodies and has, where appropriate, used its statutory powers of intervention.

The effectiveness of services to support school management

97. The arrangements for schools to buy back management services were poor at the time of the previous inspection. Since then, the LEA's response to the inspection and to its Best Value review of school improvement have generated significant improvements. The LEA's services to support school management are now highly satisfactory.

98. The LEA has improved greatly the information provided to schools about the services that are available and has produced a very comprehensive manual of both traded and non-traded services offered by the full range of council directorates. Summary details are helpfully provided in a common format so that schools are able to gain a rapid overview of what is available. Many services provide valuable additional detail, including, for example, the responsibilities of schools choosing alternative providers, though there is some inconsistency.

99. Major services such as financial, personnel and property services offer differentiated levels of traded services to accommodate schools' differing needs. Schools are involved fully in reviewing provision and planning future changes. The charges for services are generally transparent and relate clearly to the scale and cost of their provision.

100. The appointment of a schools' procurement officer has contributed well to the LEA's improved customer focus. There is effective leadership, which is evidenced, for example, in working with schools to prepare the ground for the re-tendering of the schools' catering contract. The service provides highly valued client support for services not provided by the council and advice about alternative providers to schools. The introduction of trade fairs is beginning to open the way for schools to have access to a broader choice of service providers. At present, however, the costs of supporting schools in selecting alternative providers are borne centrally.

*Recommendation***In order to improve services to support school management:**

- ensure that all support for the letting and monitoring of individual schools' contracts is provided on a transparent, commercial basis.

Financial services

101. Financial services were unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, despite some significant strengths in provision. Schools faced difficulties in reconciling their financial records with the council's monthly budget monitoring statements. There has been sound progress, although all difficulties have yet to be resolved. The quality of the service is now satisfactory.

102. Schools generally regard the quality of financial support and advice available through the LEA's traded bursarial service as better than satisfactory, and there has been a growth in the number of schools using the service. Schools are well advised about the level of service that is best suited to their needs. However, schools report some variability in the quality of service from individual officers; some new headteachers, in particular, feel well supported, while others see the need for more training about the council's financial systems. Schools have welcomed the LEA's new financial handbook and the associated training. A pilot project providing a few schools with on-line access to their financial records is a further positive development in improving the quality of financial management in schools.

103. Appropriately, the LEA sees the quality of schools' financial management as a key part of its wider school improvement agenda. Schools are categorised according to the quality of their financial management and the classification is used to inform the audit programme. This represents sound allocation of resources to priorities. However, not all schools are clear about the criteria used to place them in each of the three categories, nor of the framework of criteria used by auditors.

104. LEA officers across the directorate are well supported in their financial management. This is reflected in the generally effective setting and monitoring of centrally retained budgets. The LEA has simplified its accounting arrangements for standards fund expenditure, as recommended in the previous report.

105. The **payroll service** remains a source of major dissatisfaction among schools responding to the school survey. They report that coding errors frequently cause discrepancies between schools' own financial records and those held by the LEA. However, the LEA's monitoring data indicates that corrections to budgetary control reports have fallen from over 2000 last year to 360 thus far in 2002-03. There are therefore grounds for cautious optimism.

Recommendation**In order to improve the accuracy of payroll information:**

- implement as soon as possible plans to enable schools to transfer payroll information electronically to the council's systems, ensuring that automatic checking procedures are robust.

Human resources

106. The education directorate's personnel section was providing a highly satisfactory service to schools and to the LEA at the time of the previous inspection. There has been further progress since then, and the service is now of good quality.

107. In consultation with trade unions, the LEA has updated its personnel policies. A full range of clear policies is now available in electronic form. The industrial relations climate is generally good, and schools feel well supported by the quality of professional advice and casework available from the LEA. The basis for charges for traded services is now clear and appropriate and the vast majority of schools choose to buy the full range of services available to them.

108. Schools are well informed about employment and personnel issues. A combination of regular visits to schools by personnel consultants, headteacher briefings and highly-regarded training for governors provide valuable information to school managers, with the first element also keeping the LEA abreast of developing issues in individual schools. Officers contribute effectively to multi-disciplinary task groups discussing schools that give cause for concern.

109. Service planning is clear and linked effectively to other key plans such as the recruitment and retention of teachers. A key target is to improve the quality of the education payroll service, the management of which has recently transferred to the education personnel section from the council's corporate payroll directorate. The previous section of this report also refers to this issue.

Property services

110. Support to schools on building maintenance and the management of projects was poor at the time of the last inspection, though changes that were imminent at that time gave grounds for cautious optimism. Since then, the LEA has implemented fully the recommendations that it should put in place a revised repairs and maintenance agreement and secure more effective services for schools. The quality of the education directorate's property services is now good.

111. Officers have worked effectively to develop the partnership with schools and with the council's external property consultants. As a result, schools have access to a comprehensive, customer-focused range of maintenance contracts for electrical and mechanical equipment, and qualified technical advice and support to assist with the planning

of school-funded building projects and more general forward maintenance planning. Emergency repairs can be commissioned at short notice and are generally effective.

112. About 60 per cent of schools have chosen to buy the full package of property services, and the number is rising. Many others buy individual elements on an ad hoc basis. Primary schools' views of the quality of buildings maintenance services compare favourably with those in other LEAs. Secondary schools remain more sceptical, with the majority making alternative arrangements. However, the positive views expressed by headteachers from all sectors during the inspection suggest that there have been further improvements since the survey was conducted.

Services for ICT in school administration

113. Support for ICT in school administration was poor at the time of the previous inspection, though steps were already being taken to address the under-investment in this area. The report recommended that the LEA should implement its ICT strategy without delay. Since the inspection, the LEA has added to its capacity and there has been sound progress in several areas. The quality of support for ICT in school administration is now satisfactory.

114. The LEA has successfully established its central pupil database and makes increasingly good use of it to monitor the progress of groups of pupils as well as providing highly valued data for schools.

115. Technical support is much improved. Primary schools' criticisms of the costs do not adequately reflect the important role that the service plays in insuring schools against the increasing risks of disruption associated with computer malfunction.

116. Technical difficulties outside the LEA's control have impeded progress in connecting schools to the London Grid for Learning. The LEA has upgraded all schools' administrative management systems, but limited connectivity in schools has, in turn, slowed down the introduction of on-line data transfer between schools and the LEA. Progress in developing the educational content of the council's website and its intranet has been modest. Nevertheless, a small group of schools is piloting on-line access to their accounts within the council's financial information system, and the LEA and schools have overcome the technical difficulties to ensure the successful transfer of annual pupil census data and the population of the pupil database. Schools and the LEA have worked together effectively to establish e-mail protocols that meet the needs of headteachers.

