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IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF
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APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF 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 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 partly 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, 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 60 schools. The response rate was 68 per cent.
3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to ten primary, four secondary and two special schools. A further eight primary 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 London Borough of Camden serves a diverse community in inner London. It is ranked as the seventeenth most deprived borough in England, but the contrast between affluence and poverty in different areas is very marked. The schools in the Borough face considerable challenges: pupil mobility, increasing numbers of refugee children, as well as cultural and linguistic differences.

5. Camden is a very well run LEA with many more strengths than weaknesses. The quality of leadership given by elected members and senior officers is very good; planning is of a high order. The schools enjoy a high reputation and their quality is reflected by the high number of beacon schools, covering all phases, and the regularity with which parents living in other boroughs elect to send their children to Camden schools. The LEA has recently been awarded beacon status.

6. Standards in LEA maintained schools have been below national averages generally, but above those for other inner London boroughs. Standards at Key Stage 2 have risen markedly, and consistently, to reach, and sometimes exceed, national averages. Improvements in secondary schools are less significant than in primaries and, in some respects, schools' progress is below the national rate.

7. These results reflect very effective LEA support in primary schools; some of the schools have made outstanding progress. Another major strength has been the high quality of assistance given to special schools that were judged to have serious weaknesses or to require special measures.

8. The performance of the following functions is good or very good:

- quality of planning;
- consultation with schools over major plans;
- support for schools causing concern;
- support for ethnic minority achievement;
- support for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in primary and special schools;
- support for early years;
- support for school management;
- support for behaviour;
- financial services;
- personnel services;
- managing the supply of school places.

9. The functions below are exercised satisfactorily:

- provision of performance data and target setting;
- support for governors;
- support for the quality of teaching;
- property services.

10. By contrast, the performance of the following functions has significant weaknesses:

- support for attendance;
- transition arrangements, notably Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3;
- SEN assessment and statementing procedures;
- extent of delegation of funds to schools.

11. Camden is not only a good LEA, but an improving one. There is a common sense of purpose to drive up standards and achieve excellence that is shared by schools, members, officers and LEA partners alike. It results in productive partnerships and mutual respect. The LEA, particularly at corporate level, has earned a high level of trust. However, there are weaknesses in inter-agency working at the school level that need resolving.

12. There is, too, a shift in culture that needs to be made. The LEA is insufficiently open about the cost of its services to enable schools to take a clear view about the value for money they represent and some central costs are too high. This, together with the sheer volume of support sometimes provided, particularly by the inspection and advisory service (IAS), reinforces a sense of dependency in a few schools. It needs to transfer more of the onus for improvement to the schools themselves. It is in a good position to make this shift, given its existing high quality as an organisation, the effective involvement of elected members and the good relationship it enjoys with its schools.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

13. Camden LEA serves a diverse community in inner London. The total population is about 188,600; approximately one-fifth of the residents come from ethnic minority groups, the largest being the Bangladeshi community. Almost a third of under-16s are from ethnic minority groups. The proportion of pupils in Camden primary schools eligible for free school meals is well above national averages (LEA 42.3 per cent, national 19.9 per cent) and above in secondary schools (LEA 29.1 per cent, national 17.5 per cent).

14. In January 1999 there were 23,024 pupils in Camden schools. 1.9 per cent of primary and 3.4 per cent of secondary pupils had a Statement of Special Educational Need; this is above national averages. Approximately 43 per cent of primary and 39 per cent of secondary pupils speak English as an additional language. It is a measure of the rich diversity of the Borough that 106 different languages are spoken by the pupils. In 1997/8 there was a 10 per cent turnover in the primary population. In May 1998. Refugee children represented 11 per cent of primary and seven per cent of secondary pupils, and numbers are increasing.

15. There is a substantial flow of pupils across borough boundaries. Approximately ten per cent of the pupils in Camden primary schools come from other boroughs. At secondary level the corresponding figure is about 40 per cent and 50 per cent when the former grant maintained schools are included.

16. The LEA maintains 42 primary, ten 11–18 secondary schools and seven special schools (one residential). This includes, since September 1999, three former grant maintained schools (two secondary and one special hospital). There is one beacon infant school, two beacon secondary schools, a beacon special school, two technology colleges and one language college. Four of the ten secondary schools are girls only, one is boys only and five are mixed; in January 1999 60 per cent of the pupils were girls. There is one nursery school, which is an Early Excellence Centre, and 30 junior and infant schools have nursery classes; 57 per cent of four year olds are on a school roll. The LEA has two pupil referral units (PRU), one for primary and one for secondary-aged pupils.

Performance

17. Over the period 1996-99 there has been a significant difference at secondary level between the performance of eight schools maintained by the LEA and all schools including those grant maintained. To reach judgements about the effectiveness of LEA support for school improvement over this period, the results for the eight secondary schools have been used. To assess the quality of target setting for years 2001 and 2002 the results for all ten secondary schools, including the Foundation schools, have been used, including the former grant maintained (now Foundation) schools.

18. Some key features of school and pupil performance are as follows:

Primary

- Children's attainment on entry to school is generally below average. It is still below at Key Stage 1 but close to national averages at Key Stage 2.
- The most recent inspection of Camden's primary schools shows that the quality of schools, in overall terms, is above its statistical neighbours^① and above the national average. For instance 31 (82 per cent) of the LEA schools were judged to be good or very good. This figure is above both its statistical neighbours (63 per cent) and the national average (74 per cent).
- In addition, OFSTED data for schools that have been inspected twice shows that all aspects have seen an improvement which has been greater than for the national picture.

Secondary

For the eight LEA-maintained schools in the period 1996-99:

- Results at Key Stage 3 were generally below the national average. In 1999, the improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 or better was three times the national rate for English and double that for mathematics; in science, the improvement was well below the national rate.
- At GCSE level the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A* – C in 1999 was 39.5 compared to the national average of 46.3 for all types of schools. This represents an increase of 2.1 per cent from the 1996 figure which is below the improvement rate of 3.7 per cent nationally.
- Two schools were commended by OFSTED^② for outstanding inspection reports in 1998/9.

For the ten secondary schools in the period 1996-99:

- In 1999, 47.3 per cent of pupils gained five or more grades A* - C at GCSE; this represents an improvement of 4.1 per cent from 1996 which is above the national rate.

Attendance and Exclusions

- Attendance in primary schools is below national averages, while at secondary level it is just below and the gap is narrowing.
- In both primary and secondary schools the proportion of pupils excluded is above national averages. Permanent exclusions are declining significantly in secondary schools.

