



**INSPECTION OF
BURY
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

JANUARY 1999

**OFFICE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS
in conjunction with the
AUDIT COMMISSION**

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INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the Framework for the Inspection of Local Authorities* which focuses on the effectiveness of LEA work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was in two stages. A two-week initial review carried out in June and July 1998 established a picture of the LEA's context, the performance of its schools, its strategy and the management of services. The initial review was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection and audit reports, LEA documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 87 schools and the response rate was 82 per cent.
3. The second stage of the inspection carried out in October and November 1998 involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through one and two day visits to four secondary, one special and fifteen primary schools. Shorter visits were made to the two Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), a unit for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) attached to a high school, and an Adolescent Services Unit run by Social Services. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school and provides value for money. In addition to the standard themes covered in every inspection the following additional themes were reported on:
 - Support for art and design in secondary schools;
 - Support for Information and Communications Technology (ICT~ in primary and secondary schools;
 - Support to schools for behaviour
4. This report draws on material from the initial review, from the school survey and from the school visits, together with evidence relevant to the themes drawn from recent HMI visits to Bury schools.

January 1999

LEA Support for School Improvement: A Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities, London, OFSTED, 1997

COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Bury Local Education Authority (LEA) serves a small Metropolitan Borough which is, in most respects, close to average socially and economically. The performance of the schools, particularly the secondary schools, is, however, much better than average, and the support given to those schools by the LEA is exemplary. This report contains some criticisms, but overall it paints a picture of an LEA which demonstrates what can be achieved by a small authority which targets its scarce resources precisely and implements its plans effectively.
6. The Education Service has most of the characteristics of a highly effective organisation: it is very well led, has a distinctive ethos and clear principles, enjoys excellent relationships with its schools, consults with them well and listens to what they say, plans well, but places more emphasis on the implementation of plans than on the production of documents, uses its resources prudently and checks that they have the effect intended. It places considerable emphasis on trust and loyalty. The phrase “the family of schools” was regularly used. Remarkably, it amounted to more than pious rhetoric, and did not preclude tough action where it was needed in the interests of pupils.
7. Bury also undertakes some of the essential tasks of an LEA, as defined in recent legislation, particularly well. Its services are, without exception, effective and not excessively costly; provision of performance data to support target-setting is excellent; support for literacy is similarly excellent, and that for numeracy also good; support for behaviour is very good (though often very expensive); best of all, the LEA has done much to reinforce the autonomy of its schools. The School Improvement Strategy aims to give senior managers in schools the confidence and skills to effect improvement. This report suggests that this is the right strategy and that, despite some inconsistencies in the performance of the Quality and Advisory Service (QAS), it is working. To a remarkably consistent extent, the secondary schools are well managed. The primary schools have further to go, and it is on them that the LEA’s resources are primarily targeted.
8. Working with genuinely autonomous schools is a challenging task. The LEA has become to some extent a victim of its own success, in the sense that its schools, thanks in part to its own advice, are as well able to interpret performance data as the LEA is. That leads to some tension over target-setting - tension which is potentially creative, in that it should lead to further development of partnership as the LEA and schools work together to close the gap between their respective aspirations.
9. Twenty schools were visited as part of this inspection. All were improving; seventeen were improving rapidly, but one (a school with

weaknesses) was making only slow progress. In every school, the support to improvement given by the LEA had been effective, or very effective.

10. All of this is achieved despite relatively limited resources. The LEA makes good use of what it has, but the inspection revealed some constraints, most seriously in expenditure on and support for ICT. Moreover, the LEA cannot, and probably should not, provide support for all subjects of the curriculum. Support for art and design was inspected in detail, and found to be lacking. More generally, post-Ofsted support was occasionally less than was needed.
- 11 To a greater extent than any other LEA inspected in this current cycle, Bury demonstrates what can be achieved without diverting resources unnecessarily from schools. It does so without rhetoric or fuss, modestly achieving with its schools a genuine partnership that serves parents and children well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A In order to make better use of resources and to secure more consistent QAS support across primary and secondary schools, the LEA should:

- i) further tighten the performance management of link inspectors so that an appropriate level of challenge is provided in all schools;
- ii) review its insistence that all schools, irrespective of quality, should be regularly visited.

B In order to meet its objectives for the ICT curriculum and for the use of ICT in administration, the LEA should:

- i) develop, in consultation with its schools, a detailed strategy for ICT provision;
- ii) ensure access to the level of curricular and administrative technical expertise necessary to drive forward its strategy;
- iii) produce clear proposals for the benefits, costs and timescale of intranet links between schools and the LEA;
- iv) engage in discussions with schools about the future levels of ICT investment needed.

C In order to improve provision and to raise standards further in art and design, the LEA should:

- i) use a greater range of strategies (beyond performance data) to monitor the subject;

- ii) review with secondary schools how timely advice and consultancy on complex specialist issues may be made available.

D In order to make more efficient use of resources for provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the LEA should:

- i) review the management arrangements for the Adolescent Services Unit in order to ensure that education provision gains maximum benefit from the LEA support available;
- ii) establish a clear development and improvement plan for the provision for excluded pupils and those in danger of exclusion;
- iii) implement arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and supporting improvements in the EBD unit at the high school;
- iv) assess the relative value and cost effectiveness of the various services supporting pupils' behaviour.

E In order to resolve the debate with schools over literacy targets for Key Stage 2, the LEA should:

- i) engage in further discussion with heads and governors in order to raise awareness of the need for higher and more challenging targets;
- ii) initiate a detailed discussion with schools about the implications, including the resource implications, of raising their aspirations.

SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

The District

12. Bury is an urban metropolitan district in the north of Greater Manchester. It includes the six towns of Bury, Prestwich, Whitefield, Radcliffe, Tottington and Ramsbottom. Established in 1974, it is the fourth smallest metropolitan authority in England with a population of approximately 182,400. The under-five age group numbers 13,000 and there are 30,100 children between five and 17.
13. In most respects, the socio-economic profile of Bury is close to, or a little more favourable than, the national picture. Unemployment, for example, is 7.4 per cent and the percentage of pupils eligible for free meals is 20 per cent in the primary phase and 15.3 per cent in secondary; these are slightly below the percentages nationally and in similar areas.
14. Just over seven per cent of Bury's pupils are of minority ethnic origin. The largest ethnic group is Pakistani, which is double the national average of 2.1 per cent. According to published Fee figures, in 1997 English was a second or additional language for six per cent of pupils.

The Schools and Pupils

15. In January 1997 (Form 7 data) there were 29,282 pupils on roll at 86 schools maintained by the LEA comprising: one nursery; 68 primaries, of which 31 have nursery classes; fourteen 11-16 high schools and three special schools. Twenty-five schools are a voluntary aided and 13 voluntary controlled; there are two grant maintained primary schools. There are two Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) incorporated within the Pupil Learning Centre (PLC) and an Emotional and Behavioural Unit attached to a high school. Bury has six independent schools with a total of 2640 full time pupils, 70 per cent of whom live in Bury. Higher-attaining pupils are over represented amongst those who transfer to the independent sector at 11+.
16. Since 1987 there have been ten successive years of growth in primary school numbers, and from 1992 a rising trend in the secondary sector which is expected to continue over the next few years. Bury's high schools are a net importer of pupils in year 7. However, the steady increase in the birth rate in the borough of 14.3 per cent from 1984-1989, almost double the national trend, has now been reversed with a 14 per cent reduction since the peak of 1989. The total roll in 2002 is anticipated to be about 6.5 per cent lower than 1997. High schools will increase steadily to a peak at 2003, at which point the total roll forecast of 12,478 represents an increase of about 12 per cent on the 1997 roll. In 1997, 71.6 per cent of Bury's 16 year olds remained in full-time education, compared with 69.3 per cent nationally.

17. In 1997 there were 1,505 children in the nursery school and 31 classes attached to infant and primary schools. Statistics for 1996 show that 32 per cent of pupils under five were in nursery schools and classes and 65 per cent in all schools and nurseries. The latter compares with a national average of 60 per cent and a metropolitan borough average of 74 per cent. It is the borough's policy to admit children into reception classes at the beginning of the academic year in which they become five, thus providing nine full terms of infant education for all parents who want this.
18. Two per cent of Bury's pupils in primary schools have statements of special educational need (SEN), which is below the national average. In 1997, 5.2 per cent of pupils in secondary schools were statemented, which is above the national average. However, this figure is now being reduced.

Education Funding

19. The resources per pupil suggested by the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) formula are in the lowest quartile for all metropolitan authorities (Appendix 4, Exhibit 1). The comparatively low level of resources comes about because:
 - the social characteristics of the area mean that Bury has a low score on the Additional Educational Needs indicator;
 - the Area Cost Adjustment factor compensates for higher costs, primarily in London and the South-East, rather than in metropolitan authorities.
20. Up to and including 1996/97, the Council chose to spend well above the Education SSA (Exhibit 2). It was then less able to exercise this discretion because of demands in other areas, and as a result there was a reduction in real terms of £5 million in the education budget and £3.2 million in the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB) between 1996/97 and 1997/98.
21. In 1997/98 Bury delegated 92.8 per cent of the Potential Schools Budget (PSB) to schools which is a higher percentage than the majority of metropolitan authorities (Exhibit 3). Of the total primary and secondary ASB 85.88 per cent was distributed as pupil led funding.

The level of resources has been increased again in 1998/99, because of a combination of:

- a small overall increase in the resources available to the local authority;

additional funding available through the New Deal, the National Grid for Learning and the Key Stage 1 class sizes initiative.

Structure of the Education Department

23. Bury LEA was established in its present form in 1974, following local government reorganisation. The political make-up of the Council is 39 Labour, six Conservative and three Liberal Democrat. The Council was restructured in 1997 with four principal directorates reporting to a Chief Executive, comprising Corporate Resources, Development and Environmental Services, Competitive Services and Personal and Community Services. The Education Service, including Cultural Services, became part of the latter, which also embraces housing and social services. Seven service managers now report to the Chief Education Officer (CEO) as follows: personnel, financial, pupil support, cultural, quality and advisory, buildings and administration and lifelong learning.
24. The Education Service reports to the Council's Education and Community Services Committee, which meets five times a year. The Education Special Sub Committee receives confidential reports at least twice a year on the performance of educational establishments considered to be at risk or requiring special measures and/or in urgent need of specific additional support, with authority to take the appropriate remedial action. It also receives reports in line with agreed local procedures identifying teachers within the authority considered to be ineffective under the provisions of the capability procedure.

SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS

25. The following summary refers to all maintained schools, including grant maintained schools, in Bury. The data used in this section is illustrative. Further details on the performance of Bury schools are contained in Appendix 2.
26. **Attainment on entry to infant and primary schools in Bury was judged by inspectors to be broadly in line with national norms. There are very few schools judged to have a very high or low attaining intake.**
27. **Attainment is above or well above national averages at Key Stage 2 and at GCSE; in some respects it is above average at Key Stage 3; it is in line with national averages at Key Stage 1.**
- in 1997 Bury was ranked 6th out of 132 LEAs for the performance of its schools in the Key Stage 2 English and mathematics tests;
 - in 1997 Bury was ranked 30th out of 131 LEAs on the performance of its schools in GCSE at the 5+ A*-C indicator and 3rd on the 5+ A*.G indicator.
28. **Levels of attainment have risen steadily in Bury in recent years.**
- the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 English tests rose between 1995-7 from 57.6 per cent to 72.7 per cent;
 - the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 mathematics tests rose between 1995-7 from 58.4 per cent to 74.2 per cent;
 - the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* -G grades at GCSE rose between 1994-7 from 46.6 per cent to 48.4 per cent;
 - the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* -G grades at GCSE rose between 1994-7 from 95 per cent to 95.5 per cent;
 - the average point score of pupils at GCSE rose between 1994-7 from 37.4 to 38.2;
 - about half of Bury's secondary schools showed a general upwards trend in performance at the higher grades of GCSE between 1994-7.

29. Even though starting from a relatively high base, the improvements in attainment have been similar to national rates.

- the proportion of Bury pupils gaining Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 English tests rose by 15.1 per cent between 1995-7. It rose nationally by 14.7 per cent;
- the proportion of Bury pupils gaining Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 mathematics tests rose by 15.8 per cent between 1995-7. It rose nationally by 17.1 per cent;
- the proportion of Bury pupils gaining five or more A* -C grades at GCSE rose by 1.8 per cent between 1994-7. It rose nationally by 2.6 per cent;
- the proportion of Bury pupils gaining five or more A*~G grades at GCSE rose by 0.5 per cent between 1994-7. It rose nationally by 1.5 per cent;
- the average GCSE point score of Bury pupils rose by 0.8 between 1994-7. It rose nationally by 2.1.

30. **The data from OFS TED inspections confirms that attainment is generally near or above national norms for all National Curriculum subjects, except design technology in all key stages and in formation technology in key stages 1 and 2.**

- the quality of education in primary schools was judged to be broadly similar to that found nationally, but in secondary schools it was better than the national picture. Schools' climate and ethos were better than those found nationally. Management, leadership and efficiency were similar to the national picture in primary schools, but better in secondary schools. Overall, the proportion of primary schools judged to be good or very good was broadly similar to the national figure; about one quarter required some improvement. The proportion of secondary schools judged to be good or very good was substantially above the national figure; none required general improvement.
- one secondary school has been identified in HMCI's Annual Report as particularly successful;
- one special school was found by OFSTED inspectors to require special measures and has since closed; one secondary school and six primary schools were found by OFSTED inspectors to have weaknesses.

31. Attendance in primary schools is consistently in line with or above national figures. Attendance in secondary schools is consistently above national figures. The number of pupils permanently excluded from primary schools was in line with (1996) or worse than (1997) the national figure. Permanent exclusions from secondary schools were worse than the national figure in both years.

SECTION 3: LEA STRATEGY The LEA has set clear and appropriate priorities for education: planning at all levels of the service is thorough and consistent. Successful partnerships have been forged with schools, who share a commitment to the Council's strategy.

The LEA minimises the education resources that are kept for central services and delegates a comparatively high proportion of resources to schools. As a result, education services are tightly and efficiently run.

Role and Priorities

32. The Borough's initial Education Mission Statement encapsulates the corporate objectives as follows:

"The LEA, in partnership with its schools and the community, will secure opportunities for all individuals to develop fully their aptitudes and abilities, so enabling them to meet their needs and to enrich their own lives and the life of the community".

The Education and Community Service is committed to supporting developments in the two broad areas of: knowledge, understanding and skills; and attitudes, values, interests and beliefs: and to achieving high quality provision, performance and personal relationships. The key priorities of the Education Service Development Plan (ESDP) are:

improving the effectiveness of educational and cultural services by raising

- standards of educational achievement;
- developing opportunities for learners with special educational needs; and
- ensuring that the policies of the Education Service reflect the LEA commitment to equality of opportunity.

33. The LEA sees its role as carrying out its statutory duties, but also playing a wider role in promoting educational achievement, focusing on strategic planning and policy development and giving clear leadership. Priority is given to the development of its capacity to collect, analyse and utilise information that will support its functions, those of schools and other partners.

34. The ESDP establishes the links between strategic objectives at Council and Education Service levels and details the tasks to be undertaken over a three year period. It identifies the personnel responsible, performance indicators and resource implications, but not always precise costings. It

is not clear how the stated outcomes are to be monitored in terms of progress, effectiveness or value for money. The first three of the nine objectives are in order of priority; several of them incorporate elements from the cultural services development plan so that they can be integrated within the workings of a single service. Each of the seven services has a mission statement and development plan, not written to a consistent format. The Educational Development Plan (EDP) shares the same improvement focus as the ESDP and includes an assessment of current strengths and weaknesses.

35. Overall, the process of determining and setting priorities is thorough and coherent, and planning at all levels is consistent with the priorities set. Consultation is widespread. A philosophy of democratic management and openness exists, which helps to generate trust, loyalty and cooperation. There is a strong sense of local community and pride in what the borough does and a determination to do better in pursuit of excellence.

Strategy for School Improvement

36. In line with national objectives, there have been an active drive and desire to improve school performance. The underlying principles within the White Paper, "Excellence in Schools," are seen as central to future development. The Education Service regards target setting as very important in helping pupils to improve their performance. A significant new strategy is the "Celebrating and Extending Achievement Project: Support for Continuing School Improvement" (CEAP) which is based on the following beliefs, that:

- the people who are best able to improve effectiveness and efficiency are those in the school;
- schools need to engage in rigorous self-review through development plans and internal and external monitoring;
- there is expertise within school, the advisory service and other sections of the Council and with other agencies that can be harnessed to support schools in extending achievement;
- the best practice in schools can be shared

37. The LEA's relationship with its schools is defined within both CEAP and more general school improvement initiatives, with increased partnership, greater understanding of self-review and enhanced improvement of schools identified as success indicators. Although partnership is not explicitly defined, the evidence from school visits is of a clear, implicit understanding of the level of engagement necessary to work in partnership with the LEA. The QAS is the main service contributing to the LEA's strategy for school improvement. Its primary function is

the provision of inspection and advisory support to schools to assist them to manage their own improvement. The LEA sees its role rightly as helping the schools to run themselves.

38. The QAS development plan for 1998-99 reaffirms the LEA's core function of school improvement. It is underpinned by key principles; its first priority is the further development of partnership with its schools and community which tests its actions against the three main functions of leadership, support and intervention. The GAS will also seek to be the main means through which external support and intervention can be applied, in a way which is sensitive to each school's performance and circumstances, the provision of services, advice and challenge to help all schools to raise standards and direct and robust intervention where necessary to tackle under-performance.

Consultation

39. Forums for consultation exist at several levels with governors, head teachers, local authority, teacher associations, and representatives from the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses and Beth Din. Aided by its compact size and management style, the LEA has established a reputation for openness, receptiveness, and willingness to respond. At the levels of strategy and policy formation, there is genuine consultation during the decision-making process which can have a direct bearing upon the course of future actions.
40. Every governing body is automatically a member of the Governors' Forum and each school receives agenda papers and invitations to attend its centrally funded termly meeting. The forum has commented on the LEA's draft EDP, Behaviour Support Plan and budget proposals. The Bury Association of Primary Heads (BAPH) and Bury Association of Secondary Heads (BASH) are inclusive organisations which promote the ideal and practice of the "family of schools" as a group that functions collaboratively in pursuit of common objectives. Through these groups, headteachers were consulted recently about the expansion of the GAS and given opportunities to express preferences for the type of advice needed. Less consultation was reported over bids and grants, with the criteria for involvement in some projects not always clarified fully.

The School's Response to the LEA Strategy

41. Overall, schools strongly approve of the LEA's role and priorities and reflect them in their own development planning. In particular, there is a clear awareness of the long-standing commitment to raising pupil attainment. However, CEAP currently means little in practice to several schools where there has been little involvement and no tangible impact.

The LEA 's Evaluation of its Effectiveness

42. The LEA gives systematic and appropriate attention to evaluation and is in a good position to check its own performance. The Performance Review and Audit Committee has taken over the role of monitoring the performance of the Education Service. Its main functions are to satisfy the requirements of Best Value. It is proposed that the first progress report on the corporate objectives will be made to the Performance Review and Audit Committee in Autumn 1998. Lead officers on the action areas are developing indicators for measuring performance so that progress can be reported.
43. Within the Personal and Community Services Department, the director assesses whether tasks have been achieved and at what level of performance. The CEO is accountable for the operation of Education and Cultural Services and meets regularly with the seven heads of service in the education management team to review progress being made towards the objectives they have set themselves.
44. The LEA evaluates effectiveness in several other ways including monitoring its progress in the implementation of its ESDP and periodically surveying the views of consumers of its services, teachers and governors and its own staff. Several of the service plans make appropriate use of success criteria. The Early Years Partnership receives reports which enable the monitoring and review of the Early Years Development Plan.

Statutory Responsibilities

45. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet the great majority of its statutory responsibilities. However, the headteacher appraisal system is adversely affected by the workloads of GAS staff and headteachers: of the 36 appraisals scheduled in 1996-97, 16 were not started. The speed at which statements of special educational need are processed is unsatisfactory, but this is being addressed.

