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**INSPECTION OF
CALDERDALE
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

July 1999

**OFFICE OF HER MAJESTY'S
CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS**

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Background

1.   This report details the findings of a short inspection which was conducted under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 in June 1999. The purpose of the inspection, which was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, was to inform him about the progress which had been made in responding to the findings and recommendations of earlier inspections which took place in 1997 and 1998.

2.   This third inspection has followed up the progress in implementing the recommendations and action plans for the previous two inspections. In particular, attention was paid to the extent of the improvement in:

- strategic planning;
- the management of the LEA;
- the LEA's relationship with its schools.

3.   The inspection was conducted by a small team of Her Majesty's Inspectors (Schools) (HMI) over two phases; each lasting for three consecutive days. HMI analysed a considerable amount of LEA documentation, plans, committee reports and performance data. They had discussions with Elected Members of all parties, the Chief Executive and members of his Department, the Director of Education and senior officers, the Head of Education Effectiveness and senior advisers, advisers with responsibility for the literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) strategies, and representatives of headteachers and teachers associations, consultation fora and the Education Action Zone. All heads of grant maintained schools were invited for discussion as well as heads of schools currently requiring special measures, special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit. In addition HMI visited nine primary schools and five secondary schools for half a day. During the visit, they had discussions with the headteacher and chair of governors, the special educational needs coordinator, and either the literacy, or numeracy or information and communications technology coordinators.

Commentary and Recommendations

4.   This report follows the third inspection of Calderdale in two and a half years. During that relatively short period of time, a great deal has changed in the LEA, much of it for the better. Inevitably, however, a weight of history presses on the LEA: of sluggish, heavy-handed paternalism on its part, and on the part of the schools a mixture of distrust, resentment and dependency. The LEA has not been able fully to escape from that legacy. Therefore, although we can record progress, that progress is still insufficient and, in some respects, fragile.

5.   The LEA has in post a competent, energetic departmental management team. That is in itself a significant gain since the last inspection. This team has been in post only since April, but it is already doing much to recapture the goodwill of most, if not all, schools. In doing so, it has the full cooperation of elected members, who are redefining their strategic role, while scrupulously refraining from the detailed and unnecessary interference that previously made the work of senior officers all but impossible.

6.   Not all the departmental management team's decisions, however, have been well-advised. The most important and urgent task of many facing the Department Management Team was to redraft the Education Development Plan, which is the basis of its school improvement thrust. The plan as it stands is inadequate (and accepted by the Secretary of State only on condition that it be reviewed). It neither sets challenging targets nor proposes feasible strategies for achieving them. Moreover, to the extent that it is capable of being costed, it threatens to require a level of funding that would have an unacceptable impact on schools' budgets, as they have not been slow to point out. To formulate a plan that was both challenging and affordable, and clear in its relationship to the work of the Halifax Education Action Zone, should have been the team's first task. Instead, time has been spent on a largely unrelated vision statement, "Building our Learning Community".   A preference for aspiration over realistic planning and practical implementation is not, in our judgement, what Calderdale most needs at this point.

7.   The key to real progress in Calderdale, however, is trust between the LEA and its schools. The Director and her colleagues have done much to build, and to deserve, trust, through an openness and willingness to consult that have not been striking features of Calderdale in the past. The growing goodwill toward the LEA has been put in some jeopardy by a continuing muddle over aspects of finance and budget-setting. As the implications of Fair Funding have been discussed with schools, it has only been with difficulty that financial data has been obtained from the corporate centre. In particular, the budget implications for former grant maintained schools, though known earlier, were made clear only at the last minute. Such unnecessary secrecy looks duplicitous, and it must be said that some headteachers (governors take a more measured, though sometimes critical, view) are only too ready to read treachery into what may be merely error. The majority take a more mature view, but we were made powerfully aware of the views of a vocal minority whose predilection for extreme criticism has become a barrier to continued progress.

8.   The LEA, of course, must also trust the schools, and respect their autonomy. It claims to do so. We did not find that enough had been done to put these claims into

practice. This report, for instance, contains examples of well-intentioned but indiscriminate monitoring and demands for more of the same. This does not convince us that the LEA understands fully that, if the schools are to manage their own improvement, its approach cannot be based upon a continued aspiration to control them.

9.   These are cultural issues, hard to define and difficult to deal with, but these are the issues that have bedevilled the recent history of Calderdale, and continue to threaten its future. In its wholly sincere and well-meaning responses to our previous recommendations, the LEA has tended to follow the words, as it were, but not the music. It is now beginning to tackle the fundamental issues, but it is, in our view, some way from solving them.

10.   There are, nevertheless, many things that the LEA now does adequately, and a few that it does well. Among the latter are:

- support for literacy;
- support for numeracy;
- support for schools in special measures.

11.   These are important strengths, crucial to raising standards. Overall, however, the LEA's support for school improvement is ineffective, because the Education Effectiveness Service is, in its approach to schools, neither challenging nor rigorous. In particular, many schools attach little value to the work of the link advisers. We believe that the new leadership of the service will quite quickly raise its performance and win the confidence of the schools, but for the moment that has yet to occur. The LEA's performance of the following functions is inadequate:

- the framing of an Education Development Plan;
- the provision of challenge and support;
- support for Information and Communications Technology;
- budget-related information;
- the provision of technical services and the specification of service level agreements;
- the provision of education for pupils out of school.

12.   The LEA cannot therefore be given a clean bill of health. The schools are still coping with an uncertain infrastructure and with ineffectual support for school improvement. The remedy, however, is to some extent in their own hands, and we doubt the utility of further inspection. The diagnosis is clear. So is the remedy. The lack of overall financial discipline, clarity and transparency of financial information are matters initially for the Chief Executive. Provided this improves, and with goodwill, in our view, the performance of the LEA, particularly in relation to school improvement, should improve under the present leadership.

In order to promote school improvement more effectively, the LEA should:

- redraft the Education Development Plan taking full account of all the recommendations of the Department for Education and Employment and the criticisms contained in this report;
- revise performance targets based on a more demanding assessment of what pupils should achieve;
- make much more systematic use of all the school-related information available to target more precisely all monitoring visits;
- abandon plans to increase the number of monitoring visits;
- continue to improve the performance management of the Education Effectiveness Service, so as to secure greater challenge in its approach to schools.

In order to provide effective support for teaching and learning with information and communications technology (ICT) the LEA should:

- support schools in developing their assessment of pupils' information technology capability against the expectations of the National Curriculum;
- use the data from the end of Key Stage assessments to form a more accurate picture of attainment across the LEA;
- develop performance indicators for the use of ICT across the curriculum;
- develop the support for ICT coordinators to help them to consider how they can accelerate and measure school improvement in ICT;
- systematically disseminate the best classroom practice in the use of ICT, National Grid for Learning and, in particular, Internet;
- ensure that planned training for advisers helps them to support the use of ICT in their subject or phase and includes support for GNVQ courses in secondary schools.

In order to provide clearer budgetary information as a basis for consultation and to allay the suspicion of schools the LEA should:

- devise an appropriate budgetary strategy which ensures that resources are aligned to priorities and that budgetary monitoring, control and accountability for retaining expenditure within the limits of the budget are rigorously employed;
- ensure that all decisions which have an impact on school budgets are subject to appropriate consultation and fulfil the requirements outlined in the LEA's consultation procedures;
- in the context of the proposed review of the formula, ensure that schools are provided with clear information to enable them to understand the distribution of the budget;
- draw up a specification for the central services which are provided by recharging the Education Department.

