

Inspection report
BRISTOL
Local Education Authority

Date of inspection: May 2003

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Basic information about the LEA

Name of LEA:	Bristol Local Education Authority
Address of LEA:	Bristol City Council PO Box 57 The Council House College Green Bristol BS99 7EB
Lead inspector:	Rosemary Matthews HMI
Date of inspection:	May 2003

Introduction

1. This inspection of Bristol local education authority (LEA) was carried out by Ofsted in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities (December 2001)*. The inspection focused on the effectiveness of the LEA's work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.

2. The inspection was based on a range of material, which included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, and data, some of which was provided by the LEA. That material also included school inspection information; HMI monitoring reports; audit reports; documentation from, and discussions with, the LEA's officers and members; focus groups of headteachers; staff in other departments at that local authority, and diocesan representatives. Other agencies and partners submitted written evidence of participation and joint working and participated in focus groups. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA published in March 2001. A questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the work of the LEA, was available to all schools, and its results were considered by the inspection team. The response rate to the questionnaire was 73 per cent.

3. The inspection also involved studies of particular aspects of the LEA's work through focused interviews. Those interviews tested the views of headteachers and other staff on key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The interviews also considered whether the support that is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, and is effective in contributing to improvements in schools and provides value for money.

4. For each inspected function of the LEA, an inspection team makes a judgement which is converted into a numerical grade. The inspection team may make up to 52 key inspection judgements. An inspection judgement is made against criteria for each inspected function of the LEA. These criteria, (and the guidance notes on functions of an LEA that may be inspected by Ofsted), can be found on the Ofsted website. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are appended to this report, along with short explanations of what each numerical grade represents. Judgements on inspected functions of an LEA are made during the inspection of the LEA and indicate the effectiveness of the LEA's performance of individual functions at the time of the inspection. The numerical grades awarded by the inspection team complement the areas of the report which comment on the individual functions scrutinised on this inspection, and, as such, must be considered in the light of those comments.

5. Some of the grades are used in the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) profile for the education service. It is intended that the CPA for education will be regularly updated so the grades from this inspection will contribute to the next assessment.

6. The CPA for the education service takes account of the performance of all aspects of the local service, including pre-school and adult education. The CPA for education is composed of a number of inspection judgements, as well as other performance indicators, such as improvement trends at Key Stage 3. The assessment, published in December 2002, gives star ratings for each local authority for a range of local services, for example social services, benefits, environment etc., whereas this report focuses on the local authority's work to support school improvement.

Commentary

7. Bristol is the eighth largest city in England, serving a diverse community with a number of affluent areas, as well as areas of significant social deprivation.

8. This is the third inspection of Bristol Local Education Authority (LEA). Inspected for the first time in 1999, the council was not successfully exercising its functions for raising standards in schools. Inspected again in 2001, some momentum had been generated and the majority of the LEA's functions were carried out satisfactorily; nevertheless, significant weaknesses remained in a number of important areas, and the council's capacity to sustain improvement was in doubt. As a consequence, the Bristol education partnership board was set up as a joint venture between the council and central Government, with a remit to offer strategic advice to the LEA.

9. Much has happened to improve matters over the past two years. Priorities are clear, and there is now no doubt that Bristol is 'a city where learning comes first'. The partnership board has been a highly successful catalyst for change. An interim director of education did much to identify what needed to be done, and began to establish the fundamental change in culture needed to do it. In 2002, a change in the leadership of the council brought about significant improvements in elected members' relationship with schools. The new director of education and lifelong learning, appointed in September 2002, is impressive and resolute in his determination to improve education in Bristol, and has been crucial in securing the confidence of all those involved in education. Improvement has accelerated in recent months, and aspiration, cautious optimism, and a growing sense of collective responsibility for improvement are displacing despondency in schools. Recommendations from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. The imperative for change clearly remains, but members, officers, schools and the LEA's partners are rightly confident that this can be achieved.

10. The LEA has demonstrated its capability to face up to, and to deal with, its weaknesses. Strategic direction is now much improved, and leadership considerably strengthened. Financial matters are now satisfactory, as is the targeting of resources to priorities. Weaknesses in school leadership and management are now confronted. Stakeholders are much more involved in council and education decision making, which is now better informed. Headteachers had regained a degree of confidence in the leadership of elected members, but following local elections in May 2003, a change in the political balance of the council has left them anxious about the future. As the partnership board comes to an end, a cross-party agreement for continued support for collaborative working between senior officers and members, and for further strengthening corporate decision making, is wholly appropriate in ensuring that gains are not lost.

There are particular strengths in:

- support for early years;
- the effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs (SEN);
- steps taken to meet statutory obligations for special educational needs; and
- the effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its special educational needs functions to

support school improvement.

11. Very good support for early years education is strongly focused on improving attainment, and reflects the council's long-term commitment to high quality provision. Provision for special educational needs remains impressive, with the capacity and drive for further improvement.

12. Sound progress has been made in improving support for school improvement, and in promoting social inclusion. Both areas are now satisfactory, with some highly satisfactory aspects. Raising standards drives plans and action, and the recent inclusion strategy has the potential to give coherence to a wealth of diverse activity. A culture of self-review is emerging, and the capacity for further improvement is clear. With the exception of Key Stage 4, standards are gradually rising. However, the LEA is not yet providing value for money. Standards remain stubbornly low, despite high spending on education.

The following weakness remains:

- human resources services to support school management.

13. This service is recovering from major staffing instability, and successfully managing much that has been unsatisfactory. Good capacity for improvement has already been demonstrated.

14. Until the reviews of primary and secondary school provision are complete, arrangements for admissions to schools will continue to be problematic. There remains much to be done to reduce further the large backlog of school buildings in need of repair, and to support schools as effective purchasers of management services.

15. The Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment for education, published in December 2002, gave the education service one star (a low category) for current performance because strategic management, and the low performance of schools, formed part of the assessment. Based on the previous inspection, weaknesses in the education service's capacity to make further improvement were indicated by its one star rating for improvement.

16. The finding from this inspection is that Bristol remains a satisfactory LEA, now making satisfactory progress. What is highly significant, is its advance from poor, to a now satisfactory capability to effect further improvement and to act on the recommendations of this report. This is a considerable achievement, attributable to strong and decisive political and professional leadership. Providing cross-party agreements are honoured, the authority is now well placed to meet the challenges facing it, in particular, the urgent and long overdue task of raising unacceptably low standards in schools.

Section 1: The LEA's strategy for school improvement

Context

17. Bristol, the eighth largest city in England, serves a diverse community with a number of affluent areas, as well as areas of significant social deprivation. It became a unitary authority in 1996.

18. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 22.1 per cent, is broadly in line with that found nationally. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils continues to rise; at 16.2 per cent, figures are broadly in line with the national average. Statements of special educational needs, although reduced, remain above national averages, at 2.6 per cent for primary-aged pupils, and 6.9 per cent for pupils of secondary age.

19. In January 2002, there were 51,374 pupils in Bristol's schools, including 1,534 children in maintained nursery schools. The number of pupils in primary schools continues to fall. Secondary school numbers have risen, although this masks 23 per cent of pupils, many of whom are higher attaining, moving to schools in neighbouring authorities and the independent sector at secondary transfer.

20. Since the last inspection, the city has reviewed secondary school and post-16 provision. It now maintains 163 schools, including three pupil referral units; three early years centres; 13 nursery schools; 23 infant schools; 22 junior schools; 73 primary schools; 19 secondary schools (nine of which are designated as 11-18 schools), and ten special schools. There are currently eight Beacon schools, five specialist colleges and two early excellence centres.

Performance

21. Standards in Bristol's schools are poor. Apart from Key Stage 1, attainment has remained well below national averages and averages for authorities in similar circumstances¹. Although results at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 have improved since 2000, and the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades at Key Stage 3 has risen significantly, Bristol still remains in the bottom 25 per cent of all English authorities; moreover, pupils make less progress as they move through statutory schooling.

22. Attainment on entry to primary schools continues to be below the national average, despite good quality provision for early years education. At Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress and the rate of improvement is mostly well above the national trend and that of similar authorities. Reading is now in line with the national average. Writing and mathematics have improved from well below to below national figures. Progress is average

¹ Bristol's statistical neighbours are Bolton; City of Derby; Kirklees; Enfield; Leeds; Stockton-on-Tees; Southampton; Bury; Walsall and Wirral

at Key Stage 2, with a rate of improvement above that found nationally and in similar authorities.

23. At Key Stage 3, pupils make below average progress and the rate of improvement varies. It is below the national trend in English, broadly in line in mathematics, and above in science. Improvement in science is well above similar authorities, but in English and mathematics is well below those authorities.

24. At Key Stage 4, pupils' progress is well below average, resulting in a rate of improvement well below the national trend and that of similar authorities. Standards have barely moved for the past six years, and only six schools are performing as well as, or better than, comparable schools. The percentage of pupils achieving no General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes has increased since the last inspection, and in nine secondary schools, fewer than 25 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades. The average point score for post-16 attainment is well below national and statistical neighbours' figures.

25. Attendance in both primary and secondary schools continues to be well below national figures. Although improving in primary schools, this continues to be a major concern in secondary schools. Unauthorised absence, although reduced last year, is above average for primary schools, and well above average for secondary schools. Rates of exclusion, also reducing, are still above the national average for primary schools and remain well above average for secondary schools.

