

Derbyshire

Local Education Authority

Inspection Report

Date of Inspection: September 2004

Reporting Inspector: Brian G Blake HMI

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Basic information

Name of LEA:	Derbyshire Local Education Authority
LEA number:	718
Address of LEA:	County Hall Matlock Derbyshire DE4 3AG
Reporting Inspector:	Brian G Blake HMI
Date of Inspection:	September 2004

Summary

Introduction

Derbyshire is a diverse authority, mainly rural but with a number of urban areas that suffer some social deprivation. The LEA maintains 430 schools. The population of the county is almost all White UK, with around 1.5% from other ethnic groups.

Derbyshire pupils perform well above the national average in national tests at Key Stage 1 and in mathematics at Key Stage 2. Pupils' performance at all other key stages is in line with national averages. Although rates of improvement and progress are also broadly in line with national averages, the LEA has been successfully increasing the gap between its own performance and national averages across most areas. This is reflected, in particular, in the above average value-added figure achieved between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

There have been a number of important changes since the previous inspection. There is now a cabinet structure at council level and a restructured education department. Both these developments have played a major part in improvements in management and leadership.

Main findings

Summary: Derbyshire is a good local education authority (LEA). Since its previous inspection in 2000, the LEA has focused well on improving educational provision for all pupils and, overall, has made highly satisfactory progress since that time. It has addressed and, in almost all respects, met the recommendations from the previous report. It has made good progress in its strategic planning for education, particularly in its support for schools causing concern. Derbyshire LEA has many strengths. Its use of self-evaluation at school and LEA levels is very effective. Working relationships with schools are very good and officers are regarded highly for the open, professional support and challenge they provide. Elected members place a high value on education and resources are well matched to targets in major plans. Pupils' performance is improving. The LEA's support for vulnerable children, including its support for pupils with special educational needs, has also improved as a result of more effective targeting on areas of greatest need. There is a keen determination to improve further in all areas, especially those that support the most vulnerable pupils. Overall, the capacity of the LEA to improve is good.

Areas of strength	Areas of weakness/for development
Corporate leadership of education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education is the major priority in the authority • Officers and members are committed to working with schools and other partners to raise standards and improve provision for all pupils • Priorities for improvements in education are focused on areas of greatest need and are supported well by targeted resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity in the procedures for measuring cost-effectiveness in major plans and policies • Insufficient detail in the 14 – 19 action plan to target future improvements in provision
Strategy for education and its implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good strategy for education that supports schools' self-improvement • Pupils' attainment continues to improve, especially at Key Stage 1 	
Support to improve education in schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advisory and inspection service provides good support for leadership and management in schools • Support for national initiatives is helping to raise standards and improve provision in schools • Support services are focused well on school improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High proportion of vacancies for LEA-appointed governors
Support for special educational needs (SEN)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective planning to support pupils with SEN • Effective allocation of resources, including specialist support services, for SEN 	
Support for social inclusion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy for social inclusion is helping to improve the provision for pupils at risk of exclusion • Targeted joint-agency support is helping to improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils • Well developed links between the advisory service and pupil support services promote social inclusion • Effective training for schools and governors improves child protection and safeguards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disproportionate number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions of pupils with special educational needs • Corporate parenting strategy is less rigorous for looked after children placed out of county • Significant number of looked after children do not have a completed personal education plan

Recommendations

Key recommendations

There are no key recommendations.

Corporate leadership of education

Decision-making: Improve procedures for more accurately measuring cost-effectiveness in achieving the outcomes in major plans and policies.

Support for 14 – 19 education: Develop the 14 – 19 action plan to include costs, resources, timescales and success measures in order to better monitor and evaluate the county-wide provision for pupils.

Strategy for education and its implementation

Support to improve education in schools

Support for school governors: Take steps urgently to bring the proportion of vacancies for LEA-appointed governors in line with the national average.

Support for SEN

Support for social inclusion

Support for behaviour in schools

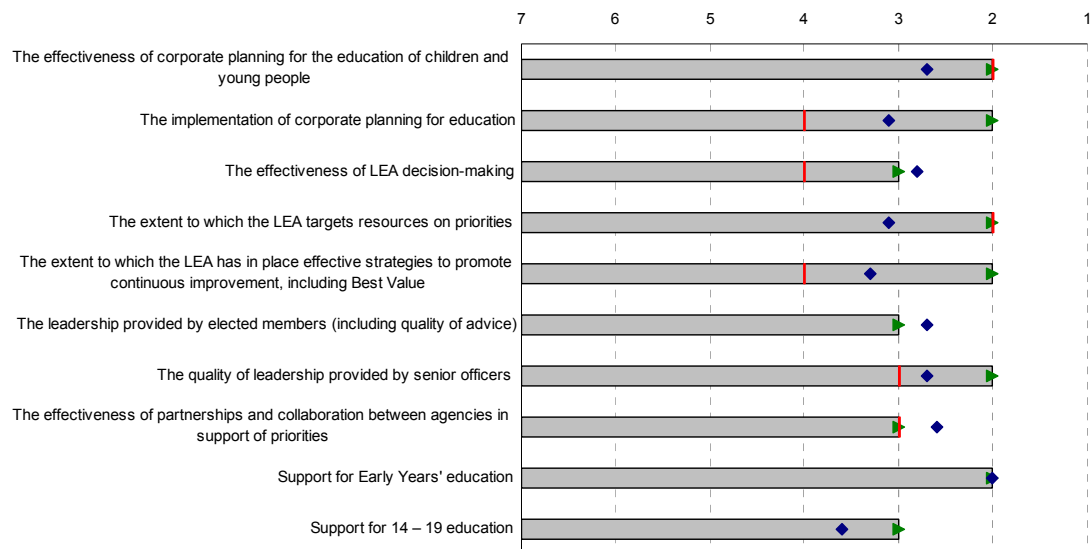
- Reduce the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions of pupils with special educational needs.
- Develop preventative strategies for those pupils at risk of exclusion.

Provision for looked after children

- Ensure that the corporate parenting strategy includes all looked after children, especially those placed out of county.
- Complete personal education plans for all looked after children.

Section 1: Corporate leadership of education

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

Corporate planning for education and its implementation

1. The overall quality of corporate planning remains consistently good. The LEA has made significant progress in its ability to implement these plans more effectively and this is also good.

2. The quality of the LEA's planning for improvements in education has been recognised by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The LEA is now piloting a Single Education Plan (SEP), which incorporates a number of previously required separate plans for different educational services. The LEA has been very successful in identifying clear, well-argued priorities, including a number of cross-cutting aspects that most affect educational provision and pupils' performance across Derbyshire. For example, support for early years, which is good. The LEA's audit of data to establish these priorities is generally good, although there is variation in the quality of some, particularly those areas that require data from partners within and outside the LEA.

3. There is a well-defined corporate consensus in working towards a shared set of educational objectives and targets, which contributes to the authority's success in implementing its corporate plans. Elected members recognise education as the authority's major priority and are ensuring that there is good targeting of resources to priorities; senior officers successfully direct the work of LEA services to meeting these priorities.

4. Officers and elected members monitor effectively the LEA's progress towards its stated targets and against each of the SEP priorities. The range and type of information provided to members are good, and include regular progress reports across all service areas. The lead member for education is actively involved in educational matters and has developed very sound and effective working relationships with senior officers. The improvement and scrutiny committee also has a clear programme that ensures they receive regular, good quality, progress reports on major plans and on the implementation of local and national initiatives.

