Office for Standards in Education

# Cambridgeshire

# Local Education Authority

# Inspection Report

**Date of Inspection: January 2004**

**Reporting Inspector: Robert Barr HMI**

audit commission

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## Basic information

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| Name of LEA: | Cambridgeshire Local Education Authority |
| LEA number: | 873 |
| Address of LEA: | Castle Court<br>Shire Hall<br>Castle Hill<br>Cambridge CB3 0AP |
| Reporting Inspector: | Robert Barr HMI |
| Date of Inspection: | January 2004 |

# Summary

## Introduction

Cambridgeshire is a largely rural, relatively prosperous, county. The few areas of severe deprivation are located in Cambridge city and in the North East of the county. Cambridgeshire has the highest population growth of counties in England; this expansion is set to continue. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national figure. The percentage of primary and secondary school age pupils with a statement of special educational need is higher than the national figure. The Local Education Authority has six nursery schools, 202 primary schools and 31 secondary schools. There are nine special schools and seven pupil referral units or secondary support establishments.

Standards of attainment in Cambridgeshire schools are generally in line with those in similar authorities[1] but are mostly higher than the national average. Despite improvement in standards, the LEA has fallen short of its 2003 targets in most areas. Targets for primary school pupils for 2004 are unrealistic, and those for pupils at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) stage are highly unlikely to be met.

Since the last inspection there have been few changes to the councillors with responsibilities for education. The only significant change to management structures has been the re-organisation of school effectiveness functions to facilitate better targeting of support for schools. The county has complied with the statutory requirement to modernise its council decision-making structures and has established a cabinet system for strategic decision-making and series of scrutiny committees. However, the cross-party policy development structures existing prior to modernisation have been retained. Six pairs of infant and junior schools have been amalgamated to create all-through primary schools. The reorganisation of special schools as part of the council's special educational needs strategy involves the establishment of two new broad range area special schools to replace four smaller schools in Cambridge city.

[1] Cambridgeshire LEA's statistical neighbours are: Oxfordshire, Devon, Dorset, Suffolk, North Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Cornwall, Somerset and West Berkshire

## Main findings

**Summary**

Cambridgeshire's progress since the last inspection in 2000 has been highly satisfactory and that in support for school improvement and special educational needs has been particularly good. This is now a highly satisfactory LEA**.** Well-developed corporate planning processes and the effective leadership of knowledgeable elected members underpin this progress. Nevertheless, in a few important areas, improvement has lacked pace: for example, in improving the quality of performance management across education services. Senior officers' systematic approach to leadership, seeking to achieve consensus by persuasion, has generally been effective but it has not always provided the drive and urgency to ensure improvement proceeds at sufficient pace. The performance of almost all services is at least satisfactory, and many are good or better, but the quality of service management continues to be too variable. While the relationship between the LEA and secondary schools is sound overall, it has yet to develop into the constructive partnership needed to provide a secure platform for improvement of the attainment of 14–19 pupils or the development of integrated children's services. However, senior officers and elected members are aware of these weaknesses and, with recent indications of accelerated pace, the LEA's capacity for further improvement is highly satisfactory.

| Areas of strength | Areas of weakness/for development |
|---|---|
| **Corporate leadership of education** | |
| • The effectiveness of corporate planning and decision making<br>• The leadership provided by elected members<br>• Early Years' education<br>• Asset management planning | • Support for 14–19 education<br>• The consistency of service level performance management |
| **Strategy for education and its implementation** | |
| • The LEA's strategy for school improvement<br>• The extent to which the LEA's support is focused on areas of greatest need<br>• Support for underperforming schools | • The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers |
| **Support to improve education in schools** | |
| • Support for national initiatives to raise standards at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3<br>• Support for information and communication technology<br>• Support for school governors<br>• Support for the national initiative to raise standards at Key Stage 3<br>• Human resources support for school management<br>• The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school improvement | • Support for gifted and talented pupils<br>• The planning and provision of property services in supporting school management |
| **Support for special educational needs** | |
| • The strategy for special educational needs (SEN) | • The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money |
| **Support for social inclusion** | |
| • Support for health safety, welfare and child protection<br>• Support for attendance | |

## Recommendations

**Key recommendations**

- Speed up the development and introduction of the new partnership arrangements with secondary schools and ensure they are implemented effectively to address priorities.
- Develop and implement a strategic plan for 14-19 education in partnership with the local Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, headteachers, further education college principals, training providers, employers and elected members.
- Improve the analysis of educational outcomes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN); ensure robust procedures are in place to monitor the use of SEN resources in schools; and analyse the relationship between use of resources and pupil outcomes to inform future use and targeting of SEN resources.

**Other recommendations**

### Corporate leadership of education

**Strategic partnerships:** complete the mapping of partnership activity with greater urgency; evaluate strengths and weaknesses of partnership initiatives; and use the findings to focus resources on those making the greatest difference.

### Strategy for education and its implementation

**Supply and quality of teachers:** develop and implement a strategic plan for recruitment and retention, clearly linked to the strategy for continuous professional development; and analyse data supplied by schools to inform short and longer-term planning for recruitment and retention.
**Providing school places:** identify medium and longer-term solutions to the issue of surplus places in Cambridge City secondary sector.

### Support to improve education in schools

**Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement**

- ensure notes of visit are copied directly to the chairs of governing bodies;
- clarify the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of schools and the LEA in relation to newly qualified teachers;
- explore alternative means of monitoring school performance and move to a position of more highly differentiated provision for successful schools;
- improve the quantity and quality of data relating to pupils with SEN or at risk of educational exclusion available to assigned inspectors prior to the annual review process.

**Gifted and talented pupils:** develop and implement a strategic plan, in full consultation with schools, to support gifted and talented pupils, not just the more able.

### Support for special educational needs

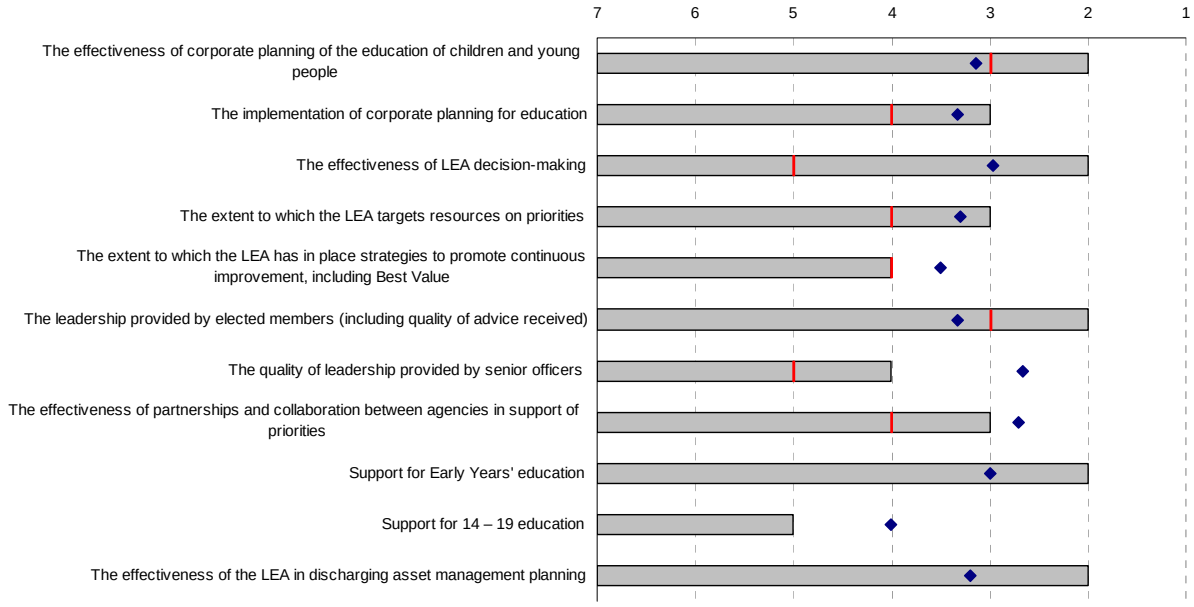
**Statutory obligations:** set more challenging targets and agree action to improve the timeliness of advice with schools, the educational psychology service, primary care trusts and social services.

### Support for social inclusion

**Education other than at school:** produce a costed plan for the development of, and links between, services and agencies that support the education of pupils out of school in consultation with schools and other partners.
**Promoting racial equality:** ensure that all schools report racist incidents (including nil returns) according to the definition contained in the report of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence; and identify strengths and weaknesses in schools' practice and support or intervene in schools that do not meet acceptable standards.

# Section 1: Corporate leadership of education

## Summary table of judgements




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

## Corporate planning for education and its implementation

1. At the previous inspection, corporate planning for education its implementation were satisfactory. Corporate planning for education is now good. The LEA's performance in implementing corporate plans is highly satisfactory but, while most strategic plans are implemented well, there are a few areas where there has been a lack of pace. The effectiveness of performance management at service level is still inconsistent. The LEA has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

2. The high priority that the council accords education is now much better reflected throughout corporate plans. The county's 2001 education strategy *Prospects for Learning* and its corporate plan together include a logical and well thought through articulation of the council's aims and aspirations for education services and schools. These provide a good foundation for education planning which is based on a clear and accurate assessment of the needs of the county. Education planning benefits from the consistent leadership of knowledgeable and committed elected members. There is now a sound strategy for special educational needs and the county's strategic vision of achieving communities free of social exclusion is well developed.