26. Five schools, one secondary and four primary, are deemed to require special measures. One school has serious weaknesses, compared with ten in 2001, and one school is underachieving. In addition, five schools are causing concern to the LEA. There has been little change in the percentage of schools that are good or very good through Ofsted inspection; figures remain well below the national average.

Council structure

27. Local elections in May 2003, saw Labour lose control of the council for the first time in 20 years, leaving no political party with an overall majority. New working arrangements were still under discussion at the time of the inspection. Previously, the cabinet was composed of the leader of the council, elected in May 2002, and six executive members, with the deputy leader of the council responsible for education and lifelong learning. One of five overview and scrutiny commissions covered education and lifelong learning.

28. The responsibilities of the chief executive are divided between the director of central support services, who is also the head of paid service with overall corporate management and operational responsibility, and a cabinet secretary responsible for cabinet co-ordination. Education and lifelong learning is one of five departments, with a new director appointed in September 2002.

29. The Bristol education partnership board, established in 2001, following the previous inspection, provides strategic advice to the council and the education and lifelong learning department. This partnership is scheduled to end in July 2003.

Funding

30. Education is Bristol's first priority, with a spending commitment significantly above the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) or Formula Funding Share (FSS) for a number of years. Education expenditure as a percentage of SSA was 111.26 per cent in 2002/2003. The SSA/FSS per pupil is close to the average for similar authorities and just below the England average. Expenditure is at SSA/FSS for primary pupils (although well above this for under-fives), and above SSA/FSS for secondary pupils.

31. Capital expenditure has increased significantly, standing at £25.2 million in 2002/2003, almost six times what it was in 1997/1998. Revenue contributions are relatively low, while there has been a significant increase in the use of capital receipts, notably funding from the sale of Bristol airport.

32. At 87.7 per cent, Bristol's delegation of its local schools budget was just above the average for similar authorities, and nationally, in 2002/2003. As the table below indicates, delegated funding per secondary school pupil is above all comparable averages in 2002/2003, and for primary schools it is at the England average and above comparable authorities. Delegated funding per special school pupil is also above all comparable averages.

	Bristol £ per pupil	Statistical neighbours £ per pupil	Unitary authorities £ per pupil	England £ per pupil
Primary individual schools budget (ISB)	2,223	2,132	2,153	2,223
Secondary ISB	3,060	2,826	2,852	2,940

Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002/03.

33. At £301 per pupil in 2002/2003, the authority's Standards Fund per pupil was below statistical neighbours (£327), unitaries (£311) and England averages (£334).

34. The LEA has been successful in obtaining significant amounts of external funding from a range of sources, including Excellence in Cities, New Opportunities Fund, Children's Fund, Single Regeneration Budget and the private finance initiative. It is one of only four LEAs about to share £290 million in a joint venture partnership for public finance initiative.

35. Although the LEA's expenditure on school improvement in 2002/2003 appears low in the following table, significant spending on the advisory service is included in the strategic management element, which is therefore higher than all averages. Spending on SEN also appears low, but there is significant delegation in this area, making overall spending almost four per cent higher than the England average.

	Bristol £ per pupil	Statistical neighbours £ per pupil	Unitary authorities £ per pupil	England £ per pupil
Strategic management	142	112	93	101
School improvement	11	26	26	31
Access	124	103	124	131
SEN	122	145	151	160
Total	399	386	394	423

Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002/03.

The LEA's strategy for school improvement

36. The LEA's strategy for school improvement has improved from satisfactory to highly satisfactory. The strategy reflects the Education Development Plan (EDP); Excellence in Cities; three education action zones; the strategy for improvement in schools facing challenging circumstances, which involves all secondary schools; and the primary school improvement strategy. Although somewhat ambitious, this extensive range of actions has the potential to effect the substantial changes required of the LEA when set alongside the improving coherence in service planning.

37. The last inspection recognised the previous EDP as providing a satisfactory framework for focusing improvement on key priorities, and an adequate basis for action. It recommended a review of secondary schools' performance targets to incorporate the influence of the Excellence in Cities and education action zone initiatives. Derived from a very thorough audit of performance, the EDP is now a more comprehensive and focused working document. Outcomes are well aligned to imperatives for the LEA - raising attainment, improving attendance and behaviour, reducing exclusions and addressing weaknesses in schools' leadership and management. Targets for 2004 are, rightly, very challenging, particularly in the proportion of pupils expected to achieve five or more A*-C grades at GCSE.

38. Implementation remains satisfactory, despite some difficulties in recruiting staff. This considerably strengthened strategy has resulted in better targeting of resources to schools with the greatest need, and improved the co-ordination of support. Systematic and thorough monitoring identifies proposals for remedial action and evaluates progress against clear outcomes and targets.

39. Since the last inspection, more schools inspected by Ofsted have shown improvement. Officers are clearer about actions needed to effect change, and schools causing concern are identified at an early stage, hence there are fewer with serious weaknesses. The well-managed Excellence in Cities initiative is working effectively in promoting collaboration between secondary schools, and in reducing exclusions. Education action zone projects are benefiting schools in developing approaches to learning and teaching, with some effect on attainment, and good practice is being successfully disseminated. However, there

has been little improvement in the overall performance of schools; standards remain stubbornly low, despite the generous funding available. Targets for 2002 were not met, and, without the necessary acceleration in the rate of improvement in secondary schools, the LEA is unlikely to achieve minimum national targets for 2004.

The allocation of resources to priorities

40. The council's targeting of resources to priorities is satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection, targeting was poor. Recommendations were made concerning medium and long-term financial planning; the pattern of home-to-school transport; the completion of the section 52 budget statement, and the involvement of schools in overall budget making and strategic direction. These recommendations have been addressed.

41. A joint partnership board and scrutiny budget-working group have effectively brought about improvement, and a schools' forum has recently been established. In addition, decisions to review primary and secondary school provision have given greater focus to strategic and financial planning.

42. Both the council and the education department now have medium-term financial strategies, which reflect strategic priorities. Significant resources have been directed towards improving poor building stock. However, financial forward planning for the LEA's capital strategy is insufficiently detailed. The budget process incorporates an appropriate review of current and future pressures, which are known and understood by schools. Budget making is generally accurate. The accuracy of data collection has improved, and monitoring and budget control, including home-to-school transport, are satisfactory. Potential overspends are successfully managed. The LEA is aware of the need to review high spending on premature retirement costs, and to determine value for money from corporate recharging.

43. Despite regular reviews of the mainstream funding formula, the proportion of funding through the age-weighted pupil unit is relatively low. A decision to target growth in funding to Key Stage 2, under-funded in comparison to other key stages, has been appropriate, as has been the decision to revisit the methodology for funding additional educational need. A long overdue review of the special schools formula is now taking place. Grant bidding is effective and successful. Schools are adequately supported and monitored in budget making, although the number of schools with significant surpluses or deficits remains too high.

Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value

44. Strategies to secure continuous improvement are satisfactory. The recently revitalised approach reflects the LEA's drive to raise pupils' achievement. Significantly, the LEA's preparation for this inspection is indicative of its sound capacity for self-evaluation. The primary, secondary and post-16 reviews have assisted the LEA in improving its strategic focus in that attainment, school place planning and building stock are considered together.

45. The new director is in the early stages of implementing performance management to improve accountability. Currently, individual performance appraisal is not rigorously related to the LEA's priorities and targets; sensibly, improving planning has been a necessary prerequisite. Service and divisional plans clearly relate to corporate plans, but, outside the

school improvement division, criteria for success mainly describe processes rather than outcomes. Until recently, the quality and quantity of data collection and performance indicators have been a weakness. Strenuous efforts are now being made to improve the accuracy and effective use of data.

46. The Best Value Performance Plan is sound. Education Best Value reviews have been appropriately selected and well managed, as reflected, for example, in the early years, SEN, and advisory service reviews. The LEA has also contributed to cross-council reviews of major functions such as finance and personnel. Contract renewal reviews, for example, in catering, have been suitably carried out according to Best Value principles. Challenge and consultation are strengths. However, as with service plans, improvement planning is not yet sufficiently focused on outcomes, nor well enough integrated into financial forward planning. To date, there is no evidence of the influence of reviews, as none has reached the monitoring stage. Nevertheless, elected members are clear about their role in undertaking monitoring through the scrutiny function.

Recommendations

In order to improve planning for continuous improvement:

- establish criteria in all plans which describe the expected outcomes; and
- fully integrate improvement plans into financial forward planning.

Section 2: Support for school improvement

Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's support for school improvement

47. Sound progress has been made in improving the LEA's support for school improvement. In line with the drive to raise standards, priorities are now more focused, services have been restructured and are better co-ordinated, planning has improved, and accountability has been strengthened. New initiatives have been well managed. With the exception of human resources services, support is now either satisfactory or highly satisfactory. A culture of self-review is emerging, and the capacity for further improvement is clear.

The effectiveness of services to support school improvement

48. The effectiveness of services is satisfactory. Attainment is still unacceptably low, but, with the exception of Key Stage 4, standards are rising. The rate of improvement has increased at Key Stages 1 and 2, and in science at Key Stage 3. Considerable, and well-targeted, action has taken place in secondary schools aimed at improving GCSE results in 2003. Services now provide satisfactory, instead of unsatisfactory, value for money.