Budget Planning and Expenditure

Cost of Central Services

46. High priority has been given in recent years to the protection of school budgets and this has minimised the resources that are retained by the LEA for central services.
47. The net cost per pupil of all central services in Bury is the lowest of all of the 31 authorities in the Audit Commission sample (Exhibit 4). This has impacted on the level of many of the central services which the LEA has been able to provide, particularly in relation to:

coverage in parts of the QAS

- financial and personnel services and ICT support services.

Nevertheless, schools' satisfaction with the quality and impact of the services provided was considerable, and in many respects greater than was the case in any other LEA inspected so far.

48. Some areas of expenditure were, however, higher than the average for other authorities. For example, premature retirement costs were in the highest quartile for metropolitan authorities and in 1998/99 were nearly 2 per cent of the total education budget. This is related to historic decisions which are difficult for the LEA to influence now. Information provided by the LEA indicates that since 1992/93 the LEA has substantially reduced the number of enhancements of benefits granted on early retirement.

Strategic management costs

49. Analysis carried out by the Fee and published in a Press Release in February 1998 indicated that Service Strategy and Regulation (SSR) costs in Bury in 1996/97 were 1.4 per cent of the total education costs compared with the percentage for all authorities of 0.76 per cent. Section 122 returns for 1997/98 also indicate that SSR costs per pupil were higher than average for metropolitan authorities. A substantial element of these costs relates to central local authority recharges. The combination of central recharges for strategic management, committee support, IT and personnel support involves charges to the education budget of about £0.75 million. Examination of the value for money of these central recharges will be a key part of the local authority response to Fair Funding.

Funding to overcome educational disadvantage

50. The LEA in 1997/98 spent nearly £9 million, some 13 per cent of its total education budget, in providing support to individual pupils (Exhibit 5).
51. The LEA has clear principles and mechanisms for allocating resources which involve extensive consultation with schools and other stakeholders. The LEA is practised in the art of making the best use of available resources. What it has it targets effectively to priorities and checks that it is spent as intended.
52. The LEA provides effective support and monitoring to ensure that schools manage their budgets well. The documentation provided is clear, accurate, timely and sufficient to enable schools to plan and administer their finances.
53. The Performance Review and Audit committee is the LEA's main mechanism for ensuring that services meet the requirements of Best Value. Its tradition

of making do on relatively small resources, perhaps ironically, puts it in a good position to ensure that services are not unduly costly and have their intended effect. This report suggests that it does so with unusual success.

- 54 However, at present there are enormous variations in the cost of the different behaviour support services, with a high level of resources spent on external placements. The only evidence of evaluation linked to an examination of effectiveness came from the PLC which proposed an analysis of time spent by staff on different types of work in schools. The intention is to link this with information on pupil outcomes such as reintegration and reduction of exclusions in order to facilitate identification of the most cost effective areas of work.

School Places and Admissions

- 55 Bury has the lowest percentage of unfilled places at both primary and secondary level amongst metropolitan authorities, having removed a large number in the 1980s (Exhibit 6). However, it now has one of the largest problems of pupils in excess of capacity as the population has grown and as pupils have entered Bury schools from neighbouring authorities. There are, therefore, places empty in a few schools, whilst there is overcrowding in others. Overall, the deficit of primary places will probably have been eliminated by 2002 as the population falls again, but the secondary deficit will rise to about 1,000 by 2002/3.
56. The authority is taking reasonable steps to meet its statutory duties. It has an accurate system for short-term forecasting of demand, based on Health Authority data about pre-school children and its own experience of patterns of migration and transfer. This has given it a clear picture of future need for places in various localities. Adjustments are currently planned in local provision to harmonise supply and demand, and initial consultation with schools has been appropriate. However, the LEA has not yet taken action, as recommended by the auditor, to ensure that secondary places are provided where they are needed in the long term, but is monitoring parental preferences in 1998 in order to see whether or not parents are responding to the pressure on places by filling the schools that are currently less popular. This is a sensible strategy at this stage.
57. The district auditor found the LEA's management of school admissions to be generally good. The proportion of all parents eventually gaining a place at their first preference school is high at 93.7 per cent. Nevertheless, when parents' preferences are not met they tend to appeal:
the pressure on school places leads to about five times as many appeals as the national metropolitan average. Three secondary schools are particularly over-subscribed and generated 210 appeals in 1998. The Council takes too long to resolve appeals; in 1996 it took twice the length of time taken in the most effective authorities.

Strategic planning for special educational needs (SEN), behaviour, attendance and the out-of-school population

58. In order to bring greater co-ordination to the services which provide support for SEN, behaviour, attendance and provision for the out of school population a Pupil Support Service was established in May 1 998. The Pupil Services section of Pupil Support has responsibility for the following SEN-related functions: the administration of statutory assessment and review procedures for pupils with special educational needs; arranging and monitoring special needs provision; authorising the provision of home or hospital provision; liaison with the social services department and the district health authority; the management and organisation of transport for SEN pupils; and liaison with the Bury Parent Partnership. An education officer has recently been appointed to coordinate and develop the support, policies and objectives across the services, which represents an important step forward.

Priorities, plans and policy

59. Two of the nine priorities in the ESDP are particularly relevant to SEN, behaviour, attendance, exclusions and the out-of-school population. These, with associated targets, are:
- further develop and improve opportunities for learners with special educational needs;
 - support for pupils to improve access to, and achievement in, educational provision.
60. The LEA's SEN Policy dates from 1 994; however, the provision it describes does not match the current situation or service/schools organisation and does not adequately describe the continuum of needs and support available.

LEA guidance on the identification of pupils with SEN and the implementation of the Code of Practice

61. The guidance provided by the LEA is detailed and clear. It describes the relative roles of the schools and LEA, and the different levels of support provided. Very clear descriptions and guidance are provided on the criteria applied to determine whether statutory assessment should be undertaken. The associated Guidelines for Staff are good, and describe fully the systems and procedures which are used by the LEA.
62. The budget for SEN is carefully monitored, and costs have been contained. There are effective systems in place to predict year on year costs, and a contingency in the GSB for new statements produced during the year. Funding for statements is delegated on a formula basis, which is

to be reviewed. There is funding via LMS for pupils at Stage 3; the basis for allocating these funds to schools is currently being reviewed to make it more closely linked to pupils' needs.

The LEA 's strategy for the management of behaviour, exclusions and the out-of-school population

63. A good draft LEA Behaviour Support Plan was produced, following consultation with parents, pupils, teacher associations, the health service, social services and voluntary organisations. The purpose of the plan is stated to be to ensure that the LEA has coherent, comprehensive and well-understood local arrangements for tackling pupil behaviour and discipline problems and supporting pupils with social and emotional difficulties.
64. The plan describes clearly the relative roles of schools and the LEA. It states that effective action requires a partnership with other interests and agencies and that 'it is schools who are responsible for managing pupils' behaviour, identifying problems, carrying out the initial assessment of pupils' needs and planning provision in the classroom.' They also have the key role in the exclusion process. However, the education service in its plan will set out the procedure schools should follow before seeking assistance, together with the help and support they can expect and how these can be obtained'.

In school behaviour support and provision for pupils who are out of school

65. The LEA has two PRUs within its PLC. The Social Services department maintains a centre for adolescents. There is a full continuum of support available to schools, ranging from training and advice through direct involvement of PLC staff, shared placement, to placement of pupils in a PRU.

Exclusion from school

66. The strategic management of exclusions is the responsibility of the Principal Education Welfare Officer. A report to Committee in March 1998 showed that permanent exclusions rose from 22 in 1989/90 to a peak of 81 in 1994/95. There was a decrease to 72 in 1996/97, though that still represents a rate which is above the national average. The Committee set a target in November 1997 to reduce the number of exclusions by seven per cent per year over the next three years which would result in 68 exclusions in 1997/98, 63 in 1998/99 and 58 in 1999/2000. In fact the number in 1997/98 is 54, which is already below the three-year target maximum. The report analysed local and national issues and reached a number of conclusions about actions to be taken. These are reflected in the revised exclusions policy which the Committee approved for implementation.

67. This policy appropriately defines the relative responsibilities of headteachers, governing bodies and the LEA. The policy is based on guiding principles which encompass inclusion; the minimum use of exclusion; the appropriate use of exclusion; the early identification of emerging SEN; and the use of permanent exclusion as an ultimate sanction. It contains detailed pre-exclusion procedures, including support available from LEA services; factors to consider when considering exclusion, including the needs of particular groups, for example looked after children and pregnant school girls; fixed and permanent exclusion procedures; and independent appeals. The policy has been implemented effectively by schools, which have applied the principles governing the minimum use of exclusion and utilised the LEA support services. Comprehensive guidance is provided about the procedures to be adopted by the governing body's disciplinary committee and the role of the CEO's representative who will attend meetings of the committee.

Liaison with Other Services and Agencies

68. Liaison with an extensive range of other services and agencies is very good and improving. Liaison with Social Services has improved since the restructuring of the department within the same Directorate as the Education Services. For example, the Principal Education Welfare Officer is a member of the Area Child Protection Panel, and the Education Welfare Service (EWS), Social Services and the police have jointly delivered child protection for schools. There are extensive arrangements for the LEA and other Council departments to plan and work with the Health Authority, Health Trusts, Community Health Council, and the voluntary sectors under the umbrella of the Joint Consultative Council. The LEA is fully involved in initiatives concerned with the economic development of the borough and consults with partners such as Bolton and Bury Chamber about its own strategic development. An effective relationship is maintained with the Bury Parents Partnership, through which issues related to SEN are discussed and resolved. The LEA has close relations with local church bodies and contributes significantly to the work of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

SECTION 4: THE MANAGEMENT OF SERVICES

All the schools visited regard the services provided by the LEAs as expert, timely and helpful. The QAS is a well managed service undertaking a broad range of functions which are recorded and costed.

The recent restructuring within the Education Department provides for more effective coordination of Pupil Support services. There are good joint working arrangements between all those involved in meeting pupils' special educational needs, including behavioural difficulties.