Decision-making

5. The effectiveness of the LEA's decision-making has improved and is now highly satisfactory. There is a clear approach to corporate decision-making from officers and elected members. Good relationships exist between officers, the executive and the improvement and scrutiny committee. However, the level of challenge to policy decisions and educational practice does not yet reflect a clear understanding of the cost-effectiveness of outcomes in major plans and policies.

6. Decisions made by the executive are published after every meeting of the group. Meetings of the executive and the improvement and scrutiny committee are open to the public, though attendance by the public has traditionally been poor. Exchange of information between different political parties is good, and reflects well on the approach by Derbyshire's elected members to promote joint corporate decision-making.

7. Communication between senior officers and elected members is good, as it is with the vast majority of the LEA's stakeholders. This is due, in part, to the very open dialogue that exists at both strategic and operational levels. This enables the LEA's partners, especially schools, to feel well informed about decisions made by the authority and to understand the implications for them.

8. The authority makes difficult decisions when required. The recent decisions on home to school transport show that well informed recommendations, with detailed and timely information from officers, aid the decision-making by members and lead to better services for users.

Recommendation

- Improve procedures for more accurately measuring cost-effectiveness in achieving the outcomes in major plans and policies.

Targeting of resources

9. Targeting of resources to priorities continues to be good. The education budget for 2004-05 is just over 3% above the education Formula Spending Share (FSS), as it has been for the last four years. This, together with cabinet support to pass on fully increases to schools, demonstrates the council's commitment to education as its number one priority. Spending reflects fully the priorities outlined in

the SEP and the council's medium-term financial plan. The LEA makes good use of opportunities to gain additional funding, sharing information with schools and providing support when requested. Despite its extra funding commitments, a relatively low FSS settlement means that school budgets in Derbyshire remain significantly below national averages and those of statistical neighbours.

10. The LEA's approach to financial planning is very open, honest and characterised by regular and effective dialogue with schools. The very good relationships that exist between schools and the LEA mean that some difficult financial decisions, such as the prioritisation of more growth to the primary than the secondary sector, have been taken with the full support of all schools..

11. A review of the current secondary school funding formula is underway, but progress has recently stalled. However, schools understand that the reasons for this lie in differences of opinion between themselves rather than the inability of the LEA to resolve the issue. The LEA does have a clear view of potential solutions and is working actively with schools to achieve a consensus of opinion on this, together with its planned review of the primary formula.

12. Budget management is accurate, with good support for school resource management. The LEA has improved on the timeliness with which it finalises budgets, with 2004-05 data given to schools in mid February 2004. This has enabled schools to improve their approach to financial planning, which could be enhanced further through the earlier release of indicative budgets.

13. The LEA's approach to monitoring and challenging school balances is effective. The total of balances held by schools is falling and the position with regard to large individual budget surpluses and deficits has improved overall. The only area to show an increase has been the number of secondary schools with a surplus greater than 5%, but the LEA is monitoring the position closely and is actively engaged with those concerned.

Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value

14. The LEA has made significant progress and overall provision is now good. The council's commitment to continuous improvement was highlighted in the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), where its approach to Best Value was very good. Best Value reviews (BVRs) are targeted at high risk or under performing services in order to achieve the greatest impact on services to schools; for example, the reviews of management services and aspects of special educational needs (SEN). The work of the education improvement and scrutiny committee complements the BVRs and has led to improvements in services to schools and to individuals. BVRs and the work of the committee are user-focused, but do not always give sufficient consideration to cost-effectiveness against outcomes. This is important in an LEA where budgets are low and resources relatively scarce.

15. The LEA has demonstrated its commitment to improvement in a number of ways, most notably by giving the deputy chief education officer specific responsibility

for managing performance. The education department has its own performance management framework, which complements corporate arrangements. Although there is some variation in the structure and style of individual service plans, they contain a range of appropriate targets and actions that reflect well the priorities of the SEP. The LEA knows its own performance well. Service plans are monitored monthly by service heads, and proposed solutions carried out. An annual review of service plans, conducted by the deputy chief education officer, ensures that plans are fully evaluated before being re-written. A process of budget-setting and review takes place in parallel to complement this. The work of individual officers is part of the framework through which personal development plans and regular meetings with line managers ensure that the principles of Best Value are consistently applied in the day-to-day work of the LEA, by staff who are knowledgeable and committed to improvement.

Leadership by senior officers

16. The quality of leadership by senior officers has improved and is now good. There is a very clear and agreed focus from senior officers, which is well supported by the council, on raising standards and improving the overall quality of provision in all schools. This focus is prominent in the LEA's SEP, and in school improvement visits from link advisers. Support for SEN and social inclusion also receives appropriate attention from senior officers, but these areas are not, as yet, having as great an influence on provision in schools.

17. The chief education officer provides very effective leadership by giving a clear and well-thought through vision for education across the authority. Meetings between the portfolio holder for education and the chief education officer ensure that matters of policy and practice across all areas of education are discussed regularly. These meetings are helping to establish a reputation with schools and external partners that officers and members are open and well informed about the educational issues that Derbyshire LEA currently faces.

18. The quality of information provided by officers to elected members is good. Reports to the executive and the improvement and scrutiny committee contain the right balance of background information, important issues for consideration and clear recommendations for action. Useful introductory summaries help elected members to understand quickly the significant points arising from lengthy and detailed reports.

Strategic partnerships

19. The LEA's support for strategic partnerships continues to be highly satisfactory. The LEA works very well with all its schools. There is a number of well co-ordinated partnership links with external agencies including, for example, truancy sweeps with the local police, 14 – 19 initiatives with the Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). However, formal evaluation of the effectiveness of these links is not implemented fully and the LEA is not always in a position to know how its provision for schools and their pupils is being affected. The authority works well

with trade unions, reflecting its determination to engage in purposeful dialogue with as many of its stakeholders as possible. Diocesan representatives are well informed about operational matters in a number of service areas; for example, property, buildings, admissions and appointments.

Support for 14-19 education

20. This aspect is highly satisfactory. Staying-on rates are in line with national averages, as is pupils' performance at Key Stage 4.

21. The LEA links well with the local LSC to support 14 – 19 year old pupils. The active involvement of the chief education officer and the lead member for education on the LSC management board results in clear strategic planning. At an operational level, links between LEA officers and their equivalent LSC colleagues are also effective, particularly in the development and support of local initiatives. A recent joint statement from the LSC and LEA outlines well the intentions for the further partnership development of 14 – 19 provision across Derbyshire. LEA officers have used this statement and the authority's SEP to formulate a school improvement plan and a draft 14 – 19 action plan for intended work over the coming year. The related action plan, however, lacks sufficient details of costs, resources, timescales and success measures and is, therefore, not detailed enough to be used as a focus for developing further partnership working with the LSC.