49. The leadership and deployment of staff in school improvement services are satisfactory, as at the time of the last inspection. Although no fieldwork was carried out, it is evident that schools have been fully consulted on, and are clear about, priorities for change which emphasise improving performance. Significantly, the new role for link advisers, as school improvement officers with responsibility for evaluating impact and success, will enable schools to design improvement programmes around their own development plan.

50. Strategic planning is now satisfactory, improving from unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Many teams have been restructured for increased effectiveness; for example, a member of the ethnic minority achievement service works alongside the literacy team. Some restructuring is recent, and appointments are still to be made, but the overall aim to strengthen specific expertise is clear. Annual service plans are appropriately detailed, timescales and resources clear, and outcomes mostly well defined. Schools understand how support is targeted according to need, and they welcome its separation from monitoring and challenge.

51. Performance management of services, unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, is now satisfactory. Accountability is improving as a result of structural changes arising from a useful Best Value review. Implementation of the council's performance management scheme is imminent. There are sound systems for the induction of new staff, but a high level of staff turnover has stretched management capacity.

52. In 1999, at the time of the first inspection, the expertise of school improvement staff was unsatisfactory. It is now highly satisfactory, although there has not yet been a thorough audit of staff's skills against objectives for education.

Recommendations**In order to improve the expertise of the LEA's staff, and the targeting of expertise to areas of most need:**

- audit thoroughly staff skills and experience; and
- provide relevant training.

Monitoring, challenge and intervention

53. The LEA's approach to monitoring, challenge and intervention is now highly satisfactory. Satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, the revised framework provides a firm foundation for improvement.

54. Sound protocols underpin a much clearer understanding of expectations, roles and responsibilities. The annual categorisation of performance and need is a solid basis for the range and amount of support provided by the LEA. Intervention is now in inverse proportion to success, with the bulk of additional support being targeted at schools most in need. The LEA, after consultation with headteachers, is moving towards giving more successful schools greater responsibility for self-evaluation, although this is not yet fully established.

The focusing of the LEA's support on areas of greatest need

55. Support for areas of greatest need has improved from satisfactory to highly satisfactory. Intervention strategies are clear, and now linked to well-planned and coherent packages of support. The appointment of senior phase advisers to oversee support for schools causing concern has resulted in a better match of support to need, better monitoring of schools' progress, and improved evaluation of the effectiveness of the LEA's actions.

56. From April 2001, the delegation of 40 per cent of the budget for advisory time to schools has given them greater control over support and training. The new post of business manager has resulted in more flexible arrangements for brokering services. This has been welcomed by schools as being more responsive to their needs as clients. The planned separation of advice and support from the LEA's monitoring role is likely to further strengthen schools' independence and develop their autonomy. Some advice is provided to schools on services which can be provided outside the authority; it is envisaged that this will be more extensive in the near future.

The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring and challenging schools

57. Monitoring and challenge have improved from satisfactory to highly satisfactory, with good potential for further improvement. This is as a result of an increased focus on raising standards in prioritised schools, improvements in monitoring progress towards targets at Key Stage 3, and increasing expertise in identifying levels of need in schools.

58. Challenge to schools has improved, particularly in prioritised schools where it is good. However, there is still some unjustified variation in the level of challenge to more successful schools. The use of data for monitoring schools is now highly satisfactory. The

annual desk-top review of schools' performance, drawing on a good range of quantitative and qualitative information, is a powerful monitoring tool, supporting headteachers and governors in self-review, and providing a solid basis for identifying support. Monitoring reports are generally of good quality with incisive evaluations of schools' strengths and weaknesses, and offering clear advice on improvement strategies. The detail and usefulness of link advisers' records of visits are variable.

59. The last inspection indicated the need to improve the quality of data provided for link advisers to support their monitoring and challenge of schools. This recommendation has been implemented, alongside further improvements in the provision of data to schools. Electronic transfer of data is also much improved, and plans are in hand for further reducing demands on schools for data entry. Training in managing and interpreting data has continued, but the LEA is aware that many schools are not making full use of this for planning and teaching. The Key Stage 3 strategy team is providing good training and support for departments on the use of data to monitor progress towards targets, and to identify priorities for teaching. Examples of good practice are beginning to be shared.

60. The LEA is relocating its research and statistics team within the school improvement and educational achievement division, to integrate its work with the drive to raise achievement.

Recommendation

In order to improve schools' capacity to monitor pupils' progress:

- establish in schools the necessary support and training to make effective use of data.

The effectiveness of the LEA's work with under-performing schools

61. The LEA's identification of, and work with, under-performing schools, previously satisfactory, is now highly satisfactory. Nevertheless, more remains to be done to further reduce the number of schools requiring much improvement. Monitoring of schools' performance is more rigorous, and recent improvements in the management and co-ordination of support to schools causing concern have made services more effective.

62. The overall number of schools identified by Ofsted as requiring much improvement has reduced since the last inspection. Schools in this category make good progress within a reasonable timescale. However, three primary schools have required special measures since 2001, and two others remain in special measures. The LEA has successfully reduced the number of schools with serious weaknesses. At the time of the last inspection, ten schools were in this category. Of these, one has been subsequently placed in special measures, and one other still has serious weaknesses. The number of underachieving schools rose from one to three in the period after the last inspection, but only one school is currently still underachieving. Of the LEA's ten secondary schools facing challenging circumstances, one is subject to special measures and another is underachieving. Four others are on the LEA's list of schools causing concern, a recognition of vulnerability, and an indication of the LEA's more rigorous monitoring and active intervention.

63. Recent improvements in monitoring schools have strengthened early identification, and monitoring by the education partnership board and elected members is now much more systematic. The LEA is now more active in identifying weaknesses in leadership and management and informing headteachers and governors of concerns. Where necessary, formal warnings are issued and additional governors appointed. The removal of financial delegation is used flexibly, rather than invoked automatically, when schools require special measures. Headteachers are now closely involved in the development of action plans, and in negotiating packages of support, and governors are better supported in decision making, for example on the appointment of new headteachers.

64. Additional strategies, such as the leadership incentive grant for secondary schools, are better co-ordinated with other support. Wide-ranging support is available for schools causing concern and headteachers praised the quality of training, for example, work on behaviour management, which has contributed to improved teaching. The LEA's strategy of using advisory headteachers in some schools in special measures has enabled these schools to make progress without a gap in leadership. Strategies for schools leaving intensive support have improved through phased withdrawal.

Support for literacy

65. Support for literacy remains satisfactory. No fieldwork was undertaken, but evidence from the LEA's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence, and evidence from schools supports this judgement.

66. Although standards at Key Stage 2 have continued to improve slowly, but steadily, over the last four years, results remain well below national and statistical neighbours' averages. However, in 2002, for the first time in three years, results against national figures indicate a reducing gap. The number of schools meeting Key Stage 2 targets in literacy is higher than statistical neighbours, but lower than the national average.

Support for numeracy

67. Support for numeracy is highly satisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection. However, performance varies, and there is significant underachievement in some schools. In the primary phase, results have improved faster than the national rate. At Key Stage 2, standards remain too low, although the percentage of boys attaining Level 5 in 2002 is in line with the national average. One third of schools missed their targets in 2002, and significant gains will need to be made if challenging targets for Key Stage 2 for 2003 and 2004 are to be met.

68. Good data are available, but the LEA recognises that this is not sufficiently well used by schools to target under-performing groups. Leading mathematics teachers are effective in carrying out well-targeted work in schools, and in the dissemination of good practice. Highly regarded training, advice and support from the LEA have been instrumental in improving teaching quality. Links with other initiatives are improving, as is coherent working with a range of services supporting school improvement.

Support for information and communication technology

69. Support for information and communication technology (ICT) continues to be highly satisfactory. The LEA's vision for ICT, shared with, and understood by schools, is accompanied by a determined drive to promote its use for teaching and learning, but this is not underpinned by a fully coherent strategy. Information and communication technology is used effectively for school administration, and for recording pupil data.

70. Support to schools is appropriately targeted, leading to an increase in the use of ICT in the curriculum. The National Grid for Learning has been successfully implemented. Last year's targets for broadband connection have been exceeded, and all schools have access to the Internet. The quality and quantity of hardware have improved, and technical support to schools has been strengthened. The majority of schools have signed up for New Opportunities Fund training; this has had a significantly positive impact on teachers' knowledge and use of ICT for teaching and learning. Training, support and guidance provided by the ICT team are good, as are links with other initiatives, for example, Excellence in Cities, education action zones and city learning centres.

71. However, the emphasis on raising attainment through secure teacher assessment has been less focused. At Key Stage 4, the percentage of pupils attaining a nationally accredited award in ICT is well above the national average, but at Key Stage 3, attainment at Level 5 is below national figures. Despite support from the LEA, schools admit difficulties in assessing pupils' work at Key Stages 2 and 3. As a result, targets for 2003 are based on insecure teacher assessment.

Recommendation

In order to raise attainment in ICT:

- provide further support and guidance to schools on assessing pupils' work.

Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3

72. The LEA's support for raising standards at Key Stage 3 is highly satisfactory. It is at the heart of the drive to raise standards in secondary schools, and highly rated by schools. Although having only a modest impact on standards so far, effective support has had a significant effect on the quality of teaching and planning in many schools.

