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APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act, 1997. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999 insofar as it relates to the work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities* which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.
- 2 The inspection was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, focus groups of headteachers and governors, staff in the education department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 121 schools. The response rate was 79 per cent.
- 3 The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 11 primary, five secondary and two special schools, the Early Excellence Centre and a partnership centre. A further seven schools were visited as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy monitoring. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

- 4 The long-established West Midlands city of Coventry has moved from manufacturing prosperity through recession and decline and back into new found success as a service, office and high-tech centre. Notwithstanding its recent prosperity, it still incorporates areas of considerable disadvantage and the LEA serves a school population which is culturally and ethnically diverse. It houses two universities, four colleges of further education, and boasts schools that are improving, do better than those in comparable areas and equal national achievement in some.
- 5 The city has an aspirant ethos and a strong civic identity. This sense of identity finds political expression in the Coventry Community Plan, which was put together by a coalition of all the key groups in the city, including business and the voluntary sector, and gives high priority to learning. Boosting educational standards is seen as key to attracting inward investment to regenerate the city. In turn, regeneration is seen as contributing to better achievement in schools. This virtuous circle creates a synergy between corporate aims, education department aims and those of schools.
- 6 The consensus, with which we agree, is that standards in schools need to be higher. This is primarily an issue for the schools themselves, but the LEA must also ask itself whether its support for raising standards is deployed in the most effective manner possible. In one crucial respect we do not believe that it is. The work of the school advisory service is not sufficiently targeted on those schools which most need challenge and support. Good though the work of the service is, too much of the key resource, the time of the service, is deployed to schools whether they need it or not.
- 7 That significant caveat apart, this is a thoughtful and well run LEA. It is managed by able and dedicated officers who believe in consultation, open and honest discussion and the achievement of consensus whenever possible, but are not afraid to take hard decisions when these are required. It knows its schools very well and, on a basis of shared values, works in genuine partnership with them, using their expertise and acting upon their advice.
- 8 It carries out all of its functions at least satisfactorily, many of them well and some of them exceptionally well. Support for the education of children in public care is exemplary, as is the parent partnership work. Support for school management, the data supplied to schools, information and communication technology (ICT) in administration, financial management, admissions and aspects of special educational needs (SEN), particularly the approach to inclusion, are all very good.
- 9 There are some weaknesses, but not major ones, in curriculum ICT at the secondary level, in ICT data exchange, and in the clarity of the service level agreement for the schools advisory service. The Minority Group Support Service has supported many schools in creating an ethos that acknowledges and values diversity but has yet to do so consistently in all schools.

- 10 The city enjoys stable, strong, well-informed and effective political leadership. Education has had consistent and long-standing support from members. Particularly effective consultative mechanisms underpin good relationships with many partners who contribute to education. There is strong and active support for education from the business community. Headteachers in the city are respected public figures, movers and shakers, active in civic life, regeneration and support of communities.
- 11 Education is well funded through a flexible system that both enables policy commitment to be backed up by funds and ensures review of whether money is being well spent. In addition, the clarity of the Council's collective approach has enabled it to make out an effective case for funding to a number of external agencies. This funding has been deployed in a holistic way, meshed in with central government funding and in support of the Council's own priorities. Members have supported with matched funding when required. These additional resources have enabled the council to work at creating a context that supports school improvement without diverting either resources or energy from the core task of raising achievement.
- 12 The LEA is currently poised to move forward on a number of fronts. Further important action is planned on surplus places and on post-16 arrangements in conjunction with the new Learning and Skills council. In addition, we have raised a question about effectiveness and believe that a small but crucial shift in culture is needed if the LEA is to change, from one that is very well-run to one that is highly effective. Officers clearly have the capacity to carry through the requisite actions as well as implementing the recommendations of this report, in order to further improve what is already a very good LEA.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

- 13 Coventry is a compact city with a population of 304,000. Surrounded by green belt, it has some pleasant residential areas. In contrast, some parts of the city, in particular the northeast, are disadvantaged and includes wards that are amongst the most deprived 10 per cent in the country. The city ranks 40th in the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Region's (DETR) index of deprivation. Once a prosperous manufacturing centre, it suffered decline and recession in the seventies and eighties and has since re-invented itself as a service, office and high-tech centre.
- 14 The school age population of 49,994 is diverse. Around 20 per cent of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and for 14 per cent English is an additional language. Most are second generation children from settled communities but the last year has seen an accelerated increase in the arrival of asylum-seeker children, 230 of whom have been admitted to Coventry schools since last September. Twenty-two percent of pupils are in receipt of free school meals. This is somewhat higher than the national figure. Just under one per cent of pupils of primary age and 1.6 per cent of secondary have a statement of special educational needs as compared with 1.6 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively nationally.
- 15 Coventry has 120 schools: 89 primary, 19 secondary, 11 special and a Key Stage 3 pupil referral unit (PRU). In addition it runs the Early Years Centre, a pregnant schoolgirl and mother unit and a medical recovery unit. There is sufficient nursery provision for all those who want places. Seventy-six per cent of three-year-olds and 95 per cent of four-year-olds are in LEA primary schools. Thirty-one-per cent of schools in the primary sector and 21 per cent in the secondary sector are voluntary aided. There are two Beacon schools and five specialist colleges, three for technology, one for arts and one for languages.

Performance

- 16 When children start school in Coventry their skills are mostly less than those expected of the age group. They make good progress and have sound attitudes to learning. Attainment in Key Stage 1 is close to national averages and above that of similar LEAs. Improvements in standards are in line with national trends. Key Stage 2 standards are below national averages, except in English where they are in line with national figures. Improvements in English and mathematics are similar to national trends and above similar LEAs. Attainment in Key Stage 3 is above similar LEAs but below national averages. There is improvement in mathematics and English but with some fluctuation in the latter. Key Stage 4 attainment in GCSE examinations is below national averages but in line with similar LEAs. The rise in the proportion of pupils gaining five A*-C grades has been gradual but slower than that achieved nationally. Attainment in vocational qualifications is good in relation to national figures.

- 17 Post-16, 71 per cent of students, a high proportion, stay on at school. In recent years, LEA resources and initiatives targeted at post-16 education in schools have contributed significantly to improved GCE A-Level and GNVQ results, as documented in the OFSTED area-wide report. With the exception of Key Stage 4, schools in Coventry have higher attainment in national tests than those in similar LEAs.
- 18 Attendance in Coventry primary schools is a little below the national average, and in secondary schools it is well below the national figure. OFSTED data indicates that 67 per cent of Coventry primary and secondary schools were graded good or very good in Section 10 inspections. This is above the percentage in similar LEAs. Levels of permanent exclusions in primary and secondary schools have fluctuated since 1996. In 1998/99 primary school exclusions were in line with national averages and secondary schools were significantly worse. In 1999/2000 secondary schools are much closer to the national average whilst primary schools figures have deteriorated.

Funding

- 19 The City Council regards the education service as a priority and has consistently funded education above Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) levels: 105 per cent in both 1999/2000 and 2000/2001. Expenditure is above 100 per cent in 2000/2001 in each of the constituent sub-headings of the SSA, from under fives through to post-16 education. The Council has determined to pass on the full education SSA to the education service in recent years and intends to do so again in 2001/2002.
- 20 The Council has a record of comparatively high delegation to schools. In 1999/2000 80.6 per cent of the local schools budget was delegated, making Coventry 13th of 36 metropolitan authorities. For 2000/2001 the Council has met all of the Secretary of State's targets for reduced central expenditure and increased delegation to schools.
- 21 Following delegation, the resultant individual school budget per primary and secondary pupil in 1999/2000 was higher than the average for metropolitan authorities (Coventry being third highest in primary and seventh in secondary), statistical neighbours and England. A similar pattern emerges in 2000/2001.
- 22 The education service in Coventry has benefited from a significant level of external funding, in particular via the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), £6.7m of which has been education based, and the establishment of an Education Action Zone in 2000.
- 23 The Council's spending on those services it funds centrally is significantly above the norm in respect of:
 - Insurance, where, in 1999/2000, the average net cost is £32 per pupil as opposed to £15 in metropolitan authorities (Coventry 2nd), £14 for statistical neighbours and £11 for England. These costs are unjustifiable, particularly as this is a retained central service which can be delegated to schools. The

Council is committed to a Best Value review of insurance arrangements in 2000/2001, including the rationale for the charges being made to the Education Service as a proportion of the whole.

- Specific grants where, in 1999/2000, the net spend per pupil is £88 compared with an average of £56 for metropolitan authorities (Coventry 2nd), £60 statistical neighbours and £57 for England. The additional cost in large part reflects Coventry's success in attracting external funding, which necessitates additional contributory funding from the Council.
 - Total net provision for statements of special educational need, with Coventry spending £80 per pupil in 1999/2000, relative to £40 by metropolitans (Coventry 5th), £30 by statistical neighbours and £48 for England. Further comment is set out in the section of the report dealing with SEN.
- 24 Coventry's total capital spending in the last four years has ranged between £6.9m (the budget cost for 1999/2000) and £8.4m, the actual cost for 1997/98, reflecting a major investment on education buildings. Visits to schools confirm that this is money well spent.
- 25 The suitability of the LEA's Fair Funding scheme is the subject of thorough annual consultation with schools, and is monitored via the Fair Funding Group consisting of representatives of headteachers and the diocesan authorities. The LEA is considering the possible delegation of special education support services to schools for 2001/2002.
- 26 While the basis for the delegated funding scheme is transparent, the way in which funding for special educational needs (SEN) in primary and secondary schools has been developed over time, makes it impossible for schools to identify a clear, single delegated amount for SEN. Hence, the LEA is unable to monitor the use of delegated SEN expenditure. The LEA should attempt to clarify the levels of delegated SEN funding for 2001/2002. The formula provides schools with funding which is above the national average. The difference between the funding for primary and for secondary schools is in line with national figures.