3. Plans at corporate and directorate level are well linked. A well-established cycle of planning ensures transparent and timely decision-making and consistency between the budget

and strategic plans. While resources are tight the county has targeted its resources well and external funding has been used effectively to support projects in areas of disadvantage.

4. Systems to plan and co-ordinate work across council directorates and partnerships are generally satisfactory with effective links at a strategic level between education, health and social services. Over the past year the council has sought to improve the management of its partnership activities. While there is more to be done, partnership working is already more efficient and more clearly focused on strategic priorities.

5. At corporate and directorate levels monitoring and evaluation processes have strengthened. Monitoring of performance is supported by better management information and there is a sharper focus on key indicators. Monitoring reports are clear and candid. Scrutiny by elected members is now effective and well managed. However, at a service level, progress has been slower and the full benefits of standardising of planning processes have not been realised because of variability in the quality of service objectives, targets and evaluation of service performance by service managers.

6. The leadership provided by elected members is now good; that of senior officers has improved, and is satisfactory. In most areas the leadership of senior education officers has been effective and has resulted in secure improvement but in a few areas progress has been too slow, and leadership has lacked urgency.

**Decision-making**

7. The effectiveness of the LEA's decision-making has improved significantly, and is now good. Elected members of all parties are well supported by officers and make decisions based on a sound understanding of current performance and areas for improvement or development. Shared priorities are well understood. This is particularly important given Cambridgeshire's tight financial circumstances.

8. Decision-making processes are transparent and inclusive. They are based on good consultation with schools and other stakeholders. The LEA is not afraid to take difficult decisions: for example, the implementation of the SEN strategy and the reorganisation of its special schools. The pace of strategic decision-making has, at times, been slow, due to the authority's commitment to getting ownership of issues before implementation, but routine decision-making, such as the annual budget setting, is timely and allows schools to plan ahead.

**Targeting of resources**

9. Cambridgeshire's targeting of resources to priorities has improved, and is now highly satisfactory. Education continues to be a strategic priority and, to compensate for relatively low levels of central government grant, spending on education has, for several years, exceeded government guidelines[2]. The authority has also been successful in attracting

[2] Government guidelines as set out in the Standard Spending Assessment for education up to 2003-04 and the Formula Spending Share from 2004-05.

additional funds, particularly for capital investment in schools. In 2003-04, increases in schools funding exceeded government guidelines but, because of a tighter corporate budget constraints, the planned increase in school budgets for 2004-05 will fall short of the government target.

10. Elected members and officers have a very clear and well-developed funding strategy which ensures strategic priorities are appropriately resourced. A three-year revenue budget strategy is complemented by a comprehensive five-year capital strategy. However, arrangements to enable officers and members to evaluate value for money from resource allocation decisions are underdeveloped. Corporate overheads for education are relatively high but currently under review.

11. Well-developed and efficiently administered financial and management processes ensure budget making is timely and accurate. Budget control and monitoring of central budgets are generally good, with particular focus given to high risk areas. Indicative and actual budgets are issued in good time to schools. A significant minority of schools have licensed deficits; however, these are appropriately supported and challenged. Some small secondary schools with falling rolls are inherently unable to eradicate their deficits and the LEA has recognised the need to address this in the wider context of school place planning. A new activity-led funding formula has been devised which will better meet the needs of individual schools. While pace on the development of this has been relatively slow, consultation has been good and the proposed formula is supported by schools.

**Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value**

12. The LEA continues to have satisfactory strategies to promote continuous improvement. At corporate and directorate levels performance management processes have strengthened, but progress at service level has been slow.

13. The commitment of senior officers and councillors to ensuring that the council delivers good performance despite the tightly constrained resources is reflected in improvements in planning and performance management arrangements at corporate and directorate level. The county's improvement strategy is sharper. Best Value reviews are now co-ordinated within a comprehensive programme of member challenge and scrutiny reviews. The programme of future reviews focuses more on high risk and strategic priorities, with fewer reviews but more cross cutting themes.

14. Progress on responding to the recommendation to improve performance management arrangements across education services has been slower and less effective. A comprehensive standard template for individual service plans has been developed and has been used by all services for the last two years. All staff now participate the corporate performance appraisal process. Nevertheless, the LEA has yet to gain the full benefit from these developments. In general, service performance has improved and is, with few exceptions, satisfactory or better, yet the quality of planning and performance management practice continues to be too variable. Too many targets do not provide sufficient challenge, objectives are sometimes unclear and the evaluation of service performance by service heads too often lacks objectivity and precision. Senior managers are addressing these deficiencies

appropriately, but belatedly, by providing additional training; strengthening arrangements for senior management scrutiny and challenge of service plans.

**Leadership by elected members and advice given to them**

15. Elected members' leadership has improved and is now good. Elected members have a clear and well-articulated vision for the council which embraces raising attainment, combating social exclusion and promoting lifelong learning. The relationship between senior managers and elected members continues to be good and a high level of delegation to officers enables elected members to retain an appropriately strategic role, and officers to manage the implementation of decisions.

16. Cambridgeshire's councillors have maintained a business-like and pragmatic approach to fulfilling their role. Modernisation of member structures has been well managed. The new cabinet arrangements have led to sharper strategic decision making. Cross-party service development groups have replaced service advisory groups but they continue to provide an effective mechanism for the analysis and refinement of education priorities. Scrutiny arrangements, previously a weakness, are now effective and improving. The role of scrutiny committees is well defined and understood, and there is an appropriate balance between regular monitoring and investigation activity. The quality of information and advice to elected members on scrutiny committees is satisfactory and improving and is already providing them with an effective basis to challenge service and school performance. In addition, work is in hand to develop further scrutiny arrangements in anticipation of the increasing complexity that will result from more extensive partnership working.

17. Education in Cambridgeshire benefits from having majority and minority party elected members with a depth of experience and knowledge of education issues and of the council's schools. Furthermore, the continuing cross party consensus on education issues and the measured and responsible approach to decision-making have both contributed to the quality of elected members' leadership.

**Leadership by senior officers**

18. The leadership of senior officers is now satisfactory, and has been critical to improvement in most aspects of the LEA. However, they have not always been successful in driving improvement with sufficient pace. The council is benefiting from the energetic leadership of its recently appointed chief executive. In working with senior education officers he is adding to their capacity to secure necessary improvements and there are indications of faster progress in areas where pace had previously been slow.

19. Senior officers have shown determination in addressing the recommendations of the last inspection and in responding to national priorities. The response of senior officers to new initiatives is usually timely and well organised, for example in relation to the implications of the green paper *Every Child Matters*. The systematic approach to leadership by senior officers, which seeks to achieve consensus before implementation of change, has provided the basis for the secure improvement in many areas. However, such an approach does not always ensure progress is made with sufficient pace.

20. The partnership between senior officers and schools has improved, and the partnership with primary and special schools provides a secure platform for improvement. Senior officers are rightly proud of their record in responding sensitively and decisively to serious problems within schools. However, relationships with secondary schools, while satisfactory overall, are not improving as fast as for other schools. A significant minority of secondary schools are unwilling to engage to more than a limited extent with LEA officers in strategic developments. Reasons for this include the long tradition of institutional autonomy and the prominence of difficult resource issues in contacts between the LEA and its schools. Nevertheless, in part, the slow progress in developing the partnership with secondary schools can be attributed to a reluctance by senior officers to be assertive in taking the lead on some key strategic developments, for example on the development of the strategy to support the 14 – 19 age group. Senior officers are aware of this deficiency and have recently begun discussions with secondary school representatives on a new form of partnership and a more robust medium term funding strategy.

***Recommendation***

- Speed up the development and introduction of the new partnership arrangements with secondary schools and ensure they are implemented effectively to address priorities.

**Strategic partnerships**

21. Strategic partnership working is highly satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing Local Strategic Partnerships, and there is a clear understanding of partnership working at both strategic and operational levels.

22. The education directorate is developing a strategic approach to partnerships, supporting the corporate regeneration and neighbourhood renewal priorities of the council. For example, effective co-operative working in the Fenland area has resulted in improved standards in primary schools. The demand for partnership work has grown, and the authority is in the process of mapping provision to minimise duplication and to identify key priorities, although progress on this important task has been limited by a lack of time and resources. There are appropriate mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of individual programmes, but arrangements for providing an overview of strengths and weaknesses of partnership initiatives, to identify those making a real difference or not adding value, are not clear.

23. Links at a strategic level between education, health and social services are good and there is effective practice on the ground to support looked after children and to assure the welfare of children and young people. Links with the police, the local Learning and Skills Council and professional associations are productive. Partnerships with the diocesan authorities and with faith and community groups are sound, although these partners feel insufficiently involved in shaping policy.

***Recommendation***

- Complete the mapping of partnership activity with greater urgency; evaluate strengths and weaknesses of partnership initiatives; and use the findings to focus resources on those making the greatest difference.

**Support for Early Years**

24. The LEA's support for early years' education is good. The LEA has a coherent strategy to raise attainment in early years, with strong links to its strategy for school improvement and social inclusion. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) is very well supported by officers and elected members and the quality of partnership working is very good. Strategic planning is based on a thorough audit of need. The LEA and EYDCP are confident they will achieve their April 2004 target to ensure sufficient places for three-year-olds whose parents request it, despite significant budget constraints. Places for children with disabilities are, however, still predominantly within the maintained sector, requiring some children to travel considerable distance to access suitable places.