73. The strategy is coherent and well planned across all strands. As a result, weaknesses in curriculum planning and teaching and learning have been tackled, and significant improvements made in most departments supported. In some schools, staff shortages have slowed the pace of progress.

74. Activity in schools is increasingly well co-ordinated. Support is based on a thorough identification of need, and differentiated appropriately. Good support is provided to middle managers in the use of performance data, though the team knows that some departments need to make better use of this. Continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 is beginning to be addressed through transition projects. Monitoring of improvements in teaching and

learning identifies effective forms of support, such as the coaching of teachers in school. The team of advanced skills and leading teachers is helping to develop and spread good practice.

75. Strategic links between advisory teams are strengthening, but this is an area for further action. Nevertheless, joint training has occurred, and collaborative projects have improved teachers' skills and expertise in the use of ICT with pupils with special educational needs.

Support for minority ethnic groups, including Travellers

76. Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic and Traveller groups was previously satisfactory. It is now highly satisfactory. This is as a result of an improved strategy, better communication, clearer lines of accountability, and improved working with other agencies. While standards of attainment for groups of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds remain below national and statistical neighbours' averages, there are signs of improvement. However, this is slow, and targets will be difficult to achieve.

77. The placing of minority ethnic achievement as a central element in the LEA's overall strategy for equalities and inclusion has resulted in schools having a better understanding of the significance of inclusion for raising attainment. Grant funding, including the administration of the Traveller achievement grant, has been appropriately delegated to schools. The sensible decision to locate the ethnic minority achievement consultant within the literacy team will further integrate the National Literacy Strategy with actions to raise the attainment of black and bilingual pupils.

78. High quality guidance documents support the work of schools. Better communication with parent groups and local communities has resulted in improved participation of minority ethnic parents in family learning projects. This has also led to increasing numbers of children from minority ethnic families in pre-school placements. More children from Traveller groups are accessing post-16 education. Firm partnerships with the Traveller education service, Connexions, Sure Start and the Children's Fund, enable children from minority ethnic and Traveller groups to take advantage of opportunities provided by additional funding. A successful project is addressing the needs of a growing number of asylum seekers and refugees living in Bristol.

79. Schools are well supported in including pupils with English as an additional language in the literacy hour through documentation and support packs. However, this does not extend to the rest of the curriculum. Courses for teachers are well attended, with many schools providing their own training in line with local needs. Improvements in the collection and analysis of data have led to a better understanding of the performance of particular groups of pupils. The LEA successfully monitors the attendance of minority ethnic and Traveller groups, more recently, by gender. There is a new register of children from asylum seeker groups, but this does not record their first or subsequent language.

Recommendation**In order to promote the attainment of pupils with English as an additional language:**

- produce guidance for pupils learning English as an additional language, which extends existing materials.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

80. Support for gifted and talented pupils is highly satisfactory. It is currently more focused in secondary schools through good work within Excellence in Cities. However, some support has been provided in the primary phase through training requested by schools, and the LEA's 'Flying High' project. The authority is well placed to extend its strategy for gifted pupils into the primary phase, while making the most of existing work, for example, in dance and music.

81. The proportion of pupils achieving higher grades in national tests at Key Stage 3 has risen significantly, representing a considerable improvement in achievement and expectation in Bristol. Approximately two-thirds of schools facing challenging circumstances have contributed to this increase.

82. The secondary strategy is clear, coherent, and focused strongly on raising standards. A wide range of activities promote high achievement and raise expectations of both teachers and pupils, including summer schools, curriculum projects, and links with higher education. Projects are well planned to focus on areas of relative weakness in teaching and pupils' performance, and there is a careful balance between enrichment and developing good practice. The impact of the LEA's activity is monitored carefully, and findings used to inform future planning, for example, of summer schools. Work has included a range of activities in sports, dance and drama, with an emphasis on providing additional opportunities for talented young people. The partnership makes good use of expertise in schools, for example, from specialist colleges and leading teachers. Future priorities rightly emphasise the importance of embedding strategies for supporting gifted pupils into the curriculum and into teaching.

83. In primary schools, additional funding has been used well for pilot projects and developing teachers' expertise in a small number of schools.

Support for governors

84. Support for governors, highly satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, remains so. Evidence from the LEA's self-evaluation, other documentation, and the views of schools, supports this judgement. No detailed fieldwork was carried out, but there is evidence of better engagement of governors in understanding the role of senior managers in schools, particularly in improving standards, and more active involvement in the appointment of senior staff.

Support for school management

85. Support for school leadership and management remains satisfactory. No fieldwork was carried out, but the LEA's own evaluation, and other evidence, confirms this finding.

86. Confronting weaknesses in school leadership is a fundamental strand in the LEA's school improvement strategy. A wide range of well-targeted support benefits senior and middle managers, including guidance from consultant and partner headteachers, additional deputy headteachers, leading teachers, and training and coaching. A recent conference for schools provided significant evidence of senior managers' now increasingly positive attitude to, and strengthened understanding of, leadership for continuous improvement.

The effectiveness of services to support school management

87. The overall effectiveness of services to support school management was not judged at the time of the last inspection. Although satisfactory, there are some significant weaknesses, the most important being an ingrained presumption on the part of the council that it should be an automatic provider of services. Insufficient efforts are being made to help schools develop as effective purchasers, and to expand the market for services. However, the education client unit supports individual schools in contracting outside the council. The newly appointed assistant director for resources is aware of these shortcomings and the need to tackle them. This is reflected in the imminent creation of a traded services board.

88. The LEA provides a clear and useful traded services booklet, with flexible options for each service. Appropriately, this includes entitlement to services provided free to schools under the LEA's strategic responsibilities. Headteachers have had some involvement in the configuration, monitoring and evaluation of services, but this has been variable. Service standards describe procedures, rather than quality, and, in some instances, charges to schools are not separated from delegated sums.

Recommendations

In order to improve the effectiveness of self-managing schools:

- support schools in developing effective procurement skills;
- identify clear options for alternative provision of services; and
- involve headteachers fully in the configuration, monitoring and evaluation of services provided by the LEA.

89. **Financial services** remain satisfactory. No fieldwork was undertaken, but schools express positive views about the service received from finance officers, and improvements have been made to central cost-centre management.

90. Highly satisfactory four years ago, but not judged at the time of the last inspection in 2001, provision of **human resources** support is now unsatisfactory, although with good capacity for improvement. The service has suffered from major instability in staffing at senior level, but the recently appointed service manager is quickly and successfully improving team working, clarifying roles and responsibilities, updating knowledge, and

implementing performance management. Agreements with schools are clear, and almost all buy back the service. There are regular channels of communication, both formal and informal, with trade unions. Schools were able to cite examples of casework which had been handled effectively and sensitively. Plans for improvement from the corporate Best Value review of human resources, have just been adopted.

91. However, there remains a legacy of the past. Data collection is weak, and there has been no recent review of service provision, service agreements, or cost. Headteachers have not been consulted, and there has been no analysis of levels of satisfaction with the services offered. Contracts issued by schools have not been monitored, but significant inroads have been made into issuing timely contracts to staff newly appointed to the LEA.

92. Some model policies are available on the LEA's website, but some are missing or in draft, and a significant number are due for review. As a result, schools are not confident that they are sufficiently aware of the most recent legislation. There has been little effective monitoring of schools in the past, but a new guidance manual for schools is about to be launched and a programme for reviewing policies has been drawn up.

93. The provision of **property services** by the corporate property and finance department remains satisfactory. The last inspection made recommendations regarding the provision of information to schools on resource deployment within the indemnity scheme, reviewing processes for ordering, monitoring and paying for work, and clarification over arrangements for the local authority's exercise of its landlord function. These have been largely addressed.

94. The indemnity scheme is now more transparent. While not all schools are satisfied, the perceived unfairness of the scheme relates largely to a significant problem of poor quality building stock, and a backlog of repairs. For the most part, only high priority work is undertaken, due to the high level of need. Response in cases of emergency is good, but technical support has been of variable quality. Despite receiving advice on this, not all schools have a clear understanding of the separate responsibilities of corporate buildings services and the LEA's strategic responsibilities, nor of the landlord/tenant split.

95. The property and finance department has introduced improved project monitoring and reporting systems, and the council is increasingly working in partnership with external contractors to improve value for money.

96. Satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, the LEA's **ICT infrastructure and support for school administration** is now highly satisfactory. No fieldwork was undertaken, but schools are very positive about the clarity of the LEA's vision for ICT and the improvements made in both hardware and software support. Training and technical support is reported as good.

97. **Cleaning and caretaking** are highly satisfactory. Schools have access to a central contract provided through the council, but the quality of service from the contractor is variable due, in part, to recruitment and retention difficulties. However, monitoring of quality, appropriate caretaker training, and a generally useful relief caretaker service are available. Good client support is also available for those wishing to make other

arrangements. A Best Value review is appropriately scheduled for 2003/2004 prior to the re-letting of the contract in August 2004.

98. **Grounds maintenance** is highly satisfactory. A central contract is delivered by three contractors, including the council's direct service organisation, and managed by corporate leisure services. Headteachers were involved in the contract specification. Area supervisors successfully monitor the contract through bi-annual site visits.