In order to improve the provision of Technical Services the LEA should:

-    *give schools a Service Level Agreement which sets out what they can expect to receive and allows them to check whether they receive their entitlement, and sets out costs so that they can assess value for money;*
-    *devise and share customer care procedures which list the response which schools are entitled to when they request help and outline their course for redress when they have complaints.*

In order to develop a behaviour strategy and to provide suitable and sufficient education for pupils who have no school place the LEA should:

-    *as a matter of urgency, re-draft the Behaviour Support Plan taking into account the criticisms which are made in this report and those of headteachers;*
-    *ensure that pupils' attendance at any alternative education provision is regularly monitored and non-attendance followed up;*
-    *monitor the numbers, names and lengths of stay of all pupils attending any of the alternative education provision for some or all of their school week; on the basis of an analysis of this information, set and monitor targets for each pupil in terms of their expected progress towards reintegration into school;*
-    *regularly review the progress of pupils who have attended alternative education provision for more than six months and devise plans for their reintegration into a permanent educational placement.*

The Context of the LEA - update

13.   An Education Action Zone has been established and consists of 29 schools in Halifax.

14.   Arrangements are in hand for nine grant maintained high schools and seven primary schools to become foundation schools. One other primary school will take aided status.

15.   The Council has a new committee structure in line with the recommendations of "Modernising Local Government". This consists of a Cabinet based on broad disciplines with portfolio areas covering health and social care, community service, economic regeneration, schools' and children's services and central services. The Cabinet consists of a Leader, Deputy Leader and five Members with responsibility for the portfolio areas. As a transitionary arrangement, in addition, two diocesan representatives sit in Education Cabinet. Scrutiny committees are formed to examine aspects of the Council's policies and their implementation. Since the local government elections in May 1999, no party has held an overall majority but there is an all party consensus on most educational issues.

16.   The Education Department has new leadership. On the retirement of the previous Director of Education, the Chief Executive steered the LEA through some of the initial developments which were required immediately following the inspection in June 1998. An acting Director took responsibility until the current Director of Education took up post in February 1999. In addition, two educational consultants were recruited to provide advice and assistance for part of this period. In April 1999, three new second tier officers took up posts and are responsible for leading developments in Education

Effectiveness, Students and Community Services and Resources and Information. These officers form the new departmental management team.

The Performance of schools - update

Overall, attainment in schools is above average in National Curriculum assessments at Key Stage 1, in line with national averages at Key Stages 2 and 3 but below national averages at GCSE. Attainment in secondary schools has not improved at the national rate.

- Standards of attainment vary considerably between schools and attainment is low in a number of schools, particularly in Halifax;

- Results in National Curriculum tests in English at Key Stage 2 show consistent improvement. Mathematics test results are in line with national averages, but these do not show consistent improvement;

- Rates of improvement vary between secondary schools. Only six secondary schools, including two in Halifax, have improved the percentage of pupils gaining five or more subjects with grades A*-C at GCSE by more than the average national improvement between 1996-1998;

- Four primary schools require special measures, although HMI have recently recommended that one of these schools no longer requires special measures. A further primary and a secondary school have been removed from special measures. Since September 1997 a further five primary schools, two of which are grant maintained, and a pupil referral unit have been judged by OFSTED inspection to have serious weaknesses.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

The Structure of the Council

17. At the time of the first inspection, the Council's Committee structure was exceptionally complex with many more subcommittees than were required to conduct the business efficiently. Members spent too much time on unnecessary details with insufficient focus on strategic issues. The operation of two subcommittees risked excessive and inappropriate scrutiny of schools. Insufficient progress had been made by the second inspection. Members and officers had not effectively tackled the recommendations in the first report.

18. In line with *Modernising Local Government,* a new Council structure is in place. Subcommittees of the former Education Committee have all been abolished. The abolition of the exclusions subcommittee has been particularly welcomed by schools. The Cabinet comprises seven elected members and includes the portfolio holder for Schools' and Children's Services. The Directorate structure reflects the Cabinet structure. So far, only the Director of Schools and Children's Services is in post; the other four directors are still to be appointed.

19.   Members, officers and schools, on the whole, feel that the new structure is an improvement. The number of meetings has significantly decreased. The Director of Education has enhanced responsibility; she has put in place procedures to ensure an appropriate record is kept of her actions. The new structure has the potential to ensure that strategic and policy matters are dealt with promptly and efficiently with workable arrangements for issues to be raised at scrutiny committee. However, it is too early to judge whether this optimism is well placed as, for instance, the scrutiny committee has only met once. The structure, therefore, has still to become established. At present there is uncertainty and confusion among members, officers and schools about the relative responsibilities of Cabinet and scrutiny committee and how these will work in practice. Members, also, have differing views about their right of access to officers other than the Director of Education.

20.   The post-Ofsted evaluation panel conducted interviews which indicated there had been a change in the role of Members who were felt to be less involved in day-to-day issues. This finding was confirmed by discussions and school visits undertaken for this inspection.

LEA planning

The LEA action plan

21.   The LEA accepted the findings and recommendations of the second inspection. The action plan which was subsequently drafted set out a number of actions designed to ensure progress on three main issues:

-       clarifying the role of Elected Members;
-       improving the effectiveness of strategic management of the Education Department;
-       improving relationships with schools and developing a shared understanding of how the LEA can support schools.

22.   The planned actions have been implemented. Good progress has been made on the first two issues. Progress on the third issue has been less clear. Some improvements have taken place, but relationships with schools are still fragile.

23.   Progress on implementing the action plan has been rigorously evaluated by a panel which has been chaired by the Chief Executive. This panel includes representatives from schools, the Training and Enterprise Council and two Chief Education officers appointed by the Association of Chief Education Officers. As part of the evaluation, the panel conducted a survey of schools and interviews with head teachers and governors to find out whether the improvements which had taken place were recognised by schools. The findings of this survey are reported throughout this report.

The Strategic Planning Framework

24.   The strategic planning of the Education Department was severely criticised in each of the two previous OFSTED reports. In 1997, the departmental development

plan was judged not 'to develop in any systematic way the priorities' of the Education Committee. The report of 1998 expressed doubts about the capacity of the senior management team to provide strategic management and leadership and drew attention to the continuing weakness in the information culture of the LEA. For example, the LEA had set up a database, but had little understanding of its strategic significance and made little use of performance analysis in the formulation of policy.

25. A new departmental management team, including a Director and three second tier officers, has been in post since April. The team has defined a large agenda for immediate attention. The priorities include:

- the LEA's strategic planning framework;
- a review of secondary school provision in Halifax;
- the strategic development of Information and Communications Technology;
- a review of the Local Management of Schools formula;
- a review the Education Development Plan;
- a review of the Behaviour Support Plan and Special Educational Needs support and provision;
- the lifelong learning plan;
- a review of the early years development and child care strategy;
- the School Organisation Plan and establishing the School Organisation Committee;
- the Capital Building Programme.

26. This agenda reflects the policies of central government and also the particular issues important in the local context, but is too long and too ambitious to lead to action. Consultative groups with representatives from schools have been established to steer developments. School representatives have welcomed the opportunities for dialogue, although they are still undecided about whether their participation will lead to real changes and to the implementation of an agreed programme of action.

27. A consultative group, including headteachers' representatives was involved in the process of agreeing the final draft of a strategic planning framework for the LEA in an attempt to achieve greater coherence, enterprise and evaluation. The strategic statement identifies the overall purposes of the LEA. On this basis a three year strategic plan, with an intention to roll forward, has been drafted. An annual plan sets out in more detail the action to be taken. On the basis of the one year plan, all services are expected to develop business plans which deliver the relevant aspects of the one year plan. Evaluation procedures to monitor progress will be established and both the one and three year plans reviewed in the light of them. However, neither the structures to support evaluation, nor the management information required to make it valid are in place.

28. A statement of Visions, Aims and Principles entitled "*Building our Learning Community*" reflects an intention to develop clear, open, consultative and transparent working practices. The statement also promotes a "leadership" role for the LEA working to raise expectations and achievement in "partnership" with "autonomous" schools. How "leadership" will work alongside "partnership" and "school autonomy", concepts which might in some circumstances be in conflict, remains undefined. The

statements define 33 aims and 17 statements of principles.   As a framework for practical planning this is far too complex, the focus is not sufficiently clear or practical to engage schools.