25. The LEA's procedures for baseline assessment and the foundation stage profile are used consistently by staff. The training for schools on the foundation stage profile is of high quality and is well regarded. There is good support for schools from the LEA on the analysis of data to identify strengths and weaknesses and guidance on identifying and supporting children at risk of underachievement is comprehensive. In line with its overall school improvement strategy, the LEA monitors effectively the performance of schools and challenges them to raise standards further. LEA monitoring of schools and Ofsted data indicate that provision in over 90% of maintained schools offering early years and/or foundation stage provision is good or very good. Information from both the LEA and the EYDCP to parents on the range of places and services available, and how to access them, is comprehensive and accessible.

**Support for 14-19 education**

26. The LEA's support for and leadership of 14-19 education is unsatisfactory. The Education Development Plan (EDP) is not sufficient to support development in the 14-19 area. There is a lack of pace in the development of a strategic plan, with formal consultation with schools and colleges only starting in October 2003. The LEA, the local LSC and Connexions are presently working together to prepare a draft plan by March 2004. Although the recent appointment by the LEA of a 14-19 adviser is, however, welcome.

27. The LEA has no schools achieving below 25% five or more A*-C grades at GCSE. The attainment of Cambridgeshire pupils at Key Stage 4 for 2003 is in line with averages nationally and that of similar authorities. However, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades has plateaued over the last three years and achievement of the 2004 EDP targets therefore looks highly unlikely. Pupil attainment measured by one or more A*-G grades is, however, an exception with focused support from the LEA over the past three years contributing to sustained improvement. By this measure, Cambridgeshire pupils' attainment is now higher than that found nationally and in line with that of similar authorities. Performance in Cambridgeshire post-16 is well above both national and statistical authority averages. Figures published by Connexions in 2002 show that Cambridgeshire had the highest proportion of its school leavers in education, employment and/or training when compared to similar authorities.

***Recommendation***

- Develop and implement a strategic plan for 14-19 education in partnership with the LSC, Connexions, headteachers, further education college principals, training providers, employers and elected members.

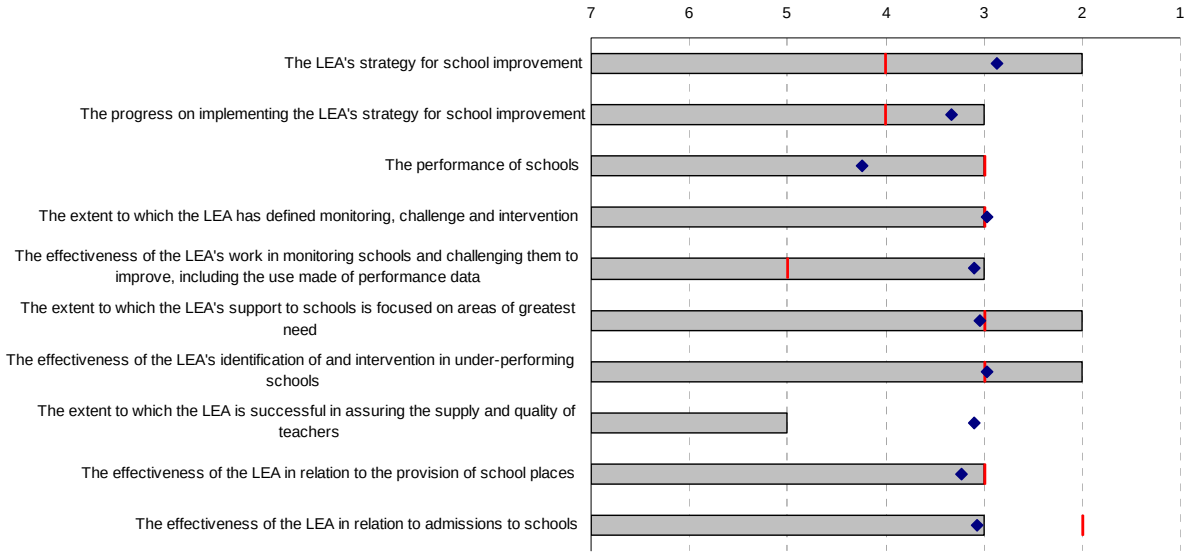
**Asset management planning**

28. Asset management planning is good. Condition, suitability and sufficiency data have been moderated, recorded on a central database and used to inform planning. This database has been expanded usefully to include information on early years settings. Investment needs have been clearly identified and are being effectively addressed. The backlog of building maintenance has been reduced from £56m to £39m between 2000 and 2003 and all of the highest priority work has been addressed. The asset management plan relates well to the corporate capital strategy, the school organisation plan and the EDP. Priority is given to supporting the effective management of school places and the raising of attainment. A good accessibility strategy is also incorporated into planning. The authority has been successful, in particular, in acquiring significant additional funds from property developers to support its capital programme.

29. A growing majority of schools have premises plans, written to a standard LEA template. The LEA monitors these, together with the use of consent forms for capital projects, to ensure that LEA and school priorities are synchronised and devolved funding is used appropriately. Project management skills training and an improved property database have been employed in order to increase the number of projects completed on time.

# Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation

## Summary table of judgements

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## The strategy for school improvement and its implementation

30. The strategy for school improvement has improved from satisfactory to good. The LEA targeted activities on underperforming schools, strengthened the coherence of the Education Development Plan (EDP) and encouraged greater understanding of the plan by schools.

31. Raising achievement, improving attendance and reducing exclusions are common aims across the education directorate and are central to strategic priorities in corporate plans. Procedures for monitoring are clear, and a good range of data is available for challenging schools to set realistic, but ambitious, targets. Programmes of intervention and support are targeted at schools in most need. The LEA has improved its strategy for supporting amalgamated schools, after one such primary school was found to require special measures.

32. The audit for the EDP 2002–2007 (EDP) was thorough, drawing on a good range of data, with effective account taken of local circumstances and the LEA's other statutory plans. The rationale for the inclusion of the three local priorities is clear. Most actions and activities are focused on making maximum impact, and are generally well defined. Success criteria are focused and provide a sound basis for measuring progress over the full life of the plan. However, the milestones against which the success of the plan is to be judged on a year-by-

year basis are sometimes less well defined. The links between resources and the constituent priorities and activities within the plan are articulated clearly.

33. Implementation of the EDP is highly satisfactory. Progress against activities is monitored regularly, and the results inform future planning. There have been some notable successes in implementing the priorities for English, mathematics and information and communication technology, in improving standards in the Fenland area, and in reducing the numbers of schools causing concern. There has been some slippage, for example in developing assessment for learning, and uneven progress has been made in the priority devoted to narrowing the attainment gap and tackling underperformance.

34. Performance targets are challenging. However, despite some encouraging improvements in standards, the LEA has fallen short of its targets in most areas, apart from at Key Stage 3. For primary education, the performance targets for 2004 are unrealistic. Rightly, steps have been taken in the target setting process for 2005 to rectify this situation. For GCSE the picture is more mixed. Progress across schools is uneven, and there is underachievement. Only a fifth of schools met their 2003 targets for the proportions of pupils achieving five or more A*-C and, despite its priority in the EDP, it is highly unlikely that the LEA's 2004 target for this measure will be met.

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

35. This area of the LEA's work is highly satisfactory. The LEA's definitions, procedures and criteria for monitoring, challenge and intervention are clear. However, there continues to be insufficient differentiation within the 'light support' category where schools are entitled to two days support a year. This is at odds with its target of creating autonomous and self-sustaining schools.

36. The quality of data used to support the LEA's challenge and support process has improved. Both assigned inspectors and schools are provided with a comprehensive range of data that are used alongside that what is provided nationally. Data are held at the individual pupil level and contain local analyses based on prior attainment. The electronic transfer of pupil attainment data between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 has been significantly more successful this year than previously. The breadth of data used is generally good but as yet assigned inspectors lack the necessary pupil level data analyses to enable them to monitor systematically schools' performance in relation to the education of pupils with special educational needs or at risk of educational exclusion.

37. The annual review process is a strength, with outcomes from the review feeding directly into each school's target setting process. Assigned inspectors are well prepared for annual reviews and, because of the LEA's focus on school self-review, so are schools. Nevertheless, the process is not fully transparent, as each school's categorisation is not shared with all schools. Assigned inspectors provide relevant support and challenge, ably supported by national strategy consultants and strategy managers. At Key Stage 4, standards for five or more A*-C grades have plateaued over the last three years. While assigned inspectors have worked with schools to set targets based on prior attainment, the subsequent monitoring programme has not been sufficient to drive up standards.

**Extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need**

38. The LEA's work in this area is good. Schools understand clearly what support they are entitled to and what needs to be purchased. In high support schools, services are deployed according to an improvement plan which clearly identifies targets for improvement and the resources the LEA will provide to help drive up standards in these areas.

39. Deployment of support services is clearly and efficiently focused on areas of greatest need using the procedures and criteria for monitoring, challenge and intervention. Systematic and rigorous analysis of performance data is used to identify underperforming schools, enabling the efficient allocation of resources and deployment of staff. Support from primary and Key Stage 3 strategy staff is also consistently deployed through service plans and again focussed on areas of greatest need. There are good quality joint monitoring and planning between assigned inspectors and strategy managers and consultants.

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

40. The LEA's identification of and intervention in underperforming schools are now good, an improvement from the highly satisfactory position identified previously. Monitoring of school performance is rigorous. Improvements in the early identification of schools needing intensive support have enabled the LEA to act before performance deteriorates further. One secondary school and one primary school are currently in special measures, one primary is designated as having serious weaknesses and, following an inspection in December 2003, one primary school has been found to be underachieving. This reflects a substantial improvement on the position in 2000 when 8 % of schools fell into these categories.