Cleaning and caretaking

117. At the time of the previous inspection, the LEA offered little or no client support for these services. There has been sound progress since then, and the quality of support is now satisfactory.

118. All schools employ their own caretaking staff. Although a central council contract for cleaning exists, the large majority of schools make their own arrangements to access cleaning staff. However, the LEA offers training and advice about cleaning equipment and

materials and also offers an audit to schools. Details of these facilities are appropriately set out in the LEA's manual of services to schools. In a few cases, the LEA has provided support to schools procuring new cleaning contractors. These are worthwhile steps forward. However, this client support is not yet offered on a traded basis, and costs are borne centrally by the LEA.

Catering

119. Despite effective monitoring, over half of the schools rated the catering service as poor or very poor at the time of the previous inspection. Since then, schools' ratings of the service have deteriorated significantly and the quality of the service remains poor.

120. The vast majority of primary and special schools continue to use a low-cost central contract that expires later this year. The LEA's monitoring and schools themselves report deficiencies in the quality and quantity of food provided. Only about 80 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals take them and fewer than 30 per cent of other pupils choose to pay for meals. The council's Best Value review identifies that environmental health officers have deemed the structural condition and cleanliness of over a quarter of school kitchens unacceptable.

121. The LEA offers good client support to schools choosing to make their own catering arrangements. Arrangements are well in hand to improve the quality of kitchens and to secure an improved service when the new central contract is let.

Grounds maintenance

122. This area was not inspected previously. The LEA's own customer satisfaction survey indicates that only about half of those using the council provider are satisfied with the quality of the grounds maintenance service. The LEA has not succeeded in resolving issues reported by schools such as the inflexible timing of contractors' visits. The quality of grounds maintenance is poor.

123. The majority of the LEA's schools make their own arrangements for grounds maintenance services. The LEA is beginning to offer support to schools considering alternative providers, but it does not yet supply sufficient information to assist schools in reaching a decision. There are no arrangements whereby those schools wishing to do so can access technical advice independently of the grounds maintenance contract.

Recommendations

In order to improve the quality of grounds maintenance:

- provide schools with information about a range of service providers; and
- secure, independently of the grounds maintenance contract, good quality technical support and advice on behalf of those schools wishing to purchase it.

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

124. This is a new area for inspection. Ealing faces acute teacher recruitment and retention problems in many areas, and especially within core subjects. The LEA has worked hard with its schools to develop wide-ranging strategies that are helping to address the problems. The LEA's work in assuring the quality and supply of teachers is good.

125. The borough has a corporate priority to recruit and retain staff at all levels and its involvement in key worker schemes for first time homebuyers is part of this commitment. The recruitment strategy manager works closely with the housing department, housing associations and landlords to create as much accommodation for teachers as possible. The LEA analyses the data on the current workforce and conducts exit surveys for teachers leaving Ealing. The data are increasingly being used to inform the strategy and future planning.

126. Officers and headteachers attend recruitment fairs, a pool of teachers is maintained for teachers completing training, there is increasing collaboration with other London boroughs and links are well established with local colleges and universities. The LEA welcomes overseas-trained teachers and runs training courses to help them assimilate into the English system; it also assists those not fully qualified to attain qualified teacher status.

127. Newly appointed headteachers are supported effectively by a mentoring and coaching scheme and acting headteachers are given immediate support. The national leadership programmes are actively encouraged and the LEA is beginning to track the impact of senior managers when they have completed their course. The LEA has developed a strong programme of support for newly qualified teachers and their tutors and is actively involved in maintaining the standards of these teachers.

128. Research indicates that the LEA has a serious retention problem, with a high proportion of young teachers leaving after two to five years. Part of the strategy to address this issue is to strengthen the career opportunities for new and experienced teachers. There is now a clear programme for professional development that includes accredited middle management training and opportunities for secondments, allowing teachers to further their career aspirations. Similarly, the LEA is providing encouragement to those teaching assistants who wish to become teachers.

Section 3: Special educational needs

Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's special educational needs provision

129. The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy and value for money in respect of special educational needs was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The LEA has acted in a positive and measured way to improve this situation and has secured broad support for its policy and development plan set within a wider strategy for inclusion. All functions of special educational needs are now performed at least satisfactorily. The restructuring of the access and inclusion division has served to strengthen leadership and to improve provision and support for children who have special educational needs. The standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs are improving. Partnership work at strategic and operational levels with health and social services has improved and is now satisfactory. The LEA has taken care to include the effective involvement of schools and agencies in decision making and this has ensured that the LEA has been successful in developing a positive ethos in which more inclusive practice can thrive. The proportion of pupils with statements that are taught in special schools is higher than the national average, although the trend has been a decrease in the percentage of pupils with statements educated in special schools, and a corresponding increase of those attending mainstream schools. A Best Value review of special educational needs services secured further impetus for improvement and has resulted in streamlined and appropriately deployed services to support schools.

130. The LEA acknowledges that there is still some way to go before the effectiveness of its strategy and support for inclusion is realised fully. Detailed planning, particularly at a strategic level, is not yet sufficiently precise or aligned fully with available resources. Further work is needed to expedite the preparation of statements of special educational needs, especially those involving other agencies. Nevertheless, prospects for further improvement are very promising. Schools have confidence in the LEA's support and are aware of their role and responsibilities in bringing about enhanced inclusion. As a consequence, the capacity for further improvement is good.

Strategy

131. At the previous inspection, the strategy for special educational needs was unsatisfactory and the LEA was recommended to improve communication with all schools to ensure it was better understood. The LEA has made steady progress since then and the approach taken has ensured widespread support for the special educational needs policy, development plan and wider inclusion strategy. The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy is now satisfactory, although some weaknesses remain.

132. The policy and development plan for special educational needs are clear and based on sound principles. Priorities are aligned sensibly to an approach based on a commitment to inclusive practice; working in partnership with parents, schools and agencies; and equality of opportunity and delivering a community based service. Actions to support priorities are clear in their outline and detailed planning and the deployment of resources are found in service plans. The LEA recognises a need to secure more precise planning within the broader strategy for inclusion, currently subject to consultation.

133. The LEA has taken a measured and systematic approach in the development of its plans and strategies for inclusion. There has been wide consultation and involvement of schools and other partners and there is widespread support for the priorities and the direction being taken. Capacity to secure more inclusive practice in mainstream schools is being built steadily by developing the skills of staff through effective support and training. Successful approaches to inclusion are being disseminated and have been key themes at meetings of special educational needs co-ordinators and headteacher conferences during the last twelve months. In turn, and over time, the character of the borough's special schools is being altered to accommodate pupils with more complex needs. The LEA has reduced the number of special educational needs pupils educated outside of the borough and is reinvesting resourcing into mainstream and special schools.