The LEA monitors the quality and effectiveness of its services and it acts upon the evaluations undertaken.

Summary of the School Survey

69. Overall, the response from schools to the school survey was very positive, both in absolute terms and in comparison to similar surveys carried out in other LEAs. To all of the questions in the survey, the response of Bury schools was better than average and often much better. Primary schools overall gave more positive responses than secondary schools. Appendix 3 shows the results on all questions in the survey.
- 70 Interviews with headteachers and senior staff in the schools visited confirmed the high level of satisfaction with LEA services, particularly finance and personnel. Support for behaviour from both the PLC and EWS was usually reported to be good. Schools were also mainly positive about the GAS, notably the advisers' role in self-review, although sometimes critical about the absence of particular specialisms relevant to their needs. Grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts were most frequently the subject of negative comments.

INSPECTION, ADVICE AND CURRICULUM SUPPORT

Quality and Advisory Service (QAS)

71. This is a well managed service with a clear sense of purpose. In most respects, it performs a wide range of tasks well.
- 72 The work of GAS managers and advisers is centrally funded and provided without charge to schools. However, schools pay for the work of the consultants by buying their services from the Development and Training Division. The service undertakes the following functions:

advice on behalf of the LEA and support for school self-review;

this comprises each year: visits to every school to support and validate their self-review process, and monitoring of each school's implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies. Most importantly, this category of work also includes regular identification of schools whose performance causes GAS some concern, and provision of support and advice at a level judged to be appropriate to the seriousness of their needs. All schools are also entitled to a half day of advice from GAS before their OFSTED inspection and to help in drafting their post-inspection action plan. GAS will give additional attention to schools' work on their action plans if their inspection report has been adverse or their plan is of poor quality. The general adviser, the head of GAS, or, occasionally, the CEO, may attend a governors' meeting to discuss a critical report from OFSTED. Each specialist adviser writes an annual report on their subject or aspect, drawing on OFSTED reports and on their own evidence.

- **advice on behalf of the school;** each school is entitled to three half days of advice annually from GAS on aspects of their own choice; not all schools take advantage of this provision.

- **provision of performance data;**

- **work on the LEA's specific initiatives;**

- **support for under 5s;**

- **appraisal of headteachers;**

- **support for teaching;**

- **support for NQTs;**

- **advice and support to governing bodies.**

73. This is a daunting set of tasks, and has necessitated some recent reinforcement of the service, filling some of the major gaps in its specialisms which had resulted from budget cuts in 1996. Even so, GAS needs to consider whether it should focus its scarce resources better.

74. The GAS has not until this year made a reliable analysis of its costs and has therefore not been in a good position to evaluate the value for money that it provides. However, the service is aware of the few areas where it has failed to meet its objectives. It is now in a much better position to evaluate its own work systematically, because it has

moved to a new system of planning its use of resources, and its most recent development plan gives a specification of how advisers' time will be spent. Success criteria are now set for every action planned, and costs are indicated for each piece of work. Targets are agreed for each adviser, related to the overall objectives of GAS and to the Education and Community Services Committee's priorities, such as improving the achievement of boys.

Schools Library Service

75. The Schools Library Service (SLS) is part of the Libraries Service, which is located within the Cultural Services Department alongside the Arts Unit. It is centrally funded by the Education Department. Since 1992 the SLS has operated on a much reduced budget, currently £57,000 per annum, which restricts its ability to meet fully schools' demands and to initiate new developments. Nevertheless, it provides a valuable, cost effective service in enhancing schools' book provision through project and fiction loans.

Other Services to Promote Access and Achievement

Special Educational Needs

76. The LEA's management of the process of issuing statements is an acknowledged area of weakness. The Audit Commission performance indicators show that only 24 per cent of statements are issued within 18 weeks. In response to this unsatisfactory performance, an internal audit was carried out which identified a shortage in staffing and insufficient use of IT as the major contributory factors. A new IT system has been commissioned, and an additional senior post created to address these shortcomings. However, it is unlikely that even the new level of staffing will be sufficient to bring about improvements in the short or medium term. In other respects, the management of the processes of assessment and statementing is effective.
77. The proportion of pupils with statements in Bury was 4.9 per cent in 1995-96; this has now been reduced to 3.5 per cent. This reduction has been achieved by the implementation of a number of related procedures, involving a range of services. The importance of attendance by the LEA at annual reviews has been recognised in the deployment of members of the Learning Support Team to these important meetings. This has enabled the LEA, where appropriate, to reduce the support provided for pupils with statements, or to cease statements altogether. In the last full year, 56 statements were discontinued. Action has been taken to improve the moderation of cases being considered for statements following formal assessment by the LEA's Pupil Panel; this panel comprises headteachers, members of the Educational Psychology Service and education officers.

78. The LEA has also taken steps to ensure that the resources at its disposal are targeted effectively on pupils who require them at Stage 3 of the SEN Code of Practice. To achieve this, a Joint Planning meeting is held termly in each school. The evidence from school visits is that the Joint Planning meetings are effective in moderating needs and deploying resources. Moreover, they are successful in promoting good joint working between the various services involved in meeting pupils' special educational needs.
79. The work of these services is not just focused upon statutory SEN issues. The Education Welfare Service undertakes a range of roles in relation to school attendance, exclusions, child protection, juvenile employment, and juvenile justice. The number of Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) per 1000 pupils is very low, compared to other metropolitan authorities. Attendance in most Bury schools is at or above the national averages. The service responds to different needs, where it can, by the deployment of officers with particular expertise. This emphasis upon assessing levels of needs and priorities works very well in practice. Schools which have no need for regular visits from their assigned EWO know how to make contact and that they will receive an effective response to their concerns. The flexibility in deployment, and the responsibility to manage their case loads, results in resources being targeted in proportion to need. Consequently, EWOs are able to provide effective support to schools, pupils and parents over issues related to behaviour, SEN and attendance.
80. The Education Welfare Service ensures that the statutory requirements relating to exclusion are met. The PLC plays a major role in preventing exclusions, supporting behaviour and providing alternative provision for excluded pupils. The LEA is currently auditing the educational experience of looked after children. This will result in recommendations to Committee which address strategic, management and casework issues. The plan also includes a description of the provision available for pupils who are out of school.
81. The LEA also maintains an Education Psychology Service (EPS), a Learning Support Team, Sensory Support Services and a Home/Hospital Tuition Service. All of the services have effective means to assess and respond to needs, both of schools and individual pupils, and they evaluate the quality of their services. They ensure that the statutory duties of the LEA which fall into their remit are met. Management of these services is good, with deployment generally reflecting need. The EPS recognises that it does not yet deploy staff fully in line with the needs of schools, but is taking effective action to address this. Appropriate advice is given to schools and parents about other services, for example support groups which would be of benefit to pupils.

82. The English Language Teaching Service (ELTS) supports pupils for whom English is an additional language. It targets its provision sensibly at those with lower levels of language acquisition. ELTS is in the process of producing a development plan and is currently meeting nearly all of its targets. OFSTED reports indicate that the work of the service has a positive effect.

MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Financial support services

83. The level of financial support services provided by the LEA is greater than in many authorities, for example, in the management of school lettings income and in the extent of budget advice. Schools are very positive about the quality of the services that they receive. Under Fair Funding, schools may continue to ask for these services but this will be in the knowledge of their costs. Financial support services will, therefore, need to be subject to greater scrutiny in the future.

84. While spending on equipment to support schools is comparatively low, the LEA's finance computer systems are improving as a result of recent investment in software to meet the schools' needs. However, the systems are not consistently used to their full potential because of the absence of the necessary administrative computer skills in many schools. It is now an appropriate time to debate with schools the potential benefits available from accelerating investment in resources to support the use of ICT for school administration and the training needed to develop the use of the range of software available.

Personnel Services

85. Education Department personnel services were very highly valued by the schools who felt that the quality of advice provided and the helpfulness of staff were very positive, again in a service provided within tight resources.

Property services

86. The LEA carried out a condition survey of all schools two years ago and this has been used to identify priorities for improvement and repairs. The Council's investment in this area has been constrained by low resources, with the Annual Capital Guidelines being reduced to £55,000 in 1 997/98. (Exhibit 7) The Council has enhanced the resources from capital receipts. Successful bids for New Deal for Schools resources and for additional classrooms to reduce infant class sizes mean that a substantial building programme will need to be delivered during this financial year.

SECTION 5: SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN STANDARDS, QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE SCHOOLS VISITED

Secondary Schools

87. Judgements of improvement were made in four secondary schools visited, none of which were judged by OFSTED inspections to have serious weaknesses. Of the four schools, one had made satisfactory progress and three had made good progress. Two schools had improved GCSE results in nearly all subjects but the other two showed a downward trend in 1998 in 5+ A*-C at GCSE, despite improvements in average total GCSE points scores over recent years.

Primary Schools

88. The LEA inspection team made judgements about improvement in 15 primary schools, four of which had been identified by the LEA as causing concern. Of the 15 schools, three had made very good progress, 11 had made good progress and one, which had significant weaknesses, was making slow progress. The overall contribution of the LEA to improvements in standards, quality and management in primary schools was always effective and sometimes very effective.

Special Schools

89. A visit was made to a hospital day special school for pupils aged 12-18 years whose admissions are controlled by the Health Authority. LEA advisory input and INSET provision were judged to have been effective in helping the school to improve its management, teaching and curricular planning.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN LITERACY

The LEA is providing excellent support to schools' implementation of the National Literacy Strategy(NLS). It has provided good practical support and effectively interpreted the national training materials. However, a discrepancy exists between the literacy targets set by the majority of schools and the LEA 's overall target. Developments at Key Stage 3 have not progressed very far, owing largely to the constraints arising from the English adviser post being only part-time, but the support which is provided is of a good quality.