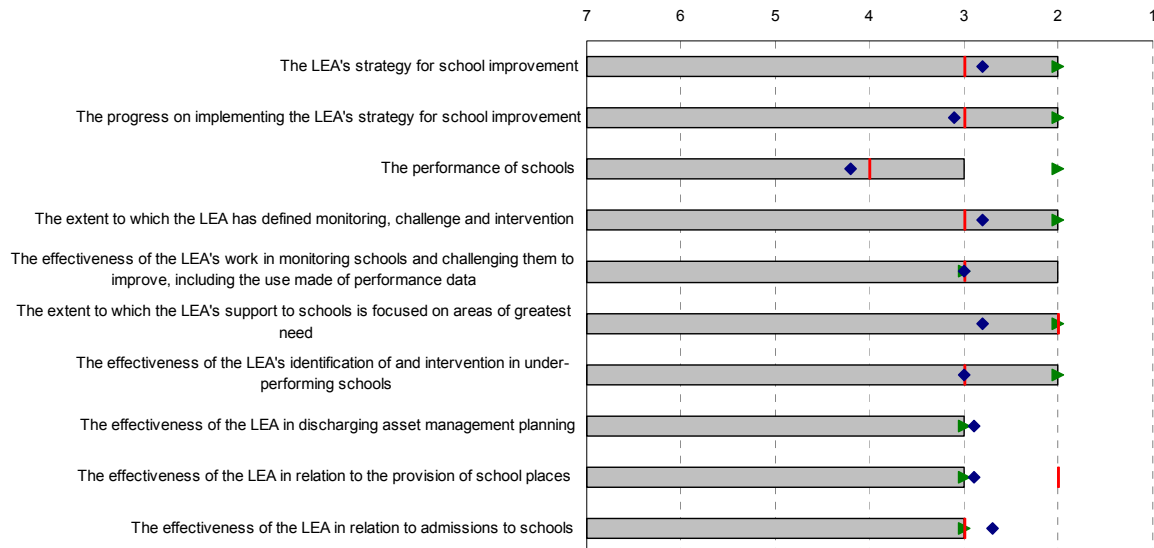
22. Secondary schools are working collaboratively with the LEA and the LSC to promote more flexible curricular opportunities at Key Stage 4 and beyond. Some very useful work has also been developed on individual learning plans as an aid to students, but the process of monitoring and evaluating the educational effects and outcomes of these are, as yet, underdeveloped.

Recommendation

- Develop the 14 – 19 action plan to include costs, resources, timescales and success measures in order to better monitor and evaluate the county-wide provision for pupils.

Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

The strategy for school improvement and its implementation

23. Both these aspects have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. The LEA's SEP is a clearly written document that identifies the major educational priorities for Derbyshire. There is a good balance between local and national priorities, with clear links to raising standards and improving provision for all pupils.

24. Individual service plans, which link well to the SEP, are providing a clear focus for the work of the school improvement service. The very good working relationships between the LEA and its schools and well planned and targeted work result in a service that monitors and challenges schools in an effective way. This is seen in the significant reduction in the number of schools identified by Ofsted as causing concern. The figures are now low when compared to national averages.

25. Good quality support services are beginning to have a positive influence on pupils' attainment at the end of each key stage, although more slowly at Key Stages 3 and 4. Overall, the LEA has continued to make small but important gains in increasing the gap between its performance and national averages in many areas. The LEA is well aware of the need to continue to raise pupils' standards at all key stages, and has set suitably challenging targets to help them achieve this aim. The latest validated data show that Derbyshire schools are well above national averages at meeting their Key Stage 2 targets, and in line at Key Stages 3 and 4. The LEA,

however, has had mixed success in meeting its own targets since the previous inspection.

26. Other aspects of the LEA's strategy for school improvement are highly satisfactory or good. The definitions of monitoring, challenge and intervention in relation to the identification of schools' areas of greatest need are good. The LEA also provides highly satisfactory support for asset management planning, school admissions and school places.

The LEA's monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools and the targeting of support

27. This aspect of the LEA's work is good, with several features of very high quality. The LEA monitors and challenges schools effectively through its framework for school improvement. The LEA's improvement strategy, which is based on the quality development dialogue, has schools' strong support.

28. The annual review with schools is a challenging process that involves a scrutiny of the school's self-evaluation and a genuine dialogue between the LEA and the school. Improved, high quality performance data are used in the review, enabling the school to compare its performance with that of similar schools locally and nationally. The attainment and progress of individuals and particular groups of pupils are considered, and realistic but challenging targets are set.

29. Every school has a link adviser, whose role is crucial to the success of the review and the effectiveness of subsequent actions. Each school is allocated to one of five programmes, according to its capacity for self-improvement. The provision of support is clearly differentiated according to the extent of the needs identified by the school's categorisation. Schools capable of sustaining their own improvement receive a light touch from the LEA. Others have a negotiated programme of monitoring, challenge and support, which may include both core and traded services. All the key participants, including link advisers, headteachers and governors, have been well trained to play their part in school improvement.

30. The agreed written record that emerges from each school's improvement review is strongly evaluative and indicates what needs to be done in order to achieve future improvement. Governors are actively involved throughout the review process and receive both the written record and a helpful oral report. However, schools do not always receive these records quickly enough.

Effectiveness of the LEA's identification of, and intervention in, underperforming schools

31. This school improvement function has improved and is now good. There has been a considerable reduction in the proportion of schools identified by Ofsted inspection as causing concern. At the time of the previous inspection, there were 18 schools requiring special measures and nine with serious weaknesses. The corresponding figures are now one and four. These proportions, 0.2% and 0.9%

respectively, are low. No school is formally categorised as underachieving and there are no secondary schools requiring special measures or with serious weaknesses. Schools are removed from special measures within the nationally-expected timescale. The proportion of schools causing concern to the LEA is falling.

32. This recent and significant improvement in the LEA's position stems largely from the establishment of an effective strategy for schools causing concern, which is well linked to the school improvement strategy. Importantly, the LEA now not only identifies those schools that cause formal concern but also those that give rise to initial concern, including those with financial issues. This, coupled with the emphasis on supported self-evaluation, has encouraged schools to be more open about their difficulties and has enabled earlier identification and support.

33. Schools in categories of concern receive well-planned, co-ordinated support, tailored to their needs. The support is costed and the LEA applies a value for money framework to schools causing concern. Schools' progress is regularly monitored, and reported to governors, senior officers and elected members. In 2002/3, four primary schools slipped from the categories of underachieving or serious weaknesses into special measures. Rightly, the LEA recognised this as unsatisfactory and it now agrees an exit strategy with each school emerging from a category of concern. This strategy is focused on the school's particular needs and provides a suitably graduated reduction in levels of support. Since February 2003, no school has moved into special measures from another category.

Asset management planning

34. This aspect is highly satisfactory. The LEA's monitoring of devolved capital budgets and its approach to project management of building schemes have improved since the previous inspection. The LEA has detailed and accurate information about its school buildings, with its asset management plan (AMP) linked well to the corporate AMP and the SEP. An asset management planning advisory group meets regularly and, combined with termly meetings of headteachers, provides a purposeful dialogue with schools on asset management issues and capital programmes, including the planning of school places.

35. The backlog of buildings requiring improvement in Derbyshire is above the national average but has been consistently falling over the last four years due to targeted funding. The LEA's bid for Building Schools for the Future, based around its 11-19 vision, was unsuccessful due to its overall position on the national deprivation index. However, it has made progress in tackling problems of accommodation through a private finance initiative, completing two new schools and with a further two schools to commence shortly.