Council structure

- 27 The Council comprises 35 Labour, 15 Conservative, three Socialist and one Liberal Democrat members. Modernised political management arrangements, consisting of a ten-member cabinet, three scrutiny boards and a ratification committee, were introduced in May. Diocesan representatives, parent governor representatives and the opposition are represented on scrutiny boards. The cabinet-lead member for education is advised by an advisory panel, the membership of which also includes diocesan representatives and parent governors as well as the chairs of the headteachers' steering groups for primary, secondary and special schools.
- 28 Implementation of the modernisation agenda has resulted in considerable simplification of the political structures. The intention is to accelerate decision-

making whilst increasing involvement and openness. There is cross-party agreement about the importance of good education 'beyond the political agendas' and a view that the new arrangements will create a less adversarial context, in which proposed action can be scrutinised by a wider range of councillors in the best interests of education. The new structures give onerous responsibilities to lead members but providing they are kept well informed by officers and draw on the expertise of their specialist advisory panels, as they currently do, these arrangements should benefit the education service.

- 29 The education service is headed by the strategic director for lifelong learning, who leads a senior management team of six. A recognition that the central team had been pruned back too sharply led to the 1999 creation of the post of head of policy coordination. The team has recently been further enhanced by the addition of the city librarian. Other members are the chief adviser, the head of student and community services, the departmental personnel manager and the resources manager.

The Education Development Plan

- 30 The Education Development Plan (EDP) has been approved by the Secretary of State, without specific conditions, for the full three-year term. The EDP provides a clear statement of how the LEA proposes to comply with its statutory duties to discharge its functions to raise standards in schools. Overall, the EDP is a good framework for school improvement across the LEA.
- 31 There has been good and effective consultation on the EDP resulting in modification. The LEA has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the context and performance of education in Coventry. The available data have been well used to ensure that the priorities set out in the EDP meet local needs, whilst also matching national priorities. The relevance of the EDP priorities to schools is good.

The six priorities in the plan, which are clearly linked to identified need, are:

- i. Raising standards in literacy.
- ii. Raising standards in numeracy.
- iii. Improving the quality of leadership, management and governance of schools.
- iv. Improving the quality of teaching (end of Key Stage 2 and Years 8 & 9 at Secondary).
- v. Raising the achievement and attainment of pupils 14-19.
- vi. School performance review, and support to schools causing concern.

- 32 The EDP provides a coherent planning framework for a range of LEA services and external agencies to contribute to school improvement in the widest sense. This is a strength of the plan and reflects the strong corporate city-wide approach. The planning of actions to meet identified success criteria is generally good. Actions are not always sharply enough focused on the needs identified. The planning to support schools causing concern is effective and the process is clearly understood by schools.

- 33 The LEA undertakes thorough monitoring procedures against the key tasks of the plan. The evaluation of the impact of the plan is effectively assessed through an annual review process. The targets of the LEA's schools have been effectively challenged through the analysis of data and the school performance review process. The LEA targets for Key Stage 2 English are challenging but numeracy at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 targets for the average points score and one or more GCSEs at A*-G have already, or very nearly, been achieved. The policy of returning to schools to re-negotiate targets will be used to re-align those LEA targets which have already been achieved.

The allocation of resources to priorities

- 34 There is an effective process within the Council, and within the education service, for allocating resources to priorities. The fact that the council is in a sound financial position and effective budgetary control is exercised assists the process. Procedures for delegation of financial responsibility to chief officers, and from chief officers to budget holders, are clear. Appropriate budget monitoring systems are in place. Usefully, chief officers are allowed to build up discretionary and earmarked reserves, the latter for specific purposes.
- 35 In general, budgetary control has been tight although some problems have occurred with slippage in capital spending. In 1997/1998, the agreed programme of £9.4m was underspent by ten per cent, and in 1998/1999 a programme of £9.3m underspent by 27 per cent. Since then an attempt has been made to ensure that the education department works more effectively with corporate colleagues on delivering an agreed capital programme, and the final position for 1999/2000 seems likely to be much healthier.
- 36 Charges made to the education budget for the services of other council departments are reasonable and, for the most part, based on negotiated service level agreements or hourly costs; further review of some charges is being undertaken in 2000/2001.
- 37 The education service contributes to the well-established and effective Policies, Priorities and Resources (PPR) planning system. The PPR is the Council's long-term planning process, which includes balancing needs, policies, service levels and resources over a five-year period. Budget holders within the education department have a clear understanding of the PPR process which is driven currently by the Coventry Community Plan, national government priorities and bounded by resource constraints as determined through the Government's and Council's medium-term financial strategy. Capital expenditure planning too, is subject to the same outline five year planning period. The annual PPR process begins in good time before the forthcoming financial year and includes thorough consultation with headteachers, unions and governing bodies through their representative forums.
- 38 The PPR process gives the LEA the flexibility to focus funding on priorities as they emerge. For instance, a major programme of nursery expansion has been undertaken in recent years. In 2000/2001 resource switches have enabled additional funding to be made available for agreed priorities such as Key Stage

2 (£400,000), Curriculum 2000 (£230,000), improved provision for special educational needs (£600,000) and an increase in matched funding to meet a growth in the availability of DfEE standards fund income (£1m).

- 39 The experience of PPR, benchmarking of some education services, and an emerging culture of performance management, puts the education service in a sound position to adopt a Best Value approach to service provision. Coventry's Best Value performance plan was produced in March 2000, following extensive consultation, and demonstrates good progress in putting in place key elements of the corporate approach to Best Value. The existence of a range of statutory plans within the education department, in particular the Education Development Plan, has provided valuable experience of collecting and recording performance information. The increased rigour necessitated by the introduction of Best Value will provide an opportunity for the education service to develop and improve its arrangements for comparing its performance with others.

Recommendations

- Through consultation, clarify the funding elements for SEN in the delegated primary and secondary school budgets to both ensure transparency and to provide the opportunity for improved monitoring of schools' spending in this area.
- Ensure that the Best Value review of insurance arrangements examines the justification for the current high level of expenditure on insurance, and that the results inform consultation with schools in respect of possible delegation of the insurance function.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions

- 40 School improvement is the key objective for Coventry LEA and a number of services contribute significantly to its achievement. Through the successful use of SRB funding the youth service works with schools to provide support to pupils through mentoring programmes, and a social inclusion project on preventative behaviour strategies together with leadership and outward-bound opportunities where pupils are encouraged to get involved in democratic processes. For the very youngest children and their families, the provision for early years has been supported by local authority funding and initiatives such as 'Sure-Start' and 'Wrap-around'. Schools report that this focus on early years is beginning to increase the skills of young children before they reach school age. The LEA's strategic approach to inclusion, which embraces both pre- and post-school provision provides very good support to children with SEN. The children and family education service contributes to school improvement by supporting schools to involve parents in their children's learning and provision of Family Literacy and Family Numeracy. The service was commended in the June 2000 OFSTED report Family Learning: A Survey of Current Practice.
- 41 With the recent appointment of the city librarian imaginative ideas for learning networks and communication within and beyond the city are being explored. Libraries already contribute substantially to the city's literacy drive; SRB funds a part-time librarian to work with community groups and young children on early literacy and a community library and school project funded jointly by Coventry and the National Youth Agency encourages socially-excluded pupils to read for pleasure. The current strategic thinking is good with a sharp focus on outcomes which can demonstrate effective learning for the young people and adults of Coventry. Alongside this the well-established business and industrial partnership centres in the city make a significant contribution to the quality of the curriculum in many Coventry schools, such as the realistic work-related modern language development opportunities provided at the Peugeot Centre.

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention

- 42 Procedures for the LEA to carry out its monitoring, challenge, support and intervention function are good, particularly in primary schools. The annual school performance review, formalised in September 1999, is the key process by which the LEA sets and challenges targets and monitors all schools. The resulting report forms the basis for an agreed one-year action plan with the LEA for support, advice and review of the school's practice. Advisers appropriately require the headteacher to clarify how weaknesses are to be tackled and then to agree the strategies for support from the LEA. The process is not yet sufficiently integrated with each school's self-evaluation procedures and the first annual performance review reports are of varying depth and clarity of judgements. However, the LEA knows its schools well so monitoring visits are not universally necessary. Although the performance review is beginning to provide robust challenge for many schools it is not yet sharply enough targeted in inverse proportion to success. There are four categories of school to which

additional support is directed, namely those in special measures and serious weaknesses, those identified as causing concern to the LEA, and those needing additional support for literacy and numeracy.