134. This approach is taking time to accomplish and many of the actions are scheduled for the next two years. This is a sensible approach in that the LEA has secured the confidence of schools and parents. Restructuring of the relatively new access and inclusion division and the appointment of key officers to strategic posts have improved the coherence of strategic planning. Funding to support the strategy has been carefully considered and the LEA has made suitable forecasts about feasibility, but this has not yet been subject to detailed discussions with schools. Elected members have approved the overall strategy and receive regular reports on its progress. Plans founded on a secure evidence base, the monitoring of service plans and improvements to performance management arrangements are contributing to the potential success of the strategy.

Statutory obligations

135. The LEA was taking highly satisfactory steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of special educational needs at the previous inspection. The LEA's self evaluation and other documentary evidence confirm that work in this area remains highly satisfactory and no detailed fieldwork was carried out. The LEA has continued to improve its performance in relation to preparing statements of special educational needs within the prescribed time limits. The proportion of those prepared to deadline in conjunction with other agencies remains low at 43 per cent and, although this figure has doubled in the last year, the late arrival of advice from the health authorities continue to cause delays. Procedures for preparing, monitoring and administering the statementing process have been significantly improved, however, and this is widely appreciated by schools.

Special educational needs functions to support school improvement

136. Support for pupils with special educational needs was satisfactory at the previous inspection. The restructuring and realignment of support services to meet identified needs have brought improved consistency and support for all schools and this function is now highly satisfactory.

137. Schools continue to receive effective advice and support from the education psychology service, consultants for special educational needs and via the regular special educational needs planning meetings, which are highly regarded by special educational needs co-ordinators and headteachers. The criteria for statutory assessment are clear but in need of some updating. Resources allocated to schools are, in general, matched to level and need and

schools view the delegation of funding for pupils with a statement of special educational needs as fair and transparent. The Ealing parent partnership continues to provide important and effective contributions for supporting parents. The service has improved partnership working and widened its repertoire of activities to support inclusion through, for example, enrichment schemes for secondary-aged pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

138. The LEA has improved the quality and consistency of the monitoring of pupils with special educational needs, including rigorous arrangements for annual reviews. Targets are set for all lower attaining pupils and the use of data is effective in ensuring that support services are deployed appropriately. At all key stages, pupils with special educational needs make sound progress. An annual review, based on the monitoring of a sample of schools, is conducted by special educational needs consultants located within the inspection and advisory service and this is making a useful contribution to the database on schools' effectiveness related to standards and provision.

139. The LEA has ensured that planned developments are based on secure consultation and communication with schools. The special educational needs panel, comprising senior directorate officers and representatives from health, social services and schools is bringing cohesion to planning, monitoring and decision making. For example, some services such as the education welfare service, the educational psychology and the special educational needs support services have been streamlined and better deployed to needs, and potential overlaps in service delivery have been eradicated. Expertise has been developed in schools to complement existing specialisms and members of staff from special schools are being used increasingly in an outreach capacity to support inclusion in mainstream schools. To enhance the central training programme, the LEA has developed a multi-agency professional development programme called 'Training Direct' which is securing a more focused and specialist-led response to individual schools' needs.

140. The LEA has made highly satisfactory progress in the recommendations resulting from the previous inspection. A Best Value review of special educational needs support services has provided further impetus for change which has led to service restructuring, more effective deployment of resources and better partnership working. Schools are right to be complimentary about the support and challenge they receive from the LEA in school improvement functions. The capacity for further improvement is good.

Value for money

141. At the previous inspection, the value for money of special educational needs was unsatisfactory. Since then, the access and inclusion division has been restructured and schools are clear on the respective roles and responsibilities. The Best Value review of special educational needs services has resulted also in more effective service delivery. Value for money is now satisfactory.

142. The overall budget for special educational needs is within available resources and, whilst costs for special educational needs in Ealing are currently higher than similar LEAs, they are not rising as fast. There remains a higher than average proportion of pupils with statements placed in special schools outside of the borough, although this proportion is

decreasing. Schools view the criteria for allocation of funding as fair and transparent. Systems for monitoring schools' expenditure are consistent and regular. Nevertheless, as reported in the previous inspection, expenditure on statements of special educational needs in mainstream schools continues to grow. A lower proportion of statements has been reviewed and discontinued than the national average.

143. All special educational needs services monitor their effectiveness against service plans and performance management is sound in all services. The impact of these arrangements has resulted in better partnership working at strategic and operational levels between education, health and social services. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is sound. In general, there is a very low percentage of mainstream and special schools with weak special educational needs provision as a result of effective and well-deployed support, and of secure monitoring arrangements.

Section 4: Promoting social inclusion

Summary

144. The LEA's effectiveness in promoting social inclusion was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. There was a clear commitment to the principles of social inclusion but services were not structured to offer co-ordinated support either within education or across the council. Significant strides have been made in ensuring that comprehensive information and data about the most disaffected and vulnerable children are available, in setting challenging targets for underachieving groups and in developing policies to combat racism. Appropriate attention is given within the EDP 2 and other key plans to raising the attainment, provision and support for vulnerable pupils. Ealing's performance in combating social exclusion is now highly satisfactory and the capacity for improvement is promising.

The strategy to promote social inclusion

145. The council has a strong commitment to promote social inclusion through its regeneration and renewal strategy. Elected members are starting to provide the impetus for cross-departmental working. A sub-group, set up in June 2002 and led by elected members, brings together officers from across the council to discuss issues and to solve problems relating to social inclusion. Education and social services directorates are working closely to establish better joint working and this is evidenced through the good support provided for looked after children and the improved procedures for child protection. The education directorate has sensibly drawn together a range of social inclusion plans and is developing a strategic plan for inclusion. Schools and other partners and agencies are involved appropriately in the developments.

146. Members of staff from within the education directorate have played an active role in the development of the children and young people's strategic partnership. They are also working productively with other agencies and departments, including the voluntary sector, in connection with the family support strategy, Sure Start, the Children's Fund and the Early Years Partnership.

147. Senior officers from within the LEA have involved schools in a range of initiatives that support social inclusion and have disseminated good practice through publications, conferences for headteachers and other meetings. Successful projects have enabled pupils to learn about black achievers in many fields and to prepare books on black scientists, writers, mathematicians, artists and musicians. The effect of these projects and other initiatives has yet to be monitored and evaluated.