^① Hammersmith and Fulham, City of Westminster, Haringey, Wandsworth and Kensington and Chelsea

^② The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

Funding

19. Significant features of Camden's education funding since 1998 include:

- The Council has demonstrated the importance it attaches to education by protecting school budgets and by making additional corporate support available for education capital funding. For instance,
 - the Education budget for 1999/2000 is set at 106.7 per cent of SSA and in line with budgets in previous years;
 - funding to improve education building stock in Camden has been boosted by £1.8m in 1999/2000 from the Council's own resources.
- Camden's financial health is strong. Schools are financially viable and at the end of 1998/9 the Education Committee had a cumulative budget underspend of £2.3m to be carried forward as an earmarked reserve. Funding per pupil is well above national averages but in line with other inner London LEAs.
- In 1999/2000, 80.2 per cent of the local schools' budget is delegated to schools. This meets the minimum set by the Secretary of State but is below the average for all authorities in England (82.4 per cent). This report highlights areas where the LEA should consider whether more delegation would result in further improvements, for instance attendance and the inspection and advisory service (IAS). Some central costs are high and this is examined later in this report.

Council Structure

20. Camden Council has 59 members: 42 Labour, 11 Conservative and 6 Liberal Democrats. The Education Service reports to the Education Committee, which is one of five committees. The services of the Council are delivered through six departments including Education. The directors of each department, together with the Chief Executive, Controller of Financial Services, the Borough Solicitor and the Assistant Chief Executives, form the Camden management team, which gives strategic direction to the organisation at officer level.

21. The Education (Performance) Sub-committee has a scrutiny function considering performance across schools and services. Its members also serve on the Education Committee. The arrangements are not fully in line with the guidance for 'Modernising Local Government', but this is currently being reviewed. The Joint Committee for Children and Young Persons sets a strategic and co-ordinated approach to the joint work of Education, Social Services and Leisure and Community Departments. A monthly newsletter 'Education Member Briefings' keeps Members regularly updated.

22. The Education Department is led by the Director of Education and a senior management group made up of the Assistant Directors of School and Student Services, Curriculum and Community Services, and the Planning and Resources Group and the Head of the Policy and Research Group. There are four advisory

groups, which include headteacher representatives and these report to an Assistant Director.

Education Development Plan (EDP)

23. In February 1998 the LEA launched its strategic plan, 'Camden 2002 – Raising Achievement Together'. A group of headteachers, chairs of governors, officers and inspectors, led by the Director of Education, worked for over a year to produce this plan, which sets out clearly and well the LEA's vision, values, purposes, strategies and targets. This established a strong planning framework for all parts of the service.

24. Since the launch of the strategic plan, the LEA has produced a range of other plans. The key plan, the EDP, is based on the strategic plan and identifies six priorities:

- Early Years provision;
- school standards: teaching and learning quality;
- provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs;
- participation and progress;
- education for citizenship and employability;
- school management and governance.

25. The quality of major plans is good and the EDP is no exception. It defines clearly the LEA's strategy for raising achievement. The detailed actions within the six priorities are wide-ranging and appropriate. They reflect not only the national agenda but also local issues. For instance, throughout the EDP there is reference to the needs of minority ethnic pupils. The LEA has very good data analysed by many factors, including ethnicity and language competency, and much of the commentary is based on this data.

26. The EDP is concise, but comprehensive. It clearly defines actions, target groups, success criteria and responsibilities. Schools report that they have been consulted well. Activities are differentiated for a range of needs but it is not emphasised sufficiently that support to schools will be in inverse proportion to success or how this will be achieved. There is limited information on timescales for action and a lack of clarity on actions in subsequent years but this level of detail is provided in supplementary plans.

27. Each individual action within the EDP has a target date and nominated person detailed in a service plan. Using a computer database, service heads monitor meticulously that proposed actions are carried out as part of performance management systems. Procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed actions, involving other partners such as headteachers, however, are weak. The relevant advisory group has been poorly attended and has met irregularly. Arrangements to keep the Education (Performance) sub-committee informed regarding progress with implementation of the EDP need strengthening; the December 1999 target date in the EDP has been put back to March 2000. Procedures for reviewing progress at the end of a year are much stronger, involving an external agency and a report to the Education Committee.

28. The cost of the EDP is reasonable. The activities are set out clearly and succinctly. They do not overlap unnecessarily. Actions are well targeted on under-achieving groups, particularly Bangladeshi pupils, boys, looked-after children, refugees and Travellers.

29. The coherence of corporate planning is a strength of the LEA and is analysed further in Section 3 of the report. The EDP is born of the strategic plan and is cross-referenced to ensure compatibility with other major plans.

30. The analysis of data is a strength of the LEA generally; at times there has been a lack of clarity in data, for instance, the performance of secondary schools and statementing rates. The target setting process is rigorous but there are issues, nevertheless. For instance, the LEA is well placed to meet Key Stage 2 numeracy and literacy targets but those for GCSE are very challenging and will not be achieved with the current rate of progress.

The Allocation of Resources to Priorities

31. Resources allocated to the EDP are sufficiently aligned with the identified priorities and the detailed information in the plan demonstrates how specific funding has been targeted towards key areas for improvement.

32. Although overall spending is above SSA, there is some variation in the allocation to sectors. LEA spending is above SSA on early years, primary and post-16 education but below SSA on the 11-15 age range. Taken together with other external funding successfully bid for by the LEA, all sectors are well funded.

33. Central costs are too high. Although central funding is in line with other inner London boroughs it is well above (about 30 per cent) the target set by the Secretary of State. Substantial reductions in corporate recharges have already been made in recent years but much more needs to be done. Funding to provide Home to School Transport is significantly higher (£103 per pupil) compared with the England (£63) and inner London (£70) averages; the LEA has been slow to reduce this cost but has now identified savings for next year. The Asset Management costs are also more than double those for England and inner London.

34. The LEA was a Best Value pilot and in 1998 carried out reviews of the School Meals Services and the IAS. There were weaknesses with the review of the IAS; it did not sufficiently analyse the cost of different functions of the service or analyse effectively the impact of the IAS in secondary schools.

35. The LEA has considerably strengthened its procedures since these early reviews. A District Audit review in November 1999 concluded that the Council has sound corporate review processes and management structures which are appropriate for the implementation of Best Value. For instance, good progress has been made on benchmarking the services for which it is responsible. The LEA has a rolling programme to conduct Best Value evaluations for all services by 2003. It has identified 'providing quality services at Best Value' as a major theme for 2000/2001.

36. The LEA is well placed for Best Value but has not prepared the schools adequately. Schools do not know the full cost of all services provided; in some

cases, the costs are known to the LEA but not shared with the schools. This lack of transparency means that schools cannot make judgements about value for money.

