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CONTENTS	PARAGRAPHS
INTRODUCTION	1-3
COMMENTARY	4-12
SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	
Context	13-18
Funding	19-22
Council Structure	23-25
The Education Development Plan	26-33
The Allocation of Resources to Priorities	34-36
SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	
Implications for other functions	38-41
Monitoring, Challenge, Support, Intervention	42-48
Collection and Analysis of Data	49-50
Support for Literacy	51-56
Support for Numeracy	57-61
Support for Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	62-67
Support for Schools Causing Concern	68-73
Support for Governors	74-76
Support for School Management	77-80
SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	
Corporate Planning	82-90
Support to School Infrastructure	91-93
Finance	94-96
Personnel	97-99
Administrative ICT	100-101
Property Services	102-105
SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION	107-118
SECTION 5: ACCESS	
The Supply of School Places	120-124
Admissions	125-126
Attendance	127-129
Behaviour Support	130-134
Provision of Education Otherwise Than at School	135-136
Health, Safety, Welfare and Child Protection	137
Looked After Children	138
Ethnic Minority Children	139
APPENDIX - RECOMMENDATIONS	

INTRODUCTION

1 This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities* which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.

2 The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments, and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 110 schools. The response rate was 75 per cent.

3 The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 17 primary, four secondary, and two special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4 Bristol became a unitary authority in 1996. It inherited a difficult legacy: one of low attainment, lack of parental confidence in the City's secondary schools, and a gap between projected expenditure and available resources. Some progress has been made in raising attainment at Key Stage 2, but not enough. Attainment at Key Stage 4 remains well below the national average and there has been little improvement over the last three years. Overall, therefore, the LEA is not successfully exercising its functions with a view to raising standards in schools. As a consequence, parental confidence in the City's secondary school provision has not been secured in all communities.

5 What the new LEA has succeeded in doing is establishing effective management services for schools. It performs most of its functions adequately, and some well. In particular, relationships with schools are good and consultation on the LEA's main plans have been sound or better. The LEA is successfully implementing the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). Support for the weakest primary schools has been effective. The quality of support provided in these areas, as well as that provided to aspects of school management and to governing bodies, has been good.

6 Support for special educational needs has been effective. Expenditure on SEN is high, but School Based Special Education Needs Assessment (SSENA) is helping to reduce the number of statemented pupils. The Special Educational Needs Manual provides schools with valuable advice and guidance, and procedures function in a way which promotes standards by improving the quality of education and the achievement of pupils with special needs. However, the LEA is not meeting its statutory responsibility with regard to the time taken to issue statements, and some annual reviews of statements were found to be late.

7 There are some significant weaknesses. They include:

- the analysis and use of performance data to set targets;
- support for information and communication technology in the curriculum;
- support for the maintenance of school buildings;
- planning school places in the secondary sector, including planning for 16-19 education;
- support for secondary schools causing concern;
- support to improve attendance in secondary schools.

8 There is also a vagueness of central direction and slowness of response to some elements of government policy and local circumstances that prevent the LEA being as effective as it should be. On some issues, notably the failure adequately to deal with the City's secondary schools in special measures, and the management of school places in the secondary sector, elected Members have not made clear, timely or open decisions.

9 There are a number of corporate issues which currently give cause for concern, even though they are being tackled. An example is the non-delegation of funding for key management support services and the high central recharges to

education. Another is the alignment of resources to priorities. A recent revision of the Local Management of Schools formula may well help in this regard.

10 It is also not clear what schools are entitled to expect of services, nor how they should assess value for money. This is particularly the case in the management services, which are not located within the Education Department, and where service specifications are not clear to schools. Even where, for example in relation to the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS), the entitlement is spelled out, it is exceeded. The LEA also lacks, in too many areas, ways of checking its performance. In that sense, it is not well placed to deliver Best Value. In some areas, planning frameworks are lacking, and the EDP, although it undoubtedly addresses the right issues, has weaknesses.

11 It is, of course, the services which have the most direct impact on the schools. Here, the City is, by and large, fortunate in the quality of the people it employs. They do what they do well. However, in the case of the Inspection and Advisory Service, we question whether it should attempt to do all that it does. It is a well qualified, highly professional service, but the weight of its visiting to all schools cannot be reconciled with the principle of intervention in inverse proportion to success, and reinforces a dependency culture in schools.

12 This is an LEA which does some things well. It does not, however, provide good value for money. A shift is needed – in the leadership given by members, in corporate management and in the management of the education service – to ensure that standards in schools improve at a faster rate than they have done up to now. Some recent improvements suggest a move in the right direction, but more needs to be done.

SECTION ONE: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

13 The Local Education Authority (LEA) of Bristol was formally established on 1 April 1996 with the dissolution of Avon.

14 Bristol is the eighth largest city in England with a population of just under 400,000. It contains a number of prosperous and attractive communities, along with areas of major social deprivation. Unemployment is the highest in the West of England and is particularly high amongst minority ethnic groups. In some wards, it is 25 per cent of the population. However, the proportion of the population with higher education backgrounds and in social class one and two is in line with national figures and above similar LEAs.