The supply of school places

148. The planning of school places was highly satisfactory at the previous inspection. The LEA's self evaluation and other documentary evidence confirm that work in this area remains highly satisfactory and no detailed fieldwork was carried out.

149. The proportion of surplus places in primary schools has increased slightly since the previous inspection to 10.4 per cent. However, the school organisation committee has approved firm plans to reduce this figure to nine per cent. The LEA's asset management plan links well to its school organisation plan to ensure that the capital implications of the work are fully considered. There is little spare capacity in secondary schools, with the great majority of surplus places concentrated in one school. Pupil numbers are projected to fall after 2005-06, and there are therefore no plans to increase secondary capacity.

Admissions

150. Admission arrangements were unsatisfactory and a source of frustration to many parents at the time of the previous inspection. Acknowledgement, however, was also given to the difficulties caused by the fact that admissions to over half of the LEA's secondary schools and a much smaller proportion of primary schools are outside the LEA's control. The report recommended that the LEA should give primary schools more decision-making powers with regard to admissions, and introduce a common preference form for all secondary school applications. Though it has yet to resolve all its problems, the LEA has made sound progress since the previous inspection, and admissions arrangements are now satisfactory.

151. The admissions brochure now contains a synopsis of the admissions process in a range of the most commonly used minority ethnic languages. The LEA has firm plans to simplify the information further to give parents a clearer understanding of the likelihood that they will gain a place in each of the LEA's schools.

152. Primary schools administer the criteria within the authority's admission policy themselves, passing only the most complex cases to the LEA. Over ninety per cent of parents achieve a place for their child in the school of their choice. However, the arrangements for parents who are unsuccessful with their first preference remain unwieldy and are a source of potential delay.

Recommendation

In order to improve the admissions process in primary schools:

- establish systems for the electronic transfer of admissions applications between schools and the LEA.

153. Partly through the work of the admissions forum, the LEA has taken positive steps to improve relationships with secondary schools and to increase mutual understanding. The timing of appeals panels has improved to ensure that pupils transferring to secondary schools are able to attend induction sessions during the summer term. Nevertheless, only 53 per cent of pupils gained a place in their first choice school in September 2002. The LEA has understandably chosen to address issues further by implementing the national School Admissions Code of Practice in 2004, and preparations for this are underway.

154. The improved relationship with secondary schools is reflected in the recent significant changes in the arrangements to deal with the high numbers of casual admissions. Schools have now agreed to deal with casual admissions directly and to provide the LEA with a weekly update of vacancies in each year group. Arrangements for the placement of

pupils excluded from schools are more effective than before. Together, these improvements have reduced the need for parents to visit the education directorate and eliminated the backlog of pupils waiting for school places. Increased opening hours of the admissions enquiry office provide a further improvement to the LEA's services to the public.

Asset management

155. At the time of the previous inspection, asset management was reported to be improving, though the legacy of under-investment remained in the poor quality and suitability of much of the school building stock. Too little time has elapsed since the previous inspection to rectify all the neglect of the past, but progress has been rapid as a result of a major expansion of the LEA's capital programme and the use of alternative procurement options such as the Private Finance Initiative. The quality of asset management planning is now very good.

156. The latest asset management plan is unique in England in having been assessed by the Department for Education and Skills as reaching the highest grade on all criteria. The local policy statement links clearly to other LEA plans and data regarding the condition, suitability and sufficiency of school buildings are comprehensive and up-to-date. As a result, the LEA has produced a transparent and agreed statement of priorities to guide the deployment of its capital funding. The small but representative asset management consultative group has been fully involved in the process, and schools are informed of progress in all property-related matters by means of detailed termly news bulletins.

157. Officers from the education directorate's property services team have worked effectively in partnership with the authority's contracted property consultants to improve the quality of planning and delivery of building projects. All projects are subject to detailed appraisal of options at the planning stage, and the LEA receives regular reports of key performance indicators relating to building work. The latest report covering the first nine months of 2002-03 shows consistent improvements over the same period during the previous year. Three-quarters of projects were completed within the planned timescales, and almost 90 per cent were completed within budget.

158. Both primary and secondary schools have noted a significant improvement in the quality of the LEA's asset management planning in the school survey. Headteachers are particularly appreciative of the LEA's introduction of on-site school liaison officers who fulfil a 'clerk of works' function in monitoring the progress of construction work in order to keep schools informed and to report to the LEA.

159. The LEA has taken appropriate steps to improve the quality of asset management planning at school level by procuring on behalf of schools the services of support surveyors. Well over half of schools now buy this service, which provides them with professional advice about forward maintenance planning and the use of schools' capital resources.

Provision of education for pupils who have no school place

160. The provision for pupils who have no school place was good at the time of the previous inspection and remains so. Strengths previously identified have been maintained,

and support staff have been increased to include two new multidisciplinary teams. The study centre remains central to developments and members of staff continue to work collaboratively and effectively with schools and a wide range of agencies. The LEA, however, has found arranging full-time provision for pupils at the study centre to be a significant challenge, especially in light of the recent increase in numbers of pupils permanently excluded from schools. All but a very few pupils have 25 hours of full time provision plus other good quality support, including from mentors and by attending out-of-school-hours clubs. Those pupils arriving at the study centre with complex and severe problems have an interim period of assessment based on a mix of individual tuition, small group work and intensive multi-agency support prior to their integration into more formalised work programmes. This highly appropriate provision is carefully matched to needs but means that the pupils are offered more limited access to the National Curriculum and, for a period of about a month, less than 25 hours of tuition. Ten pupils are currently on this programme. There have been some imaginative and appropriate solutions found for the education of Year 11 pupils, involving a mix of core curriculum and college-based provision.

161. The pupil placement panel remains an effective mechanism for handling referrals. Part-time placements at the study centre, used in combination with school placements, provide much valued intensive support for pupils with combined behavioural and learning difficulties. There is now a framework for reintegration, resulting in increased levels of support for pupils and schools, a carefully planned and monitored programme for reintegration and satisfactory rates of reintegration of excluded pupils into mainstream provision.

162. The LEA, in collaboration with the local college, voluntary organisations, the Education Business Partnership and the study centre, has developed a range of alternative educational provision to meet the needs of those who experience difficulty in moving into a school at Year 11. In particular, appropriate courses for the children of refugees and asylum seekers have been designed to complement school provision. The LEA continues to provide well for pupils with medical conditions and there is an effective programme for schoolgirls who become pregnant. There are good procedures for monitoring the education of home-educated pupils and for supporting their parents in providing the curriculum.