Recommendations

In order to focus resources on priorities, the LEA should:

- reduce the high level of central charges and make the basis for charges more transparent to headteachers and governors;
- strengthen the procedures for involving headteachers in evaluating progress with the implementation of the EDP; for reporting progress to elected Members.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions

37. This section focuses primarily on the work of the LEA's inspection and advisory service (IAS). There are considerable strengths in the LEA's support for school improvement, from a range of services which helpfully complement the work of the IAS. The multi-ethnic and language support service, the behaviour support service and aspects of SEN services are effective, particularly in primary and special schools. Finance and personnel services are purchased by a high proportion of schools and provide good support. The Council and heads of service provide very good leadership in supporting school improvement. There are weaknesses in processing statements and at the operational level in liaison with social services (sections 4 and 5) and the health authority (section 4) and in managing support for improving attendance.

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention

38. The LEA's approach has considerable strengths, but some weaknesses too. The provision for challenge and intervention is very good; there is a high level of support and monitoring but it is not always cost effective.

39. The IAS team is large for an LEA of this size. It contains highly competent and effective staff with a good range of expertise for primary, secondary and special schools. The cost per pupil of school improvement is above national averages and, in 1998, the IAS was the fourth most expensive in inner London. The LEA has decided to maintain a large team by spending, if necessary, up to 15 per cent above inner London averages.

40. The IAS is well led and effective in helping schools to improve in all sectors; and outstandingly so for some schools which have progressed from having very significant weaknesses to becoming good schools. The work of the link inspector is widely praised. The LEA has a good knowledge of its schools, uses data well to identify strengths and weaknesses, challenges schools vigorously and intervenes decisively where it perceives the need to do so. This principle is well understood and accepted by the schools. The LEA does not place limits on the resources it is prepared to commit in order to bring about the required improvements.

41. All secondary schools receive three monitoring visits per year and primaries two. In addition, there are further visits related to reviews requested by the schools, thematic LEA reviews or, in some cases, prior to Section 10 inspections which are negotiated with the school. Given the quality of the data held centrally by the LEA, it does not need this level of visiting for all its schools to monitor their progress effectively, nor do all schools need this level of support.

42. Since 1998 the IAS has worked with schools to develop an annual school self-evaluation programme. There have been some teething problems but, following extensive consultations, it has been re-launched in January 2000 with the general agreement of schools. It has led to improvements in some of the schools involved in

the pilot. At this stage, in many schools it is not firmly integrated into the school development planning cycle.

43. There is a lack of clarity regarding the level of service that schools are purchasing plus the provision and costs of additional support. The lack of transparency about costs means that it is difficult for the schools or the LEA to judge whether the service provides value for money. The LEA needs to transfer more of the onus for improvement to the schools themselves and for heads to manage the proportion of in-class support against personnel carrying out inspection and advice.

44. Whilst in practice there are different levels of monitoring and support, many schools have formed the view that they can rely on the LEA to provide all that the schools request. In a few schools this is resulting in a culture of dependency. Although for the next financial year planning is in place to focus the deployment of the IAS more closely on implementing the EDP, the IAS has not yet defined clearly, the criteria for a staged reduction of its level of support as schools become increasingly self-supporting.

Collection and Analysis of Data

45. Camden provides a good service to schools to support their analysis of data. Through the work of the IAS and the policy and research group (PRG), schools receive a wide range of performance and management data with national, local and banded comparators, where appropriate. In addition, the in-borough data gives detailed socio-economic information for each school. Heads universally welcome this data to support their pupil tracking and target setting. It is also used well to identify good practice, both by schools and by the LEA.

46. The LEA provides sound guidance on the use of data. The training and guidance documents are well planned and the data is used confidently by most schools. Training for senior staff and subject leaders on the use of data in raising standards is provided jointly by the IAS and the PRG and is sound. Some schools rightly recognise that their procedures for setting targets need to be refined.

47. In all schools the link inspector and senior staff discuss and agree the future targets, and these discussions are challenging for headteachers and subject leaders. It is also realistic about the two key factors which significantly affect attainment in Camden, that of English as an additional language and high levels of pupil mobility. The LEA monitors data closely, knows where standards are below national averages or declining and takes steps to support groups at risk of under-performing.

48. Co-ordination of the transfer of Key Stage 2 test data to secondary schools is poor and the procedures for passing data from nursery to reception are inconsistent. These issues are being considered by a working party. The provision of value-added outcome data is limited, particularly for primary schools, and special schools are at an early stage in the use of targets as a means of raising standards in personal and academic development.

Support for Literacy

49. Support for the development of literacy is good in Key Stages 1 and 2. The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) has been introduced effectively in primary schools.

50. Standards in English tests at Key Stage 2 have risen significantly in Camden since 1996. In 1999, there was a seven per cent increase, which was two per cent more than the national rate. The percentage gaining level 4 and above was 69 per cent, close to the national average and above the target set by the LEA for 2000. The target for 2002 is 78 per cent and the LEA should consider whether the interim target for 2001 is too low.

51. The decision to give all primary schools intensive support with literacy over a five year programme reflects the high levels of support from a literacy consultant and two advisory teachers, but it is an inappropriate use of resources in higher attaining schools. The literacy team is well managed, with monthly monitoring of targets plus support and supervision through the line manager. They have identified appropriate actions for this school year to focus on phonics, writing, family literacy and Key Stage 3 literacy, which are well planned to meet needs. The service works closely with learning support and ethnic minority support staff to provide effective documentary guidance and in-class advice.

52. In the school survey the primary schools rated the support for literacy as good and above the average for other LEAs surveyed. The support provided to schools includes a good range of guidance on lesson planning, teaching and all aspects of the framework plus lesson demonstrations, in-service workshops and lesson observations with feedback.

53. Support for literacy in secondary schools has strengths and weaknesses and has improved recently. The action plan for 1999-2000 appropriately indicates work which will focus on summer literacy schools, the monitoring of literacy in Key Stage 3 and developing the use of aspects of the NLS framework in secondary schools. This work has begun in some secondary schools with good effect. Special schools have been well supported by the literacy team and the guidance to staff on using the hour has been well implemented in schools.

Support for Numeracy

54. Support for numeracy is good in the primary schools and this is reflected in pupils' performances. The attainment of pupils in end of Key Stage 2 tests is above national averages. In 1999, 69.6 per cent of pupils achieved level 4, a much higher figure than might be expected given the high percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. A numeracy target of 74 per cent has been set for 2002 with an intermediate target for the year 2000 of 67 per cent. This means that the LEA is well on course to meet its target for 2002 but also suggests that intermediate targets are too low.