99. **Catering** is highly satisfactory. A central catering contract, provided through the council, has also secured a number of schools through independent tender. A thorough Best Value review, undertaken prior to the re-awarding of the contract, included good consultation with stakeholders. As a result, a sound service improvement plan has been drawn up, but this is insufficiently focused on performance indicators. Costs per school meal are low, but are being reviewed in the light of comparative data. Satisfactory support is available for schools wishing to make their own arrangements. Monitoring is not being undertaken in all schools owing to insufficient staffing.

The LEA's work in assuring the supply and quality of teachers

100. Support for the recruitment and retention of teachers is satisfactory. In January 2001, the proportion of unfilled vacancies in schools was broadly in line with that found nationally and in similar LEAs. In 2001-2002, there were significant shortages of heads of departments in secondary schools, notably in mathematics. The situation has improved in the current year, with only a small number of temporary heads of department. There are difficulties in retaining teachers. For instance, only 58 per cent of newly qualified teachers were retained for a second year in 2001, well below the national average of 88 per cent. Some schools in challenging circumstances face high levels of staff turnover. As schools report concerns over recruitment and retention, this has become an increasing priority for the LEA. Its recent strategy provides a good basis for improvement, and implementation should be a high priority.

101. Currently, activities do not constitute an effective strategy for recruitment and retention, though staff in the team have a good understanding of priorities, and the need to ensure teacher quality, as well as sufficient numbers. The LEA recognises the need for improved co-ordination, and is reorganising responsibilities within the new division of advisory and support services. At present, however, the head of service is not in place and the strategy is not fully planned.

102. Using the results of a survey, satisfactory consideration has been given to improving the retention of teachers within the LEA, particularly newly qualified teachers. Data on vacancies are collected, but the LEA is aware of the need to collate and analyse data more systematically to detect trends, subject shortages, geographical patterns and reasons for leaving.

103. Induction for new headteachers, which was inconsistent, has been improved. The continuing professional development programme for teachers is satisfactory. Plans are in hand to streamline and co-ordinate what is offered for an improved focus on key priorities, and to provide training opportunities for teachers at all stages of their careers.

Recommendation

In order to improve the supply and quality of teachers:

- urgently implement the strategy for recruitment and retention, and monitor its effectiveness.

Section 3: Special educational needs

Summary of the effectiveness of the LEA's special educational needs provision

104. Provision for special educational needs is impressive, with the capacity and drive to improve further. There is a good match of strategic intent to practice, which has resulted from good leadership; professional expertise; good quality planning; funding aligned to policy direction; good and transparent decision making; good collaborative working across services, and with other services and agencies, and high quality support for, and good communications with schools and parents.

The LEA's strategy for special educational needs

105. The LEA's strategy for SEN remains good, and continues to command the support of schools. The strategy fully reflects the Government's policy to promote inclusion into mainstream education, and to improve standards for all pupils with SEN. Policy and strategic developments are clear, and remain well understood.

106. The inclusive education action plan for 2002 to 2007 skillfully incorporates SEN strategy, the access and special schools development plan, and the disability action plan. Specific measures to raise the attainment of various underachieving groups, comprehensively detailed in the EDP, include a strong focus on support and training for schools to improve access to the curriculum, and the assessment of progress of pupils with SEN.

107. Some 70 per cent of pupils with statements of SEN are now educated in a mainstream setting. The school organisation plan for 2002 to 2006 reflects the revenue and capital planning required to effect changes in mainstream and special schools arising from a high and rising degree of SEN inclusion. Special schools are valued for their expertise, and remain central to the support provided for SEN pupils in mainstream schools. Some special schools have been modified to provide places for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who would otherwise have been educated outside the city.

Statutory obligations

108. The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations was previously highly satisfactory. It is now good. The last inspection expressed concern over the low percentage of new statements issued within 18 weeks; despite a considerable turnover in staff, this has improved markedly, and continues to rise steadily.

109. Indicators of good practice include effective planning for the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary education, and onward to post-16 education and training, and joint planning with social services and healthcare trusts for the purchase of places at special schools outside the city.

110. Supporting the extensive revision of the LEA's SEN guidance manual for schools, comprehensive and well-regarded training has been provided on the SEN Code of Practice and on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act for schools, governors and central

staff. Special educational needs co-ordinators and the parent partnership report a pleasing degree of trust and transparency in the decisions of the statements panel in respect of proposed new statements, and the review of existing statements. Officers regularly meet with parent partnership representatives and with special voluntary groups to share information on the administrative process, and to review the effectiveness of communication, which is generally good. The percentage of cases referred to conciliation, including appeals to the SEN tribunal, is relatively low.

School improvement

111. The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement continues to be good. Since the last inspection, fewer schools have been identified, through Ofsted inspection, as having weaknesses in SEN provision. Another encouraging factor is the continued improvement in the achievement of low-attaining pupils at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.

112. Criteria for the referral of pupils for assessment are clearly articulated for schools, parents and voluntary organisations, and are available on the council's website. Procedures and associated guidance for parents have been revised appropriately in the light of the new Code of Practice.

113. Schools remain very satisfied with the process of moderated funding based on their own assessments. This promotes effective planning of provision for pupils with SEN, supports recording of pupils' progress, and reduces the bureaucracy around the production of statements for pupils with high incidence, but low level needs, in behaviour and basic skills. Overall, resources delegated to schools relate reasonably well to need. Schools are significantly well financed in meeting the costs of provision for SEN. Considerable other resources are allocated for additional educational need, partly on the basis of free school meals criteria. The LEA is well aware of the need to review this, and to monitor and evaluate more closely the use of funding by schools.

114. A rigorous system now in place ensures that the monitoring of annual reviews of pupils' statements occurs on time, and with reference to the achievement of educational objectives. New statements are issued with targets and success criteria clearly based on individual need.

115. Schools are satisfied with whole-school and individual pupil support provided by the education psychology and the behaviour and learning support services, and welcome informative SEN newsletters. A cross-service group carefully assesses schools' training and support requirements against the LEA's objectives for SEN, so as to inform the annual programme of professional development. Good plans are in hand for advisers to support school self-evaluation of provision for pupils with SEN.

Value for money

116. The extent to which the LEA provides value for money remains highly satisfactory. A sensible capital programme, included in the school organisation plan and the inclusive education action plan, matches the LEA's policy direction on SEN in mapping the reconfiguration of mainstream and special schools for the years ahead. The LEA's revenue

spending on SEN has been stable. Financial pressures of high inflation in the costs of placements in independent and non-maintained sectors, and the rising cost of SEN home-to-school transport, have been accommodated. However, responsibility for SEN transport is not included in SEN administration, resulting in inefficient management.

117. Since the formation of the LEA in 1996, the number of places purchased in special schools outside the city has dropped by 50 per cent. A further reduction will be achieved through the Bristol collaborative service, in providing very specialised provision purchased jointly by social services, healthcare trusts and the LEA. A revised model of formula funding for special schools, appropriately based on bands of learning difficulty, will apply from the beginning of the new financial year.

118. There are good mechanisms to monitor the achievement of pupils with statements of SEN at annual review, and to link performance to resources. Benchmarked performance of low attaining pupils at each key stage triggers a visit from a specialist adviser. A database, currently being assembled, uses individual pupil's data from schools for annual monitoring of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. When fully operational, the LEA will be able to more effectively challenge the extent to which schools target resources to need. The recent request for annual plans of SEN provision from schools will assist in improved monitoring of delegated funding. However, despite these encouraging initiatives, the LEA has yet to establish sufficient long-term evidence of progress in the attainment of low achieving pupils against its historic high level of spending on SEN.

119. A recent, and well-managed, Best Value review has been effective in sharpening the allocation of resources to priorities in line with strategic intentions. Importantly, this has re-emphasised early, preventative intervention.

Recommendations

In order to improve value for money in special educational needs:

- review the formula for the allocation of funding for additional educational need, to include measures of pupils' prior attainment;
- monitor more closely, and evaluate schools' use of SEN and additional funding; and
- integrate the purchasing role for SEN transport in SEN administration.

Section 4: Promoting social inclusion

Summary of effectiveness in promoting social inclusion

120. The LEA's promotion of social inclusion is satisfactory. Corporate plans reflect the significance of social inclusion for community regeneration. The recent inclusion strategy establishes sound principles and values which link broad direction to statutory and service plans. There have been improvements in important areas, and significant improvement in provision for pupils who have no school place. The new community strategy has the potential to focus the work of partnerships promoting social inclusion. However, co-ordination and cohesion across a wide range of diverse action, involving a wealth of partnerships, has not yet been achieved.

The strategy to promote social inclusion

121. Effectiveness in promoting social inclusion remains satisfactory. The LEA is refining its monitoring of achievement to identify more clearly groups of pupils at risk of social exclusion. Results are being used to devise new strategies for inclusion, and to improve existing approaches. High priority is given to raising the achievement of specific underachieving groups, including disaffected and vulnerable pupils. At the beginning of 2003, four multi-agency behaviour and education support teams were established to improve co-ordination with social workers and health in local areas.

122. The LEA is involved in, or is closely associated with, a wide range of recent initiatives which address the needs of disaffected young people. Prominent examples of these include elements of the Excellence in Cities programme, education action zones, partnerships with Connexions, the street crime group, the youth offending team and the child and adolescent mental health service. Other significant examples of social inclusion activities are found in specific geographical areas within Bristol, such as the 'On Track' programme in Southmead, and the regeneration of the St George's district. As yet, there is no audit of preventive work which will serve to rationalise and give coherence to the current, disparate multi-agency provision.