- 43 The school advisory service (SAS) is the key service for school improvement. Through the annual school performance review, general advisers monitor standards and quality in the school, set and agree targets and advise senior staff. All schools purchase additional support from the SAS through one of three service level agreements (SLAs) for a graduated range of advice. School visits and discussions with headteachers indicated that they have varying degrees of understanding of the SLA they have purchased. Some headteachers are very clear and others are unsure about which SAS services come without charge, what they are getting within the cost of their SLA and what, if any, additional charges are being made for further services. The SLA requires a sharper specification to describe what is being bought under each agreement and more clarity about when the additional charges are incurred for advice beyond the SLA contract. This, together with more detailed financial information on the costs and funding of the SAS, will give schools some data from which to make judgements about the value for money of the service they receive.
- 44 The SAS provides a good service overall and some of its work is outstanding; for instance the wide range of training courses on offer at the professional development centre which are of good quality, well supported by schools and effectively evaluated by LEA staff. Headteachers are mainly very positive about the role of general advisers, their flexibility in the interpretation of their work with each school and their high levels of expertise. The SAS use a range of external funding to develop effective projects in support of EDP priorities, for example on gender and attainment issues, disaffection in secondary schools and work-related learning, the latter being highly praised in recent OFSTED evaluations.
- 45 Subject support to the primary school is also highly regarded. There are, however, areas in which the LEA is weak in its subject support to secondary schools. Most secondary schools use some external advice and training in such circumstances. Coventry does not provide a formal brokerage service or quality assurance guidance in relation to external providers.
- 46 The LEA has in place monitoring systems that enable it to identify weaknesses. It also has procedures for intervention and when it intervenes the schools think it does so effectively and in a challenging way. We read a number of reports by LEA inspectors on schools which had been the subject of intervention. The reports were incisive in their diagnosis of difficulties, and offered detailed and helpful recommendations.
- 47 Senior officers in the SAS give good leadership and manage and monitor the work of staff effectively. They operate an appropriate balance between support to colleagues and professional challenge of poor performance. Staff review procedures are in place. The monitoring of EDP priorities is well documented by the management team and councillors regularly scrutinise EDP progress.

The end of year evaluation of the EDP in June 2000 includes some clear judgements about the impact of actions by the SAS. The service is effective in using such evidence to improve its practice. The consultation networks with headteachers are well managed and there is robust dialogue with the members of the service which contributes to improvements in schools.

- 48 The central costs of school improvement per pupil in Coventry are below the national average. All schools buy a proportion of their support from the SAS. Through the effective use of the standards fund, ethnic minority grant, regeneration funding, revenue funding and income from schools the service has sufficient personnel to provide a wide range of expertise. The SAS gives good value for money.

Collection and analysis of data

- 49 Coventry provides very good data on performance. It is wide ranging, related to local circumstances and its well-timed arrival in the autumn term, enables maximum use by schools. The school survey indicates that it is rightly regarded by headteachers as good or very good, and better than other LEAs surveyed.
- 50 The education information service (EIS) provides annual data on performance for each school in relation to national averages and expectations, results in similar authorities, QCA benchmark groups and trends analyses for four years. The information is clear in its format, uses a range of representations and schools find it very helpful. In addition, schools receive performance data on attainment related to gender, ethnicity and transience in their own school. Headteachers report that this information has led to a significant improvement in the school's ability to analyse attainment evidence and to consider the factors at play in the school. For secondary schools the data are a good basis for their detailed use of information, including that from other sources, on the attainment of individuals and the targets for increased standards.
- 51 Guidance and training on the use of the data are provided jointly by the SAS and the EIS. The autumn monitoring visit by advisers to each school focuses on reaching agreement on future targets. Evidence from the school visits indicates that the LEA is seeking ambitious targets. The discussion with most headteachers is rigorous and variously described as 'a mighty debate' and 'the most challenging experience of my career'. In 1999 almost a third of primary schools were revisited by the adviser in order to discuss the raising of their targets for literacy, numeracy or both.
- 52 The LEA's approach to target setting is good and is having a positive effect on raising standards in schools. Attainment in English at Key Stage 2 is improving and the target of 80 per cent at Level 4 in 2002 is challenging but achievable with current upward trends. In mathematics the 2000 target was almost reached in 1999. At Key Stage 4 improvements have been gradual since 1995 with the percentage of 5 A*-C grades rising to 40 per cent for the first time in 1999. The five per cent increase to the target for 2002 is challenging but within

reach. The trends in improvement in Coventry schools are generally equal to those found nationally.

- 53 The data, guidance and leadership given by the adviser for assessment and the EIS are excellent. They offer training courses, customised in-service days, and the opportunity to explore the complex issues around assessment and raising attainment. The LEA recognises that elements of, for example, baseline data and Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transfer information can be improved and actions are in place to address these weaknesses.

Support for literacy

- 54 Support for literacy has considerable strengths but some weaknesses. Attainment in Key Stage 2 English tests has improved since 1996 at the same rate as nationally. If the recent rate of improvement is maintained the LEA will reach its challenging target of 80 per cent in 2002. The LEA has a rigorous policy of revisiting primary schools where targets are too low in order to consider improved targets and the strategies for reaching them. Overall, there is a trend of improvement at Key Stage 3 that matches the national rise in standards. In GCSE, English results are just below national averages and show gradual improvements since 1995.
- 55 The National Literacy Strategy is effectively led and provides a good service to schools. Following a recent management change the senior adviser has appropriately introduced a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedure in the schools together with a priority to bring a few reluctant schools fully into the strategy. The work of the team is clearly set out in a suitable three-year development plan which has well focused activities, clear time-scales and identified target groups. The plan is a result of the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in the first year of the strategy as well as action following OFSTED monitoring recommendations. Links between the literacy team and general advisers have been improved. Good collaborative work takes place in schools between the literacy consultants, staff who give support for English as an additional language (EAL), learning support teachers and family education workers.
- 56 Initially a group of schools were identified for intensive literacy support based upon low standards in English at Key Stage 2. This was a suitable approach and the intensive support followed training for all schools. The consultants' support to the 'intensive schools' over two years has been of a high standard. Teachers have benefited from good demonstration lessons, well-focused in-service sessions, guidance on planning and teaching as well as lesson observations with helpful feedback. The advice and guidance to special schools has been very good.
- 57 By contrast those schools who received no additional support have, in some cases, shown falling standards and in others, a lack of confidence in implementing the framework and the literacy hour. The lack of support for schools in the non-intensive cohort has been a weakness in the LEA strategy. This will be remedied from September 2000 when the work of the consultants

will continue some graduated support in existing schools, and provide intensive work to those who are in need of more guidance. Current training is planned to meet the needs identified in schools which are predominantly about managing the strategy, teaching phonics, teaching through guided reading and writing, raising the attainment of boys and literacy strategies for pupils with special educational needs.

- 58 The development of literacy in Key Stage 3 builds upon the national pilot project in the six lowest achieving secondary schools in the city. The LEA two-day conference in June 1999 was attended by all secondary schools and they report it as a good starting point for whole-school literacy strategies. Training and staff networks are provided by the LEA with a focus on literacy in the context of science, the humanities and modern foreign languages. Seven successful summer literacy schools were held in 1999. Data from the LEA indicates that schools are beginning to develop their cross-curricular strategies and that sound progress is being made. However the work of the LEA at Key Stage 3 is variable. Although some schools regard it well and have used the guidance effectively, at least one school has chosen not to use LEA support and another can recall no literacy advice in the last six months.
- 59 Literacy monitoring is rigorous and carried out by the consultants and the general adviser to the school. This effectively supports the schools' development of their own monitoring procedures. Education committee members scrutinise the monitoring reports of the literacy strategy and have given additional resources to the work of the literacy team.

Support for numeracy

- 60 The introduction and implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) has been well managed, building on the LEA involvement in the National Numeracy Project from 1995 to 1999. Other areas and priorities that support the development of the strategy include family numeracy, special needs and early years. These combine to provide a coherent approach to raising standards of numeracy in the primary sector. The LEA's strategic plan for numeracy is defined clearly as a priority in the EDP.
- 61 Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above that of similar LEAs but below national averages. The LEA trend over time indicates an improvement in line with the national average. In 1999, 64 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4 or above. A numeracy target of 75 per cent has been set for 2002 with an intermediate target for 2000 of 66 per cent. The LEA is on course to achieve the targets for 2002 at Key Stage 2.
- 62 Evidence from the school survey indicates that almost all primary schools find the support for teaching numeracy good or very good and this was confirmed by the school visits. The consultants and the leading mathematics teachers are proving effective and are supporting schools in raising standards. The quality of training, including training for teacher assistants, has been good. Overall support for numeracy is good and highly regarded by the primary and special

schools. The LEA effectively monitors and evaluates the components of the numeracy strategy and their impact in schools.