29.   "*Building our Learning Community*" has defined agenda for action which is too ambitious. The proposed first year development plan has included developments which are much wider than the immediate list of priorities. While all are worthwhile aspirations, their scope makes the likelihood of effective and timely implementation very doubtful. Many of the actions, even in the one year plan, are not defined in terms of concrete outcomes and are not costed. They frame intentions and are unspecific about how these will be achieved in practice. Success criteria are defined in terms of processes rather than clear measurable outcomes - for example "There is growing understanding and support in schools for the Education Development Plan" or "schools and other partners are increasingly positive about the leadership role of the LEA".

30.   Opportunities were provided for consultation although timescales were too short for schools to be able to embark on a real dialogue. Schools received some parts of the documents in May but have only recently received the final version. There has been very little response. The priorities are not clear nor actions tangible enough for schools to have confidence that action will result.

The LEA's School Improvement Strategy

31.   The first inspection found that the LEA had no convincing strategy for school improvement and had failed to articulate clear priorities for improving the performance of schools. This was particularly required to raise the low standards of some schools in Halifax where OFSTED recommended that, "a determined and explicit drive to improve these schools is needed urgently". A year later, OFSTED commented that "a great deal of activity has been undertaken, but it remains uncoordinated. The development of a school improvement project had yet to be undertaken". Since this second inspection, the LEA has drafted an Education Development Plan and an Education Action Zone has been established in Halifax.

The Education Development Plan

32.   The Education Development Plan identifies seven priorities:

A.   To improve standards of literacy.
B.   To improve standards of numeracy.
C.   To support improvement in schools causing concern.
D.   To raise the achievement of underachieving groups of pupils.
E.   To raise achievement in ICT and in its use to support teaching and learning.
F.   To raise standards by improving attendance, behaviour and motivation.
G.   To improve the quality of leadership and management.

33.   These priorities closely match the national agenda, and are as relevant to Calderdale as they are everywhere. They largely lack a local colour: they do not, for example, specifically refer to the large number of "returning Grant Maintained schools", or to the very low standards achieved in central Halifax (though the LEA might fairly say that that problem is addressed by the Education Action Zone).   Nevertheless, the priorities constitute a worthwhile outline of a plan of action, and are generally accepted by the schools.

34.   The plan is comprehensive, but does not at Key Stage 4 set suitably challenging targets. The Head of the Education Effectiveness Service is clear that the target-setting approach lacked sufficient rigour.   Nor is it, in its current draft, in our view, feasible, particularly for an LEA which has not yet emerged from substantial difficulties. The planned activities are all-embracing, rather than tightly focused or sufficiently differentiated.   Some overlap exists between the last priority and all the others (i.e. improvements in management and leadership are best supported by detailed work focused on raising attainment).   Priority D, furthermore, overlaps with C and both overlap with A, B and E. In practice, this leads to reduplication of effort and to double counting for resource purposes. Worse, the activities proposed are too numerous (14 for priority A alone), neither clearly nor realistically costed and not always obviously related to an audit of need.   Most of these criticisms have been put to the LEA by DfEE and accepted.

35.   The LEA is revising the plan in consultation with schools, reducing the planned activities and grouping them more sensibly. This is welcome, as is the proposed increase in emphasis on teaching and learning, though it is not necessary to establish that, as proposed, as a separate priority. Furthermore, the temptation to broaden the scope of the Education Development Plan beyond the central priorities set out should be resisted.

36.   The Education Development Plan was drawn up to very tight timescales, and the consultation on it was not complete.   Nevertheless, the attempt to consult was seriously intended, and consultation has continued over the revision. Draft priorities and relevant appendices were circulated to all schools, and subsequently followed by copies of the entire plan. Observations were requested, briefing meetings held for heads and chairs of governing bodies.   A wide range of stakeholders other than schools was also consulted. The main substantive result of consultation was the addition of priority G, which damaged the architecture of the plan.   Moreover, because of the lack of clear costing, schools did not immediately realise the Fair Funding implications of all that was proposed. Nevertheless, they questioned, rightly, the extent of resources proposed for central retention. As a result, the LEA agreed to conduct fewer link adviser monitoring visits to schools. This has not been universally applauded within the LEA, but it is a welcome example of consultation influencing the direction of policy.

The Education Action Zone

37.   The successful bid for the establishment of an Education Action Zone in Halifax is, at least in part, a response to OFSTED's diagnosis of the serious problems facing the three secondary schools in Halifax: that is, their relative unpopularity with parents, a

largely disadvantaged intake and low, or very low, standards of attainment. The Education Action Zone promises to bring overall coherence to the many individual projects bearing on the Halifax schools. The Education Action Zone appears not to be a bolt-on to, but an enrichment of, the LEA's overall approach to school improvement. The overall thinking is promising, and has a clear rationale.

38.   The planning for the Education Action Zone dovetails well with, and in principle should bring added differentiation to, the somewhat unfocused activities set out in the Education Development Plan. Its overall commitment closely reflects the architecture of the Education Development Plan, while the five key programmes are obviously consistent with the overall thrust of the Education Development Plan.

The LEA's Strategy for Behaviour and Education Otherwise

39.   The breakdown in behaviour and discipline at one of the LEA maintained schools prompted the first inspection of the LEA, and therefore policies and support for behaviour have a particular significance and importance. The first inspection found that while some individual children were well-supported, there was uncertainty that schools have access to sufficient broadly based expertise, nor was there a continuum of support adequate to meet the full range of needs. The report recommended that a comprehensive strategy for supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties was devised and implemented. The second inspection found that little progress had been made and that developments were partial, fragmented and slow.

40.   Major changes have taken place which affect the development of the LEA's strategy. Firstly, the Council's Exclusion Subcommittee has been abolished and this has been well received by schools. There has been no increase in the LEA's low rate of permanent exclusion. Fixed term exclusions, however, are not monitored although there are proposals to embark on this with the agreement of schools from September. There has been a growth in services and initiatives during the last year. In particular, the Youth Service will provide practical support to all secondary schools. Overdue but nevertheless welcome, are the permanent appointments of two key posts of Behaviour Support Manager and head of the Pupil Referral Unit for secondary aged pupils. A unit for primary aged pupils has been established and in-school units are proposed for a number of schools in the Action Zone. This will require careful joint planning and monitoring by the LEA and the Zone to ensure that resources are distributed to meet the schools' needs, and that the units are organised in a way which improves pupils' behaviour and motivation, but does not inhibit access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

41.   The Behaviour Support Plan and the priority to improve behaviour which is included in the Education Development Plan were drafted before the current departmental management team took up their posts. The Behaviour Support Plan is not a useful document because it is not clear what the actions proposed are intended to achieve. Hence the plan focuses on a range of activities but without referencing these clearly enough to an analysis of the problems which need to be tackled. As a consequence, the activities are vague and as currently stated lead to no clear outcome.

42.   The content of the draft plan has received significant criticism from headteachers who level 14 major and justified criticisms, including the insufficient level of analysis of the needs of schools, the lack of an over-arching organisational structure and the need for a clearer explanation of how different services and agencies inter-link. The plan lacks some of the requirements of good planning in that activities are not costed. Success criteria are not defined which will make evaluation of progress impossible.

43.   Services and support are available to form a continuum of provision, but in practice these are not sufficiently well coordinated to provide the necessary continuity and coherence. Service provision has been mapped in the behaviour support plan and in recent discussion and guidance papers, and these have been circulated to schools. The map helps schools understand the relationships between the different services, but in practice the services continue to work separately. While the effectiveness of the support teachers' work is generally satisfactory, some schools are still unsure which services provide support, whether the school is entitled to support from the service and how referrals can be made. In particular, the following difficulties were noted in the schools visited for this inspection:

- the admission arrangements for the primary in-school unit for pupils with behaviour problems are unclear;
- the Assessment and Learning Support Service (ALSS) does not consistently provide support to pupils with behavioural problems in all schools;
- referral and schools' entitlement to the Behaviour Support Service and Education Liaison Team are unclear;
- coordination of work when more than one service worked in the same school is insufficient.