123. Despite these, and many other sensible efforts to promote social inclusion, the rate of permanent exclusion from schools, and poor attendance, continues to be of serious concern, particularly in relation to a number of vulnerable categories of pupils.

The supply of school places

124. At the time of the last inspection, the provision of school places was unsatisfactory. It is now satisfactory. Recommendations on tackling the mismatch of supply and demand for places in all sectors, together with implementing the outcomes of the post-16 review, have been addressed. Data forecasting has improved, and the school organisation committee functions effectively, despite difficulties in the production of the school organisation plan.

125. The council is now more willing to take difficult decisions, and to tackle historic issues. As a result, the LEA has successfully begun fundamental and far-reaching secondary

and post-16 reviews in order to raise standards, improve value for money, and reduce the flow of pupils to the independent sector and neighbouring authorities.

126. In the secondary sector, surplus places have been reduced to around one per cent through the closure of two schools prior to the review, and a further two as part of the review. A minimum school size of 810 pupils has been agreed, in order to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum. There are effective plans to increase parental preference through the expansion and relocation of one school, and the creation of a new school in north Bristol. A major private funding initiative project and joint venture partnership are enhancing the quality and range of provision in secondary schools. Ambitious plans for post-16 provision centre on partnership arrangements with the Learning and Skills Council in six areas, with 11-16 schools acting as satellites to 11-18 schools, or college sites. From 2004, a virtual city-wide campus will be established to co-ordinate strategic development.

127. Progress in the primary sector has been slower, but will accelerate to include a review of 40 schools over the coming year. One primary school has already been closed, and an effective early years Best Value review has taken place. Surplus places stand at 9.3 per cent, while some areas have schools that are over-subscribed. The LEA has sensibly ensured that developments in the secondary sector are securely underway before starting another major review. Criteria for review are clear and sensible, and issues of access and inclusion are properly considered in the school organisation plan. Schools and parents have been well consulted and are in agreement with the need for change.

Asset management

128. Asset management planning is satisfactory. The last inspection recommended that the LEA should construct, communicate to schools, and regularly update a financial plan for meeting the capital requirements of the asset management plan over the next five years. This has been done, although costings are not sufficiently detailed.

129. Good links are made with corporate asset management planning, and with the strategic reviews of schools' provision. It is clear that in the medium term, savings made through the large capital programme will help address the large condition backlog.

130. A rolling programme of condition updates is being satisfactorily undertaken, although some flaws have been recognised in the collection of suitability data. The LEA has very recently established a capital and asset management board to oversee strategic development, together with annual monitoring visits to schools. Prior to this, the effectiveness of desktop monitoring has been unsatisfactory, and detailed links have not been made between schools' and the LEA's asset management plans. Despite publicity, and a reconstituted advisory group, many schools are not yet convinced of the transparency and effectiveness of asset management planning, although some recognise limited improvement. In response to this, property services are being restructured for improved effectiveness.

Recommendation

In order to ensure efficient and effective improvement to schools' building stock:

- work with all schools to construct individual asset management plans.

Admissions

131. Highly satisfactory four years ago, and not inspected during the last inspection, arrangements for admissions to schools remain satisfactory, but with significant weaknesses. Progress has been constrained by historically weak school place planning and, until the primary and secondary reviews are both complete, weaknesses will remain. The admissions forum has also fallen into decline, partly due to inconsistent support from officers.

132. Admissions booklets are clear, helpful and informative, and over-subscription criteria are fair and transparent. The LEA meets all the requirements of the admissions code of practice, and improvements are planned to allow parents to make on-line applications for 2004.

133. At 83 per cent, the proportion of first preferences achieved for secondary school places is low. The number of appeals is relatively high, but static; although these appeals are well handled, many parents transfer their children from the city's schools. Primary first preferences achieved are also low, but at 88 per cent, closer to the average. Primary appeals are not always completed in time for induction in the term prior to admission, and primary schools have some concerns about a lack of co-ordination in nursery admissions. There is no overall agreement with schools to facilitate the admission of excluded pupils, or those who are difficult to place. However, the LEA is aware that this needs to be resolved.

134. Liaison with neighbouring authorities is satisfactory, but progress towards fully co-ordinated arrangements for secondary schools in 2004, is hesitant.

Recommendations

In order to improve admissions to schools:

- agree with schools arrangements for the admission of pupils who have been excluded, or who are difficult to place;
- co-ordinate better admission to nurseries; and
- provide adequate and consistent officer support to the admissions forum to enable it to fulfil its duties.

Provision of education for pupils who have no school place

135. Provision is satisfactory, indicating good progress from the last inspection, when provision was poor and concern was expressed over the LEA's state of readiness to meet impending new statutory requirements. Recommendations called for an increase in the amount of support provided for permanently excluded pupils at Key Stage 3, and more generally for a widening of provision for pupils out of school. The majority of pupils now receive full-time education within 15 days of exclusion, and external evaluations of aspects of provision have been complimentary. In May 2003, all permanently excluded pupils were offered full-time education.

136. The LEA's strategy for supporting pupils with no school place is clearly described in the well-considered behaviour support plan, and in other policy documents. Pupils excluded

at Key Stages 2 and 3 are educated at the out-of-school pupil referral unit, while the LEA has well-established formal agreements with colleges of further education, and other agencies, to provide for pupils at Key Stage 4. In addition, the out-of-school support service works in partnership with the youth service, the youth offending team, Connexions and the voluntary sector. In September 2002, the LEA and Connexions sensibly appointed a Key Stage 4 co-ordinator to track and monitor the progress of individual pupils within this diverse range of provision. Data is carefully maintained to ensure that no pupil is lost to the system. At Key Stage 3, the reintegration of permanently excluded pupils remains too slow. Even where reintegration occurs, a delay of almost one term can arise.

137. The hospital education service is an established pupil referral unit, operating over five sites across the city. A well-regarded pupil referral unit in new purpose-built accommodation meets the educational needs of young mothers. The LEA has a good strategy on home education, which is well monitored, with appropriate links to the education welfare service and other agencies.

Attendance

138. Support for attendance remains satisfactory, although much has taken place in the two years since the last inspection. The LEA is working hard to maintain its focus on attendance in schools, but despite the restructuring of the education welfare service, an explicit focus within schools, and a range of other initiatives, levels of attendance remain low in the primary sector and especially low in the secondary sector.

139. Good restructuring has improved focused work through primary, secondary and specialist teams. The LEA's support, and the delegation of resources to secondary schools, is differentiated in line with need. Vulnerable groups of pupils, such as looked after children, and the children of refugees and asylum seekers, are monitored and supported appropriately, and sound links exist with the Connexions service, learning mentors in Excellence in Cities schools, the police, and social services.

140. A sound attendance policy now rightly places the onus for securing good attendance on schools working in partnership with parents. All have attendance plans setting out joint work with educational welfare officers, who are effective in implementing a rolling programme of auditing school procedures. Electronic registration is now used in all secondary schools. Importantly, governing bodies receive regular reports, and progress on attendance targets is included in advisers' review visits to schools.

Behaviour support

141. Support for the management of behaviour in schools is highly satisfactory, an improvement from the last inspection, when it was satisfactory. Since no fieldwork was undertaken, evidence for this judgement is based on material provided by the LEA, and from the behaviour support plan.

142. At the time of the last inspection, support for behaviour was rightly recognised as a key priority of the LEA, as rates of exclusion were very high. Numbers have reduced, but, despite the best efforts of the behaviour support team and other of the LEA's services, rates of permanent exclusion in primary, secondary and special sectors remain above those of statistical neighbours. Recent major initiatives, such as Excellence in Cities and the National

Street Crime Initiative have begun to challenge a culture of exclusion within schools.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

143. The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to health, safety, welfare and child protection is highly satisfactory. This has improved from satisfactory at the time of the last inspection.

144. The LEA contributes fully to the work of the area child protection committee and to its practice sub-groups. A helpful, revised, multi-agency policy, and procedures for child protection, have been circulated to all schools, nursery settings and pupil referral units, alongside specific child protection and anti-bullying guidance. All education settings have received useful leaflets alerting parents and carers to types of child abuse, and to the procedures which schools must follow where abuse is suspected.

145. An up-to-date directory of designated child protection co-ordinators is maintained for every school, education setting and service, together with their contact and training details. The LEA's and schools' staff receive good multi-agency training, and attendance is monitored rigorously. Governors receive training on sound recruitment practice through the LEA's continuing professional development programme. An advice line enables ready contact with the social services duty team.

146. The education department established a child protection steering group five years ago, in order to achieve coherence on child protection issues across services. Schools and other settings have access to sound advice. The education department's work with the Bristol prostitution forum is indicative of effective joint working with key agencies in protecting and safeguarding the welfare of children.

147. Policies for health, safety, welfare and school security, are clearly defined, as are procedures for monitoring and dealing with areas of significant risk. Schools are well supported in developing their own policies, including through access to a newly constructed website, but have struggled to comply with overdue requirements from the LEA. Accident statistics are monitored centrally, good health and safety practice is shared, and robust monitoring ensures compliance.