55. The LEA numeracy project in 1998/9 has provided a focussed lead and a sound foundation for the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). Several schools involved in this pilot made excellent progress. The LEA has established a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching of

mathematics in its primary schools. This has enabled it to target resources to areas of greatest need. Currently, 12 schools are receiving intensive support as part of the NNS and summer schools are planned. The project is very well managed and the quality of training seen was good. There were effective inputs by the strategy manager and consultant and good use was made of other contributors.

56. Support for special schools is good but that for secondary schools has some weaknesses. In the Key Stage 3 tests, the rate of improvement since 1996 has been very much greater than the national rate but the percentage gaining level 5 or higher was still 10 per cent below the national average in 1999. Relative to other subjects in 1999, GCSE mathematics results were poor. The LEA strategic plan contains a target for all schools to have a numeracy policy by year 2000 but this has not been met. There has been too little LEA action in promoting continuity on transfer from primary to secondary schools. Support for secondary schools is now being strengthened.

57. In the school survey, LEA support was rated as good in primary and special schools and ranged from poor to good in secondary schools

Support for ICT

58. The support for ICT in the curriculum is good in primary and special schools but is too variable in quality in the secondary schools. The LEA has a good development plan for ICT in the Borough in which raising pupil attainment and teachers' skills are key targets. The schools' own self evaluation in 1998 indicated that 42 per cent needed to improve standards in ICT.

59. The guidance to primary schools on technical issues, teaching and the use of resources is good. The LEA has successfully encouraged most primary schools to employ the services of an advisory teacher for a half term development project on the use of ICT in literacy and numeracy. This project is in its third year of operation, and the quality of the advice and support is good because it is practical and focussed on teaching ideas and resources. Special schools are well served with effective guidance for the use of ICT in the curriculum for pupils with specific learning needs. In the school survey, primary and special schools rated the overall support for ICT as good.

60. By contrast, the advice to secondary schools is more variable. In the main the information and guidance on policies, National Grid for Learning (NGfL) plans, network installations and hardware have been good. However, the support in developing curriculum applications in secondary schools is unsatisfactory and this aspect is not addressed sufficiently in the EDP.

61. Training for teachers is provided both by LEA staff and through a contract with an external partner. Schools report that much of the training is good and well linked to the wide range of staff needs, but is insufficient to meet all needs. Two secondary schools have technology college status and one is beginning to develop an effective training partnership with a local primary school for all staff and pupils in years five and six. This programme is proving very successful both for ICT and school links.

62. The LEA provided good advice on Year 2000 issues and is developing Camden Connect, a Borough Intranet site which is already in use in some schools. The target is that all schools will have their own website by April 2000. LEA staff have good levels of technical expertise and they offer prompt and good advice to schools. The LEA is using the outcomes of annual self review in schools to target areas of need both in skills and curriculum development.

Support for Early Years

63. The LEA provides good support for Early Years. Since 1995 Camden has implemented an ambitious programme of expanding its nursery provision. The strategies are clearly set out in a good quality Early Years Development and Childcare Plan. The EDP is closely aligned to this plan and provision for Early Years is highlighted as the first priority. The actions and activities detailed in the EDP are very appropriate; they include dissemination of good practice, support for disadvantaged groups, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language, and training plans.

64. There has been a strong corporate approach to improving Early Years. Nearly 680 new places have been created in the last four years in line with targets the LEA set itself. There has not yet been as much take up for three year olds as anticipated and the LEA is continually seeking ways to encourage more involvement with the Bangladeshi community through, for instance, the Sure Start programme. This is at 'an early stage of development, but there is every indication it will be of high quality. It is a 'trailblazer' project intended to focus on issues of ethnicity, transience and provision for refugees by providing for the day care needs of under-threes and their families. The Early Excellence Centre is at the forefront of national and international early years work and policy development. It was the first Early Years Excellence Centre to be established by collaboration between an LEA and a charitable foundation. The Centre is well supported by the LEA but delays in delegating the budget militate against longer term planning and reduce the effectiveness of a strong governing body.

65. OFSTED inspections confirm that early years provision is generally of good quality. Visits to schools suggest that the Early Years Intervention Strategy is beginning to have a positive impact. Overall, the investment in Early Years is giving good value for money.

Support for Schools Causing Concern

66. LEA support for primary and special schools causing concern is very effective and sometimes outstandingly so. In secondary schools, there is a correspondingly high level of support which is sound.

67. Three maintained schools have been judged to require special measures since 1993; one secondary and two special schools. The secondary school failed to make the necessary progress and was closed in 1998. There is a question mark over the quality of the LEA support for special schools in the past, since two of the six were placed in special measures and a third judged to have serious weaknesses. Since then, the support given to these schools has been very good. The partnership of

headteacher, governing body and the LEA has been a major strength; as a result the schools have improved considerably and now provide a good quality of education.

68. Another major strength of the LEA is the identification and support for schools with weaknesses; the support for some primary schools has been excellent. This is a principal reason that there are now no LEA schools in special measures or judged to have serious weaknesses. In agreement with the schools, the LEA establishes a multi-agency project group and an LEA action plan for additional support. These groups have proved to be well organised, challenging and effective.

Support for Governors

69. Support for governors is satisfactory and has improved in the past two years. Governors are well informed about relevant legislation and local developments through the highly regarded termly newsletter from the Director, consultation documents and a weekly posting to each chair of governors. Governors are represented on strategic advisory groups of the LEA and they are confident that the LEA listens to their views and has modified proposals as a result. There is an effective forum of chairs of governors which meets LEA officers and Members twice termly to discuss issues and feedback information.

70. The LEA's recently introduced induction programme offers good advice and is well scheduled each term. Training programmes provided by the LEA are of mixed quality. The take up of training courses is also very variable. The clerking service is satisfactory overall.

Support for School Management

71. The LEA provides good support for school management. The EDP focuses appropriately on professional development for headteachers and senior staff, together with support for monitoring and strategic planning in schools, and the proposed actions are appropriate.

72. There is a sound management training framework for headteachers and senior staff which includes courses offered by the LEA, annual conferences and long established network meetings for headteachers, all of which are well regarded. A good induction programme for heads was introduced in 1998, providing advice from the link inspector and LEA officers and contact with a personal mentor; however, the number of visits a new headteacher receives in the first term is excessive and needs better management. The national training courses for aspiring heads (NPQH) and serving heads (LPSH) are actively supported by the LEA and there is a steady take-up of places from both primary and secondary schools. The forum for deputy heads offers good development and training.