- 63 At Key Stage 3, standards are below the national average but above the average for similar LEAs. At Key Stage 4, standards in mathematics are also below the national average. The LEA is maintaining the same rate of improvement as the national trend. In the school survey the vast majority of secondary schools found the support for numeracy at least satisfactory but one fifth of schools found it poor. The variability of this support was confirmed by the school visits. Training in general, and the development of summer schools, have been good. Officers have addressed their inability to recruit a mathematics adviser by appropriate restructuring of responsibilities to ensure effective management of mathematical support.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

- 64 There is a clear corporate strategy for ICT. The Coventry Community Plan aims to improve the ICT skills of the labour force and has clear and explicit links with the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) developments. There is commitment from elected members to develop ICT and the Strategic Director (corporate development) chairs the main steering group for the NGfL. There has been effective consultation with schools about the LEA strategy for ICT. The LEA's broad plans for curricular and ICT developments are clear and appropriate.
- 65 The LEA's intention is that ICT should permeate all priorities of the EDP. However, the ICT plan is not sufficiently linked to the EDP action plans to enable success criteria to be met. ICT does link with some of the priorities but the success criteria do not always provide opportunities to assess the improvement in ICT attainment or the quality of teaching. In some cases opportunities to integrate ICT are missed. The school survey indicated that a quarter of primary and secondary schools thought that the development and implementation of the ICT strategy were poor or very poor and evidence from school visits supported this view. There were examples where schools indicated that they were impressed with the corporate vision but felt that there was no real cohesion between corporate, LEA and school developments. Support for curriculum ICT is satisfactory in primary and special schools but unsatisfactory in secondary schools.
- 66 At Key Stage 4 standards of attainment are below both the national average and those of similar LEAs. There is currently no LEA analysis of teacher assessment at Key Stages 1 and 2 but there are plans to do this in the future. The training provided within the LEA is soundly planned, timed and targeted. Officers plan to build on the identification of needs, in order to increase the emphasis upon improving the quality of teaching of ICT within subjects.
- 67 The rationale for the resourcing of schools through NGfL has been agreed through clear consultation between schools and the LEA. However, the strategy for resource development over three years was not always well-understood in schools. Evidence from the school survey indicated that the introduction of NGfL was only just satisfactory. There is limited sharing of good

practice regarding the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning, particularly via electronic communications between schools and the LEA. On average more than half of the schools visited regarded the current position of electronic data interchange as unsatisfactory.

Support for schools causing concern

- 68 Coventry has three primary schools and one secondary school in special measures plus four primary and one special school with serious weaknesses. In addition the LEA has identified three schools which, for a variety of reasons, are causing concern. The intervention and support from the LEA to these schools are generally good.
- 69 The LEA criteria for identifying schools causing concern are clearly laid out and well understood by the great majority of headteachers. The criteria include an appropriate range of indicators related to standards achieved, the quality of education provided by the school as well as its leadership and management. Procedures for the support and monitoring of schools in the special measures, serious weaknesses and causing concern categories are set out in a clear schedule for action. The responsibility for this work lies with the SAS and other branches of the LEA and is managed by the school's general adviser. Schools identified as causing concern by the LEA are offered a six-month support plan and if in that time no improvements are evident they are treated as 'serious weakness' schools. Coventry LEA also regards those 12 schools receiving intensive support for literacy and numeracy as presenting some concern and they are closely monitored by the general adviser and the relevant support teams.
- 70 The LEA has been effective in bringing three schools out of special measures in 1999. Five schools with 'serious weakness' will have no more HMI monitoring visits. Evidence from documentation and school visits indicates the high quality of guidance and advice from the LEA, which has been well planned and effectively timed. The SAS has given good advice to governing bodies about their roles, responsibilities and the action plan for improvement. The curriculum and leadership support to the schools has been particularly good in relation to self-evaluation and the introduction of monitoring in order to improve practice. As a result headteachers report that the quality of teaching has improved and targeted groups are better provided for. In one case where there was a significantly slow rate of improvement in a school in 'special measures', the LEA has supported the governors over difficult staffing decisions at the highest level and after more than two years there are now reported indications of secure improvement.
- 71 In a few instances the LEA has been slow to act on the early knowledge of serious deterioration in a school. It is clear that procedures are now more tightly managed and the LEA monitoring can ensure that an unsatisfactory situation in a school is identified and swiftly dealt with. Key members of the education committee are regularly involved in monitoring the progress of schools in these categories. With the strategic director (lifelong learning) and

other senior officers they regularly scrutinise the detailed reports on the progress of the action plan for each school.

Support for governors

- 72 The governor support service has developed and improved and provides good quality advice and guidance. Over 80 per cent of schools purchase the service level agreement for clerking and general advice. The 'pay as you use' training programme covers the effective management of a governing body, induction for new governors, current education initiatives and the statutory duties of governors. These courses are well publicised and governor's report that high quality training is provided. The tailor-made training for small groups of schools or individual governing bodies is particularly effective. Through the training provided and attendance at governor's meetings the LEA is supporting governing bodies to develop their monitoring role and contribute, through the annual performance review, to school improvement strategies.
- 73 There are sound procedures for communication and consultation with governors and it is clear that chairs of governing bodies are actively involved in many of the issues related to education in the city. The weekly information to the chair of governors is welcomed. The regular meetings of link governors and those for chairs of governors with the senior officers of the authority are felt by governors to be valuable. These meetings are supported by good documentary guidance on a wide range of governors' responsibilities. However, communication to all governors is not as effective and some parent governors believe that clearer and more accessible information could overcome the problem of parent governor vacancies. The governor support team is active in trying to improve the service. A questionnaire to governors in 1999 identified four areas in need of improvement and an outline action plan is now established.
- 74 The guidance given to chairs of governors by individual officers of the LEA is very good. They are accessible and give secure and speedy advice. In emergency situations the LEA provides a very efficient service. Those governors who have experienced special measures or serious weaknesses report that support from the LEA is excellent.

Support for school management

- 75 LEA support for school management is very good. It is a priority in the EDP and is addressed through an appropriate range of activities aimed at developing leadership, management and governance of schools. Documentation and discussion during the inspection indicate that, whilst provision for this priority is good, there are additional factors at play in the effectiveness of this area of the LEA's work. The LEA provides a model of good service management in many areas. This helps to establish its credibility, and promotes good relationships with its schools. It exploits those relationships well to promote serious professional reflection, to challenge established ideas and to encourage innovation. In addition the officers of the LEA listen to and act upon the advice of headteachers and use their expertise in training and support roles in schools.

- 76 Within this framework, headteachers are encouraged and supported on the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers. The LEA's Headlamp training is extensively used by new heads and the mentoring and induction programmes are well regarded. The current training in school self-evaluation is being evaluated and headteachers report that it has been good, particularly when deputy heads and governors have been involved. The LEA has an effective agreement with schools that supports school management by allowing staff secondments when difficulties arise. This opportunity enables teachers to develop new strategies and return to their original job with more confidence and skill. For deputy headteachers there is limited specific management training beyond that which they get with the headteacher. However, some deputies have been supported by the LEA on the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) with successful results, and the LEA provides network meetings for deputy heads. Recently training has been introduced for primary school deputies. Further support for the management of schools is available via the annual performance review and the resultant action plan with the LEA.
- 77 Professional development courses provided by the LEA include general and subject specific training for leadership and management. The latter provision is widely used by primary schools and is of good quality. The long-established middle management training programme is well subscribed and both the school survey and evidence from discussions indicate that it is of high quality. In addition, the LEA subject networks are well regarded by primary teachers but are found to be less valuable by secondary staff.
- 78 The LEA meets all its statutory responsibilities in relation to newly qualified teachers and offers good induction and support.

Early years

- 79 Following a public perception survey in 1995, which indicated dissatisfaction with the provision for under-fives, elected members and the strategic director (lifelong learning) undertook to improve the supply and quality of early years education. The LEA has invested in excess of £2million to increase the provision of places; the government targets to provide free places for all four-year-olds and 66 per cent of three-year-olds have been met.
- 80 Joint planning between the LEA and a range of agencies across the EDP priorities is good in the early years context. The Early Years Development Childcare Partnership documentation demonstrates good joint planning to deliver a coherent service which integrates care and education. The partnership has a clear strategy to ensure the dissemination of good practice, including the use of the local media to promote early years education. HMI inspection evidence indicates that the Early Years Excellence Centre works effectively through an integrated approach to meet the needs of the local community. A pilot for the early identification of pupils with special educational needs is jointly funded by education and social services. In addition, the Early Years Excellence Centre targets families for literacy and numeracy support as part of the LEA strategy to raise standards. The 'Sure Start' and 'Wrap-around'

initiatives are implemented to support the education, care and support of families. These initiatives support the main priorities of the EDP and the corporate strategies in a coherent and appropriate way. There is good provision and standards in early years.

Support for 14-19 education

- 81 Raising the attainment of pupils aged 14 to 19 is a priority in the EDP and the LEA's work in this field is proving effective. Although standards in GCSE are rising, they are not yet doing so at the national rate. However, Key Stage 4 attainment in vocational qualifications is good in relation to national figures. In Key Stage 4 the LEA has successfully attracted additional funding for a number of curriculum and community projects. HMI inspection commends the impact of these on targeted groups of young people whose commitment and interest in education is low. A three-year intervention project in three schools offers mentoring for pupils at risk of exclusion and involves effective cross-agency work. The well-established and expanding Coventry Partnership Centres provide an impressive range of opportunities for pupils of all ages to experience the demands and opportunities in local industries and business. For some pupils in Key Stage 4 these activities offer extended programmes, which bring relevance and enjoyment to their curriculum. In addition, the LEA supports work-related projects that give pupils experience of, and NVQ accreditation in, work-based learning, for example through a very successful theatre project and a design-technology programme.
- 82 In 1995, a review of post-16 work in schools identified the need to improve the teaching and learning in sixth forms and to establish expectations of higher attainment. Since then the LEA has been active in pursuit of these goals. In GCE and GNVQ advanced level courses standards have risen in recent years and some exceed national averages. The Coventry area-wide inspection notes the good progress made by young people who begin their post-16 courses in school with limited achievements as well as the high completion rates on these courses in school. For September 2000 the LEA has proposed a rationalisation of the teaching of minority subjects to improve provision for students and to introduce greater efficiency in the provision in what are predominantly small sixth forms. Further review and development are on hold pending the assumption of responsibilities by the Learning and Skills Council.