44.   Many projects and initiatives support pupils who require education otherwise, but they do not work together to form sufficiently coherent provision. These projects are not closely coordinated or monitored. In these circumstances, fourteen pupils have been offered alternative education but have not attended and their non-attendance has not been followed up. Apart from the work of the Pupil Referral Unit for secondary aged children there is insufficient support for the reintegration of pupils into mainstream provision at either school, college or work. The growth of initiatives, including in-school centres, is haphazard.

45.   Since the first inspection in 1997, progress has been far too slow. However, since April, the LEA's new departmental management team has made some progress in planning to address these weaknesses. Realistic and practical proposals have been circulated to schools for consultation. A single route for referrals will be established which will consider and agree all requests for support which may be required in addition to schools' service "entitlement". This will enable referrals to be directed to the most appropriate service and ensure some consistency in the response to referrals across the LEA. It is intended that each referral will receive some response even if support is not forthcoming. In addition, up-dated LEA procedures for monitoring rates of exclusion and allocating support for pupils at risk of exclusion have been devised. Guidance to schools on establishing in-school units have been circulated.

46.   The discussions and school visits undertaken for this inspection show that headteachers recognise the progress that is being made. The proposals are still at too early a stage for tangible evidence of improvement, but head teachers expressed greater confidence that proposals would in due time lead to the development of an effective strategy.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE LEA AND SCHOOLS

The implementation of the Code of Practice on LEA relations with schools

47.   The LEA has suitable procedures to identify schools which give rise to concern. These are discussed in detail in paragraphs 102 to 105. There is an appropriate aspiration that these schools should become autonomous and be fully responsible for their own improvement. Nevertheless, this intention is not yet consistently translated into practice.

Consultation

48.   In each of the previous inspection reports, the LEA's consultation procedures were heavily criticised: consultation was confused with information giving and was widely, and rightly, perceived to lack reality. Inadequate consultation led schools to the perception that the LEA was attempting to dictate to them.

49.   Genuine and welcome attempts have been made to involve schools in policy formation and the direction of initiatives through working parties. Clearer definitions of consultation and procedures which provide a comprehensive framework for consultation have been drafted and circulated to schools. That framework clearly defines what consultation is for, and sets out the procedures for operating it, involving existing groups in a more systematic and collaborative way. Its success will, in part, depend on schools' representatives developing consistent ways of feeding back and seeking views of the wider audience of schools.

50.   In practice, recent experience of consultation has been more mixed. Arrangements for implementing the requirements of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant have taken an approach which demonstrates that there is a real possibility of partnership between advisers, headteachers and union representatives. All parties expressed satisfaction that though the process has taken time, it has been effective in ensuring optimum benefits for everyone from a very difficult situation.

51.   On the other hand, the consultation over the budget has been less successful. Headteachers and governors were consulted, and the consultation led to some changes. Nevertheless, three financial issues - the late notification of reductions in the Central Annual Maintenance Grant, the distribution of this money to corporate departments and the arrangements to monitor schools' expenditure of the Standards Fund - have not fulfilled the intentions of the consultation procedures.

52.   It is conceded by the LEA that, owing to the very tight time scales the consultation on the Education Development Plan was incomplete. Despite the haste, the efforts to consult on the Education Development Plan were genuine. Observations were requested, and four briefing meetings for all headteachers and chairs of governors were

held. A wide range of stakeholders other than schools were also consulted. Our discussions and visits to schools show, however, that in the main schools recognise that the Education Development Plan is over ambitious and because of this, the priorities for school improvement are unclear. Moreover, schools do not feel they have had a significant part to play in its' development. Some of the more effective schools see little that will help them to maintain their effectiveness.

Improvements in relationships

53. A questionnaire to assess the success in developing new relationships with schools was developed by the Evaluation Panel for the post OFSTED action plan. The response demonstrates how deep the antipathy was between the LEA and its schools and how much work is still required to build the foundation of a more productive culture based on clear understandings and mutual respect and trust. The response rate (31%) was disappointing and schools responded positively on very few issues. The results give a strong indication that the schools will not be won over until they see evidence of a sustained, well-chosen, clearly defined and manageable programme of visible and successful actions.

54. Tangible evidence of progress is slow. Nevertheless, almost everyone that the inspection team met recognised that it was early days and expressed a genuine desire that the work of the departmental management team be successful. There is goodwill.

55. This optimism, however, is impaired by three issues, two of which are determined by other departments of the Council: - transparency of Fair Funding and the budget process (paragraphs 60-65), the long-standing inefficiency of Technical Services (paragraph 64) and the lack of an effective strategy for ICT strategy (paragraphs 80-84; 111-116). These are real difficulties and schools' complaints are well-founded. Until these matters are solved, headteachers will feel unable to turn their full attention to embarking on a dialogue with the LEA about the most productive ways of raising standards. It is entirely understandable that during this difficult period, when a new management team has to establish its credibility, everything will be scrutinised in some depth. In this climate, mistakes can assume exaggerated proportions. Nevertheless, the inspection team were struck by the different ways in which the same action is often perceived by headteachers; the extent to which hearsay prevails in some judgements; the excessiveness with which a vociferous minority continuously dwell on the same negative points; and how little the discussion focuses on the common purpose of improving the education of the children.

Relationship with Grant Maintained Schools

56. The grant maintained schools have been fully included and have attended working party meetings. Relationships between foundation schools and the LEA maintained schools are good and there is evidence of a growing commonality of purpose between the schools.

57. The transitional funding arrangements to establish grant maintained schools as foundation schools have been poorly handled. The belated revelation to the grant maintained schools of the Local Authority's allocation of the £1.6 million Central Annual

Maintenance Grant has created consternation. The Local Authority's corporate management team discussed the proposed allocations in December but only informed the schools of final arrangements in March. The late information, combined with uncertainty about the accuracy and the way in which allocations have been made to corporate budgets, has caused bitterness and has set back the improved relationship between the LEA and former grant maintained schools.

58.   In the existing climate of mistrust, great doubt has been cast on the stated intentions of the LEA for involvement, consultation and partnership. Grant maintained schools have difficulty in reconciling their accustomed autonomy with what they see as bureaucratic control.

RESOURCES AND FAIR FUNDING

59.   The first inspection found that the LEA had not developed a budget strategy which set out in detail the priorities. Budget planning did not make full use of the outcomes of consultation with schools. The Council also lacked the detailed management information that was required to ensure that funds retained centrally were deployed to meet needs and to evaluate the extent to which the deployment of funds met educational objectives. In the second inspection, an unsatisfactory budget-setting process had increased the schools' feelings of hostility and mistrust toward the LEA.

60.   The Education Department has, over a number of years, overspent its annual budget, and has relied on sources outside the Education Department to achieve a balance at the end of the year. There is a lack of financial discipline; some budget holders are reported to be complacent about budget management. Problems have also arisen from the lack of attention to adjusting budget lines to reflect changed circumstances. Currently, service budget plans do not exist against which expenditure and commitments can be monitored. Appropriate steps have been taken to address this problem. By the start of the next financial year, the Education Department has agreed to have in place fully costed service plans. Six-weekly monitoring of budgets is reported to have been put into place. Regular reports will be made to the scrutiny committee. The Director expects that the departmental budget will be in balance within the rather generous timescale of three years, although the Cabinet has agreed on interim targets for the year 2001.