73. Networks for the professional development of subject leaders and middle managers are of mixed quality, although the meetings are well managed by the LEA. The secondary subject conferences, which happen bi-annually, are successful. There is no extended training programme for middle managers to cover the skills of leadership and management, but a recent course for aspiring deputy heads was well received. Currently the LEA does not provide an effective brokering system where there are gaps in its own expertise.

74. Induction and support for newly qualified teachers are good. The LEA provides an excellent one year programme during which teachers gain good experience from across the Borough. The high quality of the training is a positive factor in students' decisions to apply to teach in Camden schools.

75. Headteacher appraisal is a weakness in the LEA, with a low proportion of heads currently involved. A few heads have not been appraised for four years. Teacher appraisal is stronger with about 75 per cent of schools maintaining and reporting an effective annual review programme with staff. The LEA has in place a planning team to take action on the expected national guidance on performance review.

76. A particular strength in the support to curriculum and management is the positive and enthusiastic partnership between the LEA and schools with local and national organisations for the visual and performing arts. Camden has a growing reputation for this work and pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities.

Recommendations

In order to make support for school improvement more effective the LEA should:

- provide support to schools in line with the principle of 'Intervention in inverse proportion to success';
- review the role of the IAS as part of the reduction in centrally retained funds;
- review targets, where appropriate, and introduce targets for Key Stage 3 attainment;
- continue to improve support for literacy and numeracy in secondary schools;
- ensure that data is transferred efficiently from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3;
- put in place procedures for the appraisal of headteachers;
- broker the provision for the training of teachers or managers, including ICT in secondary schools.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate Planning

77. High quality corporate planning is a considerable strength of the local authority. Raising standards of attainment and the quality of education are high on the corporate agenda of the Council. There is a long-standing commitment by members and the Council as a whole to support schools, not only by maintaining their funding but by setting a clear strategic vision for education in Camden, developed in partnership with schools. This commitment to education and the performance of its schools earned the Council the Beacon Status accolade in December 1999. At about the same time the Education Department was awarded the Investors in People standard – further evidence of its strong and developing support for staff across the education service.

78. In March 1996 the Council agreed the first Corporate Plan, followed closely by the Camden Plan in 1997. February 1998 saw the launch of the LEA's Strategic Plan: Camden 2002 – Raising Achievement Together. These plans are of good quality and meant that the LEA was extremely well placed to formulate an EDP. The latter translates the objectives identified by the Council into detailed planning to support school improvement.

79. The Council has been successful in winning external funding for regeneration. At the outset, the LEA was marginally involved in these initiatives but within the last two years, has taken a much higher profile. The LEA has secured significant single regeneration budget (SRB) funding to support developments in West Euston and Kings Cross. The projects focus on the educational attainment of disadvantaged groups by targeting families and individual pupils who are at risk of under achieving. The appointment of a Regeneration Officer should help to address schools' concerns about the lack of advice in accessing external grants, expressed in the school survey.

80. Camden LEA, working with other Council departments and community partners, has developed multi-agency work in key areas of support. At the corporate level this is a strength of the Council. For instance, in 1998 the Council adopted 'Investing in the Future' (children's service plan) as its plan for all services to children and young people. The related strategy group contains senior representatives from all Council departments, the Health Authority, the local health trusts and the voluntary sector.

81. Examples of strong inter-agency working are found in the SRB initiatives, a multi-disciplinary early years intervention team and community/LEA partnership working. At the operational level the corporate strength is not always reflected in practice. A significant proportion of schools was dissatisfied with the liaison between education and social services, and with the health service. This is commented on further in sections 4 and 5.

82. A very recent and well-conceived initiative has been the Excellence in Cities (EiC) bid. The Camden EiC partnership has been a model in bringing all relevant partners together. The plan is a very good one, including clear timelines that enable

progress to be easily monitored. There are clear criteria for allocating resources within each of the strands. The EiC plan is very clearly and appropriately cross-referenced to the EDP. For instance, provision for gifted and talented pupils is a priority in the EDP but enhanced in the EiC plan. It also includes a general aim to improve primary/secondary transfer arrangements, which are currently an acknowledged weakness in the LEA. The LEA is seconding a primary and a secondary headteacher to review procedures. Visits to schools reveal that EiC has not yet had an impact on target-setting, either at Key Stage 3 or GCSE level.

83. Strategic leadership of the LEA is very good and members are well informed and advised by their officers. Schools, too, are appreciative of the commitment and support they receive from their Members and officers. Mutual respect and high trust are very evident, but do not inhibit one partner from challenging another when appropriate to do so. The LEA has very effective structures for communication and consultation with schools and governing bodies. The Diocesan Authorities regard LEA activity on access issues as strong in all relevant contexts.

84. The Education Committee scrutinises school and LEA performance rigorously; procedures for evaluating progress with the implementation of the EDP need to be strengthened. Evaluation of services generally is sound and there are examples of good practice in evaluation, such as the primary learning support service (PLSS).

Management Services

85. The general quality of management support provided to schools is good and its effectiveness is recognised by a large majority of schools. Those parts of the services considered below, which are delegated to schools, are bought back by all primary schools (except for financial services, where the take up is 95 per cent) and a majority of secondary and special schools. Service managers have delegated budgetary responsibilities and work to clearly articulated annual service plans, with appropriate targets and performance measures.

86. The **personnel service** is effective and well regarded by schools. The present structure was introduced in March 1999, following a review and a comparison of staffing for similar functions in similar other London boroughs. The updated Personnel Handbook is thorough and clear and provides a good guide for schools. The offer of a regular termly visit to schools provides a continuing, consistent level of support. Steps have been taken to introduce a new administrative system to link more effectively personnel and payroll records. The payroll service is to be delegated in April 2000.

87. Camden's **financial service** is well structured and offers a sound service to schools. The clarity of school budget statements is appreciated by schools, as is the part played by internal audit. Camden LEA is addressing a concern expressed by schools by offering to collect all schools' data to input it into the Audit Commission website for reporting schools' costs, thus providing comparative data.

88. Balances are too high in some primary and special schools. The total balances, at the end of 1998/9, were 9.2 per cent in primary and 12.1 per cent in special schools. Thirty one of 42 primary schools and four of six LEA-maintained special schools had a balance of more than five per cent. All had set out in writing to the

Director of Education the reasons for the surplus and plans to commit the balance. It is essential that the position on balances be monitored closely and reported to the Education Committee to ensure that the budget for a given financial year is effectively used for the benefit of pupils' attainment.