41. Support for schools causing concern is systematic and effective. The level and type of support provided by the LEA are differentiated well, and linked closely to identified needs. Progress against carefully constructed action plans is monitored carefully by senior managers within the education department, and elected members receive regular reports. Schools causing concern improve well within the designated timescales, and carefully planned exit strategies ensure a graduated and appropriate reduction in support.

**Supply and quality of teachers**

42. This area of the LEA's work is unsatisfactory. The LEA has appointed a recruitment and strategy manager who oversees a termly collection of data on vacancy patterns. Although analysed by school type and by area, the data are not used rigorously enough to predict current and future needs, and do not inform strategies for recruitment and retention or for assuring the quality of teachers.

43. There is no LEA strategic plan to improve this function. The useful set of activities included in the EDP is not sufficient on its own to provide a comprehensive plan to meet needs. There are initiatives in place to aid recruitment from returning teachers and overseas trained teachers. The LEA works in partnership with Cambridge University School of

Education in the training of graduate teachers and co-ordinates access by Cambridgeshire schools to this programme. There is little evaluation of the impact of these initiatives.

44. Induction arrangements for newly qualified teachers are satisfactory and the LEA secures a range of appropriate development opportunities for headteachers and deputy headteachers. In addition, the LEA supports teachers' use of national training programmes and has developed a positive partnership with the Eastern Leadership Centre which can now offer the National College for School Leadership programmes of study as an affiliated body. However, the LEA has no evidence to demonstrate improvements in teacher retention and its strategy for continuous professional development does not focus sufficiently on supporting the career progression of teachers to ensure high levels of retention.

***Recommendation***

- Develop and implement strategic plan for recruitment and retention, clearly linked to the strategy for continuous professional development; and analyse data supplied by schools to inform short and longer-term planning for recruitment and retention.

**Providing school places**

45. The LEA's planning for the provision of school places continues to be highly satisfactory. It is well founded on principles of community cohesion and generally accurate demographic data, together with a clear relationship to priorities in both the asset management plan and EDP. The authority has a good understanding of the implications of the planned major expansion in housing in the county over the next decade. The number of surplus places is below national and comparable authority averages; however, this is not uniform across the county. The LEA has already amalgamated three pairs of infant and junior schools into all-through primary schools. It plans to continue this programme of amalgamation and to increase capacity in other areas.

46. The school organisation committee is an effective and independent body which has demonstrated its ability to take important decisions resolutely, for example, in regard to the approval of the special school reorganisation. The dioceses are committed partners of the LEA.

47. The high level of surplus places in the secondary sector in Cambridge city continues to be an important weakness. Out of six schools, two small secondary schools both have more than 25% surplus places and significantly falling rolls, yet the authority's proposal to close one of these in 2000 was rejected by the Secretary of State. The authority is aware that the current situation needs further review in order to secure an effective solution.

***Recommendation***

- Identify medium and longer-term solutions to the issue of surplus places in Cambridge City secondary sector.

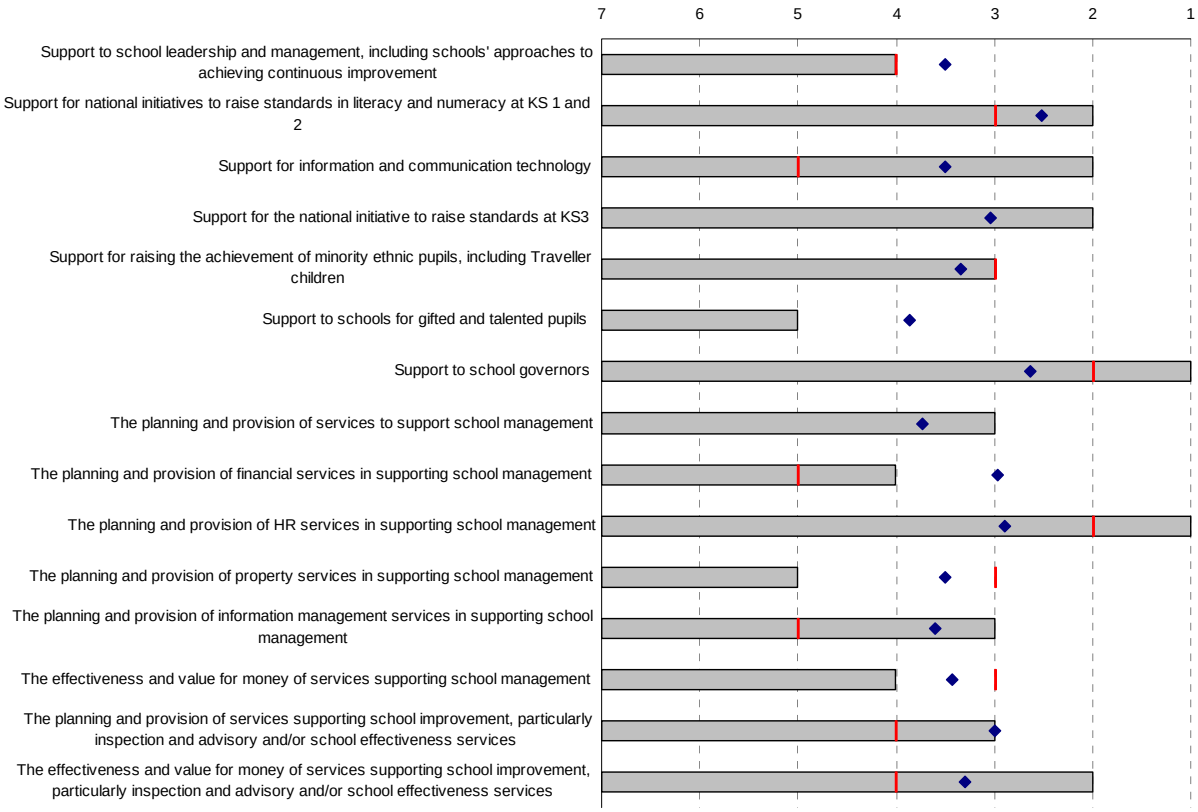
**Admissions to schools**

48. The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools is highly satisfactory, with good capacity for further improvement. This aspect was subject to differentiated fieldwork because of deterioration in the views of schools in the school survey measured against the LEA's own self-assessment of its service as good.

49. The LEA provides a good service at the stage of secondary transfer and for in-year admissions for secondary schools. First place preferences, while satisfactory, were slightly below those achieved by similar authorities in 2002. Appeals are handled consistently and in a timely manner, including those on behalf of the dioceses. The authority is currently consulting on arrangements for co-ordinated admissions in 2005/06. The LEA does not currently provide a service for centralised primary school admissions but it intends to do so from 2006 and has built the resource implications of this into its planning.

# Section 3: Support to improve education in schools

## Summary table of judgements

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## Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement

50. Support for school leadership and management is satisfactory. The quality of some individual services is good or very good, largely because of the quality of leadership of service managers. However, the strategic coherence of services is inconsistent leading to variability in both arrangements for quality assurance and service performance.

51. A high priority has been placed on supporting and improving school leadership and management, and activities to promote developments are a prominent feature of the EDP. The quality of school leadership and management is improving. Evidence from Ofsted inspections indicates that a high proportion of Cambridgeshire schools have good or better management and efficiency compared to similar authorities. However, there is also a significant minority of primary schools needing improvement. Written reports following visits by the school effectiveness service are satisfactory but they are not copied directly to

the chair of governors. This has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and holding senior school staff to account for their performance.

***Recommendation***

- Ensure notes of visit are copied directly to the chairs of governing bodies.

52. The LEA is committed to developing self-managing schools and annual reviews have a strong self-evaluation emphasis. A sound framework for school self-review has been developed and support for its use in schools has been effective and well received. Currently, the LEA judges well over four-fifths of primary schools and almost all secondary schools to be proficient in self-review. Nevertheless, the LEA has yet to respond fully to the growing management competence of schools either by more sharply differentiating support to effective schools or by exploring alternative means of monitoring school performance. Respective roles and responsibilities between school senior management teams and the LEA in relation to newly qualified teachers are blurred as a high proportion of newly qualified teachers are observed teaching by assigned inspectors. Systems are in place for sharing information between the school effectiveness service and those involved in supporting pupils with SEN and addressing social inclusion issues. However, they are not sufficiently developed to allow assigned inspectors to monitor and challenge schools in relation to SEN, groups of pupils at risk of underachieving, child protection and race equality.

***Recommendations***

- Clarify the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of schools and the LEA in relation to newly qualified teachers.
- Explore alternative means of monitoring school performance and move to a position of more highly differentiated provision for successful schools.
- Improve the quantity and quality of data relating to pupils with SEN or at risk of educational exclusion available to assigned inspectors prior to the annual review process.

53. There are highly satisfactory arrangements for the dissemination of good and innovative practice. In addition, the LEA provides good support to a wide range of school clusters and partnerships, and more recently to two leadership collaborations.

54. Schools have been provided with a range of highly valued training courses and good quality guidance materials on both procurement and applying the principles of Best Value. Support is available to schools wishing to make their own arrangements for the purchase of services. Heads of service have arrangements to monitor the quality of LEA-provided and secured service, but this is insufficiently co-ordinated across services and very dependent on customer satisfaction questionnaires. There is no mechanism for monitoring how well schools apply the principles of Best Value.