61.   The budget setting process for 1999-2000 was the subject of more detailed information and discussion. Nevertheless, this has not helped to dispel suspicions about the management of corporate finance. Work on Fair Funding started late and the journey has been difficult. Since January, there has been a burst of activity, with weekly meeting of the consultative group. However, discussion has sometimes been acrimonious.

62.   Headteachers are still very critical about a number of issues. All the issues reflect a lack of clarity and processes of effective consultation. Part of the difficulty results from poor communication between services and schools. There is a lack of clarity on the additional sums which would be delegated as a result of Fair Funding. Information is found to be incorrect and this then results in changes. This has caused considerable confusion which has not helped to secure the timeliness with which school budgets are

set. Fewer than half the schools met the deadline for submission of their budget plans. At the end of June, 16 schools had not informed the LEA about the budgets which they had set. Forty-four schools had set deficit budgets, 21 of which could not be covered by existing balances. Information from 45 schools had not been processed.

63.   Headteachers regard the level of central recharges as high without, in the schools' eyes, a satisfactory specification of what the Education Department gets in exchange. Schools are not clear about what they receive for their money, what they have to pay for, what comes "free", or how to access resources held back by the LEA. They do not have access to sufficiently detailed information on the full cost of the services both delegated and provided from centrally held funds or to bench-marked information on LEA expenditure.

64.   In particular, schools raised fierce criticism of technical services. There is a lack of clarity and consistency in information given to schools about their service entitlement. Levels of buy-back by schools are low and the service has lost staff as a result. Schools have inherited responsibility for expensive repairs and maintenance which were not addressed before delegation and when the criteria which were used to define priority were not transparent. Best value analysis is to be applied to delegated services in the future, but this may not be soon enough to ensure that the Education Department and schools get appropriate and cost effective support.

65.   In addition, the lateness in providing accurate information and the way in which the Central Annual Maintenance Grant has been reallocated to other Local Authority departments has also caused distrust. The monitoring of the schools' expenditure from the standards fund was felt to be excessively bureaucratic, with the requirement for schools to submit detailed invoices for all expenditure. When this was discussed, no explanation was provided about why a suggestion from the Fair Funding working party to reduce the administrative burdens was not possible.

ADMISSIONS AND PLANNING SCHOOL PLACES

Admissions

66.   The first OFSTED inspection report highlighted the "pecking order " of schools and the "flight from Halifax". This was reiterated in the second OFSTED report which found that "admissions to secondary schools are difficult because of the relative unpopularity of some secondary schools".

67.   The percentage of first choice admissions across the LEA has worsened slightly from 98 per cent (primary) in 1997 to 97 per cent in 1998 and, in secondary, from 94 per cent to 90 per cent. The number of first choice applications to Halifax secondary schools shows a mixed picture. Applications to one school have improved from 44 in 1987 to 93 in 1998 and remained about the same (91) for 1999. On the other hand, the number of first choice applications for another has worsened from 76 in 1997 to 43 in 1998 and 44 in 1999.

68.   Admissions appeals have fallen sharply for both primary and secondary entry; the number decided in parents' favour has remained constant and fewer have been rejected. No complaints were upheld by the Ombudsman.

69.   The Admissions Subcommittee has been abolished. A headteacher working group is consulted on admissions issues. Parental consultation takes place through a questionnaire in the admissions brochure. There is a good level of response (1386 primary and 1490 secondary) and the response is generally favourable, indicating satisfaction with the service delivered.

Planning School Places

70.   The percentage of surplus places in primary schools is similar to that nationally but is higher than the national average in secondary schools. A report of the LEA's external auditor on "planning school places" in 1997, led to an action plan. Reports to Education Committee by the Chief Executive have monitored progress on the implementation of the plan.

71.   The original action plan has been over taken by subsequent legislation, including the requirement to produce an Asset Management Plan, the School Organisation Plan and the recommendations of the two OFSTED reports. The effect of these is to introduce requirements to identify needs for "sufficiency", and address the specific requirements relating to provision in Halifax.

72.   The findings of the report of the District Auditor were made widely available as part of the consultation process on the School Organisation Plan. There have been a number of progress reports to Committee. The following specific progress points have been reported:

-       more open enrolment and standard numbers have been updated to include temporary accommodation data. (Revised figures have been made available to all schools.)
-       As a result of the Action plan following the second OFSTED, a group of headteachers, governors and officers has been set up to develop a strategic agenda for school improvement in central Halifax.
-       a strategy to remove about 900 surplus places from primary sector in two areas. In one area the Committee's favoured option, on which it has resolved to consult, is to close a primary school. The other area is still under consideration.

The School Organisation Plan

73.   The draft School Organisation Plan is a helpful document, which has been the subject of consultation with schools, prior to its submission to the School Organisation Committee in September. Schools were given the opportunity to contribute to the policy and principles section of the draft plan, which is now the subject of formal consultation.

74.   Public/private partnership is seen as a key to helping to close the gap between needs and likely resources and to addressing some of the problems in providing effective education which has the trust of parents in Halifax. The bid which has been

produced is a packaged schools Private Finance Initiative (PFI) bid for Central Halifax, covering four schools and has been placed on the DfEE's reserve list. The proposal is for a replacement primary school, significant improvement to another; and a new eight form entry school to replace the two secondary schools. A working group is discussing the strategy in the context of the LEA's PFI bid. In general, schools know the name of their representative on this group and receive information about the discussions which have taken place.

Class sizes plan

75. Consultation on this was also constrained by very tight time scales. A draft plan was produced in September and attempts were made to seek the views of schools prior to submission. Despite the difficulties imposed by tight deadlines, the outcomes are satisfactory.

Asset Management Plan

76. The LEA recognises the importance of this for the future success of capital bids, as it enables needs and available resources to be brought together and will be a key factor in securing loan sanction. Although good progress has been made, a significant amount of investment in information technology and the production of a computerised database on school buildings are required. Condition surveys have not been completed yet for all schools.

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE LEA AND ITS SERVICES

The management of the Education Department

77. The first inspection was critical of the LEA's management structure of a Director of Education and five senior officers and a Chief Adviser. Schools often enjoyed good relationships with individual LEA officers and advisers but overall the Education Department was unresponsive to schools' needs and priorities. A lack of management information impeded the LEA's response to issues which required action as they emerged. Little had changed at the time of the second inspection; strategic leadership was hesitant or nonexistent. The LEA had established a database but its strategic significance had not been established and consequently little use was made of it to formulate policy.

78. The Education Department has been restructured with the appointment of a new Director of Education and three second tier officers with responsibility for Education Effectiveness, Students and Community Services and Resources and Information. These four posts form the senior management team which will hold responsibility for strategic planning. Six third tier principal officers have management responsibilities for different aspects of work, notably Information and Communication Technology and school organization. However, the structure is too large at third tier for the size of the LEA. It is not yet working fully. Initially, schools are referring all issues to the Departmental Management Team when some issues are more appropriate for third tier officers.

79.   An important strand in the development of a new culture is bringing about a change in the tone and response of the Education Department's communications and contacts with schools so that they are increasingly regarded as customers. A comprehensive training programme has been conducted which aims to improve the customer relations. Two hundred and twenty staff across the Council departments have attended the programme and some will have had this accredited at NVQ Levels 2 and 3. Evidence from school visits shows that this strategy has been effective. In addition, Calderdale and Kirklees Training and Enterprise Council have funded a review of the progress and development of the department toward achieving Investors in People status. This makes good use of Investors in People standards to improve the management, communication and training offered by the Department.

The Education Department's use of Information Technology

80.   Schools rated the support for ICT for administration as unsatisfactory in the school survey and officers still have to overcome much antipathy towards this service. The SIMS administration system in schools, for example, has not been well supported. The previous service was too reactive and training was ineffective. At the present time there is no information strategy. A strategy consultative group has begun to deliberate the Education Department's strategy with a target date for completion of December. The decision has been taken to keep the National Grid for Learning as a separate issue from school administration and to re-coordinate these at a later date. This is a reasonable decision, given the current stage of the development of the National Grid for Learning for curriculum use.