89. The LEA support for **administrative ICT** developments is strong. Progress has been particularly rapid over the last year or so, and this has produced occasional technical difficulties and a need for intensive staff training. All schools administrative systems have Internet access, effective training is being provided and plans are in place to introduce an integrated pupil information system in 2000.

90. The **property and contracts** section is well organised and has a clear view of the individual needs of its schools. Although schools express some dissatisfaction with technical advice on building maintenance, the service is bought back by 91 per cent of all schools. There is adequate funding available for school maintenance, and the number of temporary classrooms in Camden is low. Plans are in place to reduce this number further.

91. The LEA's Asset Management Plan policy statement has been submitted on time and the suitability of premises will be assessed in accordance with the DfEE timetable. Condition surveys are carried out every three years and form part of the annual planned maintenance programme; that conducted in 1999 will form part of the Asset Management Plan. A weakness is that information given to schools, following the condition and suitability surveys, does not set out clearly the respective responsibilities of schools and LEA in respect of maintenance/improvement work. Good use is made of sale of assets and corporate support in respect of premises. No scheme has yet been funded by the Private Finance Initiative, but consultants have been engaged to research potential developments in this area.

92. The **Health and Safety** service provided is well planned and responsive to schools. Benchmarking against other London boroughs shows that it is delivered at a reasonable cost.

93. The **school meals service** provides good value both in terms of unit cost and quality. It has been subject to a Best Value review.

94. Service level specifications provided for schools are not specific enough. Appropriate consultative mechanisms exist to ensure that the provision of LEA services meets schools' needs and a very high percentage of schools buy back services. The LEA has not yet, however, set out in all cases the full costs of each service, both retained and delegated or the range of purchase options open to the school for each service, where this is appropriate. Unless, in consultation, schools expressly prefer a longer contract, contracts should be renegotiated on an annual basis.

Recommendations

In order to improve services to schools:

- in collaboration with schools, the LEA should continue to monitor school budgets closely and take action to reduce high balances where appropriate;

- information provided for schools as part of the School Asset Management Plan should provide clear delineation between school and LEA responsibilities;
- service specifications for service level agreements with schools should contain full information regarding all costs, with a range of options for buy back where appropriate.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

Strategy

95. Camden has a very clear strategy, formulated in 1998, for developing its special educational needs (SEN) provision. It is based on a comprehensive review and analysis of need and all subsequent plans, such as the EDP and Behaviour Support Plan, are consistent with it. Headteachers have been widely consulted at each stage and, in virtually all the schools visited, felt that they had been properly involved and identified closely with LEA priorities, especially with the inclusion policy. Plans are well documented, and there is extensive published guidance for schools and parents. The services are clearly defined and structured; they are well organised generally.

96. Good progress is being made in most of the chosen priority areas. Special needs are receiving attention at an early stage. The inclusion policy is developing well, especially in respect of behavioural difficulties. In the secondary PRU, accredited courses are being increased and improved. Good practice is being promoted through a range of good advice and training. The efficiency of the assessment and statementing process and the partnership with schools are improving, but there is more to do. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are being addressed successfully in the SEN context. Overall, the LEA has a strong sense of direction and is implementing its plans successfully in co-operation with schools.

Statutory Obligations

97. The LEA is taking reasonable steps to meet the majority of its statutory duties, but there have been serious delays in the completion and amendment of statements.

98. The processing of statements is too slow. The LEA reports that in 1999 all draft statements were completed within the national guideline of 18 weeks. However, this contrasts starkly with the actual rate of 32 per cent. This explains the widespread perception in schools that delays are continuing, despite the LEA headline figure. The discrepancy arises because, in 90 per cent of cases, the necessary documentation from other agencies such as the health authority and social services arrived late, and these are not counted in the LEA figure in accordance with Audit Commission criteria. Inter-agency working in this regard is unsatisfactory.

99. Special schools are content with the progress made but mainstream schools are very dissatisfied. The LEA is keen to fill vacancies for headteachers on the SEN Panel; this would be appropriate and help to reduce the gulf in perception of effectiveness between the LEA and its schools.

100. The criteria to help schools identify pupils at different stages of the Code of Practice are not sufficiently detailed. Each year the IAS conducts a thorough audit in a small sample of schools of their SEN procedures. Given the level of dissatisfaction evident from visits to schools and the school survey, a wider investigation is warranted that includes an evaluation of LEA support.

101. Arrangements for consulting parents are sound. Annual and transition reviews are well organised and the LEA is appropriately represented.

102. The quality of the statements produced is usually good. The provision made for pupils, once statemented, is also generally good, whether they are supported in mainstream schools or in special schools in the LEA. The LEA assists with appointments to special schools, as appropriate, in order to bring in more subject expertise from the mainstream. There are moves towards capitalising more in the mainstream on special school expertise in such areas as emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is a useful development. A substantial number of placements are made in special schools outside the Borough and these placements are monitored appropriately by the IAS through visits and attendance at reviews.

Improvement and Value for Money

103. The strongest feature of Camden's approach to SEN is in helping schools to improve the quality of their work; in both its advisory and administrative functions it manages to give a sound service at a reasonable cost. The IAS gives high quality advice to both mainstream and special schools. The training it provides for teachers and ancillary staff is sufficient and well regarded. Special Needs Co-ordinators in schools are well supported and are kept up-to-date. The staff of the primary learning support service (PLSS) and the educational psychology service (EPS) make equally valued contributions to advice and training. Useful guidance has been given on integrating pupils with SEN into the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The learning support and SEN peripatetic teachers are generally praised for their work in support of individual pupils.

104. In the current year, Camden is spending a little more on SEN than the average for inner London boroughs, and substantially more than the average for all LEAs. Given that its provision is sound overall, it provides satisfactory value for money. Within the whole are two significant variations. Firstly, the expenditure on supporting pupils in school is markedly more than in other LEAs, reflecting the fact that Camden is delegating less to schools. However, the services which it is able to offer as a result, such as the PLSS, are among those most valued by schools. Secondly, it spends significantly more than similar LEAs on assessment and statementing and in this case the difference is harder to justify on grounds of quality.

105. As with funding, the schools have confidence in the LEA's concern to distribute the EPS and educational social work service (ESWS) in proportion to schools' needs. But the evidence of the school visits and meetings with headteachers is that in most cases schools would like to know more about the precise basis for the allocation. The special schools are generally well funded and resourced and those visited acknowledged this. The LEA is very good at adding to its resources through successful bids for grants for special projects.