**Support for the implementation of national initiatives at Key Stages 1 and 2**

55. Support for the implementation of national initiatives is good. The LEA has continued to make good progress on the development and implementation of the well managed primary strategy. There are strong links between the primary strategy, the Key Stage 3 strategy and the management of both primary and secondary strategies for literacy and numeracy is consistent, coherent and effective. The primary strategy is well promoted by the LEA, with a very good focus on leadership and management at both headteacher and school co-ordinator level. There is good delegation of responsibilities by managers to ensure the effective deployment and monitoring of primary consultants. Training to support the strategy is sufficient and highly regarded. LEA-supported networks are in place for schools not receiving high levels of consultant support.

**Support for information and communication technology (ICT)**

56. The support for ICT is good, having improved from unsatisfactory. Leadership and strategic planning for corporate and school-based ICT infrastructures are good. The strategic policy is clear, is based on a sound audit of need, and reflects local and national priorities. Implementation is adequately resourced. The council is investing £4.2m to upgrade school networks to best practice standards.

57. There is a wide range of training opportunities available for teachers to support the development of ICT across the whole curriculum. Strategy consultants have been well supported by ICT staff in raising standards in ICT in primary schools and in Key Stage 3. There has also been an appropriate focus on improving the skills of teachers to assess pupil capability in ICT. Support for ICT in schools is well targeted and clearly matched to need.

**Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3**

58. Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3 is good. The LEA has a clear strategy for raising standards in Key Stage 3 which has been implemented well. There is a high degree of coherence between the LEA's strategy for Key Stage 3, its strategy for the primary phase, and its overall strategy for school improvement. The LEA has accurately identified schools' strengths and weaknesses and set appropriate targets for further improvement.

59. The LEA supports a wide network of meetings to develop good practice at Key Stage 3, and between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Support for the strategy is systematically allocated according to school need, and the work of consultants is rigorously monitored. All schools have access to appropriate training and development opportunities. Data held on individual pupils are used well in school annual reviews and there is effective tracking of individual pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 3.

60. Specific support for English at Key Stage 3 in Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG) funded schools has led to significant improvements in level five or above results in these schools. Secondary headteachers value the support they received from the LEA for the Key Stage 3 strategy. The LEA's support has built up the capability of Key Stage 3 co-ordinators

and is ensuring that most schools will be able to improve further without significant additional input from the LEA.

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

61. Support for minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy and Traveller children, remains highly satisfactory. Both the Cambridgeshire race equality diversity service (CREDS) and the Traveller education service (TES) are well managed, providing good support and guidance for schools, pupils and their families.

62. Small cohorts make the task of monitoring and predicting attainment complex, and comparisons with county averages are not always statistically significant. Nevertheless, the LEA rigorously analyses data, including the progress made over time by individual pupils. Findings are used to inform development programmes and to tackle areas of weakness. Attainment of minority ethnic pupils mirrors the national picture. Focused and targeted support from CREDS and the TES is making a difference to raising attainment, improving attendance and reducing exclusions, and there has been a substantial narrowing of the attainment gap in English for Black Caribbean pupils and for Gypsy and Traveller children.

63. Schools are not always fully aware of how data analysis for underachieving groups might inform their own work in improving standards. The flow of information between the various LEA services supporting schools is sound, but assigned inspectors are not provided with sufficient information and data about minority ethnic groups to inform challenge and support during annual reviews.

64. The TES has secure relationships with Traveller families, and schools appreciate the advice, guidance and support. There are significant strengths in its wide range of activities from pre-school to adult education. The support agreement drawn up between the school and the TES provides a basic framework for action, although not all take sufficient account of the school's own targets for improvement.

65. There is good support for the small number of asylum seekers and refugees. The influx of migrant workers is putting pressure on schools admitting large number of non-English speaking pupils, and on the small over-stretched central LEA team in offering prompt support and guidance and their ability to monitor provision and pupils' progress.

**Support for gifted and talented children and young people**

66. The LEA support for gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory. While the EDP includes activities aimed at supporting gifted and talented children and young people, they do not constitute an adequate strategic plan. Too few days are allocated to allow proper development and implementation of strategies to support the attainment of gifted and talented pupils. Although there is evidence of excellent work supporting gifted and talented children in some schools, it is not coordinated by the LEA. The LEA does, however, identify some local good practice and disseminates it to schools through newsletters.

67. The LEA does not have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in schools' provision for gifted and talented pupils. Monitoring is not satisfactory and a significant minority of schools do not provide even basic data to the LEA. The primary and Key Stage 3 strategy teams have named consultants with a gifted and talented focus. The work of these consultants, however, is coordinated by strategy managers.

68. The LEA does pass on to schools advice from the DfES on the identification of gifted and talented pupils, but documentation produced by the LEA is focussed on the more able pupil. The LEA has, nevertheless, co-ordinated a range of summer schools for gifted and talented pupils and has supported schools' evaluation of the impact of activities. The LEA has disseminated the evaluations to a wider group of schools. The LEA provides very little financial support, guidance or welfare for young people achieving high standards in sports or the arts.

***Recommendation***

- Develop and implement a strategic plan, in full consultation with schools, to support for gifted and talented pupils, not just the more able.

**Support for school governors**

69. Support for governors has now improved to very good. The head of the governor support service gives high quality leadership and ensures there is coherent planning and practice between the governor support service, human resources, the main privatised personnel provider, the school effectiveness service and the Cambridgeshire advisory service. There are effective mechanisms for ensuring high quality practice that draw on a range of internal processes and external validation. Almost all schools subscribe to the full governor support service.

70. The service has a thorough and detailed knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in governance across the authority and regularly evaluates the training needs of governors and responds accordingly. Governing body training is highly regarded and opportunities exist for headteachers and chairs of governors to train together and for whole governing bodies to train together. There is a successful strategy to manage governor recruitment and retention which properly focuses on increasing the number of governors from under-represented groups. The LEA has a bank of experienced governors to put into schools requiring high levels of support.

**The planning, provision, effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management**

71. The performance of individual services has improved but there continues to be insufficient consistency and coherence between services. Nevertheless, the planning and provision of services to support school management is overall highly satisfactory and they provide satisfactory value for money.

72. The council does not have a dogmatic approach to the delivery of service to schools and seeks pragmatic solutions that best meet the needs of schools. Currently their support services include a mix of in-house and outsourced provision. There are examples of effective

client management within outsourced service, and officers and elected members have been decisive where warranted in addressing examples of poor performance by contractors: for example, in terminating the schools maintenance contract. The establishment of the post of schools purchasing officer ensures that schools have access to effective support.

73. Service standards and specifications have improved. Customer feedback and LEA oversight are having some effect in improving service performance. Each assistant director has a forum of headteachers which receives reports on service quality assurance issues. Nevertheless, the LEA's approach to service development and quality assurance is not sufficiently co-ordinated across services, with headteachers engaged too frequently on a service by service basis. Quality assurance arrangements are cumbersome, with many individual questionnaires. However, prospects for improvement on these issues are good with the acting assistant director of resources looking for a more strategic and systematic way to engage external support in order to provide more assurance of service quality in services such as finance, where staff turnover has been a problem.

74. The quality of financial services has improved to satisfactory. Support for schools' budget setting is now sound. Budget monitoring is appropriately undertaken, including that of schools in deficit. Payroll services, provided by an external company, are now good.

75. However, recruitment and retention issues have created variability in the quality of service to schools, although the LEA has only very recently reached its full staffing complement. The poorly managed introduction of a new corporate financial management system caused significant difficulties for both central budget holders and schools during 2003. Council officers have worked hard to identify and remedy technical and support deficiencies and schools are beginning to recognise improvement.

76. The provision of human resource services is very good. The service continues to be delivered by private sector providers, with almost all schools buying services from one main contractor. The incidence of grievance procedures and employment tribunals is low and capability and disciplinary issues are well managed. Working relationships between LEA officers and all of the private providers and schools are excellent. Schools can exercise a wide and high level of choice in relation to the level of service from the main supplier. The main supplier's customer support is very good.

77. The provision of property services is now unsatisfactory. In order to improve performance, the authority consolidated its works contractor provision into one contract in June 2002. This contractor subsequently failed to meet performance standards, including the delivery of statutory testing programmes. The LEA took decisive and appropriate action to terminate the contract in October 2003. It is currently in the process of re-letting the contract for April 2004 and interim cover is being provided by other companies on a temporary basis. Nevertheless, the LEA has issued a good stewardship guide and appointed a schools maintenance adviser and has good capacity to improve.

78. The planning and provision of information management services to support school improvement are now highly satisfactory. These services are well led and this is reflected in good joint working on strategic planning and service development. For example on the implementation of a comprehensive information management system which will bring together pupil data, school performance, staff data, premises and finance information. The

schools' internet portal, although in its infancy, has significant potential. The telephone and email help line for information management services support is highly regarded and is extremely efficient.

**The planning and provision of services to support school improvement**

79. The planning and provision of services to support school improvement are highly satisfactory. Service leaders manage competing demands well, through judicious use of assigned inspectors and purchased support from the Cambridgeshire advisory service. Priorities for improvement have been identified clearly within both the EDP and the individual service plan for the school effectiveness service. There is an awareness of key strengths and weaknesses in provision, and actions taken tend to support the major priorities for development, although strategies to improve support for gifted and talented pupils and provision for 14-19 young people have been slow to materialise.