Looked after children

148. The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to looked after children is highly satisfactory, an improvement from satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Since no fieldwork was undertaken, judgement has been based on material submitted by the LEA, and on the annual report of the service.

149. The education and social services departments have agreed protocols covering joint working and the sharing of information on looked after children. A specific service offering direct support to young people, carers and professional staff has been expanded over the past two years. Good quality data now enable monitoring of attainment, exclusion and attendance of pupils, wherever they reside and are educated. Plans are pending for an integrated database, accessible to relevant council staff and to the Connexions service. Every pupil has

a personal education plan. However, the LEA has some way to go in completing the training of designated teachers in schools.

150. The performance of over 470 children of statutory school age was mixed in 2001/2002. Consistent with the national picture, overall attainment remains well below the achievement of groups of similar age in Bristol's schools.

Measures to combat racism

151. The effectiveness of measures taken to combat racism remains satisfactory. No fieldwork was undertaken during this inspection, but evidence from the LEA, schools, and other documentation, confirms this judgement.

152. In complying with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, a model race equality policy and action plans were made available to all schools immediately following the target date of 31 May 2002. Procedures for collecting and analysing data on racist incidents were subsequently reviewed. Management has been strengthened, actions are increasingly coherent, and schools receive sound advice and training. Given the recent nature of some of these actions, it is too early to discern significant differences on the attendance, inclusion and attainment of minority ethnic pupils.

153. The city council formally accepted the recommendations of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. An action plan was formulated in 1999, and reviewed in 2001. The council aims to reflect minority ethnic representation in the community in the number and seniority of posts in its own workforce. Monitoring by ethnicity takes place against a local authority target to increase representation by half a per cent every year.

Section 5: Corporate issues

Introduction to corporate issues

154. Corporate matters have improved markedly, and are now satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection, decision making, and the leadership of elected members was poor, while the implementation of corporate plans and the quality of advice given to members was unsatisfactory. A need for firmer and stronger political management and professional leadership was identified; clarification over the roles of members and officers was necessary, stakeholders needed opportunities to contribute to members' decision making, and all three political parties needed to agree a medium-term strategy for the education service. Political management is considerably strengthened and professional leadership now in good hands. Sound decision making has become the norm rather than the exception. Bristol City council is now more focused on bringing about improvements needed in schools.

155. This significant improvement is due, in part, to the substantial and successful work of the Bristol education partnership board, set up by the city council in discussion with central Government following the last inspection. With a clear remit to provide strategic guidance and advice on educational matters, and to improve working practices, the board has been successful in its work with officers, members and stakeholders. The route to incremental improvement is also attributable to an interim director of education, from January 2002, who began to identify key priorities; a change in the leadership of the council from May 2002, and the appointment of the current director of education from September of the same year.

156. As the work of the partnership board ends in July 2003, proposals for continued support over the next few months will need to assure secure decision making in a context where the council has no overall political control, and ensure continuing gains to corporate and educational working.

Corporate planning

157. Corporate planning remains satisfactory. Plans are becoming more coherent in reflecting agreed council priorities, and in signaling an overall sense of purpose and direction. Education features as the key priority, with the very recent community strategy signalling a clear understanding of the role of education in the council's long-term vision for the city. Links between corporate intentions and educational outcomes are strengthening through clear strategic priorities and improved departmental and service planning for education.

158. Since the last inspection, the allocation of corporate portfolios to departments is improving cross-directorate working. However, although tasks and accountabilities are clear, actions are not sufficiently co-ordinated. The need for improvement is recognised, and underpins the council's recent decision to re-instate the post of chief executive.

159. The implementation of corporate plans has improved from unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, to satisfactory. Strategic and financial planning cycles are now aligned, resulting in better decision making, and improved matching of resources to priorities. Until

recently, officers and members have placed too little emphasis on the systematic monitoring and review of key corporate priorities. This is strengthening through improved performance management, and a strong emphasis in education on securing corporate priorities through service outcomes. A comprehensive analysis of the strengths and weakness of education in Bristol provides members with detailed management information to inform key decisions, and a basis for evaluating the performance of the education service.

Decision making

160. Corporate decision making for education, poor at the time of the last inspection, is now satisfactory. This good progress is due to: the work of the partnership board; considerably strengthened scrutiny procedures; an unrelenting drive for openness and transparency from the previous leader of the council; and much improved information and advice to members.

161. Good communication with schools and other stakeholders now results in well-informed decisions and firm action from members, although trade unions consider they have insufficient influence on policy development. Executive processes are clear, and difficult decisions, for example, secondary school closures and the review of primary provision, have been taken following a rigorous and open process of examination and consultation.

162. Headteachers had regained a degree of confidence in the leadership of elected members, but changes brought about by the recent local elections have left schools considerably anxious for the future. As the partnership board comes to a timely end, cross-party agreements to continue support for collaborative working between senior officers and members, as well as to strengthen further the structure and function of the lifelong learning scrutiny commission by extending stakeholder membership, are wholly appropriate in ensuring crucial gains are not lost.

163. The LEA has a thorough understanding of educational needs and priorities. Its rationale for centrally controlled expenditure, as well as future plans, are well known and supported by schools.

Recommendations

In order to strengthen corporate decision making further :

- implement cross-party agreements for continuing support for collaborative working between senior officers and members; and
- extend stakeholder membership on the lifelong learning scrutiny commission.

Leadership of elected members and officers

164. The leadership of elected members has improved markedly. Poor two years ago, it is now satisfactory. The partnership board has greatly assisted political alliances, resulting in cross-party consensus, and a good deal of co-operation on major educational issues. Elected members are committed to education as the council's first priority. They are now facing up to

their strategic responsibilities, and are clear that high spending on education in the past has not resulted in value for money.

165. Since the election, in May 2002, of the recently deposed leader of the council, and against the back-drop of the council's communication strategy, there has been a very positive and successful drive to increase the public profile of the council, and for members to engage with schools and local communities. The views of stakeholders are actively sought through both the executive and scrutiny functions.

166. Routine decision making is timely and appropriate. Delegation to officers is now reasonably satisfactory, although it has taken some time for members to recognize the role of officers.

167. The leadership of senior officers is satisfactory. Having quickly secured the confidence of members, schools and the LEA's partners, and working from a clear strategic vision, the substantive director has brought a much-needed sense of direction. Building on the work of the acting director, the new director's insight, approachability, and considerable ability have injected determination, focus, rigour and pace to the education service. Politically astute, and firmly focused on achieving corporate and educational priorities, he is working assiduously to raise the profile of education within the corporate arrangements of the council.

168. The focus on school improvement is uncompromising, and officers are quickly grasping what needs to be done. The recent, and necessary, restructuring of the senior management team, alongside the imminent restructuring of school improvement services, are decisions welcomed by all, and indicative of proactive leadership.

169. Much effort has gone into improving relationships and promoting collaborative, and sometimes challenging, working with schools. The latter report positive changes, now considering themselves active partners in policy making. While assuming a growing sense of collective responsibility for improvement, they remain cautiously optimistic for the future. The department's clear and impressive communications strategy ensures communications with schools, members and officers are regular, appropriate, informative, and of high quality.

170. The quality of advice to members is highly satisfactory. Overall, members have a secure grasp of key issues facing education. They are well briefed on educational matters, have easy access to up-to-date information, and are well placed to make informed decisions from clear, well-considered and timely advice from senior officers, which is increasingly aligned to clear performance indicators.

171. Key elected members acknowledge a critical shift in their understanding of, and increased confidence in, their ability to challenge low attainment in Bristol schools from a much-improved awareness of performance data. This has resulted in a cross-party letter to schools expressing grave concern over past failures to ensure value for money, and a firm message that this cannot continue.

Partnership

172. Despite an overall lack of strategic coherence, action in support of priorities involving collaboration between several agencies is satisfactory. Bristol is committed to partnership as a means of securing its long-term plans for the city. There is now a greater emphasis on the council's community leadership role, and a large number of well-established and successful city-wide and local partnership arrangements. Bristol's local strategic partnership, launched at the end of 2001, has already been active in working across agencies and with local communities in the production of local community strategy, and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership functions very effectively in ensuring good quality provision for early years education.

173. The education department is now a more significant player in corporate partnerships, as well as being receptive to, and active in, partnerships with the potential to maximise the work of the department, for example, its involvement in local neighbourhood steering groups. The LEA has strong partnerships with the Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education, and schools are well supported by high quality publications and funded conference provision. A similarly strong partnership exists with diocesan authorities, but does not yet include regular liaison on the performance of denominational schools.

174. A wide range of high quality and innovative local and school-level partnerships have led to beneficial outcomes for young people and families. Examples include multi-agency working in early years settings; projects related to the Children's Fund; the development of a city-wide approach to reduce disaffection; learning mentors working with pupils at risk of exclusion as part of the learning and behaviour improvement programme, and neighbourhood renewal projects. Very strong partnerships with the police have resulted in good work in schools, and well-targeted activities from the Street Crime Initiative are limiting exclusion. Collaborative partnerships on 14-19 education, notably with the local Learning and Skills Council and with providers of further education, have been successful in increasing the range of provision for young people.