Recommendations

- Clarify with all schools:
 - a. the amount and nature of the support and monitoring available at no cost;
 - b. the support available through the three service level agreements; and
 - c. the point at which charges for additional support are incurred.

- Visit less frequently those schools which are already effective.
- Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the LEA's arrangements for subject specialist advice and the absence of any formal brokerage service for external providers in schools.
- In partnership with schools, identify the strategies that can raise standards securely to national levels and above particularly at Key Stage 4.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

- 83 Education is at the heart of the corporate agenda in Coventry. A long-standing commitment to resourcing, coupled with cross-party agreement that good education is fundamental to the health, wealth and stability of the city and must sit at the core of regeneration strategies, have ensured a synergy between departmental aims and those of the corporate whole.
- 84 Corporate planning in Coventry is clear, consistent and coherent. It is underpinned and given stability by the five-year financial plan. Plans sit one within another. The outer circle is the Coventry Community Plan, drawn up in partnership with the community conference of city stakeholders. This defines a common purpose and determines corporate objectives. These are action on jobs, poverty, city centre crime, older people, and young people. The corporate action plan translates these into key corporate priorities which are then picked up in departmental and branch plans. Strategic directors have responsibility for their own departmental and branch plans, but they also each have a cross-cutting responsibility for a priority area, thus ensuring corporate links. The priority for young people and the cross-cutting responsibility for social inclusion in the disadvantaged northeast of the city, translate well into the EDP commitment to working 'in partnership with schools and other service providers committed to meeting the educational needs of children and (the) wider community'. Both are responsibilities of the strategic director for lifelong learning.
- 85 A clearly defined process of corporate performance management ensures that plans are implemented and that their implementation is evaluated. The targets and objectives of individuals are cross-referenced to key Council objectives and regularly reviewed. Policy priorities are also reviewed annually through the PPR which incorporates extensive stakeholder consultation.
- 86 A consensual approach to decision-making is a hallmark of this authority. Consultation by both politicians and officers is extensive, involves clear and comprehensive papers and presentations and does change things. Members, who are well briefed and advised by officers, give strong political leadership, make policy decisions, then rightly leave implementation to officers who seek whenever possible to secure agreement through open and honest debate. The director and officers are accessible and responsive. Although a very few dissenting voices argue for a more high profile style of leadership, the overwhelming view of headteachers is that they enjoy a fruitful and challenging partnership with their LEA. The inspection found abundant evidence that the current approach has both fostered the sense of common purpose and served the education service well.
- 87 Partnership is fundamental to the Coventry approach, and there is substantial evidence of its contribution to school improvement. For instance, the area-wide inspection notes the beneficial impact of the city's 14-24 Forum on post-16 education. At the strategic level there is a good infrastructure for joint planning

and mechanisms are also in place for partnership working at the operational level. Links with business are particularly effective and the four Education Business Partnership (EBP) Centres around the city, on the premises of Peugeot and other major employers, have contributed substantially to the successful development of the work-related curriculum. Equally successful is the partnership with Quality Careers Service which has ensured that there is a well-equipped careers centre staffed by a careers officer on the site of every secondary school. Collaborative project work with the Chamber (TEC), Quality Careers and the further education colleges involving non-attenders and young people at risk of exclusion has resulted in 66 per cent of the group going on to accredited courses post-16. Overall attainment in vocational qualifications at Key Stage 4 is good.

- 88 The LEA also works effectively with the local universities, with neighbouring local authorities, the health authority and the police. Links with social services are good at the strategic level although they are not always fully effective at operational level. The LEA enjoys good co-operative relationships with the diocesan authorities.
- 89 In the northeast of the city and in the six other disadvantaged areas targeted by the Council for priority action, the LEA is involved in a number of appropriate and well planned multi-agency regeneration initiatives: most notably Sure Start, New Deal for Communities, the education action zone (EAZ) and a regeneration zone. These involve co-operation with external partners, other council departments such as the City Development Directorate, the Regeneration Unit and Area Co-ordination (a council led mechanism for drawing together the voluntary sector and other local players) and other parts of the lifelong learning directorate such as the libraries, community education and the youth service.
- 90 One school attributed its rising roll and improved results at least in part to the regeneration work done in its area by the LEA and other partners. Others in the northeast of the city cited the contribution of joint initiatives such as those involving parents or working with children at risk of disaffection to the creation of a more fruitful climate in which to raise achievement. Partnership approaches have ensured that schools feel and are supported not just by the LEA but by a range of agencies.
- 91 Effective, co-ordinated arrangements are in place to maximise opportunities for securing appropriate external funding for the Council. Coventry has been actively involved in seeking European Union funding since the 1980s and almost £100m has been secured from this source; £41m has been obtained from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) rounds 1, 2, 3 and 5.
- 92 The education service is well integrated into the corporate arrangements for securing external funding. £6.7m of the £41m funding is education based; of this £1.6m is committed for 2000/2001, £1.4m of it specifically school-based. The resources attracted to the education service have been well directed and well used. Arrangements for securing DfEE funding are good. The education service also benefits from miscellaneous Department of Trade and Industry

Grants. The establishment of an Education Action Zone in the northeast of the city as from January 2000 has enhanced the resources available to education.

Management services

- 93 The quality of management services provided to schools is variable. Financial services, including Internal Audit, and ICT support for school administration are good and personnel services satisfactory. Premises-related services are not rated as highly by schools, although both the school survey and school visits demonstrated that this view is by no means universal. The electronic exchange of information between the LEA and schools is unsatisfactory.
- 94 The vast majority of schools buy back services offered by the Council via service level agreements (SLAs). For 2000/2001, the LEA has attempted to provide executive summaries for all SLAs and ensure that SLAs are sent to schools together in good time before the new financial year. Current SLAs vary in terms of clarity and there is no standard format which sets out the full cost of the service, including centrally-held costs, and what that full service provides, including choice, necessary to provide proper transparency for schools. This is particularly significant in respect of the schools' advisory service.
- 95 Financial services provided to schools are well regarded by them and rightly so. School budget statements are clear. The general documentation provided to schools, supplemented by individual attention to schools' needs, together provide good quality advice and support on the planning of school finances. A valued part of the service, provided from within the education team, is that of Internal Audit which communicates with schools with admirable precision.
- 96 The LEA has in place effective mechanisms for monitoring schools' finances and has plans to improve them. This, plus the fact that schools are generally well-funded, means that there are few problems occasioned by deficit budgets. Only one primary and two secondary schools are in such a position.
- 97 At the end of 1998/1999 23 schools had a balance in excess of ten per cent. Although, in all cases, the LEA is able to present a clear explanation of the balance, it needs to work further with schools to ensure that the budget for a given financial year is used effectively. The continuation and development of existing machinery for longer term budget planning with schools and the adoption of recently produced revised procedures to assist benchmarking, budget planning and budgetary control in schools will aid this process.
- 98 The personnel service maintains good personnel performance data on schools and has the expertise to provide good quality advice. Links between corporate and education personnel are good and the education personnel service has established effective consultation arrangements with representative groups. Overall, its performance on casework and organisational restructuring has been satisfactory and often good. The payroll system works effectively.
- 99 The index team provides a good service to support the administrative ICT needs of schools. The service is praised in the school survey and was highly

valued by the schools visited. The LEA has had the intention of incorporating in one structure both administrative and curriculum support for ICT and is currently running a number of pilot projects in schools to this end. While these projects should be pursued, any reorganisation must not affect the quality of the work now provided by Index. Overall there is some way to go before an integrated information strategy linking schools, the education service and the whole Council is in being. Existing arrangements for the electronic transfer of information between the LEA and schools are poor and are recognised as such by the LEA and schools. The Council is planning major investment in ICT provision. It should lose no time in this and must ensure a co-ordinated approach.

- 100 For both premises and catering services, the Council's client agency is established to act as an independent adviser for schools and, if the service is purchased by schools, to procure all their facilities management functions from the most appropriate source. Many schools visited commented favourably upon the brokerage service provided by their named premises officer. The procurement function is the subject of a Best Value exercise in 2000/2001.
- 101 Most schools buy into premises services supplied by Coventry Contract Services (CCS). CCS is an in-house contracting service which has won contracts for building maintenance, grounds maintenance and cleaning. Here the picture presented by schools is less satisfactory. Good consultation arrangements exist via the heads' premises group to ensure schools' views are represented. Although it is established that there has been some recent improvement, over the last year the group has logged concerns about services provided by CCS, in terms of slow response, cost and quality of premises work. Not all schools have commented unfavourably, however, overall, there is room for improvement in the standard of service.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the content of all SLAs is clarified, so that the full costs and description of services provided, both central and delegated, is set out for schools.
- Establish improved LEA/school electronic communication as a matter of urgency, as part of a planned Council Information Strategy.
- Continue to monitor closely and improve as necessary the quality of services provided by Coventry Contract Services.
- Work further with schools to ensure that the budget for a given financial year is used effectively.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

Strategy

- 102 The LEA has a very effective strategy for meeting special educational needs. This effectiveness derives from good leadership, clear judgement and consultative decision-making. The LEA has established its priorities and its policy which not only reflect the national agenda, but also in areas such as inclusion, anticipate it. Schools and indeed all the LEA's education partners have been and continue to be fully consulted on the strategic plan and the detailed steps of implementation. The process has been characterised by a willingness to amend proposals and learn from contributions as the process unfolds. Its pace has been effectively judged, on the one hand encouraging contributions from all those affected, on the other avoiding the enervation of the system caused by over lengthy and inconclusive discussion. The involvement of elected members and senior officers in the entire process has been sustained, thoughtful and effective. On the evidence available to the inspection, including visits to schools, the consultative process has enhanced an already strong sense of corporate identity by enthusing the partners with the prospect of even better provision.
- 103 Such provision already has key examples of inclusion and is by no means confined to statutory school age. In the course of the inspection, team members had first hand observation of two primary/special school inclusion projects and discussed and had written information about others. An inclusive nursery at one primary school provides for young children with severe special educational needs but without statements. More generally, the pre-school special education services operate at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice and provide support for young children either at home or in units. In addition, since incorporation the LEA, local further education colleges and the Quality Careers service have systematically worked together to enhance post-school opportunities for young people with special educational needs and to promote accessible and inclusive provision.