80. Deployment of advisory staff is matched to service priorities. Workloads are monitored to ensure that staff in the advisory service are not over-burdened. However, current systems do not provide sufficient information for managers to judge the scope for realigning work to meet new and emerging priorities or to determine if support for schools, especially those in light touch categories, is deployed according to need.

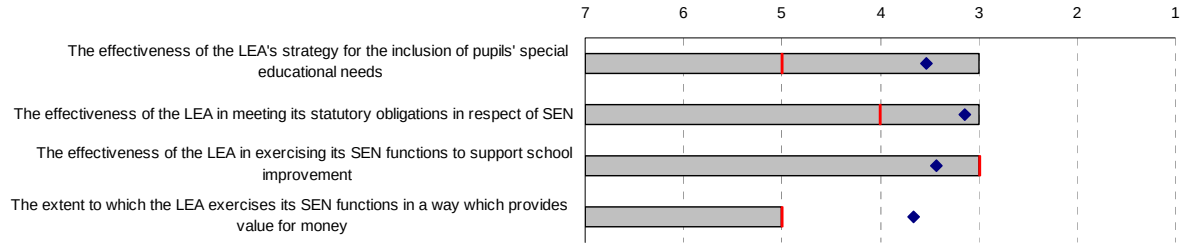
81. Arrangements for performance reviews are satisfactory. Individual performance targets reflect service targets, although these are not always sufficiently focused on key accountabilities for raising standards and improving the quality of education in schools causing concern. Arrangements for the induction of new staff are good.

**Effectiveness and value for money of school improvement services**

82. Value for money of the school improvement services is good. The school effectiveness service has the capacity and capability to monitor, challenge and support most schools. In general standards are rising. Planning and provision of support services for school improvement are highly satisfactory, and there is effective and well co-ordinated support for schools causing concern. Costs of school improvement services are low when compared with similar LEAs.

## Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)

### Summary table of judgements

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### The strategy for SEN

83. The LEA's strategy for SEN has improved to highly satisfactory. The LEA has put in place a sound and well-articulated strategy consistent with corporate objectives. It sets out activities to assist the development of a coherent programme of support to schools. Progress in implementation is well measured, and significant and necessary changes to enable greater inclusion are being made. The good progress made is due to the level of investment by the council in SEN and officers' purposeful leadership, particularly that of the assistant director (pupil support). Through extensive and effective consultation, the LEA has secured the firm commitment of schools, stakeholders and other agencies. Nevertheless, while the planned actions beyond 2003 have been set out in a work programme, they are not as clear or as well defined as in the previous year. Revision of the strategy, currently under way, is later than initially envisaged.

84. A rigorous review of SEN funding has been fundamental to the strategy's success. A greater proportion of SEN funding is now delegated to schools. Resources are now focused much more on supporting prevention and early intervention in mainstream schools, thereby supporting inclusion and reducing the need for statutory assessment. For this year additional SEN funding has been committed to support the transition to the new funding model.

85. Support for mainstream schools has been strengthened and is better co-ordinated and more coherent. As a result, more flexible and inclusive provision for pupils with SEN can be secured for the future. The role of special schools in supporting inclusion has been developed and, for example, a third of children in special schools attend mainstream schools on a regular basis. Good progress has been made in implementing a well developed accessibility strategy. Effective interagency working is promoted by the LEA at strategic and operational levels, but, as yet, pooling of budgets is limited.

86. Although the proportion of pupils with statements is still high compared with similar authorities, the implementation of the strategy has halted the growth in statements and the

numbers placed in special schools is falling. The percentage of pupils with statements placed in out of county special schools is falling and is lower than similar authorities.

87. The LEA has improved the monitoring of SEN provision for pupils with statements through revised annual review guidance and procedures. While the overall monitoring and evaluation of the strategy currently does not provide the LEA with sufficient evidence of the impact, improvements in pupil data systems should provide this within the next year.

88. The capacity of the LEA to improve further is good. The constructive working partnership that has been formed between the LEA, schools and partners provides a context which will support the further development of the strategy. There is a commitment to continue investment in SEN, in order to enable the funding strategy to recycle resources into early intervention.

**Statutory obligations**

89. The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting statutory obligations has improved to highly satisfactory. Schools receive high quality guidance and support on meeting Code of Practice responsibilities. Decisions on resource allocation and placements are fair and transparent. The quality of statements issued is good and monitoring of annual reviews is rigorous. Support for parents, through the parent partnership service and a good range of information and guidance, is effective.

90. Progress on speeding up the completion of statutory assessments, recommended previously, has been slow. Staffing difficulties have meant that the educational psychology service has been slow, relative to services in similar authorities, in submitting psychology advice for the preparation of statements. The 2002 completion rate for statements within the 18 week timescale, when the delays caused by other agencies are excluded, was below the lower quartile for LEA performance. However, the 2002 completion rate for statements within 18 weeks timescale, with exceptions, is in line with that found nationally. Schools rate the statutory assessment service highly and recent improvements in staffing, organisation and communication systems are leading to substantial and sustained improvement in the speed of assessment.

***Recommendation***

- Set more challenging targets and agree action to improve the timeliness of advice with schools, the educational psychology service, primary care trusts and social services.

**SEN functions to support school improvement**

91. Support for school improvement through SEN functions remains highly satisfactory. An increasing proportion of SEN funding is delegated to schools. Good quality support and training assists schools in making effective use of this funding.

92. Target-setting and arrangements for monitoring progress for pupils with SEN, embedded in practice in both mainstream and special schools, are well supported by good quality performance data provided by the LEA. The use of appropriate frameworks for self-

evaluation in SEN is encouraged and, where schools have accessed support for school self review with regard to practice in SEN, they regarded this as highly effective. However, the assigned inspectors' ability to monitor and challenge schools is limited because of the absence of sufficient analysis of educational outcomes for pupils with SEN and of progress made by the lowest 20% of attainers.

93. The LEA provides effective SEN support services which are responsive to schools' needs and contribute to raising achievement. The SEN professional development programme is comprehensive, accessible and well regarded by schools. Responses to the school survey and the views of relevant parties interviewed during the inspection all indicate that the LEA is effective in developing the schools' capacity to meet the needs of pupils with SEN. The development of the role of the area special school and the commitment of special schools to supporting inclusive practice has further assisted school improvement in SEN. The educational psychology service (EPS) has contributed effectively to the development of both SEN strategy and practice in schools. The quality of support provided to schools is satisfactory overall although some schools reported unevenness in the quality of service delivery, largely due to staffing difficulties.

**Value for money**

94. The LEA does not provide satisfactory value for money in exercising its SEN functions and this area remains unsatisfactory. With the implementation of the SEN strategy, progress is beginning to be made in containing expenditure on SEN. The LEA has: halted the year on year growth in statements, reduced out of county placements and included a higher proportion of children with statements in mainstream schools. This has enabled the recycling of SEN funding to school budgets to begin. Consultation with schools has been thorough and effective.

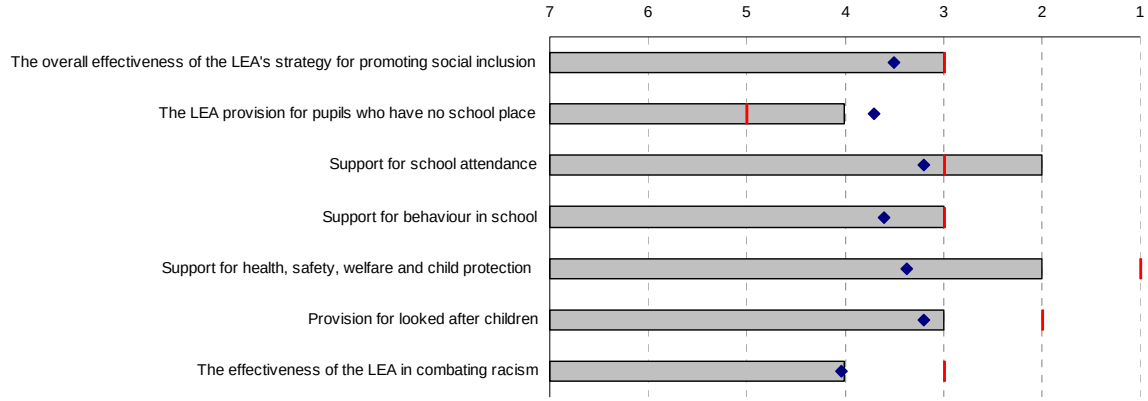
95. However, the LEA continues to spend a higher proportion of its budget and considerably more per pupil, on SEN than similar authorities. Spending in the current year is particularly high because of the need for transitional funding for schools to ensure the successful implementation of the SEN strategy. At the same time, officers are not yet able to assess the impact, and therefore the value for money, represented by this high spending other than at a general level. Nevertheless with the implementation of the SEN strategy, progress has begun to be made towards establishing arrangements for effective monitoring of SEN resources in schools and for improving in information available on educational outcomes for individual pupils with SEN. The LEA's capacity for improvement is good.

***Recommendation***

- Improve the analysis of educational outcomes for pupils with SEN; ensure robust procedures are in place to monitor the use of SEN resources in schools; and analyse the relationship between use of resources and pupil outcomes to inform future use and targeting of SEN resources.

## Section 5: Support for social inclusion

### Summary table of judgements

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### The LEA strategy for social inclusion

96. The strategy for social inclusion continues to be highly satisfactory. The council's commitment to social inclusion has been maintained, and support is now better focused on local needs. However, outcomes are not improving consistently for all groups of pupils. The LEA's preparation for the changes heralded by the *Every Child Matters* green paper is sound.