81.   The new Information and Technology teams, which are intended to replace the previous service, are still embryonic. A joint manager has been appointed and her first responsibility is to devise a structure for the teams. There is a clear rationale; the technology team will deal with software matters, such as the development of the pupil database, while the information team will develop the use of this for officers, advisers and schools.

82.   Hardware availability in LEA offices to support the emerging strategy is developing. There are plans for advisers to access the LEA network using laptop computers. Some standardisation of software applications has occurred across departments. Access to departmental documents is not yet available on-line, but the long term plan is for this to be available through an intranet. A Council web-site is planned from mid-July. Corporate Email is reported as imminent; only a handful of schools will be unable to access this from the outset.

83.   No strategic use is made of data from the database system at present. The Departmental Management Team continues to rely on comparative performance data from external sources. Pupil data is drawn from SIMS databases in schools, but some schools remain suspicious of the intended purposes for this and are not yet ready to share data. Officers are working hard to gain the trust of the schools, for example by developing transparent data protocols, showing exactly which data will be accessed by different interested groups.

84.   The LEA has the makings of a sound strategy. There remains much ground still to make up with schools in order to establish a shared approach. Within these constraints, the Departmental Management team must aim to use the information from the pupil database for strategic purposes at the earliest opportunity

Education Effectiveness Service

85.   The first inspection found that the Curriculum Support team, had been subject to considerable disruption but by the second inspection had begun to make provision which was generally positively received by schools.

86.   The Education Effectiveness Service, previously known as the Curriculum Support Team, is the service principally responsible for delivering the Education Development Plan priorities. It is enthusiastically and energetically led by a second tier officer who has made a considerable impact in a short time. Since the first inspection of the LEA in 1997, the balance of phase expertise in the service has changed radically. The appointment of six former primary headteachers has given it the credibility it previously lacked in that phase; it now lacks secondary management experience, but the linking of senior officers with secondary heads is a sensible strategy for filling that gap. The staffing of the service is now, by national standards, relatively expensive. It nevertheless sensibly does not attempt to cover the full curriculum. The coverage of religious education, music, art and the humanities is somewhat patchy.

87.   The head of service manages three senior advisers, who in turn manage 12 other advisers and the head of the Language Support Service (though it should be added that they manage aspects, as well as people). The performance management in the service is developing rapidly towards a form of appraisal, with review of advisers' notes, oral feedback and interviews, team working and work shadowing. Moreover, there is a deliberate policy of directing the most effective advisers to the schools most in need, and of removing the least effective from direct contact. The appointment of a data adviser and team has improved the use of information in targeting the work of the service. In this respect, however, a great deal of further improvement is needed and possible. At present, the service neither collates nor uses all the available information, such as that relating to special educational needs or behaviour support, or notes of National Literacy Strategy or National Numeracy Strategy consultants, nor does it target its work in the light of a sufficiently careful analysis of the data it has. For example, it is not clear to all schools receiving additional support, the bases on which the support had been allocated.

88.   The schools know their entitlement to monitoring and support, and the cost of purchasing further advice is clear, though the provision of additional support is of concern to schools. £225,000 has been delegated to schools. Buy-back rates are very low at 42 percent of schools with no purchase by the secondary schools. It is less clear whether the support provides value for money.

89.   Monitoring visits are devoted more to the gathering of information than they are to support for school self-review, and schools visited derived little benefit from them.   The monitoring visits are seldom successful in challenging complacency and underattainment.   Perhaps understandably, in the climate of Calderdale, the advisers

do not on the whole feel able to be rigorous in their approach to schools. Confidence, credibility and fragile relationships militate against productive dialogue. The written reports seen by HMI were detailed and conscientious but sometimes unhelpfully bland, and the school visits revealed few examples of challenging questioning

90. The LEA would reply that more monitoring time is needed to enable the LEA to target good practice more effectively and to broaden the monitoring agenda so as to make it more helpful to schools. This is to endanger the autonomy of schools by muddying the distinction between monitoring and support which most schools can define and seek for themselves. The current agenda for school monitoring visits is too full to be realistic. Better use could be made of the current visits by using all the evidence available to focus the work more precisely on the areas of greatest need.

91. The Head of the Service is critical of the Education Development Plan, and anxious - rightly - to make it shorter, less detailed and more focused. The activities are being rationalised and the success criteria sharpened. Attempts - attendance at meetings of the Action Forum and other key groups in the Zone, sharing of mail, informal contacts at various levels - have been made to coordinate the actions proposed in the Education Development Plan with those under way in the Zone, but these attempts are neither sufficiently formal nor sufficiently regular.

92. A revision of the Education Development Plan which broadens the scope of the service's work, should be resisted. The desire to lead development is not, in the context of Calderdale, currently realistic, particularly in view of the difficulties which advisers face in challenging schools. The service is beginning to do a limited but important job - supporting schools causing concern and helping to raise standards in basic skills - increasingly effectively. It should not dissipate its efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

93. Nine primary schools and five secondary schools were visited. Overall the schools had received a sufficient quantity of support, but it had been effective in only one secondary school and five primary schools.

Priority A: To improve standards of literacy

94. Standards in literacy are above national averages in Key Stage 1, just below in Key Stage 2 and below in Key Stage 4. In five primary schools, less than 40 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4 or above in English and mathematics in 1998; four of these appear to have made little progress since 1996 and the fifth has made variable progress over the same period. All these schools have comparatively high numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals.

95. LEA support to raise the standards of literacy is effective. A sound start has been made to the implementing the National Literacy Strategy. Ten schools were identified for intensive support in September 1998. All the borough's primary and secondary schools have been involved in the 3-5 day training events. These are of good quality. The LEA has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving literacy by establishing a team of three literacy consultants, including specialists appointed to focus on English as

an additional language, and literacy support for pupils with special educational needs. In addition, some good work is developing on the under-attainment of boys, through the National Literacy Strategy.

96.   The LEA has set a relatively ambitious target of 81 per cent, some 10 per cent higher than aggregated schools' targets. The majority of schools have set modest goals which are, in most cases, an under-estimate of likely attainment. A number of schools have agreed targets which are significantly below what they already achieve. Such undemanding targets powerfully demonstrate the low expectations of some schools and how little the LEA has been able to encourage the necessary shift. The LEA has taken action to improve target setting by seconding a headteacher to support schools in using performance data to set targets. Sensibly, the Head of the Education Effectiveness Service intends to rationalise the activities in the Education Development Plan to more accurately reflect the sound approach of the Literacy Action Plan.

Priority B: To improve standards of Numeracy

97.   Support for raising attainment in numeracy is a separate priority in the Education Development Plan, and in the planning of the Education Action Zone. An increase of 16 per cent in the proportion of pupils reaching level 4 in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test is needed by 2002, if the LEA is to meet its target of 77 per cent. At present, performance is virtually identical to the national average, though improvement has been a little faster than the national rate.

98.   The planning for numeracy has benefited from the experience of implementing the National Literacy Strategy. It is somewhat less overwhelming in scope, though it is nevertheless differentiated. For example, a consultant has a particular brief for the attainment in numeracy of ethnic minority pupils. Leading teachers have been appointed, though not all have been observed by the adviser.

99.   Preparations for the National Numeracy Strategy are well-managed by the adviser for mathematics, working to a steering group of senior officers of the LEA, the consultants and three headteachers, together with representatives of the Training and Enterprise Council and the Education Action Zone, though the latter have not in practice contributed. Relationships with the Education Action Zone are not sufficiently clear. The adviser of course knows the schools, but the absence of joint planning opens up the possibility of achieving re-duplication, rather than synergy. However, there are sensible proposals to complement the actions set out in the Education Development Plan by work within the Education Action Zone and the Single Regeneration Budget by, for example, providing training for classroom assistants to increase their numeracy skills.