90. In 1997 the proportion of pupils gaining Level 2 or above in reading and line with the national average. The Key Stage 2 and Key sh results were above the average for similar LEAs. The ge l and 2 results all showed improvements over the previous year's.
91. Literacy was a theme in five primary and three secondary schools visitec additional information was collected from one more primary school and one more secondary school. Six of the schools had good standards in literacy at the time of their Ofsted inspections. In one primary and one secondary school, the standards were unsatisfactory. Progress since the inspection was satisfactory in one school, with good or high standards maintained in all the other schools. In all of the schools, the LEA had made contributions which were at least effective in helping them to improve; in two, its contribution was very effective.
92. Schools have been made aware of the work of the NLS since its inception, through INSET and regular meetings of primary English coordinators. Schools are kept well-informed about Bury's literacy strategy through informative regular newsletters. A major in-service programme for schools and governing bodies is underway, which includes a two-day conference for headteachers, literacy coordinators and designated governors, plus professional activity days and twilight workshops. In the first year of the strategy, sixteen schools will receive intensive support. The Key Stage 2 schools chosen are also the first to be involved with the LEA project on the National Grid for Learning (NGfL), in order to help them to develop information and communication skills, knowledge and confidence in this area of teaching and learning literacy.
93. There was some concern expressed by primary schools about the lateness of both the appointment of the Literacy Consultant and the delivery of training. In both cases the LEA was not at fault. It experienced difficulty appointing a person of the right calibre in the context of great competition nationally as all LE.As sought to employ suitable staff. The timing was dictated to a large extent by the timescale set by the Fee and the availability of materials, although the fact that some of the schools not requiring extensive support have not yet had their second day of training is rather more within the LEA's control. That said, the schools were very positive about the quality of the training they have received. The evidence from the visits of HMI is that the LEA has been effective in supporting schools' implementation of the NLS. It has disseminated the strategy successfully, and effectively communicated the methodology. In doing so it has interpreted the national training package and materials and provided lesson plans and schemes of work which have been of great practical value to schools. It also created a constructive network to provide continuing support, which includes 'drop-in' sessions for teachers to view materials and discuss problems, and cluster meetings at which staff can compare methods.

94. The NLS is intended to be the LEA's main means of achieving its literacy target of 90 per cent at Level 4 and above in Year 6 by the year 2002. The work undertaken in setting literacy targets, however, has already run into some difficulties. Whilst asking the schools to prepare targets based on the likelihood of real pupils' progress through Key Stage 2, with an element of further challenge, the LEA had also prepared a draft target for each school based on moving each school upwards against benchmarked data. This was calculated to produce an aggregate which would ensure that the LEA would meet its overall target for 1999 already agreed with the government. Unfortunately for the LEA, the large majority of schools have set targets below the minimum initially proposed by the LEA, believing that to be unrealistic, and the aggregate puts the authority well behind in its pursuit of its overall target. Bridging that gap between the relatively low aspirations of the schools and those of the LEA, which are far more demanding, will be an important challenge to the LEA's leadership for the immediate future.
95. The LEA also intends to extend the NLS into Key Stage 3, but this has not, as yet, progressed very far. However, Summer Literacy Schools were successfully organised in five high schools in 1998. The LEA is constrained in the amount that it can do, and the speed with which it can take forward developments in secondary schools because of the part-time nature of the English adviser's post. It has only been fairly recently, for example, that the LEA has run courses about the NLS and its implications for secondary schools. Nevertheless, these have been well received and rated as very useful. The adviser maintains a group focused on the development of language across the curriculum, and holds termly meetings for heads of department which keep schools well informed about developments.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN NUMERACY

Overall, the LEA support for improving numeracy is very good. In most of the schools visited, there was evidence of improvements in the teaching of numeracy, especially mental skills, reflecting the high quality of teachers' preparation for the National Numeracy Strategy by the LEA, most notably in the primary sector.

96. In 1998 LEA results in the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are above national norms with 87.2 per cent of seven year olds achieving Level 2+ and 66.3 per cent of eleven year olds achieving Level 4+. This represents a fall in performance at Key Stage 2 but within the context of rising standards in the previous three years. In 1997 the percentage of pupils who reached Level 5+ in mathematics at Key Stage 3 was 67.4 per cent compared with 60.7 nationally.

97. Numeracy was a theme in four primary schools and two secondary schools visited. Standards in mathematics within the sample schools were in the main above national expectations at the time of their inspection, with numeracy given a strong focus and often taught to a high standard. Several of the primary schools achieved Key Stage 2 SATs results in 1998 which were slightly lower than the previous year, reflecting both LEA and national trends. Pupils at all stages experience a broad range of content covering all attainment targets; where weaknesses existed, they were most frequently in problem solving and using and applying mathematics. The teaching of mental skills was securely established in most schools. The role of some mathematics co-ordinators in primary schools was underdeveloped, while secondary heads of department generally offered sound or good leadership.
98. In all of the schools, the LEA had made contributions which were at least effective in helping them to improve. The primary schools were building up their knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) and were beginning to introduce elements of the numeracy hour into their curricula. In the lessons inspected by HMI the pupils' ability to solve problems mentally was developing well. Lessons usually commenced with a lively, well-paced oral session followed by class and group activities. Several schools had introduced setting or "fast track" classes to help them to align work more closely to the wide ability range, in particular to cater for the more able pupils. Only one of the secondary schools had a clear strategy for mapping numeracy across the curriculum; mathematics specialists had joined other departmental meetings to undertake a numeracy audit and to make relevant connections. Primary and secondary schools were increasingly making use of the performance data available to diagnose pupils' strengths and weaknesses, to identify the relative performance of boys and girls, to predict future outcomes for individuals and cohorts of pupils, to set targets, to measure value added over time and to organise teaching groups.
99. The LEA has made a significant and effective contribution to the preparations which primary schools are making for the implementation of the NNS in September 1999. Timely preliminary information about numeracy has been circulated to schools, raising awareness and clearly indicating to headteachers and governors their responsibilities. Initial training for senior management, governors and teachers has already been arranged for next summer term. The courses already provided have made very good use of practising or retired successful teachers, who give practical and relevant advice. The 10 day course for school co-ordinators has been well received, particularly the sessions on mental strategies. A recently retired LEA primary mathematics consultant has also positively influenced classroom practice and staff attitudes through contributing to courses, visiting

schools to give demonstration lessons and assisting with setting targets for improvement at both key stages. Guidance on planning has also been appreciated by the schools, who regard the NNS as an important means of raising standards. As a result of the LEA's sustained work, which represents good value for money, the primary schools are well advanced in their NNS preparation.

100. The LEA support for its secondary schools is weaker than that given to the primary sector, which is not surprising, given that the NNS is in its infancy and that the LEA is only just beginning to work on its strategy for the secondary phase. Also, the recent absence of consultants to work alongside secondary teachers has resulted in a less direct approach to supporting schools. Advisory visits seldom include sustained classroom observation. In one school the LEA failed to challenge the department on the significant gender differential in its mathematics results. There is little co-ordinated support for primary and secondary liaison in the subject. Courses on SEN and mathematics, and mathematics and IT have been well received. Value for money judgements ranged from unsatisfactory to good in the secondary schools visited.

USE OF PERFORMANCE DATA AND TARGET SETTING

A detailed analysis of performance data is provided by the LEA and this is very well used in all except one of the sample schools, especially to inform the self-review process

101. Schools are supported in their use of performance data by the Quality Assurance section of the QAS. This section has responsibility for acquiring and collating data on pupils' performance in National Curriculum assessments and public examinations, and for presenting it to schools with local and national comparisons. This work also prepares the general advisers for their annual task of reviewing each school's performance and development planning, and for agreeing with each school its targets for the future. It is thus a pivot on which much of the school improvement work of the LEA depends.
102. The LEA has piloted a scheme for baseline assessment of children entering reception classes. This was used by every primary school in Bury in the pilot year, including the grant maintained schools. It is intended that each infant or primary school will be provided with a clear summary in the Autumn term which allows it to compare the range of its intake's attainment against the aggregate for the LEA. The school should therefore be able to see the strengths and weaknesses of each of its new pupils and identify the development needs of the whole intake.

103. Similarly, each secondary school is provided with an excellent tabulation of the National Curriculum attainments of all pupils transferring from primary school. This includes considerable detail of the pupils' achievements in each aspect of the core subjects. Secondary schools, therefore, start with a good knowledge of what their new intake has already achieved.
104. Every year, each school's general adviser discusses the school's performance with the headteacher. This discussion is intended to follow a prepared agenda which focuses on the school's strengths and weaknesses, as revealed by the performance data, and prepares the way for planning future action. This discussion is intended to focus on the main issues, such as the overall proportions of pupils achieving national targets, and the relative performance of different groups of pupils. Notes of this meeting are provided for the Chair of Governors.
105. The LEA provides training in the use of performance data through courses and conferences, attended by headteachers and other key teachers. It gives clear and useful explanations of data in the materials given to schools. The general advisers also have a crucial role to play in helping headteachers to interpret the data, especially as it is becoming increasingly complex, requiring more sophisticated analysis.
106. The LEA's survey of schools shows a high level of satisfaction with the services provided by this section of QAS. The inspection confirmed this: the provision of data, guidance in its interpretation, and help in its usage are all rated higher than in any other LEA surveyed by OFSTED and the Audit Commission so far.
107. The LEA's provision to schools of data about their performance is closely related to its work in supporting them in setting targets for improvement. After discussion with primary headteachers, the LEA has gone considerably further than the government in requesting schools to set targets. It asked all primary schools to set Key Stage 2 literacy targets in Summer 1 998 covering the next four years, but also asked them to set reading, writing and mathematics targets for Key Stage 1, and mathematics and science targets for Key Stage 2. The LEA has also asked secondary schools to set targets for the core subjects at Key Stage 3 and GCSE and for overall GCSE targets for the next two years. Early evidence suggests that a large majority of primary schools have acceded to at least some parts of this request, though some secondaries have preferred to postpone the task until the Autumn term, a more appropriate point in their cycle. Schools have been encouraged to set targets which take account of the actual performance of the year around in question when they were last tested, whilst adding a quotient representing appropriate challenge.