Providing school places

36. This aspect was good in the previous inspection. It is now highly satisfactory. Although the LEA has successfully reduced surplus school places to 10% in primary and 5.7% in secondary, the increasing impact of falling rolls means

that the number of surplus places in some schools remains high. Over 10% of primary schools still have more than 25% of surplus places. In response to this, the LEA has produced a realistic overall strategy for the removal of surplus places, which links well to the education AMP and SEP, and includes aspects of school improvement and community cohesion.

37. Systems to forecast pupil numbers are well developed, which means that the LEA has a good understanding of what needs to be done and where. Detailed implications for individual schools have yet to be developed fully but dialogue through the school organisation committee and other meetings ensures that schools understand and support the broader aims of the surplus places strategy.

38. The School Organisation Plan is well written, with clear links to all areas of the SEP. The school organisation committee is properly constituted and demonstrates an ability to act independently in its decisions to approve closures and mergers.

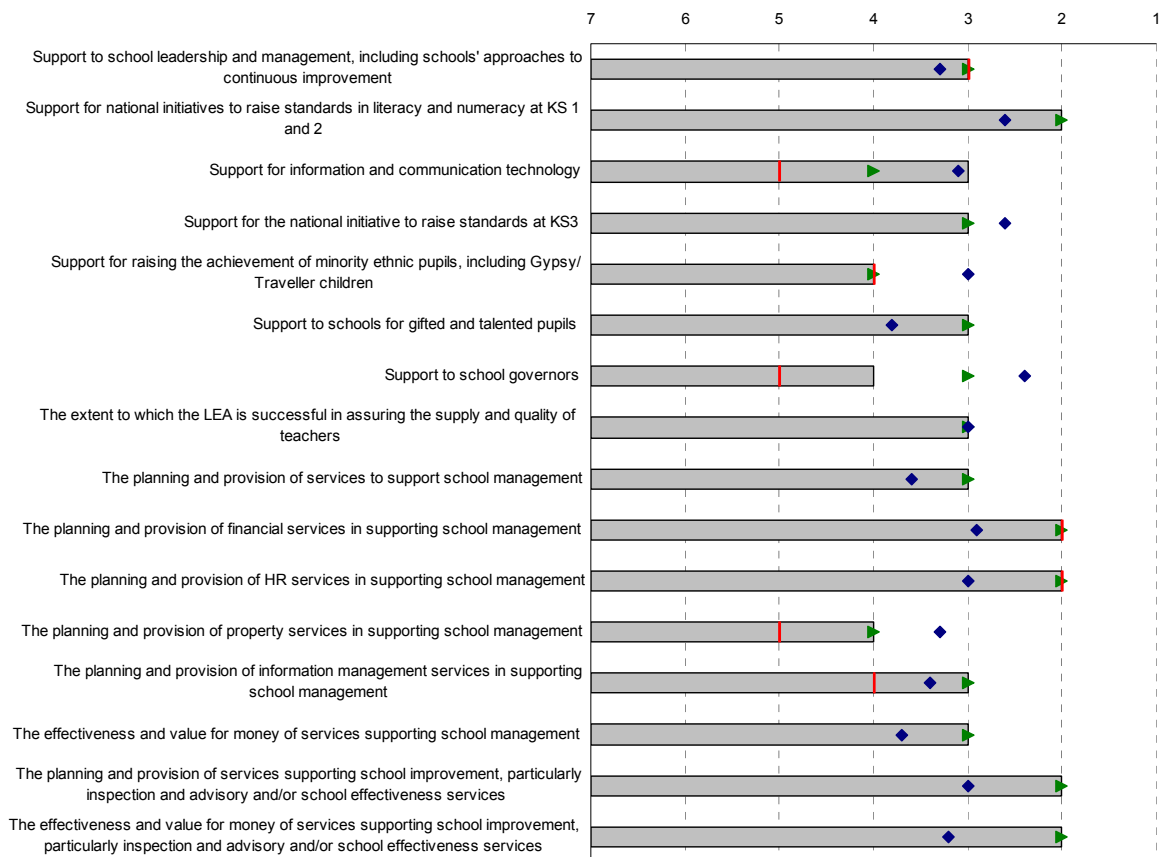
Admissions to schools

39. The LEA's support for admissions to schools is highly satisfactory. The LEA is on target to meet its 2005 deadline for the implementation of co-ordinated admission arrangements. The admissions forum is properly constituted and information presented to parents is comprehensive and available in a range of languages and formats. Co-ordinated arrangements are in place for the re-integration of excluded pupils and admission of pupils with SEN, vulnerable pupils and looked after children. The procedures have been successfully piloted in some schools and are in the process of being extended to all schools.

40. During the fieldwork, inspectors focused on the large number of successful appeals made by parents against admissions arrangements. Ninety-three per cent of parents receive their first choice of school, placing Derbyshire above the national average. In contrast, the number of successful appeals made by parents is significantly above the national average. The LEA has responded positively to this and, following detailed analysis, has implemented a number of appropriate actions for the coming year. These include working with schools at an earlier stage to discuss and agree whether temporary increases in roll are necessary and the recruitment of more independent panel members to speed up the appeals process.

Section 3: Support to improve education in schools

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement

41. The support for the leadership and management of schools continues to be highly satisfactory, with some strengths.

42. The LEA's support for leadership and management is a key priority for improvement, and is highly regarded within and beyond Derbyshire. There is a clear framework for the development of leadership at all levels. The quality of leadership and management in schools, although improving, is broadly in line with that found in similar authorities and the nation as a whole.

43. Derbyshire's advisory and inspection service plays a key role in sustaining school improvement through the support and development of leadership and management. It is a highly effective service that provides good value for money. Very productive working relationships with schools have enabled the LEA to

strengthen schools' autonomy and self-improvement. Schools are now increasingly confident and skilled in self-evaluation. Headteachers, middle managers, governors and link advisers have all been trained in the skills necessary for school improvement review, including the use of benchmarked performance data. The provision for middle managers in schools, a weakness at the time of the previous inspection, is now a strength. The primary leadership programme is also effective, focusing support on headteachers and senior management teams who face the biggest challenges in improving standards. Good practice is disseminated effectively in a variety of ways including through school improvement clusters, which play a crucial role in increasing the overall effectiveness of schools.

44. Other areas that support school leadership and management are satisfactory or better. The support for literacy and numeracy is good. The Key Stage 3 strategy and support for gifted and talented pupils are highly satisfactory, although provision for talented pupils is at an early stage of development. Unvalidated data for 2004 show that the implementation of a focused action plan has led to improved performance in Key Stage 3 English. The LEA's support for governors is satisfactory but it has not responded with sufficient vigour to the recommendation of the previous report that the proportion of vacancies for LEA governors should be reduced. The planning, provision, effectiveness and value for money of management support services are highly satisfactory overall, with good financial and human resources services.

Support for the national initiatives at Key Stages 1 and 2

45. This aspect of the LEA's work has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The National Primary Strategy has been welcomed by the LEA as a means of building on its existing practice and strengthening the coherence of its work to raise standards at Key Stages 1 and 2. Consultation on the development of the Derbyshire primary strategy was effective, involving headteachers and pupils. Its importance is indicated by the appointment of the head of the advisory service as the strategy manager, with a senior adviser in charge of each of its curricular strands.