Attendance

163. Support for attendance was good at the previous inspection. Nevertheless, the LEA was recommended to work more actively with local communities to improve attendance rates; to address attendance at the transition from Key Stage 2 to 3; and to better co-ordinate the work of the education social work service in the few schools where there were high levels of unauthorised absence. The LEA has made good progress in all three of these areas. Since the previous inspection the education social work service has been restructured and it is now a smaller but better deployed service and care has been taken to recruit officers with the necessary expertise to focus on key issues. Schools report that restructuring has resulted in a more effective service and attendance rates are improving faster than nationally. Support for attendance is now very good.

164. Rates of attendance in secondary schools have improved over the last three years. Overall, they are in line with statistical neighbours and national average rates. In primary

schools the percentage of pupil sessions missed due to unauthorised absence are in line with the national average. However, despite improving at a faster rate than nationally, attendance remains below the national average. To ensure that attendance is afforded high priority, a clear and coherent strategy is outlined in the EDP 2. Priorities for development are based on a sound audit and influenced by the recommendations from the previous inspection. Progress to date has been highly satisfactory. For example, the LEA has identified where term time extended holiday absence from some minority ethnic groups is affecting primary schools' attendance rates most. In these areas, support has been secured from community and faith leaders to reinforce the importance of regular attendance. The use of the local media has been effective and reference and guidance materials have been reissued to schools and their communities. As a result, procedure and practice has been tightened and attendance rates improved.

165. Funding for the education social work service has been devolved to high schools. Good liaison with the learning mentor strand of the Excellence in Cities initiative and periodic truancy sweeps have seen considerable rises in attendance rates in targeted schools. In primary schools, the LEA has funded ten attendance assistants. These assistants have been recruited locally to ensure strong community influence and trained appropriately to make first day absence telephone calls, make home visits where appropriate and conduct interviews with pupils after periods of absence. As a result of this initiative, attendance rates are rising in targeted schools.

166. The education social work service now works more closely with the inspection and advisory service and an annual review of each school draws on comprehensive data. An attendance strategy group has been created to monitor the progress of actions and attendance rates on a termly basis. It is also a useful forum for problem solving and for disseminating effective practice. The service continues to be effectively led and managed; it is consistent and robust in its use of legal powers and all reasonable steps are taken to meet statutory responsibilities.

Behaviour support

167. The LEA's work in behaviour support was unsatisfactory; in particular, support was too fragmented and delivered by too many uncoordinated teams. The behaviour support service has been restructured and strengthened and a range of different services has been brought under the competent management of a head of strategy and social inclusion. New multi-disciplinary behaviour teams for supporting primary and secondary schools have been established. The teams, which include re-integration link workers, a Connexions adviser and a specialist teacher, work closely with, and complement, school-based staff including the learning mentors in high schools. Systems have been established to enable schools to make speedy referrals for support. Support for behaviour is now highly satisfactory.

168. The collection of data has improved and is now sufficiently comprehensive to allow patterns of behaviour among different groups of pupils, such as those from minority ethnic communities or looked after children, to be identified and monitored on a regular basis. Until recently, the rates of permanent exclusions had fallen significantly. They were below the national average for primary schools and in line with the national average for high schools. Within the last year there has been a sharp increase in the numbers of permanently excluded

pupils from secondary schools, with 40 per cent of those excluded originating from one high school. There is an over-representation of minority ethnic pupils among those permanently excluded from schools and this is recognised by the LEA. In response to the increase, the support for pupils in high schools ‘at risk’ of permanent exclusion, has increased and pupil and family workers, employed by the LEA, are working closely with learning mentors in schools.

169. The Behaviour Support Plan provides a clear and comprehensive strategy for supporting schools in managing pupil behaviour. Schools confirm the effectiveness of consultation, a commitment to the aims in the plan and improved levels of support. While there are many references to inclusion, the relationship between the Behaviour Support Plan and the strategy for inclusion is insufficiently explicit. In particular, it is not clear how the planned improvements will meet the concerns of high school headteachers about the inclusion of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools. The LEA has started to respond to concerns by establishing links between the study centre and the Children’s and Adolescents’ Mental Health Service to provide the much needed support for schools in dealing with complex cases and often very disturbed youngsters.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

170. At the previous inspection, procedures and support for health, safety, welfare and child protection were satisfactory. Since that time important improvements have been made and these functions are now highly satisfactory. The LEA continues to take reasonable steps in fulfilling statutory requirements in respect of child protection.

171. Partnership working between the education and social services directorates has been strengthened at a strategic level and this is improving operational services. The LEA’s procedures and guidelines for communication and referral for child protection, updated since the previous inspection, are clear and understood by schools. The area child protection committee has widened its multi-agency membership to include headteacher representation and continues to operate effectively. For example, disquiet from schools about the high thresholds for referral was considered carefully and, in collaboration with schools and other agencies, the thresholds were lowered. This has resulted in increased numbers on the child protection register but to date within the capacity of current monitoring arrangements.

172. The LEA maintains a current list of designated teachers responsible for child protection. Multi-agency training is now better co-ordinated, with details published at the start of the school year to support planning for professional development. Attendance at child protection training for all school-based staff and governors is monitored robustly.

173. The LEA continues to provide a comprehensive range of guidance material and training opportunities to schools in relation to health and safety issues. However, the materials relating to risk assessment for educational visits remain in draft form and are currently subject to consultation. Procedures for supporting headteachers and site managers in managing health and safety on premises have been strengthened and are satisfactory. Safety officers explain their findings and recommendations for improvement and confirm their findings in written reports within one week. This is an improvement on the previous

inspection report. The LEA has actively promoted the healthy schools scheme and all but ten of the schools in the borough are involved or accredited in this initiative.

Looked after children

174. The support provided for looked after children was good at the time of the previous inspection. Training for foster carers, social workers and others who have a mentoring and support role for the youngsters has improved, in line with the recommendation. Support provided for looked after children continues to be good and remains a strength of the work of the authority.

175. Leadership from elected members continues to be effective. The leader of the council chairs the well-established corporate parenting committee on which young people also sit. The council also supports the multi-disciplinary team of officers across education and social services. This team works very well to promote the welfare of young people, to monitor their educational attainment and to deploy a range of strategies to raise their educational achievement. Support for the young people continues beyond school into further and higher education. There are good systems and structures to celebrate the achievement of looked after children.