97. Achieving communities free of social exclusion sits at the heart of the corporate vision for the county and reflects a long standing corporate priority. Planning is based on well-analysed information on the needs of local communities. The priority for social inclusion is well developed throughout education planning. Elected members provide active and constructive leadership of the implementation of social inclusion strategies. The Children in Need service development group is effective in overseeing the development of strategy and in monitoring and evaluating progress across education services.

98. Relationships between education, social services and health are effective at a strategic level. Education officers and schools are involved in an extensive range of partnerships to support inclusion. A good start has been made in improving the coherence and organisation of partnership activity to support social inclusion with the recent establishment of the children and young people's strategic partnership board. However, the LEA is not yet in a position to realise the full potential of partnership working, for example through the more extensive use of pooled budgets.

99. In the context of limited resources, elected members and senior managers have ensured that investment has been targeted in line with priorities for social inclusion. External funding has been used effectively to support local initiatives and has provided the focus for

effective joint working across departments and between agencies. The new SEN strategy is moving the allocation of resources towards early intervention and prevention within schools.

100. All services to support children at risk of social inclusion are at least satisfactory and many are better. Primary and secondary school headteachers are generally clear about the respective responsibilities of the school and LEA and usually hold these services in high regard. Nevertheless, they sometimes fail to respond to requests for information about fixed-term exclusions and racist incidents. While considerable progress has been made in establishing a clear continuum of support for these children, particularly for those in schools with special educational needs, the reconfiguration of services is not fully complete. Referrals are well monitored and a sound start has been made to the development of an integrated referrals monitoring system for all services.

101. The LEA's success in achieving improvement is variable. The LEA's additional support for pupils and schools in Fenland has succeeded in raising attainment at Key Stage 2 to the national average. The level of exclusions is lower than that for similar authorities and is falling. Attendance remains high, relative to national averages. However, the gap between the attainment of most groups of pupils at risk of social exclusion and the average for Cambridgeshire is growing. Too many of Cambridgeshire's looked after pupils are underachieving.

**Provision for pupils educated other than at school**

102. The range and quality of support for pupils educated other than at school have improved and are now satisfactory. The LEA has comprehensive data by which arrangements for the education of these children are agreed and reviewed. The number of pupils educated other than at school has fallen; minimum statutory requirements of tuition are met. Multi-agency working is developing, exemplified by the recent reorganisation of the primary support service to match Primary Care Trust areas.

103. The number of permanent exclusions is low, below the level found in similar authorities and nationally. There have been no permanent exclusions from primary schools in the last two years. A rise in the number of fixed-term exclusions from primary schools after the last inspection has been reversed. While fixed-term exclusions from secondary schools have risen, the number of days lost to exclusion has fallen. This success is largely down to the LEA's strategy of meeting the educational needs of pupils in their local school wherever possible. This strategy is backed by the effective and differentiated deployment of primary and secondary support teachers to work in schools and the development of re-integration and managed moves between schools in consultation with parents and headteachers. There is good data to show satisfactory progression of these Key Stage 4 pupils from pupil referral units to further education, employment and training.

104. The Behaviour Support Plan has not been revised to reflect adequately the range of provision now available in various areas of the county but much of the service detail is available in a wide range of useful supplementary documentation. The curriculum statement for pupils educated other than at school is also now out of date.

105. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing a clear, staged and costed strategy for the provision of full-time programmes for pupils out of school, recommended in the previous inspection report. Operational development has tended to run ahead of long term strategic planning. Learning support centres have been established, using LEA and school resources and the development of programmes in referral units offer some continuity of provision. These developments have been welcomed by schools. However, the LEA has only just begun work to consult and produce a clear and costed plan that will set out the next strategic steps.

***Recommendation***

- Produce a costed plan for the development of, and links between, services and agencies that support the education of pupils out of school in consultation with schools and other partners.

**Support for attendance**

106. Support for attendance is now good, particularly as a result of targeted and differentiated deployment of the well-led education welfare service. The attendance section of the Behaviour Support Plan sets out clearly the roles and responsibilities of schools, the LEA and parents. Service planning is strong. There is a very comprehensive range of guidance documents for schools. Comparative data at LEA and school level are well presented and good and are built into systems of school self-evaluation and review.

107. Attendance levels in both primary and secondary schools have been maintained in line with those in similar authorities, but have been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. Challenging targets have been set have been set for attendance and, although these have not been reached, there is a good balance of challenge and support given to schools. The education welfare service identifies accurately the schools where additional support is required and deploys its limited resources well. A new fast-track prosecution system has been started, based on schools identified for additional support. The full range of legal powers is used. There is good liaison with other agencies, particularly with the police. There is evidence of improvement in attendance where support has been targeted.

**Support for behaviour**

108. Support for behaviour remains highly satisfactory. The effective operational work of the staff from the primary and secondary support services is highly regarded by schools in both phases and it has contributed significantly to securing and maintaining the low level of permanent exclusions.

109. Support provided at school level is well-targeted, with regular liaison between LEA and school staff. There is a range of clear guidance documents, including advice to schools on the identification and support of pupils with behavioural difficulties within the institution before a referral is made. There are also good comparative data supplied to schools on exclusions, which are incorporated into school self-evaluation and review. There are some inconsistencies in the support provided to schools. Access to school-based learning support

centres is not available to schools in all areas and plans for the extension of this provision to all schools has not yet been set out and agreed.

110. A third of pupils at Key Stage 4 in pupil referral units have statements of educational need, partly because of the LEA policy to educate pupils permanently excluded in pupil referral units. There is a firm commitment to offer a wide curriculum to pupils in these units and LEA data show that the majority of such pupils make satisfactory progression into further education and employment. Nevertheless, the LEA's policy is not always successful and, for a minority of pupils with statements, the units are not able to make suitable provision.

111. Further progress in improving support for behaviour will be constrained until the continuum of support is agreed and available, and built into the wider plans for inclusion. The LEA recognises these difficulties and has the capacity to resolve them.

**Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection**

112. Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection is good. The LEA continues to meet fully its responsibilities for safeguarding the health and safety of pupils, plays an active role in discharging a collective responsibility for child protection, has comprehensive procedures and training for health and safety and contributes fully to partnership working.

113. The authority is unusual in that it has a dedicated education child protection service. This service is well managed and continues to be rated highly by schools. In particular, the service offers good quality materials and guidance for schools wishing to teach personal safety skills as part of their health and welfare programmes, and has worked closely with schools to establish a clear understanding of the thresholds of referral to the social services department. A need to monitor more closely the child protection function in all schools has been recognised. The service is drawing on its extensive database of information to identify profiles of schools that appear not to be engaged actively in safeguarding the welfare of children, prior to establishing an intervention programme. The role of assigned inspectors in this programme, however, is not clear, and there is scope for improving flows of information and involvement between the school effectiveness and child protection services.

**Provision for looked after children**

114. Provision for looked after children is highly satisfactory. The LEA's self-evaluation confirms that good quality support has been maintained. There is a variety of strategies and initiatives designed to improve attainment for pupils, including extensive training for foster carers.

115. The very limited fieldwork carried out during the current inspection focused on the standards achieved by looked after children placed within and outside of the authority. Most looked after children in Cambridgeshire schools make sound progress, and standards achieved compare very favourably with both the national averages and the averages in similar LEAs. Nevertheless, there is underachievement by pupils at Key Stage 2, in relation to the proportions achieving the higher grades at GCSE, and, more particularly, for the one-fifth of children placed outside of the county. Procedures for the monitoring of looked after children placed outside the authority are sound, but not as robust as those for Cambridgeshire schools,

and standards achieved are not as good. Too many young people placed out of county are not entered for at GCSE. Targets for looked after children, including the stretch targets for the Local Public Service Agreement, are challenging but not necessarily realistic, as they have not been based sufficiently on pupils' prior attainment.

**Promoting racial equality**

116. Support for promoting racial equality is satisfactory. There has been good progress in promoting racial equality within the LEA and satisfactory progress in developing racist incident procedures.

117. Procedures for recording racist incidents in schools are well defined. A system for electronic returns has been devised to ease the burden on schools, and to provide a prompt response, where needed, to incidents recorded by schools. However, despite reminders, some schools have been slow in submitting responses, and, following the most recent deadline, returns from 20 out of 248 schools remain outstanding. There has been insufficient follow through to monitor the quality of provision in schools, although assigned inspectors are planning to explore this as part of the monitoring programme for the spring term.

***Recommendation***

- Ensure that all schools report racist incidents (including nil returns) according to the definition contained in the report of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence; and identify strengths and weaknesses in schools' practice and support or intervene in schools that do not meet acceptable standards.

118. There is good support for schools. A comprehensive race equality pack has been provided for schools, offering detailed support and guidance on developing equality policies and combating racism. In addition, the Cambridgeshire race equality diversity service has worked, with well over a fifth of schools on developing and implementing policies.

119. The LEA's promotion of race equality is linked well to raising standards, improving attendance and reducing exclusions. Strategies for, and promotion of, race equality are embedded into plans, and progress towards targets is monitored closely. The council adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government, and achieved the first level by June 2003. The education service is making sound progress towards the move to level 2 of the standard. Good support and challenge are provided for service managers from an equalities action planning group. Faith and community groups are consulted well on the development of the LEA's race equality work, although they report they are insufficiently involved with shaping policy.