46. The drive to raise standards in literacy and numeracy benefits from the effective co-operative working by managers and by consultants across strands and across key stages. The work is well-managed and the consultants have high levels of expertise and commitment. Leading teachers are deployed effectively, working with individual teachers who need support. Training and support are well-focused and available to all schools. Intensive support to schools in most need is particularly effective, leading to significant improvements in pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy. Analysis of performance data is used well to improve teachers' assessment and target setting. Provision for small schools and mixed-age classes, a weakness at the time of the previous inspection, is now good.

47. Pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy is better at Key Stage 1 than at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1, it is above the averages for the LEA's statistical neighbours and the nation as a whole. At Key Stage 2, although improving, it is in

line. Rightly, the LEA has identified Key Stage 2 performance as an area for improvement. The gap between girls' and boys' attainment is reducing due to targeted action by the LEA and schools.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

48. Good progress has been made and support for ICT is now highly satisfactory.

49. The ICT strategy, developed in 2003, integrates curriculum and management ICT and has brought greater coherence to the LEA's work. In the past, schools' opinion of the support provided for curricular ICT was low and they were insufficiently involved in developments. The LEA has recognised this and has established a headteachers' working group, which will contribute to the planned revision of the strategy in 2005.

50. Support is differentiated according to schools' needs. The focus is appropriately on improving the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum, and leadership and management. Useful guidance is provided on writing development plans and schemes of work. The LEA is also working to improve its knowledge of pupils' capability in ICT by helping schools to self-evaluate using accurate assessment. Helpful frameworks for the assessment of ICT skills and capability have been issued to schools, for use by teachers and pupils.

51. There are clear signs of improvement. The LEA has met its targets for the ratio of pupils to computers in primary, secondary and special schools. Attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 is in line with that of statistical neighbours and the nation as a whole. The proportion of schools in which ICT was a key issue for action, following Ofsted inspection, has reduced. Schools rate the training highly. The LEA's monitoring indicates that teachers' confidence and competence in ICT are developing. However, the LEA acknowledges that there are still important areas for development. Standards, although rising, are still too low in the primary phase. Assessment and target-setting are not yet well established. Cross-curricular approaches are underdeveloped, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy and Traveller children

52. The LEA has made progress since the previous inspection and provides satisfactory support for minority ethnic pupils. Its framework for evaluating educational inclusion, although only recently introduced, is already used effectively to support schools in reviewing the quality of provision for minority ethnic pupils. The LEA is also using some innovative methods to promote greater awareness of issues of underachievement. However, the targeting of those individual pupils that are most in need of additional support, for example, Black Caribbean pupils, has not been precise enough. The commissioned service to support pupils with English as an additional language, provided in partnership with Derby City, is satisfactory but which services are available to schools needs to be made clearer.

53. Monitoring of Traveller children is highly satisfactory, with increasing use of individual pupil data systems and improved accuracy of information on the location and education of Traveller children across the county. Focused support for Traveller children at secondary school is specifically targeted to improve the attendance of these children to the same level as that for the main school population. The LEA has recently completed a review of the Traveller education service, which has led to a new service level agreement for schools.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

54. The LEA's support to schools for gifted and talented pupils is highly satisfactory. The provision for gifted pupils is good. Support for talented pupils is developing along appropriate lines but is less well advanced.

55. The LEA's work is rooted in detailed collection and analysis of local and national performance data. Strengths and weaknesses in schools' provision are identified through various processes including the quality development dialogue meeting between the link adviser and the headteacher, Ofsted inspection reports and school improvement clusters. All secondary schools have policies for their work with gifted and talented pupils and all but three have a co-ordinator. Most primary schools have identified a named person with responsibility for the aspect. The support, including training, guidance and research, centres on the work of primary and secondary forums, which involve about 80% of schools, including all but three secondary schools.

56. The thrust of the LEA's approach is now through the framework for educational inclusion as the potential vulnerability of gifted and talented pupils is fully recognised. Close working relationships have been established with various national bodies, including the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth. A focused programme of continuing professional development is aimed at ensuring that all secondary co-ordinators and the first cohort from primary schools will have national accreditation by the end of 2004/05.

57. Pupils' attainment at higher levels is above all comparators at Key Stage 1, and broadly in line at other key stages. Rightly, the LEA has identified higher-level performance at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 as an area for improvement. It is also strengthening the provision for talented pupils; criteria have been developed and schools have identified pupils who are talented in sports and in the arts. Specialist schools, a sports development unit and a creative partnership are involved in the forums and financial and developmental links are being established with external partners.

Support for school governors

58. Support to school governors has improved and is now satisfactory. The transfer of the governor support services to school improvement, and the appointment of a new head of service at a more senior level, have helped to focus

the support more clearly on governors' crucial role in school improvement and self-evaluation.

59. The LEA's consultation and communication with governors have improved since the previous inspection. Governors' representatives sit on the schools' forum, the admissions forum and the workforce reform group. Schools now regard the service more favourably. All governors and clerks receive timely information, and all have access to the LEA's extranet. A free helpline to support governors, clerks and headteachers is used frequently.

60. Around 50% of governing bodies currently use a self-evaluation tool to help them assess their effectiveness and identify their training needs. Increasingly, training is being provided in clusters and individual schools, and at times convenient for governors. Some training is also provided jointly for headteachers and governors.

61. The LEA's analysis of Ofsted inspection reports for 2003/04 shows that the overall quality of governance has improved since the previous inspection. However, a significant weakness at the time of the previous inspection has not been addressed fully. In 1999, vacancies for LEA-appointed governors stood at 25%. Although the LEA has taken several initiatives to aid recruitment, these vacancies, at 16.4%, are still approximately 6% above the national average. Moreover, the LEA's timescale for improving this situation lacks urgency. Its target for LEA governor vacancies in 2009 is 12%, which is still above the current national average.

Recommendation

- Take steps urgently to bring the proportion of vacancies for LEA-appointed governors in line with the national average.

Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management

62. Services to support school management are highly satisfactory overall. The LEA is open to alternative forms of procuring services and has, through the schools' procurement officer, enhanced the ability of schools to become more effective purchasers of services through a number of well-focused initiatives. Schools are regularly consulted about the quality of services and have indicated their general satisfaction with what is on offer. However, this is not co-ordinated, leaving schools over consulted.

63. The LEA's approach to informing schools about services is good. Service details are well presented and generally specific to meet schools' needs, although information on which services are entitlements and which ones must be purchased are unclear. The information on service standards and quality assurance is limited.

64. There has been a significant improvement in the LEA's management of information and the provision of management ICT services since the previous inspection. Provision in this area is now highly satisfactory. All communications with

schools are electronic, via the LEA extranet. This has clear guidelines and is well designed and easy to use. Financial and personnel systems are also fully electronic.

65. The effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management are highly satisfactory. Although benchmarking data show that costs are broadly in line with similar LEAs, the LEA itself has little information on the cost-effectiveness of its services. However, good use is made of BVRs and scrutiny to challenge the way in which services are provided, and this is leading to improvements.