108. The use of performance data was good or better in thirteen out of the fifteen schools where this was inspected. It was unsatisfactory in only one. This high quality of practice is the result of good LEA work: the authority's initiatives had been at least effective in nearly every school visited, and had been very effective in over one third. In many cases this represents good value for money.
109. Staff in the schools visited had a sound grasp of the data presented by the LEA and this helped them to identify salient features in their schools' performance. The recent introduction of baseline assessment has already caused some changes to teaching as teachers take better account of children's prior attainment. Some schools have taken heed of the LEA's analysis of their end of key stage performance, as compared with local schools, and have identified aspects which need a further focus in their curriculum. In at least a small number of cases, this has led schools to make changes in curriculum organisation. In several schools, Year 6 staff report the benefit they have received from the LEA's courses briefing them about developments in the National Curriculum tests, and this appears to have been a positive influence on their teaching. The attention schools are now giving to analysing their overall performance has helped some to move further towards setting targets for individual pupils. Secondary schools have stood to gain rather less than primary or special schools because they were generally already experienced in performance analysis before the LEA's major initiative, but even there some schools have benefited from the detailed work done by LEA officers. The analysis has helped some headteachers to identify relatively strong and weak subjects in their school, and other work has oriented some teachers to pupils' skills in different aspects of mathematics at Key Stage 3.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN ART AND DESIGN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Attainment in art is high in the majority of Bury secondary schools. LEA support for the subject has been effective in recent years, despite long periods of part-time advisory support. However, there is now a clear need for more focused, ongoing and expert advice to the secondary sector as art and design develops and changes and in order to raise standards further.

110. The pattern of support provided by the LEA for art in secondary schools has been gradually reduced in extent and influence over recent years. During the 1980s a full-time art adviser, also responsible for design and technology, was in post. By the early 1990s, the head of art at one of the Bury secondary schools was employed part-time as an art adviser until 1994. In 1994, the head of art from one of the other Bury secondary schools succeeded her until 1997, when the arrangement was discontinued, to be succeeded by a temporary expedient, whereby a non-specialist provides cover.

111. Since the last part-time adviser's work ended, art teachers in Bury secondary schools have been given limited subject-specific support or guidance by the LEA. In the schools visited the general view was that the LEA currently has little or no influence on the development of art in its secondary schools, and limited awareness of what is happening in the subject in those schools.
112. Nevertheless, according to OFSTED Section 10 inspection evidence, achievement and progress in art at key stages 3 and 4 are good in a high proportion of schools, higher than in similar LEAs and higher than the national average, with no evidence of poor attainment and progress. A*/A~C GCSE grades for Bury LEA schools have risen since 1 993 in line with national averages; in 1 990 they were 1.5 per cent above.
113. Art lessons were seen in three Bury secondary schools; in a fourth school the head of art was interviewed. Attainment was never less than satisfactory, and in some lessons was good. The teaching seen was generally sound and sometimes good, and the departments were generally well managed. In the short term, performance data and inspection evidence give no indication that the reduction in LEA support has adversely affected standards in secondary schools. Heads of art and teachers responsible for art in the schools where lessons were seen were professionally robust enough to at least maintain standards without the support of a full time subject adviser. However, there were particular cases in which the unavailability of expert advice inhibited progress.
114. For example, one of the schools visited has successfully taken part in a pilot scheme for Part One GNVQ Art and Design at Key Stage 4. The course is challenging pupils through its content and pace, giving them a greater awareness of the importance of target-setting, deadlines and self-evaluation, and represents a significant development in styles of teaching and learning in art at the school, but no-one within the LEA has recognised or disseminated this innovative work. In another school, health and safety issues pointed out in a ceramics area in a recent OFSTED inspection remained uncorrected. An authoritative opinion on normal provision for ceramics would have helped to resolve the issue more quickly.
115. In two of the schools visited, the teachers responsible for art were unsure how to respond in detail to specific issues raised earlier this year in their Section 10 inspection reports on assessment and curriculum planning respectively. In both cases they would have benefited from timely subject-expert discussion and advice on the range of strategies which might be used to address the issues.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT IN ICT

Many positive measures have been taken by the LEA to raise standards of attainment and to improve the teaching, organisation and resourcing of ICT in the schools visited. However, ICT remains weak in some schools and the level of support is often insufficient to meet their individual needs and also to satisfy the considerable demands of schools across Bury. The LEA lacks a detailed strategy for the development and use of ICT for curricular and other learning needs, which inhibits the effective co-ordination of the many good initiatives taking place.

116. Inspection reports show that attainment in Bury schools is generally at or above national norms in all subjects except for design and technology, at all key stages and information technology at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The inspections showed progress to be poor in between 35 per cent and 40 per cent of ICT lessons in key stages 1, 2 and 4, which is significantly worse than was the case in the LEA's statistical neighbours, where progress was poor in around 20 per cent of lessons. However, in Key Stage 3 the incidence of ICT lessons showing poor progress was a little lower in Bury than similar LEAs.
117. Information obtained from the 20 schools included in the sample showed that the average expenditure on ICT equipment in 1997-98 was substantially lower than the national average (Exhibit 8). However, most schools were improving rapidly from a low baseline, with a considerable amount of new equipment available to support curriculum developments purchased through NGfL programmes and leasing arrangements. This is a short term solution and the LEA and schools have yet to discuss the levels of future funding necessary to; increase further the total number of computers in schools; replace outdated computers; and meet increased spending on maintaining systems and for software and licensing.
118. The LEA recognises the need to raise standards of attainment and to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and organisation of ICT, particularly, but not exclusively, in primary schools. The 1998/99 QAS development plan rightly emphasises ICT as a priority, but it is not clear whether, in the absence of an ICT specialist within QAS, the school visits by link advisers will be sharply focused enough to promote the necessary technical and curricular developments. In the Education Service Development Plan (ESDP) for 1998 - 2001, IT is one of nine key areas for improvement. While the aims of the plan are appropriate, the implementation of the ESDP is likely to be hindered by the vague nature of the two objectives which cover IT in the curriculum and in SEN. In order for these objectives to guide development more clearly they need

to have more clearly specified performance indicators and to deal separately with the need for pupils to:

- develop ICT capability as specified by the National Curriculum and
- apply these capabilities to their learning of other subjects.

119. Also, although discussions have been held about systems for providing a platform for communication between schools and the LEA and for individual school links to the internet, there is not yet a clear picture among schools and officers about the benefits, costs and timing of this development. A significant weakness is the absence of an adequate, coherent ICT development plan in the LEA to provide a strategic framework, to give clear direction and to link together individual school plans.
120. In the six primary schools visited, standards in ICT had been judged by Section 10 inspectors to range from a little better than national expectations in two schools to unsatisfactory or poor in the others. In the latter schools the deficiencies were associated with too little hardware and software, underdeveloped schemes of work, too little teaching of the skills of ICT, a lack of knowledge and confidence amongst teachers and, in the weakest cases, a lack of drive within the school to tackle this aspect of the National Curriculum effectively.
121. Since the inspections, standards and provision have improved in each school: this has been quite marked in the two schools where standards were already reasonable, owing mainly to the tenacity of the ICT coordinators, but only just satisfactory in one school. Each school used the services of the LEA to a wide extent, including advice on curricular and technical issues from the Technology Curriculum Support Centre (TCSC) consultants, in-service training, equipment installation and trouble shooting from the technician and the hardware repair service. The services were highly regarded by the coordinators and headteachers, except that in most aspects they were rightly deemed to be insufficient, owing to inadequate funding.
122. In the two secondary schools visited standards were judged to be sound. However, there were gaps in coverage in each school, owing largely to a lack of computers and specialist rooms. In one school, ICT development had not reportedly been a high priority until the appointment of the current headteacher.
123. The LEA's maintenance contract was used and well regarded in both schools. However, apart from occasional use of LEA courses and consultancy, virtually no other LEA service was used. Much development was taking place in both schools, often intelligently planned to meet real needs. This was constrained, however, by a severe and reportedly

longstanding lack of funding and by a perception that LEA support was, in the main, not sufficiently oriented to the needs of secondary schools.

124. Advisory service input and INSET provision were judged to have been effective in helping the special school visited to improve its management, teaching and curricular planning.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS REQUIRING SPECIAL MEASURES AND SCHOOLS WITH SERIOUS WEAKNESSES

The LEA gives comprehensive and effective support to schools which are identified as weak. All except one of the four schools visited with serious weaknesses or causing concern had made good or very good progress.

125. Senior officers are required to inform a Special Sub-Committee of the Education Committee each term of the progress of schools that the advisory service or OFSTED has identified as having weaknesses. Where necessary, this sub-committee will meet specially for progress reports on individual schools, as it did twice in Autumn 1998.
126. The QAS categorises schools at three levels of weakness. The progress report on each school specifies the action taken by the school's management and the LEA. Schools are moved up or down the range of categories in accordance with their improvement or lack of it. The QAS has established a set of criteria, broadly similar to those used by OFSTED, for adding schools to the list or removing them from it. There are currently 18 schools on the list, representing 21 per cent of Bury schools; nearly all of these are primary schools.
127. In general, the action taken by the LEA concerning schools with weaknesses comprises: inspection of provision, scrutiny of management action, and provision of recommendations for improvement. On a number of occasions this has led to a change of leadership in a school. In some case there have been changes in the composition of the governing body. In one instance, after a school had been found by OFSTED to require special measures the LEA withdrew its delegated powers, appointed additional governors, and then closed the school.
128. The QAS has recently, for the first time, costed the time it anticipates giving to schools with weaknesses. The weakest schools will receive 24 days intervention each year; those at the middle level will receive 12 days per year, and those at the lowest level, three days per year. The cost of this in adviser time is about £37,000 to which will be added £25,500 of funding retained for this purpose from the Standards Fund.
129. During this inspection four schools were visited where standards, quality or management were causing the LEA varying levels of concern. The authority had made major commitments of resources to help recovery in

three of these, and lesser but still significant commitments in the other one, which presented less serious problems. The extent of the improvements made thus far is varied, reflecting the particular nature of the problems in each institution. In most cases the extent of improvement has been good or very good but in one there has been only limited progress in moving forward with the action plan. In three cases, the LEA has given effective support, by providing an external consultant, by carefully inducting a new headteacher, or by arranging very frequent monitoring meetings involving the general adviser. In another case, a potentially useful task group has been formed to help the school and good support has been given to producing an action plan, and in the other institution the general adviser is giving more than the usual level of monitoring and advice.