Analysis

106. Support for SEN in special schools is good. In mainstream schools support is improving and there are some strengths. The quality of in-class support for SEN and behaviour is good. However, delays in processing and amending statements are causing frustration in the schools. The LEA does not communicate well enough

regarding the progress of applications at each stage. The basis on which services are allocated is not sufficiently clear. Moreover, the criteria for allocating pupils to stages of the Code of Practice are imprecise, so that there is a clear risk that they will be interpreted in unacceptably various ways.

Recommendations

In order to make the assessment and statementing process more effective and foster the partnership with schools, the LEA should:

- devise more detailed criteria for the stages of the Code of Practice;
- revise the approach to monitoring to embrace the roles of both schools and LEA officers and support the schools in applying the criteria consistently;
- continue to improve communication with schools, particularly with regard to the basis for distributing SEN support services between schools and the progress of applications for statementing;
- restore school representation on the SEN Panel;
- investigate with social services and the health authority reasons for delays in the procedures for statementing and the amendments of statements, and identify improvements.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The Supply of School Places

107. The LEA fulfils its statutory duties well. The infant class size plan is clear and the LEA should be compliant by September 2000 in ensuring, with governing bodies, that no Key Stage 1 class contains over 30 children.

108. Forecasting of pupil numbers is conducted by the London Research Centre with a good degree of accuracy. The percentage of unfilled places in primary schools is 5.2 per cent. In secondary education the equivalent percentage is 7.8 per cent. In both cases, the figures are below national averages and within the lower quartile for inner London boroughs. Conversely, the percentage of pupils in excess of school capacity in secondary schools, at 4 per cent in 1999, is within the upper quartile for inner London boroughs. The LEA is taking appropriate action by providing additional one-form entry extensions at two secondary schools.

109. The LEA did not meet the statutory guidelines for introducing a School Organisation Plan. Preliminary consultation did take place in 1999, but the final draft plan was not circulated for comment until October 1999 with responses to be provided for January 2000. There are good reasons for the delay, in that a review was being undertaken of two of the five areas of the Borough related to the organisation of primary education and it was agreed the results should be awaited before the Plan was produced in its final draft. The plan itself is thorough, and well researched, covering all aspects of educational provision within Camden, going well beyond the minimum information required.

110. The School Organisation Committee has been established, meeting for the first time in October 1999. No further major reorganisation is planned following recent action in respect of a secondary and special school.

Admissions

111. Procedures relating to admissions to schools in Camden are more complex than in most LEAs. Approximately half of the secondary school population is from outside Camden, 21 of the 42 primary schools are voluntary aided with their own admissions policies, and the 10 secondary schools form a mix of single sex, voluntary aided, foundation and community schools. Given this complexity, the admissions procedures operate effectively. The school survey demonstrates a good level of satisfaction with the operation of the appeals process.

112. Because of the above features, the admissions booklets for starting school and transferring to secondary education have to be lengthy documents. They manage successfully to give clear and specific information to parents and address well all the relevant issues. The time taken for LEA admission administrative procedures, from publication of the admissions booklet to the individual admission being settled, following appeal if relevant, meet Audit Commission minimum or best practice standards in all areas.

113. The LEA has taken positive action to ensure a reasonably equal distribution of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs at the point of secondary transfer, following concerns expressed by headteachers that some schools were admitting a disproportionate number. A strategy was agreed in 1995, based on the LEA belief that it is good practice to have no more than two children with statements per thirty places. There is reference to this agreement in the Special Needs documentation but not in general admissions documentation made available to parents. The LEA has not monitored the approach sufficiently well to be sure it does not conflict with schools' statutory admission policies.

Provision of Education Otherwise Than At School

114. The education of children otherwise than at school, principally at home, is carefully monitored. The education social work service (ESWS) maintains records and tracks progress, while the IAS is responsible for checking compliance with statutory requirements and the quality of provision. The procedures are set out carefully and there is comprehensive and helpful guidance for both inspectors and parents. A broadly based Attendance Panel institutes action regarding individual cases when necessary.

Attendance

115. LEA support for attendance is unsatisfactory. Visits to schools and the school survey reveal widespread dissatisfaction with the management of the ESWS. High staff turnover and successive reorganisations have led to discontinuity. The purposes of the recent reorganisation are not clear to the schools or to those educational social workers (ESWs) interviewed. In some instances, bureaucratic demands on schools are thought to prevent a rapid response to requests to follow up absenteeism. The service needs to be re-focussed on its prime objectives and reorientated towards meeting the needs of schools.

116. There are some successes. Attendance rates are improving although there is less progress with improving punctuality. The LEA is actively promoting measures to support schools with these particular difficulties (see Social Exclusion below). There is useful co-operation between the police and the ESWS in tackling truancy, with joint patrols twice each year. The ESWs assigned to the early years, Travellers and to special schools give valuable support to staff, children and families.

117. A few schools, dissatisfied with the service, have appointed their own officer. The ESWS recognises and supports the work of school-based officers and is moving towards a two-tier system but at risk of a degree of duplication.

Behaviour Support

118. The behaviour support plan is a sound document, links with the EDP, and is being implemented effectively. It carries the support of the schools and they identify strongly with the LEA's priorities for managing behaviour and promoting inclusion. A key objective is to reduce exclusion and a concerted effort by the LEA and schools together has been successful. Permanent exclusions fell from a total of 50 in 1997/8 to 35 in 1998/9. The percentage of pupils excluded in Camden is slightly below the inner London average in secondary schools and well below in primary schools.

119. PLSS staff do valuable work in supporting behaviour management in primary schools through working with pupils, consultation with teachers and staff training. Courses for teachers are planned jointly with the IAS. The early intervention programme helps to reduce the need for stateminting and exclusion. The PLSS is a well managed service which is conscientious in asking schools to evaluate its work annually. Most primary schools visited have found it very responsive to all reasonable requests for support, but a minority were sceptical about the basis for distributing the support between schools.

120. There is a more limited service for secondary schools, but a number of initiatives are beginning to meet the need. The secondary PRU, the main component, is working closely with some schools to allow temporary respite for students at risk of exclusion, the students retaining dual registration until they are reintegrated. Some schools are providing respite internally through learning support units or classes. Mentoring schemes are provided to support individual pupils. The prevention of exclusion initiative (PEI), whose staff are appointed jointly by the LEA and Social Services, offers a range of suitable techniques to support teachers and pupils in the lower secondary years with managing behaviour, improving basic skills and building favourable attitudes to attendance and punctuality. Benefits are starting to be felt. A frustration for schools with a high proportion of out-borough students is that the initiative is confined to Camden students only.