Statutory obligations

- 104 There is a good balance of provision comprising special schools, provision in primary and secondary schools, and support services. Overall, the LEA meets its statutory obligations well: parents are fully supported, both by the pre-school special educational needs service and by an outstandingly effective Parental Partnership. The community education service is fully involved in provision for children with special educational needs including play partners, holiday schemes and after school clubs. Pupils and teachers are well supported at Stage 3 (and sometimes before) by learning support and behaviour support services; needs are generally identified early. The involvement of parents is effective from the earliest years and the parental befrienders service works very well, not only providing significant support to individual parents but also providing the training ground for future educational assistants in the classroom and on occasion, teachers of children with special educational needs. Unsurprisingly, there have been few parental references to the special

educational needs tribunal – two this year and one last year. The single exception to this picture of effective provision and support is in the process of formal assessment itself, where the latest figure (itself a significant improvement on last year) is 53 per cent of statements being produced within 18 weeks. Targets for rapid improvement have been set and the appointment and induction of additional staff were completed during the inspection. Moreover there is clear evidence that delays in the process have not been allowed to hold up provision: where there is consensus on the broad aspects of a child's needs additional provision is made in advance of the statement. In addition, the SEN monitoring and advisory group (which includes school representatives) has taken as a key priority improved provision at Stage 3 to reduce the upward pressure of statementing.

- 105 The quality of statements examined is good, providing detailed and specific analysis of need and prescription of provision. These qualities are reflected in the effectiveness of individual education plans examined, which meet the needs identified in the statements and secure targeted provision. The quality of this process has been promoted by a well-established system of analysis which has considerable strength in relation to those aspects of the Code of Practice which depend upon the elements of specificity, detail and quantification. It has secured the existence of these qualities in the statements studied, but given its less than universal employment, it would be sensible to consider an up-to-date analysis of this system in the light of SEN consultation and the LEA's strategy for development. Procedures for the annual review of statements are satisfactory.
- 106 Provision for children with special educational needs is systematically reviewed by the monitoring and advisory group and arrangements are sufficiently flexible to allow, as appropriate, the deployment of expertise and resources to meet new challenges. A particularly significant example of this capacity is the recent development within the LEA of support service and special school capacity to respond to autistic spectrum disorders. The percentage of primary-aged pupils with statements (2.2 per cent in 1999) and secondary pupils (3.6 per cent in 1999) are below national averages. Of all children with statements, the proportion in mainstream schools is below national averages but has increased by 36 per cent over the last three years.

Improvement and value for money

- 107 Overall expenditure on special educational needs as a percentage of the local schools budget is below average – at 23rd of all metropolitan authorities; expenditure per pupil is about 2 per cent below both statistical neighbours and national averages. On the other hand, within an overall modest figure, the costs of pupils with statements are higher than both those averages and ranks the LEA fifth highest of all metropolitan authorities. Similarly, expenditure on inclusion and promoting collaboration place the LEA as sixth highest of all metropolitan authorities with an expenditure twice the national average. Centrally-held budgets and limited delegation allow the LEA to focus resources quite rapidly to areas which it (and its partners) consider necessary. The reverse side of this coin is that monitoring of expenditure on SEN at the school

level is not well developed. The school visits, (apart from a minority of three) revealed no inclination to disturb a position which with some justification commands general support. Nevertheless, the LEA is carrying out a review of provision, services and costs in the light of Best Value arrangements to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of greater delegation. Overall, there was no evidence of insufficient funding to meet special educational needs in any of the schools visited. Indeed given the comparative modesty of overall expenditure on special educational needs, provision appears to be well resourced and focused on need.

- 108 The balance of overall provision is good and the LEA spends at a low level on pupils educated outside its boundaries. The funding for both statemented and non-statemented special educational needs is acknowledged by schools to be closely related to need and fair. The increasing use of the monitoring and advisory group to promote Stage 3 solutions to individual difficulties is starting to moderate the upward pressure of statementing. The development of inclusive early years provision and primary/special school inclusion projects are having similar effects. Evidence from the visits to schools indicates that learning support is marginally better focused at Stage 3 and earlier than behaviour support, but both services are effective. The education psychology service is allocated equitably and according to the need of each school. Perhaps more surprisingly the schools believe this to be so. Given that schools rated the service very good indeed in terms of its quality, but insufficient in amount, it would be sensible to publish the figures which the service already has, indicating individual allocations and their basis.
- 109 Applications for statementing are considered by an assessment panel which meets fortnightly but, unlike the monitoring and advisory group, contains no school representatives. As a form of moderation, one aspect of the group's work has been to carry out blind trials of anonymous cases previously determined by the panel. This showed a significant degree of convergence.
- 110 The schools visited by the team expressed considerable confidence in the expertise, responsiveness and fairness of LEA officers and support services. The sensory impairment support services are particularly highly regarded. So too are the arrangements for inducting and training special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs). These evaluations are well founded as evidenced in the LEA's statistical profiles where inspections of primary schools reveal provision for pupils with SEN to be better than both statistical neighbours and the national picture under the New Framework, with a similar picture for secondary schools. In over four-fifths of the schools visited during the inspection provision for SEN was rated good and the rest satisfactory. Support services have effective systems of performance management and budgets are carefully monitored. Overall, taking into account the range and quality of provision, the effectiveness of systems and management, and the comparative modesty of cost, SEN provision secures very good value for money.

Recommendations

- To improve further the effectiveness of provision for children with SEN:

- a. The current system of analysing SEN should be reviewed in the light of the government's proposals for SEN.
- b. The rate of completing statements within 18 weeks should be increased rapidly to nationally required levels.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The supply of school places

- 111 The Coventry school organisation plan (SOP) was published in accordance with statutory guidelines and a school organisation committee has been established.
- 112 The LEA, although slow to react at first, promoted a major programme of reorganisation from 1995, which took out of use 1536 primary and 1269 secondary places. Also in the 1990s, 40 separate infant and junior schools were amalgamated into 20 primary schools. The LEA now faces a recurring problem of declining rolls in primary schools; the current unfilled 10 per cent of places is anticipated by the SOP to grow to 19 per cent by 2004. Already 16 of 89 primary schools have over 25 per cent surplus places.
- 113 In the 1999 SOP a target for primary place removal to reduce the number of surplus places to ten per cent is set out, related to each of nine geographical areas in the city. Given the necessary time lag between the formulation of reorganisation proposals and implementation, consultation on any proposals put forward by the LEA could usefully have begun earlier than now. The draft 2000 SOP states that the Council intends to consult on specific proposals in 2000. It is important that this date, in effect autumn 2000, be met.
- 114 In the secondary sector, two schools have over 25 per cent surplus places; overall there are nine per cent surplus places. All 19 Coventry secondary schools have sixth forms, often organised in consortia arrangements with partner providers. Of the 19, nine have less than 100 post-16 students on roll and three others between 100 and 150. The advent of Curriculum 2000, the entry into secondary schools of smaller age cohorts later in the decade, taken together with the existing number of small sixth forms point to the need for an early review of future secondary provision, with particular reference to post-16 education. This should be early on the agenda of the Learning and Skills Council when it acquires its new planning responsibilities.
- 115 The Council has undertaken a major expansion of nursery education in recent years to provide for 92 per cent of all three-year-olds. The 1999 SOP states that of a total provision of 1767 full-time equivalent nursery places in primary schools 1384 are filled, some 78 per cent of capacity. To some extent this over-capacity may be addressed by primary reorganisation proposals, but it is important that the authority develops a strategic response to the issue of spare places in nursery provision in the SOP and other planning documents.
- 116 The LEA's infant class size plan is being implemented and is on course to meet the DfEE targets. Forecasting of school population is accurate.
- 117 Admission to schools is particularly well managed and effective in Coventry it meets all the requirements of the admissions Code of Practice. All booklets produced for parents relating to the admission and appeals process are clearly set out and provide the necessary information. The admissions criteria are

uncomplicated and procedures have been implemented to simplify timetables and work, as far as is practicable, in concert with other local admissions authorities. The Admissions Forum has met twice, functioning effectively, and diocesan authorities speak well of their partnership with the LEA in respect of admissions. In 1999 98 per cent of parents secured their first choice of primary school (96 per cent in 1998) and 91 per cent their first choice of secondary school (98 per cent in 1998). Appeals were low in primary schools in 1999 at 1.2 per cent of total primary admissions (2.3 per cent 1998), but secondary schools appeals were 8 per cent of total secondary admissions (6.9 per cent in 1998). In part, the low primary appeals demonstrate the surplus places available in some primary schools and the effect of infant class size plan, whereas secondary schools have less spare capacity, particularly in some popular schools. The LEA rightly gives parents every opportunity to appeal as necessary within appropriate timescales.