175. However, co-ordinated action across a complicated network of initiatives and partnership arrangements, which aligns corporate aims with educational objectives, is lacking; thus investment in partnerships is not yet linked systematically to improvements in schools. Some schools report a disparate and confusing picture, and are unaware of the rationale for project location. Nevertheless, duplication is becoming apparent as services become increasingly clear of their responsibilities for cross-cutting initiatives, and as the children's and young people's strategic partnership works to rationalise the plethora of meetings and to identify key reference groups.

Recommendations

In order to improve the coherence in work with partners, and the effectiveness of measures to address social inclusion:

- align strategic plans, collaborative partnerships, and multi-agency initiatives to corporate aims and educational objectives; and
- clarify for schools the rationale and location of partnership projects.

Support for early years

176. Support for early years education, including support and advice for the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, is very good. The strategy is strongly focused on improving attainment, and reflects the council's long-term commitment to high quality provision. Over 85 per cent of three and four year-olds now have access to good quality, endorsed provision ahead of Government targets for 2004, and nursery education is available for all three year-olds whose parents want it. These are significant achievements. The current practice of targeting private and voluntary sector providers to maintain maximum availability of places strongly supports the LEA's inclusion agenda.

177. A service improvement plan, developed as a result of a well managed Best Value review, clearly sets out the strategic overview for three years, with a detailed implementation plan for one year. Operational plans are thoroughly cross-referenced to the EDP, with clear criteria for success and robust procedures for monitoring progress. These good working procedures are well matched to local priorities, and to local neighbourhood planning.

178. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership links a range of children's services across the city. Links with schools are well established, and multi-agency working is well developed. Plans are in hand to produce information packs for parents on the range of support available. Effective early identification procedures, and improved pupil level data, results in good targeting of resources to need. Families of children with severe learning disabilities are offered portage service, and an area service for SEN supports non-maintained registered providers. The Bristol 'standard for under fives' is a high quality document, acting as a very effective self-evaluation tool, and high quality training is well focused on good quality teaching and learning.

179. A high level of good quality provision, demonstrating good value for money, is available through a range of different settings, two of which have early excellence centre status. However, the authority recognises that provision is unevenly spread across the city, making access inequitable in some areas. The partnership is addressing this.

Support for 14-19 education

180. Support for 14-19 education is satisfactory. In 2001, an area inspection of 16-19 education and training recognized poor attainment at Key Stage 4 as a major contributor to low rates of progression into post-16 learning. This resulted in an action plan for the 14-19 age group addressing continuing low levels of attainment. A good working relationship with the local Learning and Skills Council contributed to the creation of the Bristol Campus. This consortium of school and college providers aims to offer a coherent range of learning opportunities for the 14 -19 age range.

181. Within the EDP, actions to address static, low standards are well addressed. Most secondary schools are now more confident that there will be an improvement from 2003. Performance data are increasingly well used to target the LEA's support to pupils aged 14-16, but data availability is more limited for pupils aged 16-19.

182. Under the oversight of the work-related and vocational steering group, the curriculum at Key Stage 4 is becoming more diversified and includes greater emphasis on

vocational courses. All secondary schools are part of an initiative aiming to provide flexible pathways through learning, appropriate to individual need. In practice, access is hampered by the absence of a common timetable, and by the lack of financial assistance with transport costs. Collaborative work has been undertaken with the Connexions service to improve and target guidance for pupils, and a review of the excellence challenge within the gifted and talented strand of Excellence in Cities is also programmed. The strategy to support schools facing challenging circumstances, and the secondary school improvement group, are proving effective in addressing necessary improvements in subject networking, and in middle and senior management training.

183. The adult learning plan details a range of appropriate strategies to reach vulnerable groups, notably through family learning programmes. Under the auspices of the local Learning and Skills Council, Bristol adult and community education is an active member of the planning group co-ordinating local authority service providers in the region.

Appendix 1: Recommendations

The report makes a number of recommendations.

The following recommendations should be acted upon as a matter of urgency:

In order to strengthen corporate decision making further:

- implement cross-party agreements for continuing support for collaborative working between senior officers and members; and
- extend stakeholder membership on the lifelong learning scrutiny commission.

In order to improve the supply and quality of teachers:

- urgently implement the strategy for recruitment and retention, and monitor its effectiveness.

In order to improve planning for continuous improvement:

- establish criteria in all plans which describe the expected outcomes; and
- fully integrate improvement plans into financial forward-planning.

However, the following recommendations are also fundamental in that they affect the LEA's overall capacity for improvement:

In order to improve the coherence in work with partners, and the effectiveness of measures to address social inclusion:

- align strategic plans, collaborative partnerships, and multi-agency initiatives to corporate aims and educational objectives; and
- clarify for schools the rationale and location of partnership projects.

In order to improve schools' capacity to monitor pupils' progress:

- establish in schools the necessary support and training to make effective use of data.

In order to ensure efficient and effective improvement to schools' building stock:

- work with all schools to construct individual asset management plans.

In order to improve the effectiveness of self-managing schools:

- support schools in developing effective procurement skills;
- identify clear options for alternative provision of services; and
- involve headteachers fully in the configuration, monitoring and evaluation of services provided by the LEA.

In order to improve admissions to schools:

- agree with schools arrangements for the admission of pupils who have been excluded, or who are difficult to place;
- co-ordinate better admission to nurseries; and
- provide adequate and consistent officer support to the admissions forum to enable it to fulfil its duties.

In order to improve the expertise of the LEA's staff, and the targeting of expertise to areas of most need:

- audit thoroughly staff skills and experience; and
- provide relevant training.

In order to raise attainment in ICT:

- provide further support and guidance to schools on assessing pupils' work.

In order to improve value for money in special educational needs:

- review the formula for the allocation of funding for additional educational need, to include measures of pupils' prior attainment;
- monitor more closely, and evaluate schools' use of SEN and additional funding; and

- integrate the purchasing role for SEN transport in SEN administration.

In order to promote the attainment of pupils with English as an additional language:

- produce guidance for pupils learning English as an additional language, which extends existing materials.

Appendix 2: Record of Judgement Recording Statements for the inspection

Name of LEA :	Bristol
LEA number:	388
Name of Inspector:	Rosemary Matthews HMI
Date of Inspection:	May 2003

No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
SECTION 1 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY			
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	5	
2	The performance of schools	6	
3	Funding, including the co-ordination of external funding	2	
4	The LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	3	
5	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	4	
6	The extent to which the LEA targets its resources on priorities	4	
7	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement including Best Value	4	
SECTION 2 SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT			
8	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge, and intervention and shared those understandings with schools	3	
9	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	3	
10	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	3	
11	The effectiveness of LEA identification of and intervention in under-performing schools	3	
12	Support to schools for raising standards in Literacy	4	NI
13	Support to schools for raising standards in Numeracy	3	

No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
14	Support to schools for raising standards in and the curriculum use of information and communications technology	3	
15	Support to schools for raising standards at Key Stage 3	3	
16	Support to schools in raising standards of ethnic minority and Traveller children including the effective deployment of the ethnic minority and Traveller achievement grants	3	
17	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	3	
18	Support for school leadership and management including support for schools effort to achieve Best Value	4	NI
19	Support to school governors	3	NI
20	The effectiveness of its services to support school management	4	
20a	Financial services	4	NI
20b	Human resources	5	
20c	Property services	4	
20d	Services for ICT in school administration	3	NI
20e	Cleaning and caretaking	3	
20f	Grounds maintenance	3	
20g	Catering	3	
21	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	4	
22	The effectiveness of the leadership of services to support school improvement	4	NI
23	The effectiveness of the deployment of staff to support school improvement	4	NI
24	The effectiveness of strategic planning of services to support school improvement	4	
25	The effectiveness of the performance management of services to support school improvement	4	
26	The standard of expertise of staff to support school improvement	3	
27	The effectiveness of services to school improvement	4	

No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
28	Value for money of services to support school improvement	4	
SECTION 3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS			
29	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for SEN	2	
30	The effectiveness of the LEA in taking steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	2	
31	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	2	
32	The extent to which the LEA has exercised its SEN functions to meet the requirements of value for money	3	
SECTION 4 PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION			
33	The overall effectiveness of the LEA in promoting social inclusion	4	
34	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	4	
35	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	4	
36	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	4	
37	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to provision for pupils who have no school place	4	
38	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to school attendance	4	
39	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to behaviour at school	3	NI
40	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to health and safety, welfare and child protection	3	
41	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to children in public care	3	NI
42	The effectiveness of the LEA in combating racism	4	NI

No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
SECTION 5 CORPORATE ISSUES			
43	The clarity, consistency, coherence and feasibility of corporate plans	4	
44	The effectiveness of the procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans	4	
45	The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making (particularly financial decision-making)	4	
46	The quality of leadership provided by elected members	4	
47	The quality of the leadership provided by senior officers	4	
48	The quality of advice given to elected members	3	
49	The effectiveness of the co-ordination of actions in support of priorities involving collaboration between several agencies	4	
OVERALL JUDGEMENTS			
50	The progress made by the LEA overall	4	
51	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	4	
52	The overall effectiveness of the LEA	4	

JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 1 to 7 point scale:

- Grade 1 – Very good
- Grade 2 – Good
- Grade 3 – Highly satisfactory
- Grade 4 – Satisfactory
- Grade 5 – Unsatisfactory
- Grade 6 – Poor, significant weaknesses
- Grade 7 – Very poor, fails to provide effective support to schools