15 In April 1998 there were 30,997 pupils in Bristol maintained primary schools, 16,576 in maintained secondary schools and 815 in special schools. 4.5 per cent of these pupils had English as a second language and 11 per cent came from minority ethnic backgrounds. This was broadly in line with similar LEAs and national averages. 24.8 per cent of primary pupils and 24.4 per cent of secondary pupils were eligible for free school meals. This is broadly in line with similar LEAs and national norms in the primary sector and above in the secondary.

16 In 1998, 23 per cent of the pupil population were identified through the Code of Practice as having some special educational need. Overall, 5.4 per cent of pupils had a Statement of Special Educational Need; this was well above the national average.

17 The organisation of schools is laid out below.

Type of School	
Nursery	15
Infant	27
Junior	26
Infant and Junior	70
Secondary	22
Special	11
Pupil Referral Unit	1
Total	172

18 In 1996/97 the LEA inherited a high proportion of surplus places in secondary schools from Avon – 7.3 per cent in primary and 25 per cent in secondary schools. In addition, Bristol has a high proportion of small schools compared to other metropolitan authorities. The surplus place issue is exacerbated, in the secondary sector, by an exodus of pupils out of Bristol maintained schools at the end of Key Stage 2 to other authorities and the independent sector. LEA figures indicate that in 1999 Bristol lost 20 per cent of its pupils at secondary transfer, and that this constitutes 29 per cent of all pupils who achieve levels 4 and 5 in the National Curriculum tests at age 11.

The Performance of Pupils in Maintained Schools

- The data in this section is illustrative and not comprehensive.
- Judgements by OFSTED inspectors, in Section 9 and 10 inspections, show a far higher proportion of primary schools in Bristol where attainment on entry is poor compared to that found nationally and in similar authorities;
- Attainment on entry to Bristol's 22 secondary schools is even more stark: in only two schools did inspectors judge it to be good and in 19 it was judged to be poor. This confirms the LEA's figures about the proportion of average and more able primary pupils who do not go on to attend Bristol's secondary schools.
- From 1996 to 1998, the attainment of pupils in Bristol schools has been well below national figures at all key stages.
- Up to 1998, rates of improvement, even from a much lower base, have in only a few instances matched or exceeded national rates. Provisional results in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests for 1999 have changed that trend; in both English and Mathematics, there has been an increase of two percentage points above the national rate of improvement. At Key Stage 4 after a slight improvement in 1997, the percentage of pupils achieving one A*-G, five +A*-G and five +A*-C fell in 1998, and was well below national figures, as was the average points score. In 1999 there was a slight increase in the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C to 31 per cent. However, there has been considerable fluctuation in the attainment of some secondary schools, and overall, in 1999 Bristol is within the bottom 5 per cent of all LEAs in England.
- The proportion of pupils permanently excluded from primary and secondary schools is well above national rates although it is reducing.
- Attendance rates in primary schools are below national rates. In secondary schools they are well below national rates.
- OFSTED inspection evidence indicates that Bristol has fewer primary or secondary schools where standards of achievement are good than nationally. Almost three times the proportion of primary schools need to make substantial improvements in relation to standards of achievement. Twice the proportion of secondary schools need to make substantial improvements.
- Section 9 and 10 inspections report a much lower proportion of Bristol schools overall to be good or very good with regard to quality of education or management and efficiency. A higher proportion than nationally require substantial improvement. Inspectors judged the climate in primary schools to be good or very good in the same proportions as nationally. However, in secondary schools, climate was judged to be good or very good in only 43 per cent compared to 77 per cent nationally. In three secondary schools, it required substantial improvement.

- Inspectors found that several aspects of teaching were poor in a higher proportion of primary and secondary schools than nationally.

Funding

19 The City Council inherited expenditure well in excess of its first Standard Spending Assessment (SSA). Faced with a low SSA per pupil and a tight capping limit, it introduced both a high Council Tax and reductions to Council services, including a 6.1 per cent cut to the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) over a three-year period. It is now able to give schools greater priority with more than the full cash value of the SSA, and additional money for the expansion of the Standards Fund passed to schools in 1999/2000. During 1999/2000 the LEA plans to spend 11.9 per cent above the education SSA.

20 Bristol's Local School's Budget (LSB) per pupil is £2,823 while the corresponding figure for all unitary authorities is £2,598 and for all English LEAs is £2,625. This does not translate into higher than average levels of funding per pupil in schools because of relatively high spending on other phases of education.

21 Bristol delegates 82.7 per cent of the LSB to schools, which is about the national average. The LEA's delegated funding per pupil is £174 higher than the national average. The LEA has much scope for further delegation, as it has not yet delegated key management support services. It aims to achieve the 6 per cent target for further delegation by fulfilling its duty to delegate funding for both support services and for secondary school meals next April.

22 The LEA allocates 21.5 per cent of the LSB to special educational needs. This is high for unitary authorities and represents a significant proportion of LEA expenditure. It delegates a substantial proportion of special educational needs funding to special and mainstream schools. Funding retained at the centre is used to meet more complex and severe needs of pupils educated outside the LEA or for low incidence SEN.