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## Appendix A: Record of Judgement Recording Statements

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of LEA : | Cambridgeshire Local Education Authority |
| LEA number: | 873 |
| Reporting Inspector: | Robert Barr HMI |
| Date of Inspection: | January 2004 |

| No | Required Inspection Judgement | Grade | Fieldwork* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Context of the LEA** | | |
| 1 | The socio-economic context of the LEA | 2 | |
| | **Overall judgements** | | |
| 0.1 | The progress made by the LEA overall | 3 | |
| 0.2 | Overall effectiveness of the LEA | 3 | |
| 0.3 | The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection | 3 | |
| | **Section 1: Corporate strategy and LEA leadership** | | |
| 1.1 | The effectiveness of corporate planning for the education of children and young people | 2 | |
| 1.2 | The implementation of corporate planning for education | 3 | |
| 1.3 | The effectiveness of LEA decision-making | 2 | |
| 1.4 | The extent to which the LEA targets resources on priorities | 3 | |
| 1.5 | The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value | 4 | |
| 1.6 | The leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice) | 2 | |
| 1.7 | The quality of leadership provided by senior officers | 4 | |
| 1.8 | The effectiveness of partnerships and collaboration between agencies in support of priorities | 3 | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.9 | Support for Early Years' education | 2 | |
| 1.10 | Support for 14 – 19 education | 5 | |
| 1.11 | The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning | 2 | |
| | **Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation** | | |
| 2.1 | The LEA's strategy for school improvement | 2 | |
| 2.2 | The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement | 3 | |
| 2.3 | The performance of schools | 3 | |
| 2.4 | The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge and intervention | 3 | |
| 2.5 | The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data | 3 | |
| 2.6 | The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need | 2 | |
| 2.7 | The effectiveness of the LEA's identification of and intervention in under-performing schools | 2 | |
| 2.8 | The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers | 5 | |
| 2.9 | The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places | 3 | |
| 2.10 | The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools | 3 | |
| | **Section 3: Support to school leadership and management, including schools' efforts to support continuous improvement** | | |
| 3.1 | Support to school leadership and management, including support for schools' approaches to continuous improvement | 4 | |
| 3.2 | Support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at KS 1 and 2 | 2 | |
| 3.3 | Support for information and communication technology | 2 | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.4 | Support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3 | 2 | |
| 3.5 | Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/ Traveller children | 3 | |
| 3.6 | Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils | 5 | |
| 3.7 | Support for school governors | 1 | |
| 3.8 | The planning and provision of services to support school management | 3 | |
| 3.8a | The planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management | 4 | |
| 3.8b | The planning and provision of HR services in supporting school management | 1 | |
| 3.8c | The planning and provision of property services in supporting school management | 5 | |
| 3.8d | The planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management | 3 | |
| 3.9 | The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school management | 4 | |
| 3.10 | The planning and provision of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services | 3 | |
| 3.11 | The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services | 2 | |
| | **Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)** | | |
| 4.1 | The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs | 3 | |
| 4.2 | The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of SEN | 3 | |
| 4.3 | The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement | 3 | |
| 4.4 | The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money | 5 | |

| | Section 5: Support for social inclusion | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.1 | The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion | 3 | |
| 5.2 | The LEA provision for pupils who have no school place | 4 | |
| 5.3 | Support for school attendance | 2 | |
| 5.4 | Support for behaviour in school | 3 | |
| 5.5 | Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection | 2 | |
| 5.6 | Provision for looked after children | 3 | |
| 5.7 | The effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality | 4 | |

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

***JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 7-point scale:***
Grade 1: Very good; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Highly satisfactory; Grade 4: Satisfactory; Grade 5: Unsatisfactory; Grade 6: Poor; Grade 7: Very poor

# Appendix B

**Context of the inspection**

This inspection of Cambridgeshire local education authority (LEA) was carried out by Ofsted in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997.

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

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

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

All functions of the LEA have been inspected and judgements reached on how effectively they are performed. In all cases inspectors reached their judgements through an evaluation of a range of material. This included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, data (some of which were provided by the LEA), school inspection information, HMI monitoring reports, and audit reports. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA and a questionnaire seeking the views of all schools on aspects of the work of the LEA. In those areas subject to fieldwork, discussions were held with LEA officers and elected members, headteachers and governors, staff in other departments of the local authority, diocesan representatives, and other agencies and LEA partners.

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

**Context of the LEA**

Cambridgeshire is a largely rural county with a population of 558,300. Cambridge city is the major centre of population, and other large towns include St Neots, Huntingdon, St Ives, Wisbech and March. The county is relatively prosperous but there are a few areas of severe deprivation mainly in Cambridge city and in Fenland in the north east of the County. It is the fastest growing county in the country and this is expected to continue particularly in the south. The school age population is 77,600 and rising. Some 5.1% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with significant communities in Cambridge and parts of Huntingdonshire.

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in 2002 in maintained primary (8.6%) and secondary (7.7%) is lower than the national figure, but broadly in line with that of similar authorities. The percentage of primary and secondary school age pupils with a statement of special educational needs in 2002, (2.0 % and 3.1% respectively) is higher than the national figure.

There are six nursery schools, 202 primary schools in the LEA and, currently, 57% of the county's three and four year olds are on the roll of primary schools. There are 31 secondary schools, of which 12 have sixth forms. There are nine special schools and seven pupil referral units or secondary support establishments.

Eleven schools have Beacon status including one nursery, two infant, two primary, one junior, four secondary and one special. Three secondary schools are Leading Edge Schools.

**The performance of schools**

According to provisional and in some cases still unvalidated performance data for 2003, the key features of schools and overall pupil performance are:

- Attainment of pupils on entry to primary schools is above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 1, the percentages of pupils achieving Level 2 and above in reading, writing and mathematics are above the national averages, and broadly in line with the averages in similar LEAs. The rate of improvement is broadly above that found nationally and for similar LEAs.

- At the end of Key Stage 2, the percentages of pupils achieving Level 4 and above in English, mathematics and science are above the national averages, and the averages in similar LEAs. The rate of improvement is well above the national trend for all three subjects, and in English well above that found in similar LEAs. In mathematics and science the rate of improvement is in line with that for similar LEAs.

- At the end of Key Stage 3, the percentages of pupils achieving Level 5 and above in English, mathematics and science are above the national averages and in line with averages found in similar LEAs. Rates of improvement vary. In English, the rate of improvement is well above the national trend but below that for similar LEAs. In mathematics and science, the rates of improvement are in line with the national trend, but below the trends for similar LEAs.

- At the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE results are broadly in line with the national average and the averages for similar LEAs. Rates of improvement for the percentage of pupils attaining one or more A*-G grades and for the percentage of pupils attaining five or more A*-G grades are at or above the national trends and the trends for similar LEAs. For the percentage of pupils attaining five of more A*-C grades, the rates of improvement are in line with similar LEAs, but below those found nationally.

- The progress made by pupils between the ages of 11 and 14 are above the national average. The progress made by pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 are below average.

- The LEA's targets for 2004 are on track to be met at Key Stage 3 and are being revised for mathematics and science, in response to good progress made in these subjects. A rise of 6% is needed to meet the 2004 targets for the proportion of pupils achieving at least five A*-C grades, which implies an improvement rate far greater than in previous years. Improvement rates far in advance of previous years are also needed if the Key Stage 2 targets are to be met. A rise of 7% is needed in English and 10% in mathematics.

- There is some underachievement by Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, Black African, Pakistani and Traveller pupils. There is also wide variation in the performance of individual schools. More than one in ten primary schools do not achieve the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) floor targets of 65% achieving level 4 or higher at age 11. Three secondary schools do not achieve the DfES floor targets of

60% of pupils achieving level 5 or above at age 14. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C ranges from 25% to well over 80%. One secondary school and one primary school are currently in special measures, one primary has been designated as having serious weaknesses and one primary school has been found to be underachieving.

- Attendance in primary schools is above the national averages and unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national averages. In secondary schools, attendance and unauthorised absence are in line with national averages. Rates of permanent exclusion are below the national average for both primary and secondary schools.

## Funding data for the LEA

| Schools Budget | Cambridgeshire | Statistical neighbours average | County Average | England Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ per pupil | £ per pupil | £ per pupil | £ per pupil |
| Individual schools budget | 2,500 | 2,536 | 2,540 | 2,708 |
| Standards fund delegated | 49 | 52 | 56 | 61 |
| Education for under fives | 105 | 99 | 91 | 96 |
| Strategic management | 24 | 20 | 22 | 29 |
| Special educational needs | 170 | 109 | 110 | 120 |
| Grants | 3 | 13 | 14 | 53 |
| Access | 29 | 43 | 43 | 55 |
| Capital expenditure from revenue | 0 | 23 | 28 | 24 |
| **Total Schools Budget** | **2,880** | **2,895** | **2,905** | **3,145** |
| Schools formula spending share | 2,681 | 2,648 | 2,654 | 2,904 |

*Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04*

| LEA Budget | Cambridgeshire | Statistical neighbours average | County Average | England Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ per pupil | £ per pupil | £ per pupil | £ per pupil |
| Strategic management | 99 | 73 | 82 | 95 |
| Specific Grants | 0 | 14 | 12 | 16 |
| Special educational needs | 25 | 27 | 27 | 32 |
| School improvement | 29 | 34 | 34 | 36 |
| Access | 184 | 180 | 173 | 133 |
| Capital expenditure from revenue | 10 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Youth and Community | 36 | 50 | 50 | 74 |
| **Total LEA Budget** | **382** | **382** | **379** | **388** |

*Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04*

***Note: All figures are net***