Asset management plan/property issues

- 118 Coventry has benefited from significant capital expansion in recent years and can take justifiable pride in its efforts to improve building stock. Its ability to secure increased funding associated with surplus place removal has enabled the rebuilding of six primary and three secondary schools. The advent of New Deal funding further increased capital resources and, in addition, the Council has passported annual education basic credit approvals to the education service. Only 0.3 per cent of teaching accommodation is in temporary buildings. In the asset management plan a total of £28.9m of building work is identified, £4.9m of which is classified as urgent and £13.4m as essential. This is not excessive compared with other LEAs. The potential for capital funding which might accrue from further removal of surplus places may well assist the LEA in improving the quality of education buildings. Moreover it is essential that the issue of ensuring effective maintenance, referred to elsewhere in this report, is addressed.
- 119 Some aspects of the implementation of the asset management plan process were not handled well. Although education buildings had been surveyed previously, it was recognised late in the day that it would be necessary to undertake a resurvey in the spring of 2000, thereby missing DfEE deadlines for the receipt of information. As a result, schools will receive their full property data later than desirable. Given recent DfEE initiatives, in particular in respect of devolved capital funding to schools, it is clear that in future LEAs will have to pay much closer attention to the local premises needs of each individual school, with a view to developing joint funding schemes to maintain and improve school accommodation. It is questionable whether the structure for premises support, divided between the education department and client agency, is best fitted to meet future premises needs.

Provision of education otherwise than at school

- 120 Tracking of children out of school for whatever reason is a very high priority for the LEA and systems for doing so are effective, involving the gathering of intelligence not only from LEA sources but also other departments, other

agencies and voluntary organisations. The provision made for these pupils is good and improving. The hospital and home tuition service makes effective provision for sick children at two hospitals, a medical recovery unit (designated as a PRU) and, where appropriate, at home; it makes similarly effective provision for pregnant schoolgirls and schoolgirl mothers at a second PRU. The LEA also ensures that the arrangements by which parents educate upwards of 60 pupils at home are appropriately overseen and meet statutory requirements in relation to both curriculum and welfare. The service provided is well planned, related directly to needs and well managed, with an overarching aim to secure pupils' return to full-time education as soon as possible. In schools visited where this issue was discussed, provision was regarded as effective.

- 121 Provision for pupils who are out of school on account of exclusion has been the subject of considerable debate in the LEA over recent years. The traditional provision of pupil referral units was considered ineffective. As a result an existing PRU (for Key Stage 4 pupils) was closed and the remaining Key Stage 3 PRU (12 places) is used for a revolving door process. By and large pupils go there for a part-time temporary placement either to avoid permanent exclusion or to secure entry to full-time permanent provision at another school following exclusion. Previously at Key Stage 3, home tuition was provided up to eight hours per week but this is now being replaced by group tuition of 15 hours a week and above. At the time of the inspection, all 47 of the excluded Key Stage 3 pupils were accounted for either by re-entry to full-time education in school or by attendance at the PRU and dual enrolment. The remainder had either left the city or were receiving home/group tuition longer term or were awaiting agreement to enter appropriate provision. All work at Key Stage 3 is aimed at early re-entry to school; provision and work are managed by the Key Stage 3 co-ordinator within the behaviour support service. Re-entry to full-time provision takes between one to five months and the average is just under a term. Provision is generally satisfactory but the move to group tuition needs to be accelerated to ensure full-time provision is made.
- 122 Key Stage 4 arrangements are managed by the Key Stage 4 co-ordinator and there are 29 excluded pupils and 45 dually enrolled. All 74 receive a package which includes two and a half days a week in one of the three further education colleges and attendance at work-related experiences such as the Partnership Centres and Rathbone/CI project. This secures a minimum of 20 hours of education a week, planned to increase to 25 hours in September. The coordinator acts as a key focus, not only in coordinating their individual timetables but also in ensuring regular attendance and important referrals to careers advice and to contacts in public and private sectors to secure continuing education, training and employment.
- 123 At Key Stages 1 and 2, the overriding aim is to ensure re-entry to school as quickly as possible. Generally this means return to primary school although some pupils are statemented and may be placed in a special school. At the time of the inspection all 16 primary aged excluded pupils, were either back in full-time education or awaiting re-entry and receiving home tuition. Return to full-time education has taken on average just under a term. The policy aim is to

take pre-emptive action based either on inclusion projects between special and primary schools (in cases of children with special educational needs) or through the development of nurture groups such as those at two of the primary schools visited. A similar pre-emptive approach is contained in the Intervention Project (SRB/Home Office funded) which will support 45 Year 6 pupils through transition to Year 7 and thence to Year 9; the pupils are selected on the basis of being at risk on account of poor attendance or behaviour. The LEA has indicated that it will build on the lessons learnt through the project.

- 124 Overall, this provision is effective and is well understood by the schools, as are the means of accessing it. Its effectiveness is enhanced by the LEA's appreciation of the importance of involving parents in the processes and assisting them through the exclusion case worker for parents and the mediation and parent support service. This judgement was reflected in visits to schools where provision was rated satisfactory or better in all but one, and good in three-quarters. The LEA has plans to secure full-time education for all excluded pupils; these are realistic and attainable. Expenditure on education otherwise than at school is high, placing the LEA fifth of all metropolitan authorities and well above the national average. Provision is thoughtfully made, based on careful consultation and staff are effectively deployed and managed. Overall, the provision secures good value for money.

Attendance

- 125 Improving attendance and reducing unauthorised absence are high priorities for the LEA. They are both carefully monitored by the education welfare service (EWS) which is well managed and effectively deployed according to need. Attendance at secondary level remains stubbornly at 90 per cent (1.1 per cent below the national average); the figure for primary schools has improved from 93.2 per cent to 93.5 per cent (0.6 per cent below the national average). Unauthorised absence at primary level is at the national level and rather better than that of statistical neighbours; at secondary level it is 0.3 per cent worse than the national average and 0.2 per cent better than statistical neighbours. Policies and strategies are good and the service has developed a wide range of support initiatives with voluntary and youth services to supplement its routine work. Targets for improvement are clear. They are agreed with schools, are appropriately differentiated to secure required improvements, and are regularly monitored through school visits.
- 126 The work of the EWS shows an effective blend of approaches to attain the challenging targets set: routine/statistical work is supplemented by parental interview, staff guidance/support to schools, and carefully planned court work. In this last respect the judicious use of prosecutions has secured desired improvements in the case of a number of families and its use as a lever for improvement is supplemented by positive support from the mediation and parent support service. The service identifies the main reasons for absence and analyses attendance patterns of both individuals and cohorts. In discussion with schools, this is said to lead to greater specificity of target setting and more effective results. The quality of partnership with the police is outstanding. Joint work on truancy sweeps in both the city centre and on

estates have had positive effects in identifying pupils at risk and in returning them to school. The cost of provision is low: £9 per pupil compared with £12 spent on average by metropolitan authorities, statistical neighbours and LEAs nationally, and places Coventry 30th out of 36 metropolitan authorities in terms of expenditure. In the course of school visits the provision made at 15 schools was analysed; in one it was rated unsatisfactory, in one satisfactory and the rest good. In the light of these figures, it is clear that the education welfare service not only meets its statutory responsibilities but also provides good value for money.

Behaviour support

127 The LEA has set clear targets for the decrease in the rate of exclusions. Progress towards them is monitored regularly by senior officers including the strategic director. The targets are those established nationally and the LEA is well on line to attain its target for next year. Permanent exclusions from secondary schools have reduced by almost a third this year and this has moved the LEA to just above the national incidence for secondary permanent exclusions (after being well above) and above the national incidence for primary permanent exclusions (after being at the national average last year). The behaviour support plan is not without weaknesses but is broadly satisfactory. Its strength is in the specificity of supporting actions and plans and their implementation, which have helped to ensure that systems and practices are better than the plan would lead one to suspect. The LEA has helped to develop an increasingly collegiate approach to the handling of exclusions. A headteachers' exclusion reference group and a protocol with secondary schools ensures that arrangements for re-entry into school, where appropriate, are consistent with the needs of excluded pupils without placing insupportable burdens on a single school or a group of them. This also helps to protect the interests of the great majority of pupils who behave well. The behaviour support service intervenes effectively at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice and provides high quality support and training for behaviour management and behaviour modification. The service is well managed and effective and these qualities are reflected in evidence from school visits where behaviour support was never rated less than satisfactory and in four-fifths it was rated good. Expenditure on referral units and behaviour support plans is below both statistical neighbours' and national averages and exactly half way (18th) for all metropolitan LEAs. The service provides good value for money.