100.   The schools have been well-prepared for the National Numeracy Strategy by a series of conferences and regular written guidance, in addition to which, a number of initiatives have raised the profile of mathematics in the LEA, for example: trialling Key Stage 3 numeracy, piloting a Key Stage 2/3 bridging unit, mathematics in the early years and mathematics for the most able, among other initiatives in both phases or indeed cross-phase.

101.   In four of the schools visited, judgements were made about numeracy, all of them favourable. The training has been well-received, and the numeracy team has rapidly established itself.

Priority C: To support improvement in schools causing concern

102.   In 1997 the LEA had no clear plans to address the growing problems posed by disaffected pupils, under-achievement and weaknesses identified in Section 9 inspections. The action plan sought to identify more clearly schools requiring additional support. By the second inspection progress was made in addressing the concerns.

103.   The LEA discharges its statutory duties well in relation to schools in special measures and schools with serious weaknesses. It has used its additional powers to withdraw delegation and appoint additional governors. It has informed schools of the requirements under the Code of Practice and has issued 'early warnings' to headteachers and governors, where appropriate, in anticipation that 'formal warnings' will be dispatched, should key issues not be addressed effectively. Procedures are now well established for supporting schools in special measures. The LEA usually seconds an experienced headteacher to arrest the decline and support the school in producing an action plan; thereafter a substantive headteacher is appointed to manage the necessary improvements. This approach has been effective in the five primary schools and one secondary school which have required special measures; two no longer require special measures, recently a recommendation has been made to remove another school from special measures, two are making reasonable progress and one is proposed for closure.

104.   The LEA provides additional support to a further 11 schools: these include three Central Halifax secondary schools (all in the Education Action Zone) and eight primary schools, many of which feature in the list of schools where less than 40 per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 English and mathematics tests last year. Concerns have been identified through a systematic scrutiny of performance and benchmark data. However, the LEA has not consulted widely enough on these arrangements which might constitute, in outline at least, a policy for intervention to support schools causing concern with clearly understood triggers for action.

105.   The deployment of advisers' time is generous but it is not clear how these levels can be sustained. The staffing is deployed without sufficient discussion with the management of the schools about how it could best focus on meeting the school's needs. Similarly, a majority of the schools which are identified as in difficulty, are located in the Education Action Zone. There are no clear and consistent procedures for joint planning or to rectify weaknesses.

Priority D: To raise the achievement of underachieving groups of pupils

Activity 5: To raise the standards of minority ethnic pupils

106.   The first report identified the inability of the LEA to articulate clear priorities for improving the performance of pupils generally, and specifically those from minority

ethnic groups. It also noted that the LEA 'concentrates too much on the processes to be followed rather than on the goals to be achieved'. The LEA was also criticised for not having sufficient attainment data on the performance of pupils of Asian heritage. The LEA was recommended to analyse and distribute relevant comparative information to schools and their governing bodies in order to stimulate a more systematic approach to target setting, tracking individual pupils' performance and subsequently devising strategies to raise standards of those pupils.

107.   Since the second inspection, the majority of the schools with large proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are now a part of the Halifax Learning Zone. Concerns remain about the low standards of attainment of minority ethnic pupils in those schools.

108.   The LEA's strategy for raising the achievement of under-achieving groups of pupils in the activity plan does not distinguish between the strategic role of the LEA and the operational management of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. Nevertheless, there are grounds for cautious optimism. The bid for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant demonstrates a better understanding of the activities outlined than in the activity plan in the Education Development Plan. The transition from Section 11 arrangements to Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant was well-managed by headteachers working in partnership with the LEA. However, some schools are still critical of the extent to which the LEA continues to take a centralising role in the operational management of the grant. If the LEA wishes schools to take full responsibility for the academic attainment of minority ethnic pupils in a coherent and integrated way, its current approach is not sustainable.

109.   The comprehensive database has the capacity to conduct an analysis by ethnic background. Analysis of Key Stage results takes place at Key Stages 1 and 2 but not at Key Stages 3 and 4. The analysis shows that pupils of minority ethnic backgrounds make a good start at Key Stage 1 but this is not sustained to the end of Key Stage 2, where attainment of pupils of ethnic minority origin is 17 per cent below their peers.

110.   The benchmark data on the performance of like with like schools indicate wide variation in the performance of different groups in schools. As yet there is no analysis of why this is the case. Successful practice exists in a number of primary schools but this is not analysed or disseminated.

Priority E: To raise achievement in ICT and in its use to support teaching and learning

111.   Standards of ICT capability, as judged by OFSTED inspection teams, have been unsatisfactory in 41 per cent of schools at Key Stage 1, 50 per cent of schools at Key Stage 2 and 25 per cent at Key Stage 3. These figures compare unfavourably with the broad national picture at Key Stages 1 and 2 but close to the average at Key Stage 3.

112.   Raising achievement in ICT and improving its use to support teaching and learning are appropriately identified as priorities in the Education Development Plan. Six related and appropriate actions are outlined. The four year ICT development plan published in 1997 was too broad to provide a detailed picture of LEA support. The draft

Education Effectiveness Service Plan now sets out more precisely the areas in which the LEA will support schools, together with responsibilities and success measures.

113.   The scope of advisory support for ICT has been widened. The adviser for ICT retains the overall responsibility and two other advisers are now responsible for the National Grid for Learning and for associated training using lottery funding. This is helpful, given the demands of the current national initiatives and the amount of work which still has to be done. The functions of the ICT centre have been considerably reduced.

114.   LEA support and guidance have not been sufficiently attuned to the needs of schools. Schools rated support for ICT in the curriculum as unsatisfactory in the schools' survey and this was confirmed by discussions and school visits which were undertaken for this inspection. Too little attention is paid to teaching and learning with ICT and too much of the support available focuses on technical aspects of provision. A well-targeted primary inservice training programme includes courses on the use of ICT as part of the literacy strategy and a longer course for coordinators. These long courses have been effective, helping particularly with curriculum planning. In addition, school based training took place in a small number of primary schools (nine in all) in 1998-1999. Secondary inservice provision is very limited, comprising courses which are based on the expertise available rather than on an analysis of the needs in schools. As in many LEAs, teachers lack confidence in their own personal use of ICT and on its integration into the curriculum. Support for ICT coordinators, especially in secondary schools, has not helped them sufficiently to facilitate change in the experiences and learning of their pupils.

115.   Little attention has been given to the assessment of pupils' ICT capability. As a result, the LEA has a very limited picture of the standards achieved and has no reliable baseline data with which the LEA and schools can set measurable targets. The LEA also has little clear information about the use of ICT across the curriculum. Schools' ICT development plans also reflect insufficient consideration of how pupils progress and what they achieve. The LEA has provided a range of support materials including a "Skills Framework". This provides a helpful breakdown of what pupils should be able to do in each year of primary schooling, but does not set this in the context of the National Curriculum to enable assessment against National Curriculum levels.

116.   The implementation of the National Grid for Learning has frustrated many schools and has not yet generated innovative practice. A series of strategic briefings to consider the LEA's strategy sounded out schools mainly on issues of provision and achieved attendance by 85 per cent of schools. The LEA strategy has become bogged down in technical and logistical problems. This was not helped by the unforeseeable loss of the LEA's first chosen Internet Service Provider and a failure to secure the full bid for year two of the project. The first cohort included a small pilot of nine schools. Many of these remain frustrated at still not being able to provide pupils and staff with access to Internet. Important lessons from the pilot have been collated and passed on to the second cohort of schools, but focus mainly on issues of provision. Important as these are, little has been learnt about how access to the National Grid for Learning can enhance the work of both teachers and pupils. Responses from schools do not indicate innovative practice or give examples of activities which have motivated pupils and

teachers. Examples of good classroom practice are not being systematically disseminated.