176. There are currently 408 looked after children in the care of the local authority, 131 of whom are educated out of borough. There are well-developed procedures to track the progress for all of those children and young people for whom the authority is responsible. The data collected are relevant and comprehensive, although not yet within a central database to link all services. All schools have designated teachers for looked after children and all of these pupils have personal educational plans. Checks are made on the progress of all looked after children to ensure that sufficiently challenging targets are set for individuals. The educational attainment for looked after children has continued to improve year-on-year from a low base. The proportions of looked after children attaining level 4 or above in English at Key Stage 2 and the proportion gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C are above the national average. Attainment at Key Stage 2 in mathematics is in line with the national average. Despite considerable and continuing improvement, the proportion of pupils gaining 1 or more GCSEs at grades A*-G remains below the national average.

Measures to combat racism

177. Measures taken by the authority to combat racism were very poor at the time of the previous inspection. The council had not given sufficient priority to addressing the recommendations of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson Report, 1999). There were no corporate or departmental action plans or clear corporate policies. The council has made good progress since then in addressing the recommendations and in responding to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Arrangements are now satisfactory.

178. There is a race equality scheme and a corporate and departmental action plan that identifies appropriate priorities for education. The council provides sound support for families who experience difficulty when arriving in the borough. For example, an advocacy service has been established to help parents from minority ethnic groups to understand the

workings of the education system in the borough and to assist them if the need arises. Elected members are aware of the need to increase minority ethnic representation on the community forums. Relationships with the local minority ethnic communities are good, but the speed of developments has meant that arrangements for involving them in shaping corporate policy have not been systematic.

179. Rapid progress has been made over the last two terms, especially in supporting schools in meeting the general and specific duties of the Race Relations (Amendments) Act 2000. In addition the education directorate now has clear policies and practices on combating racism. There are sound procedures and guidance in place for schools on preventing, addressing, reporting and recording racist incidents and systems for termly reporting of racist incidents to governing bodies and to the LEA. The first set of returns was due at the end of the autumn term and the majority of schools have responded. The LEA has appropriate systems for monitoring returns and acting on information received.

180. Council staff have received training. Officers have been appointed to be the first points of information and contact for employees concerned about equalities issues, including discrimination and harassment. Training on equality and achievement and combating racism is also included in induction programmes for new teachers and other school staff.

Section 5: Corporate issues

Summary

181. The clarity and coherence of Ealing's corporate plans were unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and procedures for implementing and evaluating the impact of corporate services on education were poor. New arrangements in political administration and decision-making processes were too recent to be evaluated for their effectiveness. The LEA has made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues and recommendations from the inspection but some weaknesses remain. The council's aims do not relate closely enough to the unique set of circumstances of Ealing, although step changes are in hand to improve this within the proposals for the community strategy. Officers, elected members and schools lack a common understanding of the council's priorities for education. Improvements have taken place in plans and planning within the education directorate, in spite of an acknowledged lack of clarity and coherence in corporate plans.

Corporate planning

182. Corporate planning remains unsatisfactory. Elected members are committed to improving education, and spending has been maintained around standard spending assessment. The major weakness is that the council's aspirations are too general and, as such, are not easily transferable into measurable long and short-term targets against which performance and progress can be measured and budget priorities decided. The council's priorities and core themes that lie behind the vision are set out in the Best Value Performance Plan entitled 'Making a World of Difference' and, as before, in combining corporate planning and public information within this single document neither purpose is served well. The core themes outlined in this plan are translated into 'Ealing 4 Excellence' comprising four key council priorities: achieving excellent services; building effective partnerships; enhancing the council's reputation; and becoming an employer of choice. The two key service objectives for education are to raise standards in, and access to, education and to develop partnerships that deliver high quality leisure facilities for children and young people. There is limited detail to show how the authority intends to achieve its priorities and objectives or to indicate the broad outcomes that the education partnerships are expected to achieve. Corporate plans are not communicated with sufficient clarity to enable schools and other partners and stakeholders to understand the council's priorities for education.

183. The council is currently developing a community strategy and is working with the local strategic partnership on a strategic framework for neighbourhood renewal. The aspiration of promoting the economic, environmental and social well-being of all of the borough's communities through improving service delivery is clear. So too is the key purpose of identifying how, by working in partnership with statutory, voluntary, community and private sector agencies, the council can add value and make a real difference to what is happening. However, it is not clear that the issues facing the LEA have been grasped fully at a strategic level, especially those relating to raising educational attainment. The part to be played by education within the strategy is most strongly represented within the vision of 'a place to grow up'. Within this the council has set four strategic objectives, although the basis

and rationale for these is not explicit. As with other corporate planning there is limited information to indicate broadly how objectives will be achieved and insufficient reference to key educational policies and programmes that would provide more detail. The council has also agreed recently a Local Public Service Agreement that incorporates challenging targets for education.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that corporate planning supports the work of the directorate of learning and ambition:

- clarify in corporate plans, the priorities for education and how the council intends to achieve its objectives; and
- ensure elected members, officers, schools and other partners and stakeholders have a common understanding of the council's priorities for education.

184. The council's financial planning is based on a three-year strategy, the latest of which ends in April 2003. While the strategy is intended to address corporate objectives, these have been defined with too little clarity to enable members to allocate resources to services in a strategic manner. Decisions to fund education and social services at standard spending assessment have not been challenged sufficiently in the past. While financial management within the education directorate has been good, the decisions have contributed to significant overspending in some other directorates, and a consequent drain on the council's reserves. This, in turn, has limited the council's ability to fund new priorities, with growth being funded in the main from efficiency savings. The most recent annual audit letter recommends that the council should increase its available revenue balances to a level that members consider appropriate. Budget planning in 2003-04, including a significant increase in council tax, addresses this satisfactorily.

185. Planning within the directorate for learning and ambition is developing well, although it is not yet fully clear or coherent. The new education strategic plan is part of a broader suite of plans that sits between the council's aspirations and education service plans. The eight objectives of the plan have been set against the council's vision and the corporate priorities, although the relationship between the strategic plan and statutory education plans is not so clear. The timing of the production of the strategic plan has meant that it is not embedded fully into other divisional plans nor indeed necessarily representative of the full set of strategic priorities facing education. The need for improvement is recognised and refinements are in hand for the next planning cycle. Systems are in place to ensure that education plans are affordable and that the two per cent year-on-year efficiency savings set by the council are met.

186. The implementation and evaluation of education and council plans are satisfactory, when taken together. The council has designed a balanced scorecard to track progress across corporate objectives based upon an analysis of key targets and performance indicators. It has also invested in performance and management information software to improve linkages between plans and across service areas, although it is very early days in the implementation of the system. Performance review is satisfactory. Quarterly reviews are used for the

checking of progress against the main performance indicators. Increasingly, detailed reporting is only being used for measures where there are significant issues or a risk of failing to meet the planned target. The council has responded well to issues raised in the previous inspection report. The implementation of the action plan following the previous inspection has been monitored well by the executive director for learning and ambition, the corporate board and elected members. Notable improvements have been secured, not least of which is the preparation and implementation of the council's race equality scheme.