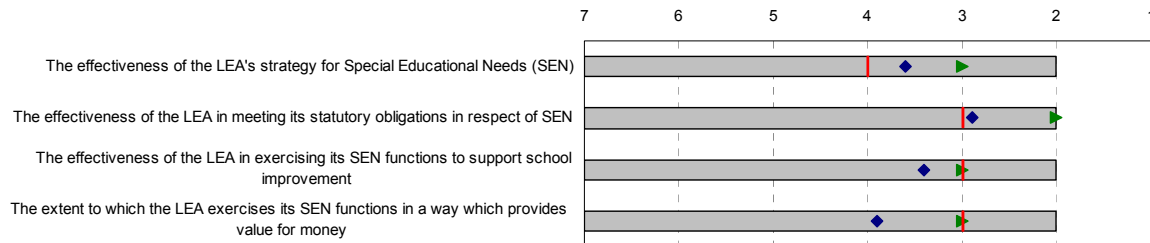
Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement

66. The advisory and inspection service has improved on its satisfactory performance at the time of the previous inspection. It is now highly effective and provides good value for money.

67. The service's planning and provision are good, as are its monitoring, challenge and support to schools. The LEA intervenes effectively where it has identified under performance. Staffing has been strengthened since the previous inspection and the service now has the benefit of good capacity, capability and commitment. The service is very well led and managed. It regularly monitors, evaluates, challenges and costs its provision. Its costs are competitive and below the national average. There is a shared understanding of purposes and processes throughout the service and in schools, whose levels of buy-back and satisfaction are high.

Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

The strategy for SEN

68. The strategy for SEN has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now good.

69. The LEA's policy and procedures for SEN have been thoroughly reviewed following widespread consultation with schools and other agencies and, as a result, its policy on inclusion for pupils with SEN is well understood across the county and provides a good basis for further improvement. The strategy for inclusive education is also appropriately reflected in a number of LEA plans, including the SEP. Plans are consistent, well matched to needs of schools, monitored systematically and reviewed thoroughly. The disability action plan shows how the authority will make schools accessible to pupils with physical difficulties but lacks clearly identified timescales, making monitoring of progress against specified targets difficult. Less than 70% of schools have returned their accessibility information, which adds further to the LEA's difficulty in monitoring progress in this area.

70. The information about SEN available on the LEA website is wide-ranging and includes relevant and clear details about specific and graduated provision for pupils with a range of needs. However, there is currently no parent partnership service web link accessible through the county website.

71. The LEA promotes effective inter-agency working at strategic and operational levels, including a 'complex needs panel', which agrees inter-agency provision. However, the overall effectiveness of this provision is limited by the current inconsistent approach to pooling budgets.

72. The LEA currently collates performance data on pupils with SEN, including P scales, to provide comparisons between pupils who have similar needs. Although only one year's data are currently available, this is a good development within the SEN strategy.

Statutory obligations

73. The LEA's performance in this area has improved and is now good. Schools receive high quality guidance, advice and support on meeting their responsibilities in the SEN Code of Practice. Timely updates are also provided in response to policy and legislative changes at a national level. There are also effective inter-agency arrangements for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of pre-school pupils with SEN.

74. Criteria for statutory assessment are well-defined and resource decisions, made by a multi-disciplinary panel, have led to greater transparency in decision-making and increased inter-agency understanding of the range of needs that are to be met without statements. The quality of statements is generally good, although some lack sufficiently clear and measurable objectives. Monitoring of annual reviews is rigorous, with authority representation at key transition reviews. The authority retains a higher proportion of statements than found in similar LEAs, but the rate at which statutory assessments are started is falling. A large number of statements has been amended or discontinued, in accordance with LEA policy.

75. The parent partnership service is highly valued by most parents and officers, and is effective in bringing parental concerns to the attention of the authority. In addition to providing direct advice to parents, the parent partnership officer effectively contributes to strategic meetings and training initiatives, so ensuring that parents' views are fully heard. Officers are acting to ensure that all parents feel that they are full partners in meeting their child's special educational needs.

SEN functions to support school improvement

76. SEN functions to support school improvement are good. The authority places significant emphasis on the progress of pupils with SEN, with good target-setting and monitoring embedded in mainstream and special school practice. Schools have been well supported in their use of P scales to improve the monitoring of pupils' progress. The LEA's monitoring and challenge of its schools, supported by effective school self-evaluation, show that SEN issues are regularly discussed at school improvement meetings between headteachers and link advisers. Concerns identified in Ofsted inspection reports, annual reviews, and casework are also addressed through direct feedback to schools.

77. The LEA provides effective support services for SEN, which are responsive to schools' needs, contribute to increased achievement and are highly valued by schools and parents. Although some schools reported unevenness in service delivery, largely due to staffing difficulties, these have now been fully resolved. The LEA is now undertaking a full review of SEN provision, which in its first year has accurately identified the challenges and future priorities.

78. Specialist support services contribute to a wide variety of training that is promoting good progress in the development of staff skills to meet the needs of pupils with SEN. Good SEN practice within the LEA is identified and shared through

a number of very good publications. The LEA also uses a wide range of external providers, including universities and consultants, so extending the number of available accredited courses and providing enhanced support towards greater inclusion.

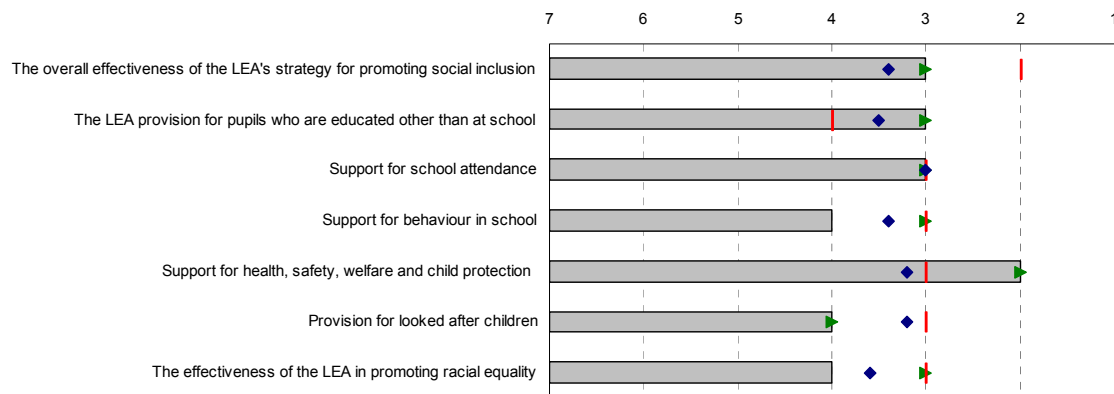
Value for money

79. The LEA provides good value for money in its exercise of SEN functions. The authority has effective systems for monitoring the SEN budget, including any overspends that arise to ensure that they are kept to a minimum. Elected members receive regular progress reports from officers on the monitoring of SEN budgets, which keep them well-informed and knowledgeable about emerging issues.

80. Recycling of SEN budgets to schools has begun. The budget formerly allocated through statements for primary aged pupils with less complex needs is now made available without the need for statements. This gives primary schools greater clarity about their SEN budgets, and allows for more effective long-term planning. This delegation has been well prepared and implemented. Consultation on similar delegation is taking place for secondary schools. Although the costs for special schools are below those for similar authorities, the funding arrangements are being reviewed. The authority has agreed to some special schools operating below capacity in recognition of the complexity of pupils' needs which they meet. Progress has been made on reducing the costs of out-of-county placements by increasing in-county provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum.