Health, safety, welfare, child protection

128 The LEA child protection strategy is good and there are clear links from the LEA to social services, the health authority and the police. These judgements reflect the findings of the school survey and visits to schools. All schools have child protection link teachers and there is a child protection reference group of headteachers. Provision is well organised and effective. The LEA also has good arrangements for handling health and safety issues and school security. There are clearly defined policies, the implementation of which, are carefully monitored by both members and officers. Training is regularly provided. In all

areas the LEA is taking the necessary steps to meet its statutory responsibilities. Overall expenditure is moderate.

Children in public care

- 129 Provision for children in public care is given a high priority in all LEA plans, including the EDP. It is discharged through the education access service (EAS) which is just two years old but based on education/social service co-operative arrangements which have existed for over five years. The numbers of statutory school age pupils in public care in Coventry represent 0.66 per cent of the school population (compared with 0.44 per cent nationally). The service is based on a very well organised database covering both educational and personal details of all children in public care. The service takes particular pains to ensure that it is always up-to-date and of considerable use in informing policy developments. It is unique in being able to provide longitudinal information about children in public care over the last five years. This enables the LEA to record and track the progress of children in public care effectively. It also facilitates comparison of their performance with that of other pupils in Coventry over the same time span, helping to inform the development of strategies to tackle under-attainment. As an example, additional resources and support provided for secondary schools with disproportionate numbers of such young people were prompted by data interrogation. This showed that the pupil's progress between Year 6 and Year 9 was not markedly different from the city norm, but the lack of it between Year 9 and Year 11 was. Next year's GCSE targets for these pupils have already been met and the LEA is arranging new ones.
- 130 Over 70 per cent of the schools have a named person for these children and there is a clear plan to make that complete within the next year. The service provides termly training for all named persons and other less formal contact's each term, together with a half-termly printout of information on each school's children in public care. In addition, the service provides direct training for individual teachers and foster parents, parental supporters of learning and those working in homes and residential units. Each social services home now has a resource base for homework and the use of ICT. All the homes have a book ownership scheme and all have volunteers who provide opportunities for paired reading. In addition, the service ensures that the links to work-related learning, the further education sector and private industry are well developed for children in public care in the later stages of secondary education. All plans and supporting actions in the EDP demonstrate a clear priority for securing the development of children in public care and the EAS benefits from the support and leadership of elected members for whom this is clearly a high corporate priority. Most of the expenditure incurred on this access service is through LEA sources and in particular the standards fund. Education services dedicated to children in public care are well focused and very well managed. In all schools visited where this issue was addressed the service was rated at least good. At the strategic level, partnerships between education and social services are fruitful and effective, but in about a third of schools visited, the response of social services locally was regarded as variable or unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, the overall service provided by EAS was rated never less than

good. Expenditure on children in public care in Coventry is twice the national average and almost eight times the average of statistical neighbours. It places them second of all metropolitan authorities in spending. It is in fact money well spent, providing very good value for money and representing a significant strength of the LEA.

Minority ethnic and Traveller children

- 131 Support for minority ethnic children is good in many respects and in many schools, but it is not uniformly good in all schools. Support encompasses children from the settled communities, the majority of whom are of Indian heritage with smaller Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and other heritage groups, Traveller children and the children of refugees and asylum seekers.
- 132 The quality of ethnically analysed data on achievement is good and shows that most minority ethnic groups exceeded the targets set for them in 1999. The exception is the Black Caribbean group who, consistent with the national pattern, start out well but then decline. The authority is aware of this issue and has chosen to address it in the context of minority ethnic achievement generally rather than as a specific issue.
- 133 The Coventry minority group support service (MGSS) has been active to good effect in securing additional SRB funds to extend its work. A holistic approach has meshed this funding in with central government Ethnic Minority Achievement and Travellers Grant (EMTAG). SRB funding falls into three categories; intensive language acquisition; under-achievement; and community languages. Forty-three children took and passed GCSEs in community languages in 1999 with 88.4 per cent achieving grades A to C. The welfare and work experience for young people project supports disaffected young people in school, many of whom are of African/Caribbean or dual heritage.
- 134 The additional funding has enabled MGSS to support schools generously through devolved specialist staff, who are fully integrated into mainstream schools and make a valuable and valued contribution to achievement in all the schools visited. In addition it retains a core central peripatetic team of 13 FTE specialists. The team provides training, supplies good data on minority ethnic achievement and benchmarking data and monitors language acquisition. This monitoring is not however carried out on a regular basis in all schools. It also supplies specialist resources to the primary sector, liaises with families, particularly through the two refugee settlement officers, and offers support, including valuable specialist help, to the sensory support service. Both training and support, which is mainly to weaker schools and those with significant numbers of 'in year' arrivals, are effective and the data supplied enables schools to set targets for minority ethnic achievement. Progress on these is then considered as part of the school performance review. Unusually, Coventry has appointed three specialist consultants to the literacy and numeracy strategies. Their contribution is generally effective in ensuring that the strategies take full account of the needs of minority ethnic pupils.

- 135 Coventry buys into the West Midlands consortium for the education of Traveller children, 200 to 250 of whom are in the city at any one time. The consortium provides thoughtful and effective support for children and schools through its involvement in the Coventry early years work, and through an advisory teacher and welfare officer. It is also involved in the development of projects using new technologies and children can now receive two hours daily tuition by satellite to their caravans when they are away from the city. Schools value the services of the consortium.
- 136 Since last September, the LEA has received 230 children of asylum seekers or refugees as opposed to a norm of about ten per annum in the last five years. Its record in getting them into education rapidly is good. Both Admissions and MGSS have been proactive in responding rapidly to this new need. The LEA has drawn on SRB funding and some schools have drawn on their EMTAG resources to offer intensive language learning alongside phased integration into mainstream schooling.
- 137 Although the ethos of many schools admirably reflects the diversity of Coventry, this is not uniformly true, particularly for schools in the less diverse parts of the city. Five of the schools visited had some deficiencies in this regard. MGSS is a responsive service that is valued and listened to by schools. A more strategic approach on its part, with a sharper focus on ensuring that all Coventry schools reflect and endorse the diversity of the city and its pupils, would enhance support for minority ethnic pupils.

Social exclusion

- 138 The Council and the LEA are active on many fronts in combating social exclusion. They work closely with a range of partners on regeneration initiatives and have encouraged agencies such as the Coventry Chamber of Commerce and the Belgrade Theatre to develop effective educational work with disaffected young people. Within the education department, early years, the youth service, and community education all make a valued contribution to fostering social inclusion through work with families, adults and young people. This ranges from supporting the social integration of special school pupils to literacy and reading work with families and children, and the 'Wrap around' service for three-to eleven-year-olds supplying breakfast, teas and space for homework. Schools rightly acknowledge the contribution made by these services.

Action to address racism

- 139 Corporate and education department commitment to countering racism and discrimination and promoting harmonious race relations is clear and long-standing, but to date the impact of action taken has been limited. Minority ethnic groups are under-represented in the senior management of the LEA and schools. The education department has had an equal opportunities (EO) team since 1992. Since 1995 there has been good guidance and an agreed policy for countering racist harassment, procedures for the reporting of racist incidents in schools and an EO coordinator in each school. Work with schools has been

on-going and of variable impact, but the MacPherson inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence has given it a much higher profile. Following a post-MacPherson members and management board seminar, the education service has audited the current position, produced a thoughtful draft race equality strategy derived from the audit, and organised training based on the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) 'Learning for All' guidelines. These are sound moves.

Recommendations

- Begin the formal process of consultation on the removal of surplus places in primary schools in the autumn of 2000 and address the issue of current under-utilisation of nursery facilities.
- Focus on ensuring that all Coventry schools reflect and endorse the ethnic and cultural diversity of the city.
- Following consultation and amendment, implement the race equality strategy.
- Address the appropriateness of current organisational structures to meet the future premises needs of schools

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Through consultation, clarify the funding elements for SEN in the delegated primary and secondary school budgets to both ensure transparency and to provide the opportunity for improved monitoring of schools' spending in this area.
- Ensure that the Best Value review of insurance arrangements examines the justification for the current high level of expenditure on insurance, and that the results inform consultation with schools in respect of possible delegation of the insurance function.
- Clarify with all schools:
 - a. the amount and nature of the support and monitoring available at no cost;
 - b. the support available through the three service level agreements; and
 - c. the point at which charges for additional support are incurred.
- Visit less frequently those schools which are already effective.
- Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the LEA's arrangements for subject specialist advice and the absence of any formal brokerage service for external providers in schools.
- In partnership with schools, identify the strategies that can raise standards securely to national levels and above particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Ensure that the content of all SLAs is clarified, so that the full costs and description of services provided, both central and delegated, is set out for schools.
- Establish improved LEA/school electronic communication as a matter of urgency, as part of a planned Council Information Strategy.
- Continue to monitor closely and improve as necessary the quality of services provided by Coventry Contract Services.
- Work further with schools to ensure that the budget for a given financial year is used effectively.
- To improve further the effectiveness of provision for children with SEN:
 - a. The current system of analysing SEN should be reviewed in the light of the government's proposals for SEN.
 - b. The rate of completing statements within 18 weeks should be increased rapidly to nationally required levels.

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- Focus on ensuring that all Coventry schools reflect and endorse the ethnic and cultural diversity of the city.
- Following consultation and amendment, implement the race equality strategy.
- Address the appropriateness of current organisational structures to meet the future premises needs of schools

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