130. The LEA's mechanism for supporting weak schools is good, and its response firm. Its use of resources is very sound and in almost all cases provides good or satisfactory value for money. The LEA meets its obligations, and the balance of support and challenge is generally appropriate to schools' circumstances.

SUPPORT FOR BEHAVIOUR

The LEA provides a range of services and provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. One of these, the Alternative Provision Project for Key Stage 4 pupils who are not attending school, provides an outstanding service. The out-reach behaviour support provided for mainstream schools is very good. The new facilities for supporting pupils temporarily out of mainstream and the high school EBD unit have been successfully established, but require support to bring about improvements.

131. The effectiveness of the LEA's support for behaviour was the focus of visits to four primary schools and two secondary schools. At the time of their Ofsted inspections, the behaviour in five of these schools was good; it was satisfactory overall in the other, although significantly worse in one key stage. Since the inspections, all of the schools have either made considerable improvement or maintained high standards. In five of the schools, the LEA has made effective or very effective contributions. The other school did not require any support from the LEA.
132. HMI also visited the central resources available for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are two distinct provisions within the PLC. The first of these is for pupils at key stages 2, 3 and 4 who will be returning to mainstream or who are at Stage 4 of the Code of Practice. Staff from here also provide support in schools for individual pupils and advice to teachers about managing behaviour. The second is the Alternative Provision Project (APP). This is for pupils in their final year of schooling for whom return to school is not appropriate. In exceptional circumstances, PLC staff may provide home tuition for pupils unable to

attend school or a PRU. This is for no longer than half a term and is part of a clear plan to establish attendance at a school or PRU. There is a unit at one of the LEA's high schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural problems.

133. Placement of pupils who have no school place is determined by a group of officers representing the range of provision available. The Social Services department maintains a centre run by Adolescent Services, and part funded by the Education Department. This has eight places, and caters for pupils with whom the Social Services department already have an involvement, and who present behavioural difficulties at school and are at risk of being excluded.
134. The support for behaviour in mainstream schools provided by the PLC is very good. It has been effective in preventing exclusions in primary and secondary schools, either by helping schools to maintain pupils on site or by temporary placement elsewhere. PLC staff give expert advice to school staff about managing pupils' behaviour, which has increased their confidence and ability to deal with problems. The PLC also provides training to teachers about behaviour management, which has been very helpful for schools in developing and implementing policies and practice.
135. The in-school support is not always successful, and placement outside mainstream is used in appropriate cases. Pupils from primary and secondary schools have been successfully reintegrated from these placements. There are well thought-out plans and procedures for reintegration. These include target dates for return to school which are established at the outset and subject to review, and well managed part-time reintegration for increasing amounts of time per week.
136. The outreach support provided by the PLC is generally very highly regarded by schools. The procedures for access are well understood, and the PLC is mostly able to respond in a timely way to requests for help. Where intervention by the PLC has not been successful in preventing exclusion, schools attribute this to insufficient time being available from the service. The service gives greater priority, in keeping with its preventative role, to work in primary schools, and this is reflected in the views expressed by schools in the survey about LEA services. Behaviour support was rated higher by both secondary and primary schools in Bury than the average for the 21 LEAs surveyed so far, and the primary school rating was the highest for all those authorities.
137. A relatively new centre, established after the closure of an EBD special school provides the outreach behaviour support service to schools and on-site provision for excluded pupils, or those at risk of exclusion. Pupils attend for two days per week. Although the on-site provision has been established and is functioning, it does not have a sufficiently clear plan for development. Nor is there adequate support from the advisory service, in terms of curriculum development. Support is provided by the EPS and EWS, but there are no regular multi-disciplinary team

meetings incorporating those and other appropriate services. Management is currently by an acting headteacher, with plans to make a permanent appointment by April 1999.

138. The APP makes outstanding arrangements for its students. It deals with pupils with a variety of problems, encompassing the disaffected, the disillusioned and the all but disappeared. Such a wide range of needs requires a range of flexible responses, and the APP provides these admirably. At the heart of this provision is a highly effective partnership between the LEA and Bury College.
139. Pastoral arrangements for students in the APP are excellent. There is an emphasis on success, and staff go to extraordinary lengths to get accreditation for students' achievements. There is a palpable sense of commitment, from APP and College staff to helping these youngsters to achieve. Given that for these students the APP represents a last chance, this is highly appropriate. Last year, successes were gained in GCSEs, City and Guilds, NVQ and CLAIT, and a range of internal College accreditation. In 1996/97, 80 per cent of students went on to further education, training schemes or employment; in 1997/98 the figure was 67 per cent. Students are well known to the staff, and very good support is provided by the EWS to follow up promptly on unexplained or persistent absences. A wide programme of activities, including residential opportunities, is used effectively to develop students' social skills.
140. The LEA maintains a unit for pupils with EBD at one of its high schools. This also was established after the closure of the EBD special school. The school and the LEA work in harmonious partnership over the unit, but the LEA's support is rather stronger in principle than in practice. The cost of each place at the unit is expensive at approximately £12,000 each, plus the age-weighted funding for each pupil, and there is some lack of definition about what that funding is intended to cover. The arrangements for support from other services are also not clearly defined. Admissions to the unit encompass pupils with more severe difficulties than previously, which poses increased challenges for management of pupils and integration.
141. The Adolescent Services Unit is not an LEA establishment. However, it educates some of the borough's most difficult pupils, and would benefit from a greater involvement of LEA services, particularly in the monitoring and evaluation of provision and support for improvement.

SUPPORT FOR THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

The LEA has helped the schools either to maintain or to improve the quality of their teaching, often from a good baseline, through joint SEN planning meetings, well targeted INSET and effective advisory support.

142. The data from OFSTED inspections for all Bury schools shows that in terms of the quality of education provided, 60 per cent of primary schools and 85 per cent of secondary schools were considered to be good or very good. This represents a much better than average picture in the secondary sector. Substantial improvements were needed in three primary schools.

143. In all except one of the sample schools, the quality of teaching overall was satisfactory or better at the time of the Section 10 report, with a high proportion of good and very good teaching in many of the schools. The exception was a primary school where 80 per cent of the Key Stage I lessons were judged to have been unsatisfactory.
144. All of the schools visited had at least maintained the quality of teaching and in half of them there was evidence of improvement, including all those where significant weaknesses had been identified. The LEA had contributed widely to the changes and improvements evident in the teaching.
145. In a minority of schools, progress was too slow because there was insufficient monitoring by senior management or the LEA. Several schools would have benefited from a more objective assessment of need when the weakness was identified at the time of the feedback from the OFSTED inspection, but this had not been forthcoming from the LEA. In such instances, staff had been sent on courses indiscriminately and the resulting INSET had not been effective.
146. LEA courses and school based INSET were otherwise mainly successful in addressing gaps in teachers' subject knowledge. Most schools subscribed to the full LEA package, which comprises a considerable amount of training. The LEA is able to forecast needs accurately through extensive consultation with schools and it can therefore make provision accordingly.
147. LEA advisory support from link and subject advisers was achieved through: school visits to help individual teachers identified as weak; the provision of relevant documentation, such as sample policies; the monitoring of improvement in teaching, (although the LEA was too often reactive in this respect); the regular heads of department and coordinators' group meetings held by some subject advisers and for SEN and nursery staff; the encouragement to visit other schools in order to learn from better practice elsewhere; the moderation of course work in the secondary phase; and, in extreme cases, by helping schools to evaluate and confirm unsatisfactory teaching in order to remove incompetent staff.
148. These LEA support mechanisms were judged to be effective in all except one school, where no specific support had been given. Support was nearly always in proportion to the school's needs and only in one instance was it less than that which was required. The schools are

getting satisfactory or good value for money from the LEA's contribution to the quality of teaching.

149. An important aspect of the LEA's support for teaching is the induction programme for NQTs, which comprises a series of meetings, a detailed informative handbook, a profile which provides a format for LEA and school monitoring, a helpline should problems arise and two visits involving classroom observation by an LEA adviser. Several heads had also received guidance from the LEA about the monitoring of classroom performance through classroom observation. The NQTs interviewed in the course of the inspection were mainly positive about the support they had received.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOLS

Support for management

The LEA has given much background support for the improvements in management made by the majority of schools and it has succeeded in helping them to engage in a validated self-review process in their own institutions. Central to the LEA's strategy for supporting school management is the dialogue between headteachers and link advisers when reviewing assessment results and school development planning. However, some inconsistency is evident in the effectiveness of this system across phases, with secondary schools receiving less good support. The LEA provides an excellent standard of support to governing bodies and has extensive procedures in place for communication and consultation.