Section 5: Support for social inclusion

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

The strategy for social inclusion

81. The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion is highly satisfactory, with all reasonable steps being taken to fulfil statutory obligations. The implementation of this strategy has been satisfactory and has accelerated recently with the use of new pupil tracking systems to monitor more effectively children who are at risk of being lost to the education system.

82. The co-ordination of social inclusion work is a strength of the education department, with effective links between the advisory and inspection service, the educational welfare service, the behaviour support service and the educational psychology service. Young people also contribute to consultation, decision-making and training events on social inclusion issues. There are some satisfactory cross-agency links, but the understanding of other agencies' work and the pooling of budgets are underdeveloped. The children and young people strategic partnership is a good forum for strategic development and co-ordination, with representatives from statutory agencies, non-statutory agencies, council departments and parents. There is satisfactory use of regeneration funds to ensure that local communities are involved in some of the social inclusion initiatives.

83. Elected members are well informed about likely changes to services for children as a result of national guidance and legislation. All education services that contribute to social inclusion are at least highly satisfactory or better. There are good links between major plans and specialist service plans, which help promote social inclusion at authority and education department level.

84. Good practice is evident in work on child protection and safeguarding children, with extensive and well-attended training for all adults working with

children and young people across Derbyshire. However, some aspects of the authority's support for looked after children need further work. Guidance for ensuring that children are safe is comprehensive and accessible, and is available on the LEA's extranet and in hard copy form. While overall attendance and exclusions rates are broadly in line with national averages, the high level of fixed-term and permanent exclusions of pupils with SEN is a cause for concern. The LEA gives satisfactory support to the education of children other than at school and to the promotion of race equality.

Support for attendance

85. The LEA's support for school attendance is highly satisfactory. Attendance at primary and secondary level is in line with national averages but special school attendance has fluctuated since 2002, with a marginal drop to below 90% in 2004.

86. Schools receive good LEA advice and guidance on improving attendance. The educational social work service has good contact with the advisory and inspection service, and pupil attendance is a regular feature in the discussions between link advisers and schools to promote improvement. There are also good links to other agencies, via the attendance sub-group of the children and young people's strategic partnership and the local implementation group. Specific initiatives aimed at improving attendance are effective. The fast-track method is particularly successful in improving attendance and avoiding court action for those pupils most at risk.

87. However, pupil data on attendance are not sufficiently accurate and this has prevented more rapid progress since the previous inspection. The LEA has taken recent action to address this weakness and is now implementing a new pupil tracking system that will allow more precise monitoring of attendance and response to areas of greatest need.

Support for behaviour

88. The LEA has made progress in this area and now provides satisfactory support for behaviour in schools. Although exclusions are in line with national and similar LEA averages, there are too many pupils with SEN who experience fixed-term and permanent exclusions. In 2003/04, the figures were 59% and 71% respectively of the total number of exclusions. The numbers of fixed-term and permanent exclusions in special schools and pupil referral units have also shown a year-on-year increase since the previous inspection. The full impact of the LEA's targeted actions is still not evident.

89. There are clear priorities in the SEP and specialist service plans to reduce exclusions, which have led to well-constructed and effective links between different service providers within the LEA. Particularly effective links have been established between the behaviour support service, advisers, and the educational psychology service. The behaviour support service provides clear traded service level agreements for schools but, currently, the focus of work is on responding to

exclusions rather than on more preventive strategies. There are also some effective cross-agency links between behaviour support, the Connexions service and social services. Links are less consistent with health.

Recommendations

- Reduce the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions of pupils with SEN.
- Develop preventative strategies for those pupils at risk of exclusion.

Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection

90. The LEA has made highly satisfactory progress in this area and provision is now good. Officers and members give high priority to the protection of children in Derbyshire. This is reflected in major plans and through joint agency work that promotes the welfare of children. This priority is promoted effectively by the child protection officer in the education department, who links well with the area child protection committee (ACPC).

91. The participation of school staff and governors in training events is good. There is a comprehensive training programme provided by the LEA and the ACPC, with detailed records kept on all staff and governors who have received recent and relevant training. Schools that have not attended training in the last two years are vigorously followed up. Schools have access to good guidance on all issues to do with health and safety on school sites and for school visits within and outside the county.

Provision for looked after children

92. The LEA has made steady progress and its support for looked after children is now satisfactory. The attainment of looked after children has improved since 2000, with more pupils achieving levels commensurate with their abilities, especially at Key Stage 4. There are, however, still some areas, as there are nationally, where performance is lower than it should be. Attainment in literacy and boys' performance at Key Stage 3 are unsatisfactory. The authorised absence rate for looked after children in primary schools is currently twice the Derbyshire average for all children and the overall attendance of looked after children is still low.

93. Elected members are aware of their statutory responsibilities for corporate parenting. While members generally fulfil these responsibilities effectively, insufficient emphasis is given to the overall provision for children placed out of county.

94. There is a dedicated team of teachers working with looked after children, managed jointly by education and social services. The work of the corporate parenting officer is beginning to make a difference to standards and provision. A high priority is given to looked after children by LEA teams, senior officers and

members. However, not all the work has been successful and, currently, personal education plans have been completed for only 64% of looked after children.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the corporate parenting strategy includes all looked after children, especially those placed out of county.
- Complete personal education plans for all looked after children.

Promoting racial equality

95. The LEA's effectiveness in promoting race equality is satisfactory. There is strong support across the authority for supporting race equality, with both the corporate equalities plan and the LEA's action plan having ambitious targets and success criteria that very clearly set out the council's intentions to improve its support in this area. The clear intentions are further supported by the LEA's guidance to schools on race equality. The promotion of racial equality is also effectively supported by the purposeful actions of senior officers and school link advisers. Initiatives, including newsletters and theatre groups, are good and are supported well by training and regular discussions between officers and school staff. Although the framework for evaluating educational inclusion is relatively new, it covers issues of race equality well and promotes awareness of race issues in schools.

96. Some aspects of the LEA's strategy for promoting race equality have, however, been introduced too slowly since the previous inspection. The guidance on reporting of racist incidents is yet to have sufficient impact in schools. Some schools are not reporting incidents and the LEA does not require schools to provide annual nil returns. The LEA is aware of these shortcomings and has taken action to address them, in addition to requiring each school to identify a named teacher with responsibility for promoting race equality by the end of the summer term 2005.