Health, Safety, Welfare, Child Protection

121. The general effectiveness of liaison between education and social services in the school survey is rated as unsatisfactory by primary schools and as poor by secondaries. The LEA is aware of the issue and arranged meetings with the Director of Social Services at which improvements were identified. Schools still cite examples of poor day-to-day communications regarding children potentially at risk. The LEA and the social services need to investigate the effectiveness of the measures put in place.

Looked-After Children

122. There are 233 looked-after children in the Borough and the LEA has made good progress towards monitoring their progress and achievement. An inter-agency working group, co-ordinated by the SEN Inspector, meets regularly. Attainment data for looked-after children placed outside the borough is not yet complete but plans have been made to collect it. The steps taken so far leave the LEA well placed to develop additional techniques to encourage the raising of achievement. Some of the schools visited have good internal pastoral arrangements for this group of pupils.

Ethnic Minority Children

123. Overall, this is an area of considerable strength in Camden. The needs of ethnic minority children permeate the EDP and the LEA's policies, reflecting its commitment to its diverse population. There is exceptionally comprehensive data for the schools and the LEA as a whole, well analysed by ethnicity and attainment. It is updated and improved regularly. For instance, closer analysis has recently been made of the achievements of the sub-groups of black pupils which have been an area of concern. The Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant (EMAG) plan is very well

written and takes careful account of a wide range of ethnic minority issues related to cultural origins, language needs, travellers and refugees. It sets out clearly the responsibilities of each relevant service.

124. The main service for implementing the LEA's strategy is the Camden language and support service (CLASS) which is very well organised and far-sighted. It has long delegated the appointment of support assistants to schools, concentrating its own efforts on consultancy, and this has greatly eased the transition from Section 11 to EMAG funding. The schools visited consistently praised the quality of support. CLASS works in close collaboration with the inspector for languages and ethnic minorities and together they offer very good training and written guidance. In particular they assist the schools effectively, according to their needs, with the appointment, deployment and training of support teachers and assistants and bilingual support staff. They provide useful help to schools in formulating their own policies for ethnic minorities.

125. Systematic audits are conducted in schools of the stages of English development of those pupils for whom it is an additional language as a basis for the school's planning. Intensive support is provided to schools with the greatest need and is well received. There is high regard for the LEA's work in relating the NLS to pupils whose first language is not English.

126. The LEA faces major challenges in providing access to education for all its pupils. There is high pupil mobility, increasing numbers of refugee children as well as a high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. It is largely a success story - although as rapidly as the LEA tackles one challenge, another emerges, and so it can never be complacent. The LEA has better data than most LEAs on pupil mobility; this shows that while levels are generally above average they are very high in a few schools. For instance, one secondary school averages 25 per cent turn over of pupils in a two year period; casual admissions of about five pupils per week to this school create difficulties for the grouping of pupils and continuity of learning. Much of the current mobility centres around schools receiving different refugee groups who are housed in temporary accommodation. Schools supply data to the LEA termly on the number of admissions and pupils departing. The LEA is providing an appropriately high level of support to such schools.

127. The LEA has identified under-achieving ethnic minority groups and has undertaken positive action as a consequence of these analyses. In particular, there have been a number of initiatives to raise the achievement of Bangladeshi pupils and there has been a 'narrowing of the gap'.

Social Exclusion

128. Camden has responded to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report by strengthening its measures to combat racism. It took part in the pilot for the Audit Commission's Race Equality Audit. It has set up a racist incident monitoring procedure in each school and most of those visited were complying with its requirements. It has analysed in great depth the relationship between ethnicity, achievement and exclusion, helping schools to identify precisely the pupils at risk. A range of initiatives is being supported in schools, or groups of schools, targeted on

raising achievement and reducing exclusion and often drawing on additional funding from EMAG, SRB projects, the Excellence in Cities initiative and the Social Inclusion Standards Funding. The approach is consistent across the initiatives, using techniques described elsewhere in this report. In the schools visited, the support of CLASS for homework clubs was particularly valued. These clubs are of great benefit to pupils, mainly refugees, whose accommodation make quiet concentration difficult at home.

Recommendations

In order to improve access to education:

- review the role and organisation of the ESWS, take steps to restore schools' confidence in the service and co-ordinate efforts to inform parents of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- monitor the ways secondary schools are implementing LEA advice on admitting pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need;
- investigate further how day-to-day communications between social workers and schools can be improved;
- investigate the possibility of including all pupils who could benefit from PEI, regardless of the borough in which they reside;
- ensure that the LEA has full data on looked-after children educated within and outside the Borough.

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

The LEA strategy for School Improvement

In order to focus resources on priorities, the LEA should:

- reduce the high level of central charges and make the basis for charges more transparent to headteachers and governors;
- strengthen the procedures for involving headteachers in evaluating progress with the implementation of the EDP; and for reporting on progress to elected Members;

School Improvement

In order to make school improvement more effective the LEA should:

- provide support to schools in line with the principle of 'Intervention in inverse proportion to success';
- review the role of the IAS as part of the reduction in centrally retained funds;
- review targets, where appropriate, and introduce targets for Key Stage 3 attainment;
- continue to improve support for literacy and numeracy in secondary schools;
- ensure that data is transferred efficiently from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3;
- put in place procedures for the appraisal of headteachers;
- broker the provision for the training of teachers or managers, including ICT in secondary schools.

Strategic Management

In order to improve services to schools:

- in collaboration with schools, the LEA should continue to monitor school budgets closely and take action to reduce high balances where appropriate;
- information provided for schools as part of the School Asset Management Plan should provide clear delineation between school and LEA responsibilities;
- service specifications for service level agreements with schools should contain full information regarding all costs, with a range of options for buy back where appropriate.

Special Education Provision

In order to make the assessment and statementing process more effective and foster the partnership with schools, the LEA should:

- devise more detailed criteria for the stages of the Code of Practice;

- revise the approach to monitoring to embrace the roles of both schools and LEA officers and support the schools in applying the criteria consistently;
- continue to improve communication with schools, particularly with regard to the basis for distributing SEN support services between schools and the progress of applications for statementing;
- restore school representation on the SEN Panel;
- investigate with social services and the health authority reasons for delays in the procedures for statementing and the amendments of statements, and identify improvements.

Access

In order to improve access to education the LEA should:

- review the role and organisation of the ESWS, take steps to restore schools' confidence in the service and co-ordinate efforts to inform parents of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- monitor the ways secondary schools are implementing LEA advice on admitting pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need;
- investigate further how day-to-day communications between social workers and schools can be improved;
- investigate the possibility of including all pupils who could benefit from PEI, regardless of the borough in which they reside;
- ensure that the LEA has full data on looked-after children educated within and outside the borough.

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