150. OFSTED inspections showed that schools were generally well or satisfactorily led, with secondary headteachers often demonstrating particular strengths. This inspection showed that there have been improvements in the quality of management in nine out of seventeen schools since their OFSTED inspection. In addition, three schools are maintaining their previous high standard of management. The LEA has contributed effectively to the improvement or the continued high quality management in eleven cases, and very effectively in two cases; in the remainder the effectiveness of the LEA's contribution has been much more limited.
151. In many cases, schools have tightened up their management procedures, where particular weaknesses had been found during their OFSTED inspection. In some cases, the appointment of a new headteacher appeared to have accelerated this process. In at least two schools, though, managers believed that the budgetary constraints under which they operated made it very difficult to make progress on resourcedependent issues, and some schools were working with smaller than usual management teams because of resource deficiencies. Overall,

schools were generally making less headway in initiating or extending classroom monitoring than they were on other issues noted by OFSTED inspectors. In some cases inadequate attention had been given to this, even though it had been a key issue arising from the school's inspection

152. The LEA has given considerable background support to the improvements schools have made. The regular meetings for headteachers have proved valuable in giving some primary heads a steer on school improvement strategies, and the forum for deputies is generally appreciated as an opportunity to explore key issues. The LEA's involvement in a regional management development course has been very helpful to middle managers in a number of schools in both phases. Many senior managers have benefited greatly from the LEA's provision of performance data, and the advice of the finance and personnel sections is generally greatly appreciated. Such support has been beneficial in, for instance, identifying weak progress by pupils or tackling the ineffectiveness of certain teachers.
153. The LEA makes guidance and advice available to schools immediately before their OFSTED inspection, mainly in order to ensure that schools are familiar with the inspection process. This now needs to be extended to include PRUs. Schools have found the advice useful, though the additional option of specialist advice informed by classroom observation, wisely not often taken up by the schools, is not a good use of very tight resources. Advisers have helped some schools to devise a good post-inspection action plan; this has represented good value for money. In other cases the school was entirely able to produce a good plan on its own and the LEA sensibly let the school do so. However, in a few cases, the school needed support in planning its response to the inspection but it was not sought or provided, and at least one school produced a poor action plan, without intervention by the LEA.
154. A keystone of the LEA's strategy for supporting school management is the dialogue between headteachers and their general adviser when reviewing assessment results and development plans. At best, the adviser has been able to help headteachers at these annual reviews to identify what needs to be done and how. Some schools, more often primary than secondary or special, have found discussion with their adviser to be very fruitful; this has raised the level of thinking in the school and helped managers to implement appropriate strategies for improvement. In certain cases, the adviser has challenged the school productively with a careful analysis of its performance and development, and brought an informed, objective breadth of view to the issues discussed. However, the present system has three weaknesses which cause the LEA to be adding little value to some schools' own self review Firstly, there is evidence that some secondary schools would have benefited from more detailed advice on the organisation of the curriculum. Secondly, although general advisers have discussed a

school's progress with headteachers they have sometimes missed some important aspects of performance. Thirdly, the evolving system of advisory visits tends to focus very heavily on the study of performance indicators. In some cases, the adviser does not always come to terms with all the significant strengths and weaknesses in the school because of the lack of additional evidence that could have been derived from consideration of a wider range of evidence.

Support for governors

155. Support to governing bodies was rated as good in the survey of views of the LEA's services by secondary and primary schools. Training for governors was graded as good by secondary schools and better than adequate by primary schools. Both activities were rated better than the averages from the 21 LEAs surveyed so far.
156. In five primary and three of the secondary schools, the role of the governing body was judged by their Ofsted inspection to be good; it was satisfactory in a further seven primaries and one secondary. In three primaries it was judged to be unsatisfactory. Improvement since the inspection has been good, or performance maintained at a high level, in all the schools visited except one where it has been satisfactory. The LEA has provided support that has been effective, and in three cases very effective, in all the schools. Governors have a very high opinion of the support they receive from the LEA.
157. Governors are kept well informed. A termly governors' newsletter was introduced in Summer 1998 and a telephone hotline has been installed for out of hours information. Regular publications also play an important part in providing information and advice, with the Management Handbook giving guidance on matters such as the setting up of sub-committees and arrangements for elections. These various means of consultation and communication work very effectively. Newsletters contain timely information about governors' responsibilities. The termly meetings with the CEO are occasions of open discussion and genuine debate as well as opportunities to provide information.
158. The LEA offers a clerking package to schools on a buy-back basis. Briefing for clerks is organised termly with heads of service supplying detailed background information. Governors' resolutions are collated and reported to Education Committee with specific items requiring responses from officers and/or members reported back to the meetings. An important monitoring function is achieved through the analysis of the termly reports and the checking of the resolutions passed by governing bodies in relation to the agenda items. Most of the schools visited make

use of the LEA's clerking service, and consider it to be very effective and efficient, with clerks often able to give governors good advice and guidance.

159. Active steps are taken to recruit governors and some difficulties are reported in recruiting co-opted governors. Prompt action is taken to fill vacancies and the present governorship vacancy rate is only 1.5 per cent. Each new governor is sent a welcome pack on appointment which includes statutory instruments and articles, a guide to the law and information about governor training. Governor training is under the administration of the Development and Training Centre. Several courses are specifically aimed at new governors. Training is often described by governors as excellent, although the uptake is sometimes low.
160. In the three schools where weaknesses in governance were identified by their Ofsted inspection, the LEA provided support with the subsequent action plan and its implementation. In both cases this was effective.
161. The LEA has provided extensive, expert and detailed advice to governing bodies on the appointment of headteachers. Management services support the work of governors effectively, with the budget manager role being a particular strength; governors value the attendance of budget managers at meetings, when appropriate, and the budget information that they provide. LEA officers are generally described as accessible and responsive to governors' queries and problems.

APPENDIX I CONTEXT OF THE LEA

(a) Characteristics of the pupil population

Indicator	Date	Source	LEA	National
1. Number of pupils in LEA area of 1997 compulsory school age	1997	Form 7	29282	
2. Percentage of pupils entitled to 1997 DEE free school meals	1997	DfEE		
i. primary			20.00	22.8
ii. secondary			15.3	18.2
3. Percentage of pupils living in households with parents/carers				
(i) with Higher Educational qualifications	1991	Census	13.3	13.5
(ii) in Social Class 1 and 2	1991	Census	33.0	31.00
4. Ethnic Minorities in population aged 5-15. Percentage of ethnicgroup:	1991	Census		
Asian			0.2	0.5
Bangladesh			0.2	0.8
Black African			0.2	0.6
Black Caribbean			0.2	1.1
Black Other			0.4	0.8
Chinese			0.3	0.4
Indian			0.6	2.7
Other			0.7	1.1
Pakistani			4.2	2.1
White			93.0	89.9
5. Percentage of pupils:				
(i) with a statement of SEN				
primary				
secondary	1997	DfEE		2.6
(ii) attending special school				
primary	1997	DfEE		3.9
secondary	1997	DfEE		1.1
6. Participation in education:				
(i) % pupils under 5 on the roll of a maintained school	1997	DfEE		1.6
(ii) % pupils aged 16 remaining in full time education.				
	1996	LEA	65	60
	1997	LEA	71.6	69.3

(b) Organisation of schools

1. Number of:	Number
Nursery schools	1
Infant schools	3
Junior schools	3
Junior and infant schools	62
Middle schools	
Secondary schools 11-16	14
11-18	
Special schools	3
Pupil Referral Units	2

2. Pupil/teacher ratio

	Year	LEA	National
All	1997	20.4	19.6
Nursery	1997	22.0	19.2
Prima7	1997	23.9	24.1
Secondary	1997	17.5	17.3
Special	1997	5.6	6.2

Source. DfEE

3. Class size

Rate per 1000 classes

Size of class	Year	LEA	National
31 or more	KS1	1997	473.1
	KS2	1997	464.1
36 or more	KS1	1997	59.1
	KS2	1997	55.3
4 Surplus places			
% surplus places	Year	LEA	National
Primary	1997	2.7	+ 9.5
Secondary	1997	3.7	+ 11.6

Source Audit Commission

(c) Finance

Indicator	Source	Year	– LEA	National
% expenditure in relation to standard spending assessment	DfEE	1996 .97	8.5%	
Funding per pupil: £ per pupil Primary 0-4 5-6 7-10	CIPFA	1996 .97	1344.9 1230.9 1169.0	1278.8 1180.2 1149.4
£ per pupil Secondary 11-13 14-15 16+	CIPFA	1996 -97	1537.9 1829.8 2000.0	1567.4 1931.4 2440.0
Aggregated schools budget: £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1996 .97	1464.1 2022.5 9755.3	1486.0 2052.7 7945.2
General schools budget: £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1996 .97	1919.4 2490.3 13400.7	2021.8 2694.2 12595.0
Potential schools budget: Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1996 .97	1593.0 2161.2 10670.2	1664.6 2232.6 8819.1
Capital expenditure: £ per pupil	CIPFA	1996 .97	15.6	128.9

APPENDIX 2:

THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

PUPILS' ATTAINMENT¹

1. Attainment at age 7 KSI tests/tasks

	Year	% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above					
		Teacher Assessment			Tasks/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1997	82.4	80.4	1.9	82.7		
	1998	83.6	81.4	2.2	80.4		
English (reading)	1997	82.2	80.1	2.2	82.5	80.1	2.6
	1998	82.7	80.5	1.9	83.3	77.4	3.0
English (writing)	1997	80.4	77.5	2.9	87.8	80.4	2.0
	1998	81.0	78.9	2.1	87.5	81.4	1.9
Mathematics	1997	86.7	84.2	2.5		83.7	4.1
	1998	87.5	85.5	2.1		84.8	2.5
Science	1997	86.7	85.5	1.2			
	1998	87.7	86.5	1.3			

Source: DfEE

2. Attainment at age 11 KS2 tests/tasks

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 4 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1997	72.5	63.4	9.2	72.7	63.2	9.4
	1998	74.1			73.5	64.7	8.8
Mathematics	1997	74.1	64.1	10.0	74.2	62.0	12.2
	1998	72.9			66.3	58.5	7.9
Science	1997	77.0	69.5	7.5	77.2	68.8	8.4
	1998	79.2			76.7	69.3	7.4

Source :DfEE

¹1998 data has not yet been validated nationally.

3. Attainment at age 14 KS3 tests/tasks

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 4 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1997	64.8	60.2	4.6	67.1	56.6	10.5
	1998				70.4	65.1	5.3
Mathematics	1997	70.6	64.0	6.6	67.4	60.7	6.6
	1998				67.1	59.9	7.2
Science	1997	70.2	62.2	8.0	68.0	60.8	7.2
	1998				61.9	56.5	5.4

Source :DfEE

4. Attainment at age 16 GCSE results in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
	1996	98.0	93.9	4.1
	1997	98.0	94.0	4.0
	1998	99.4	95.2	4.2
	1996	49.6	42.6	7.0
	1997	48.4	43.3	5.2
	1998	47.6	44.4	3.3
	1996	95.2	88.1	7.1
	1997	95.5	88.5	7.0
	1998	96.0	89.6	6.4

5. Attendance

	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Attendance in primary schools	1996	93.9	93.4	0.5
	1997	94.5	93.9	0.6
Attendance in secondary schools	1996	91.6	90.5	1.2
	1997	92.2	90.9	1.3
Percentage of pupil sessions				

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