Appendix A

Record of Judgement Recording Statements

Name of LEA :	Derbyshire Local Education Authority
LEA number:	718
Reporting Inspector:	Brian G Blake HMI
Date of Inspection:	September 2004

No	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	Fieldwork *
Context of the LEA			
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	4	
Overall judgements			
0.1	The progress made by the LEA overall	3	
0.2	Overall effectiveness of the LEA	2	
0.3	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	2	
Section 1: Corporate strategy and LEA leadership			
1.1	The effectiveness of corporate planning for the education of children and young people	2	
1.2	The implementation of corporate planning for education	2	
1.3	The effectiveness of LEA decision-making	3	
1.4	The extent to which the LEA targets resources on priorities	2	
1.5	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value	2	

1.6	The leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice)	3	NF
1.7	The quality of leadership provided by senior officers	2	
1.8	The effectiveness of partnerships and collaboration between agencies in support of priorities	3	
1.9	Support for Early Years education	2	NF
1.10	Support for 14 – 19 education	3	
Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation			
2.1	The LEA's strategy for school improvement	2	
2.2	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement	2	
2.3	The performance of schools	3	
2.4	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge and intervention	2	NF
2.5	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	2	
2.6	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	2	NF
2.7	The effectiveness of the LEA's identification of and intervention in underperforming schools	2	
2.8	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	3	
2.9	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	3	
2.10	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	3	
Section 3: Support to school leadership and management, including schools' efforts to support continuous improvement			
3.1	Support to school leadership and management, including support for schools' approaches to continuous improvement	3	

3.2	Support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at KS 1 and 2	2	
3.3	Support for information and communication technology	3	
3.4	Support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3	3	NF
3.5	Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/ Traveller children	4	
3.6	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	3	
3.7	Support for school governors	4	
3.8	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	3	NF
3.9	The planning and provision of services to support school management	3	
3.9a	The planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management	2	NF
3.9b	The planning and provision of HR services in supporting school management	2	NF
3.9c	The planning and provision of property services in supporting school management	4	NF
3.9d	The planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management	3	
3.10	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school management	3	
3.11	The planning and provision of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	2	NF
3.12	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	2	
Section 4: Support for special educational needs			
4.1	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs	2	

4.2	The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	2	
4.3	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	2	
4.4	The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money	2	
Section 5: Support for social inclusion			
5.1	The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion	3	
5.2	The LEA provision for pupils who have no school place	3	NF
5.3	Support for school attendance	3	
5.4	Support for behaviour in schools	4	
5.5	Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection	2	
5.6	Provision for looked after children	4	
5.7	The effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality	4	

**NF' under fieldwork means that no fieldwork was conducted on this function during this inspection.*

JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 7-point scale:

Grade 1: Very good; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Highly satisfactory; Grade 4: Satisfactory; Grade 5: Unsatisfactory; Grade 6: Poor; Grade 7: Very poor

Note: in the case of JRS 1: socio-economic context of the LEA and JRS 2.3: performance of schools, grades relate to comparisons against national averages:

- Grades 1-2: Well above
- Grade 3: Above
- Grade 4: In line
- Grade 5: Below
- Grades 6-7: Well below.

Appendix B

Context of the inspection

This inspection of Derbyshire LEA was carried out by Ofsted in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997.

This report provides a commentary on the inspection findings, including:

- the progress the LEA has made since the time of its previous inspection in 2000;
- the overall effectiveness of the LEA and its capacity to improve further;
- the LEA's performance in major aspects of its work;
- recommendations on areas for improvement.

The summary is followed by more detailed judgements on the LEA's performance of its individual functions, which sets the recommendations for improvement into context.

All functions of the LEA have been inspected and judgements reached on how effectively they are performed. Not all functions were subject to detailed fieldwork, but in all cases inspectors reached their judgements through an evaluation of a range of material. This included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, data (some of which were provided by the LEA), school inspection information, HMI monitoring reports, and audit reports. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA and a questionnaire seeking the views of all schools on aspects of the work of the LEA. In those areas subject to fieldwork, discussions were held with LEA officers and members, headteachers and governors, staff in other departments of the local authority, diocesan representatives, and other agencies and LEA partners.

The functions that were not subject to detailed fieldwork in this inspection were:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice);• support for early years;• the extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge and intervention;• the extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need;• support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3; |
|--|

- the extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers;
- the planning and provision of financial services, HR services and property services in supporting school management;
- the planning and provision of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services;
- the LEA's provision for pupils who are educated other than at school.

Inspection judgements are made against criteria that can be found on the Ofsted website. For each inspected function of the LEA an inspection team agrees a numerical grade. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are to be found in Appendix A. These numerical grades must be considered in the light of the full report. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment profile for the education service.

Context of the LEA

Derbyshire is a large, largely rural authority with a number of urban areas, the largest of which is Chesterfield. Although there are some areas of unemployment, the overall figure is below the national average. There are some parts of the county that suffer from social deprivation, particularly in the former coal mining and textile areas but, overall, the socio-economic context of the authority is average.

There are around 117,00 pupils in 430 schools, of which eight are nursery, 69 infant, 55 junior, 234 primary, 47 secondary, 10 special schools and seven pupil referral units. Just over half of secondary schools have sixth forms. There are 10 Beacon schools, one of which is primary and the remainder secondary. There are 22 specialist schools. Educational provision is available for all three- and four year-olds, with the current take-up around 93% and 97% respectively.

There is one primary school in special measures and three with serious weaknesses. One special school is also designated as having serious weaknesses.

The percentage of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is below the national average. In other areas such as free school meals, pupils placed in special schools, and pupils with a statement of special educational need, the LEA is in line with the national averages.

The performance of schools

The validated data for 2003 show that pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 1 is above the averages found nationally and in similar LEAs. Performance is also above the national average for Key Stage 2 mathematics. Pupils' performance in all other end of key stage tests and examinations is in line with averages found

nationally and in similar LEAs. Unvalidated data for 2004 show that, overall, the LEA is maintaining levels of performance in all key stages and is making marginal gains against national averages and performance in similar LEAs.

Rates of improvement are above the trends found nationally and in similar LEAs for Key Stage 1 writing and mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2. It is in line for all other areas. The progress of pupils between each of the key stages is in line with that found nationally.

The latest validated data show that Derbyshire schools are well above national averages at meeting their Key Stage 2 targets and in line at Key Stages 3 and 4. However, the LEA has had mixed success in meeting its own targets since the previous inspection. Despite concerted effort, Derbyshire, like many other LEAs, has missed its Key Stage 2 targets since 2002. In 2003, the LEA was unsuccessful in meeting most of its targets at Key Stages 3 and 4, but the percentage difference was often very small. The LEA is, however, well on line to meet the Government's floor targets of minimum achievement at both Key Stages 2 and 4.

The attendance and unauthorised absence rates of primary and secondary pupils are in line with national averages. The rate of permanent exclusions is below at primary and in line at secondary.

Inspection data show that the proportion of good or very good primary schools is in line with the national average. It is above at secondary level.

Funding data for the LEA

SCHOOLS BUDGET	Derbyshire	Statistical neighbours average	County Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Individual schools budget	2,656	2,695	2,693	2,900
Standards fund delegated	71	60	58	63
Excellence in Cities	11	6	5	35
Schools in financial difficulty	0	2	3	4
Education for under fives (non-ISB)	71	79	93	85
Strategic management	36	32	25	30
Special educational needs	90	111	116	126
Grants	21	13	15	26
Access	69	47	46	60
Capital expenditure from revenue	30	36	31	24
TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET	3,054	3,081	3,085	3,354
Schools formula spending share	2,849	2,890	2,919	3,197

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2004-05

LEA BUDGET	Derbyshire	Statistical neighbours average	County Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Strategic management	108	89	87	99
Specific Grants	10	11	11	14
Special educational needs	33	29	30	36
School improvement	35	37	34	38
Access	133	165	183	142
Capital expenditure from revenue	1	3	3	2
Youth and Community	55	58	52	75
TOTAL LEA BUDGET	375	392	400	406

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2004-05

Notes:

All figures are net.

Funding for schools in financial difficulties excludes transitional funding.

Averages quoted are mean averages; the original DfES Comparative Tables quote median average figures, not the mean average.

Notes