187. Performance management is developing satisfactorily within the education directorate. School improvement services make productive use of quarterly reviews to track progress against key performance indicators. Service planning is developing satisfactorily. Service plans have a common format and are broadly consistent with the directorate's strategic plan, though they do not always include the targets and actions from Best Value improvement plans. Service plans also vary in the extent and manner to which they relate to corporate objectives, financial implications are made clear and targets and success criteria are sharply focused and measurable. The monitoring of the implementation of service and statutory plans is satisfactory and is much stronger than the evaluation of the effectiveness of plans and strategies. Officers have regular performance reviews and these result in the identification and subsequent meeting of training needs. The directorate is currently on track to achieve Investor in People status.

Recommendations

In order to develop service plans that further continuous improvement:

- establish clear links between corporate plans, service plans and Best Value improvement plans;
- make targets clearer and criteria for success more precise; and
- establish regular and clear evaluations of the effectiveness of the implementation of service plans.

Decision making

188. The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making remain satisfactory. The new council structures introduced in 2001 have served to speed up the decision-making process.

189. In broad terms, the council's financial strategy has provided sufficient funding for key strategic educational priorities. Elected members have taken some difficult key operational decisions; for example, the management of the closure of a special school, adopting a City Academy solution for a secondary school and embracing alternative methods of procurement by approving a substantial Private Finance Initiative scheme to add to the LEA's already extensive capital programme. Corporate decisions on the annual education budget have been timely. The allocation of revenue and capital funding to schools is transparent. Schools are involved in and consulted on the planning and review of the education budget and understand the education rationale behind the school funding formula.

190. Procedures for decisions delegated to cabinet are well managed, fully recorded and, on occasions, called in by the individual scrutiny committee. There are currently no terms of reference and guidance for decisions delegated to the executive director of learning and ambition, although procedures are in hand to produce these.

Recommendation

In order to clarify decision-making procedures:

- agree and publish the revision of powers delegated to the executive director of learning and ambition.

The leadership provided by elected members

191. The leadership provided by elected members is satisfactory. Those who work most closely with the directorate of learning and ambition have a secure knowledge and understanding of educational issues. The portfolio holder for developing young people is highly regarded by schools. Other elected members have a clear sense of the importance of education and are committed to raising standards. However, the council has not taken a strong enough lead in providing direction on priorities or in directly involving and engaging schools in decision making and policy.

192. The schools' standards panel, functioning as part of the individual scrutiny committee, meets quarterly to monitor school improvement activities and the implementation of key plans and initiatives within education. It fulfils this role effectively. There have been occasions where the individual scrutiny committee has challenged the executive, for example by investigating and discussing the implications of a move towards a City Academy. However, the scrutiny committee has made only limited use of direct evidence such as performance data, expert witnesses and school visits in order to strengthen its ability to challenge the executive and to contribute to policy development.

193. Relationships between senior officers and elected members are good. Councillors have confidence in the education directorate and their ability to secure further developments. Elected members receive satisfactory advice in the form of papers and by means of presentations from officers on key issues. It is recognised, however, that the quality and sufficiency of information provided for elected members needs to be monitored and reviewed to avoid elected members from becoming overwhelmed with data and information.

The leadership provided by senior officers

194. The leadership provided by senior officers in the directorate of learning and ambition is highly satisfactory. There has been good progress since the previous inspection in areas such as focusing support on areas of greatest need, reducing the need for intervention in schools and in developing policy and strategy for special educational needs.

195. The current executive director of learning and ambition was appointed in November 2002, following a period from April 2001 as interim executive director. She has a clear vision for the future and provides purposeful, energetic and determined leadership.

Relationships with schools are sound and have developed strength recently. Satisfactory progress has been made at senior officer level in building procedures that enable schools and other partners to influence the work of the LEA and to shape policy. Schools are cautiously optimistic about the future but have yet to see the effect of recent decisions.

196. Officers within education have a thorough knowledge and understanding of schools and of the tasks and activities that will make a difference. Significant progress has been made within each of the four divisions within the directorate; for example, in furthering the post-16 strategy and in improving the quality of management support services for schools. It is, however, recognised that areas of cross-divisional working, departmental strategy and the interface with the corporate centre to achieve coherence remain under-developed. The high cost of housing within the area contributes to difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff within the LEA. Some creative thinking and radical solutions have been employed to solve the recruitment problems and to fill vacancies, including the use of part-time staff and consultants.

Partnership

197. The LEA's arrangements for partnership work were good at the previous inspection. Since that time, the most senior officers have strengthened their commitment to working in partnership and this area of the LEA's work remains good.

198. Relationships between partners at all levels are good. Key partners, such as those in health, social services, the police, early years, post-14 and from the business community, recognise a step change in the LEA's approach in the last 12 months. For example, the development of the children and young people strategic partnership brings together important agencies and departments in order to improve the planning and monitoring of services involved with inclusion and in bringing about community improvement.

199. Care has been taken by the LEA to involve partners in joint meetings to avoid repetition and potential duplication in service planning and delivery. This has made an effective contribution, for example, in improving the provision made for looked after children. A partnership approach in the property services team with the council's contracted external property consultants has led to improved quality in the planning and delivery of building projects.

200. There has been some encouragement at school level to develop partnership working. For example, the outreach role of special school staff in supporting inclusion in mainstream schools is growing. There has been effective dissemination of good inclusive practice such as strategies to improve attendance between high schools. However, progress to date has been more limited in developing the role of advanced skills teachers, Beacon and specialist colleges and in furthering school level partnerships.

201. One of the council's stated key aims is to work in partnership across departments and with external agencies. This broad remit has been appropriately interpreted in the education directorate where strategic and operational level partnerships have been consolidated, and in numerous cases enhanced. Between key partners, operational aims and objectives are understood well. However, at a corporate level, communication with and the

direct involvement of partners have been weak and there is only limited understanding by external partners of the strategic aims and objectives of the council.

Support for early years

202. The strategic management of early years had some weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and, in particular, insufficient prominence had been given to developing an overarching strategy. The council's strong commitment to the provision for early years education has continued and additional funds have been allocated to address the identified weaknesses and to strengthen the infrastructure necessary to build the partnership between the maintained, private and voluntary settings. The authority is now able to provide a free part-time place for all three and four-year-olds whose parents request one. The take up of places is monitored and areas of disadvantage are targeted systematically in the creation of new full day childcare places. Support for early years is now highly satisfactory.