Priority G: To improve the quality of leadership and management

117.   As judged by OFSTED inspectors, a higher proportion of primary (66.2%) and secondary schools (77.9%) were judged satisfactory or better in relation to management and efficiency than in England as a whole. Improving management and leadership is nevertheless a priority in the Education Development Plan, to which it was added as a result of consultation with the schools.

118.   The LEA lays considerable stress on supporting school self-evaluation. This is consistent with the view that the schools should be supported in their autonomy. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether the Education Effectiveness Service in its current state is able to participate with schools in a dialogue which is rigorous enough to be challenging. In none of the fourteen schools visited was there evidence of such challenge (though there were references to effective support for the curriculum).

119.   The LEA's programme of support for management includes:

- structured induction for new headteachers, involving mentor heads;
- training for aspiring heads through National Professional Qualification for Headship;
- maintaining the existing HEADLAMP arrangements;
- accreditation at the MEd level for at least six months;
- courses leading to National Subject Leadership Standards for 30 subject leaders;
- 6 one day courses for primary middle managers.

120.   Almost as striking as what the programme includes is what it does not: little structured networking of headteachers, for example, and no attempt to learn from the experience and expertise of the former grant maintained heads and governors. Schools in Calderdale are on the whole well-managed, without the intervention of the LEA.

Activity 8: The processing and interpretation of assessment and management data and its use for selective target setting both by senior managers and by governing bodies

121.   The first inspection report criticised the LEA for not providing relevant comparative information which enabled the Authority's schools to measure their progress against that of others, locally and nationally. Evidence from the inspection revisit showed that the LEA has taken this seriously and invested expensively in a comprehensive database which has considerable potential but was not fully utilised.

122.   Some progress has been made since the last inspection. The Pupil Information Database is reportedly operational for primary schools and the LEA now has key staff in place, who understand the potential of the database. A General Adviser has been appointed to develop strategies to ensure that its use is exploited more fully by schools in the coming year. The LEA has agreed with representatives of secondary schools

that every secondary school pupil will be entered on the database with details of their background and attainment.

123.   There is now secure data on all children in primary schools in Calderdale. All primary schools have input base data on their pupils using unique signifiers with pupil background identifiers built in for ethnicity, gender, free school meals and special educational needs as well as contact addresses for parents/carers. The LEA reports that primary schools are updating their inputs on a weekly basis. This year's baseline assessment was an important test: because schools had already provided the base data on individual pupils, the LEA was able to send out the tests and analyse the returns without any additional work on the part of schools.

124.   Analysis of the data is conducted by a company which provides this service for some 50 LEAs. The LEA is of the view that this obviates the need for a traditional Head of Research and Statistics and allows them to focus on the key issue which is how to persuade schools to use the data to promote school improvement. A user group meets and this is a source of good practice and ideas.

125.   The LEA can demonstrate example of ways in which the database is helping to strengthen a more collaborative and developmental approach. For example, a working group of headteachers has been established to look at individual pupils' profiling and tracking. The secondary headteachers are requesting advice on how to use the database, particularly about receiving pupils' National Curriculum assessments on transfer to secondary schools.

126.   Key developments are still required. Advisers require training in how to use the data to support and challenge schools. The classification of ethnicity is not sufficiently consistent across all schools. Targets for improvement are not yet sufficiently rigorous and will need to be amended in the light of the more recent National Curriculum Assessments and schools' experience following the revising of the Education Development Plan.

APPENDIX 1: THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

PUPILS' ATTAINMENT

1. Attainment at age 7 KS1 tests/tasks

| | Year | % of pupils achieving Level 2 or above | | | | | |
| | | Teacher Assessment | | | Tasks/tests | | |
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	82.8	79.3	3.5			
	1997	82.8	80.4	2.4			
	1998	85.2	81.4	3.8			
English (reading)	1996	81.4	78.6	2.8	81.8	78.0	3.8
	1997	81.6	80.1	1.6	81.7	80.1	1.6
	1998	84.2	80.8	3.4	82.7	80.1	2.6
English (writing)	1996	80.7	76.6	4.0	81.7	79.7	2.0
	1997	79.8	77.5	2.3	80.4	80.4	0
	1998	82.3	78.9	3.3	82.8	81.4	1.4
Mathematics	1996	85.1	82.2	2.9	84.0	82.1	1.9
	1997	85.1	84.2	1.0	84.8	83.7	1.0
	1998	88.0	85.5	2.6	86.4	84.8	1.6
Science	1996	87.0	84.1	2.9			
	1997	86.9	85.5	1.3			
	1998	89.5	86.5	3.0			

2. Attainment at age 11 KS2 tests/tasks

| | Year | % of pupils achieving Level 4 or above | | | | | |
| | | Teacher Assessment | | | Tasks/tests | | |
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	61.2	60.1	1.1	55.5	57.1	-1.6
	1997	62.9	63.4	-0.5	60.5	63.2	-2.7
	1998	61.1	65.3	-4.2	63.5	64.8	-1.3
Mathematics	1996	62.9	59.9	3.0	55.9	53.9	2.0
	1997	64.3	64.1	0.2	61.9	62.0	-0.1
	1998	63.7	65.3	-1.6	58.9	58.5	0.4
Science	1996	64.5	65.1	-0.7	61.1	62.0	-0.9
	1997	66.3	69.5	-3.2	64.8	68.8	-4.0
	1998	66.7	71.6	-4.8	65.6	69.3	-3.7

Source: DfEE

3. Attainment at age 14 KS3 tests/tasks

| | Year | % of pupils achieving Level 5 or above | | | | | |
| | | Teacher Assessment | | | Tasks/tests | | |
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	58.1	60.3	-2.2	53.3	56.6	-3.8
	1997	57.5	60.2	-2.6	50.7	56.6	-5.9
	1998	55.5	62.5	-7.0	64.6	65.2	-0.6
Mathematics	1996	57.0	61.5	-4.5	53.1	56.7	-3.7
	1997	61.9	64.0	-2.1	56.7	60.7	-4.1
	1998	59.0	63.9	-5.0	58.6	59.9	-1.3
Science	1996	57.3	59.7	-2.3	53.7	56.4	-2.7
	1997	60.2	62.2	-2.0	56.8	60.8	-4.0
	1998l	57.4	62.4	-5.1	51.7	56.5	-4.8

Source: DfEE

4. Attainment at age 16   GCSE results in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
1 A*-G	1996	92.0	93.9	-1.9
	1997	90.7	94.0	-3.2
	1998	93.8	95.2	-1.4
5 A*-C	1996	39.9	42.6	-2.7
	1997	38.5	43.3	-4.8
	1998	39.7	44.7	-4.9
5 A*-G	1996	83.7	88.1	-4.4
	1997	83.5	88.5	-5.0
	1998	86.4	89.8	-3.4

Pupils aged 15 at the beginning of the school year and on the role in January of that year   Source: DfEE

5. Attainment at age 18   A level results Average point score per pupil

Number entered	Year	LEA	National	Difference
2 or more	1996	16.7	16.8	-0.1
	1997	16.6	17.1	-0.6
	1998	17.6	17.6	0
Less than 2	1996	2.1	2.7	-0.6
	1997	2.3	2.7	-0.4
	1998	2.1	2.8	-0.7

Source: DfEE

6. Vocational qualifications of 16 to 18 year olds in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries (Advanced)	1996	83.2	79.3	3.8
	1997	63.4	75.4	-12.0
Pass entries (Intermediate)	1996	72.7	69.1	3.6
	1997	63.1	68.9	-5.8
	1998	58.7	72.5	-13.9

Source: DfEE

The percentage of students who were in the final year of a course leading to approved vocational qualifications

7. Attendance

	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Attendance in primary schools	1996	94.0	93.4	0.6
	1997	93.5	93.9	-0.4
Attendance in secondary schools	1996	90.3	90.5	-0.1
	1997	91.0	90.9	0.1

Source: DfEE