203. The implementation of the Ealing Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership strategic plan is having a clear effect on provision. Fifteen neighbourhood nursery initiatives are being supported, four social services nurseries have been integrated into the education setting, an early excellence centre has been opened and another planned.

204. One of the local priorities within the EDP 2 is focused on improving early years education and, within this, there are clear links with the national strategies for numeracy and literacy. The appointment of a new head of early years and an inspector for early years has improved inter-divisional co-operation, although difficulties in recruiting the full team of advisory teachers weakens the partnership's ability to tackle all of its priorities at the speed indicated in plans.

205. The recently introduced handbook for the Foundation Stage is comprehensive and offers advice on policy, teaching and learning, special educational needs, inclusion, and partnership with parents and the community. Related training is well focused and the venues for the meetings are chosen carefully as part of the aim of the dissemination of good practice

Support for 14-19 education

206. At the time of the previous inspection, strategic planning for post-16 provision was unsatisfactory. There was neither an overall post-16 development plan nor priorities within the first EDP for raising attainment. Considerable progress has been made and planning for a comprehensive strategy is at an advanced stage. Strategic planning is now satisfactory.

207. Priority is given within the EDP 2 to raising attainment in Key Stage 4 and to assuring progression through post-16. There is appropriate emphasis on broadening the curriculum from 14 to 19 and to ensuring that there is greater opportunity for all young people to participate in education. There are also good links with the national strategy for Key Stage 3 and to the Excellence in Cities programme.

208. Independent consultants produced a detailed Post-16 education and training report in March 2002, and this provided a good foundation for consultation. All interested partners were involved in agreeing the basic principles that underpin the post-16 strategy. The

ultimate intention is to strengthen co-operation between all post-16 providers in Ealing and within the surrounding boroughs so that the students have access to a mixed economy of broad and flexible provision. The main issues are identified clearly within the resultant post-16 development plan, as are the consequential action points. The plan awaits the outcome of the area-wide post-16 inspection, conducted by Ofsted in the autumn term 2002, before being finally agreed.

209. This wait is not delaying progress at a local level. An earlier report has been used to form the basis of new post-16 provision for the Southall area. Improvements are being made to existing college buildings, funded by the London West Learning and Skills Council. The new college is planned to open in September 2003; this will serve the needs of students leaving the three 11-16 schools as well as the local community. The local community has representation on an area body that advises the college's governing body. The senior management of the college and the schools meet regularly to discuss the breadth and quality of educational provision.

210. The brief of the acting Excellence in Cities manager includes responsibility for planning post-16 education and training as well as for providing links to other programmes across the education directorate. Although this is a wide brief, it has considerable strengths in ensuring that there are very positive links between the Excellence in Cities programme and the post-16 strategy. The developing partnerships are potentially strong, involving at different strategic and operational levels, the London West Learning and Skills Council, the Ealing Learning Partnership, the Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College, Connexions, the Business Partnership and schools.

Appendix 1: Recommendations

This report makes a number of fundamental recommendations, which are key to the further progress of the LEA. Work should begin on them immediately. They are:

In order to ensure that corporate planning supports the work of the directorate of learning and ambition:

- clarify in corporate plans, the priorities for education and how the council intends to achieve objectives; and
- ensure elected members, officers, schools and other partners and stakeholders have a common understanding of the council's priorities for education

In order to develop service plans that further continuous improvement:

- establish clear links between corporate plans, service plans and Best Value improvement plans;
- make targets clearer and criteria for success more precise; and
- establish regular and clear evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of service plans.

In order to clarify decision-making procedures:

- agree and publish the revision of powers delegated to the executive director of learning and ambition.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the EDP 2:

- reduce the number of criteria for success and ensure that those remaining are sufficiently measurable to enable effective monitoring and evaluation; and

In order to improve support governing bodies:

- improve the quality of written feedback for chairs of governors by providing clear judgements and, where appropriate, sharply focused recommendations.

The report also makes the following recommendations. These are:

In order to improve the quality of grounds maintenance:

- provide schools with information about a range of service providers; and
- secure, independently of the grounds maintenance contract, good quality technical support and advice on behalf of those schools wishing to purchase it.

In order to improve support for information and communications technology:

- develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to determine standards in ICT; and
- provide assistance in the moderation of assessments made by teachers;

In order to improve services to support school management:

- ensure that all support for the letting and monitoring of individual schools' contracts is provided on a transparent, commercial basis.

In order to improve the accuracy of payroll information:

- implement as soon as possible plans to enable schools to transfer payroll information electronically to the council's systems, ensuring that automatic checking procedures are robust.

In order to improve the admissions process in primary schools:

- establish systems for the electronic transfer of admissions applications between schools and the LEA.

Appendix 2: Record of Judgement Recording Statements for the inspection

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

20a	Financial services	4	
20b	Human resources	2	
20c	Property services	2	
20d	Services for ICT in school administration	4	
20e	Cleaning and caretaking	4	
20f	Grounds maintenance	6	
20g	Catering	6	
21	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	2	
22	The effectiveness of the leadership of services to support school improvement	4	NI
23	The effectiveness of the deployment of staff to support school improvement	4	NI
24	The effectiveness of strategic planning of services to support school improvement	4	NI
25	The effectiveness of the performance management of services to support school improvement	3	
26	The standard of expertise of staff to support school improvement	3	NI
27	The effectiveness of services to school improvement	3	
28	Value for money of services to support school improvement	3	
SECTION 3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS			
29	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for SEN	4	
30	The effectiveness of the LEA in taking steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	3	NI
31	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	3	
32	The extent to which the LEA has exercised its SEN functions to meet the requirements of value for money	4	
SECTION 4 PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION			
33	The overall effectiveness of the LEA in promoting social inclusion	3	
34	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	3	NI
35	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	1	
36	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	4	

37	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to provision for pupils who have no school place	2	
38	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to school attendance	1	
39	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to behaviour at school	3	
40	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to health and safety, welfare and child protection	3	
41	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to children in public care	2	
42	The effectiveness of the LEA in combating racism	4	
SECTION 5 CORPORATE ISSUES			
43	The clarity, consistency, coherence and feasibility of corporate plans	5	
44	The effectiveness of the procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans	4	
45	The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making (particularly financial decision-making)	4	
46	The quality of leadership provided by elected members	4	
47	The quality of the leadership provided by senior officers	3	
48	The quality of advice given by elected members	4	
49	The effectiveness of the co-ordination of actions in support of priorities involving collaboration between several agencies	2	
OVERALL JUDGEMENTS			
50	The progress made by the LEA overall	2	
51	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	3	
52	The overall effectiveness of the LEA	3	