Council Structure

23 The Education Committee is one of eleven Council committees, and acts as the lead for early years with the Social Services Committee, subject to the responsibilities vested in the Early Years Joint Sub-Committee. The Education Performance Sub-Committee has the remit to monitor the effectiveness of performance within the LEA.

24 As a response to the White Paper, Modernising Local Government, the Council is piloting new structural arrangements in Health and Environmental Services and Leisure Services, which involve the establishment of separate executive and scrutiny functions in a move towards a cabinet arrangement. This pilot was being reviewed in November 1999, prior to decisions being taken on its implementation across the Council.

25 The Education Directorate is led by the Director of Education and a senior management group made up of the divisional directors of Achievement, Planning and Resources, and Children and Community.

Education Development Plan (EDP)

26 The LEA's main strategy for school improvement is "Achievement in Bristol"; the initial plan for education, which was put in place at the time of the formation of the new Unitary Authority in April 1996, and has been reviewed and amended each year since. This plan sets out the vision of the Council for education, and brings together all aspects of the LEA's work in relation to raising attainment. The EDP is the main plan within this strategy, and has been approved by the Secretary of State for a three-year period subject to a specific condition. In addition to the EDP, "Achievement in Bristol" contains summaries of other plans including:- the Early Years Development Plan; Behaviour Support Plan; Inclusive Education Plan; 14-19 Development Plan; Lifelong Learning Plan; Infant Class Size Plan; School Organisation Plan; ICT Development Plan; Asset Management Plan, and the Education Directorate's own internal organisational priorities.

27 The priorities within the EDP reflect both national and local priorities, and have developed out of consultation with schools and through reviews undertaken on a yearly basis in relation to Achievement in Bristol.

28 The School Improvement Programme is based on a sound audit of needs which provides a clear identification of strengths and weaknesses within the LEA's schools. Activities are differentiated to address particular groups of pupils, for example those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

29 The priorities defined within the EDP are:-

- raising attainment in literacy across all Key Stages;
- raising attainment in numeracy across all Key Stages;
- raising attainment in, and increasing the use of, information and communication technology;
- raising attainment in science;
- improving and enhancing the quality of teaching;
- improving and enhancing the quality of school leadership and management;
- promoting inclusion and raising standards for pupils with SEN; and
- support for schools causing concern.

30 Plans clearly define action; target group; success criteria; responsibilities and broad timescales. Schools agree with the priorities; and consultation with schools on the plan, and on the LEA's other main plans, have been sound or better. This is confirmed in the School Survey and the visits to schools conducted as part of this inspection. In almost all cases, secondary and primary schools endorse the priorities within the plan. The only exception is in the special schools where there are concerns over the feasibility of the LEA's plans for inclusion.

31 Nevertheless, there are weaknesses. There are some overlaps between priorities. Success criteria are not always specific enough to define precisely what

outcomes the LEA intends to achieve, and while time scales have beginnings and ends, actions are not sequenced over a three year period. Schools visited are therefore unclear when activities will take place, how they will be implemented and how they can work in partnership with the LEA.

32 The LEA has a strategy for checking its progress in evaluating the plan: reports are made to Performance Monitoring Sub-Committee, and the Directorate's senior management team. An EDP evaluation group composed of officers, headteachers and governors will monitor the overall progress and implementation of the plan. Nevertheless, the strategy takes too little account of targets for service improvement and could overall be based on more precisely measurable outcomes.

33 The plan sets out an appropriate process for setting targets with schools, and the targets for 2002 are challenging. However, the data used for setting targets in 1999 was inadequate, and did not correspond to that identified to be used in the plan. As a result targets were insecurely based. Data collection and analysis is a weakness which the LEA needs to address with more urgency than has up to now been the case.

The allocation of resources to priorities

34 Resources allocated to the Education Development Plan are not sufficiently aligned with the pattern of needs and the actions identified by the LEA. Services have not precisely identified the cost of implementing the priorities, nor have they detailed how the LEA will be accountable to schools.

35 Changes to the formula for delegation to mainstream and special schools were implemented in 1999/2000, and have improved the match between resources and need. An activity-led approach to resourcing has made it possible to implement changes in funding priorities which this year included additional funding for infant class size and Key Stage 2. The additional funding for Key Stage 1 takes the budget for infant schools slightly above the national average for 1999-2000.

36 Schools do not know the full cost of services provided by the LEA. As a consequence they are unable to make judgements about value for money. The LEA has surveyed schools' views and established service design groups to clarify responsibilities of both LEA services and schools. A catalogue of LEA services to schools has been prepared. The LEA is at an early stage in its preparation for Best Value, which is being led corporately. Services to schools such as Personnel, Payroll and Building Services have undergone Best Value reviews. Others are planned as part of a five-year cycle of reviews. Work towards achieving Best Value will include implementation of the Business Excellence Quality Framework, which the City Council intends to introduce within two years.

Recommendations:

37 In order to improve the LEA strategy for school improvement:

- the EDP needs reviewing to ensure that actions are taken in a planned sequence and communicated to schools. School targets should be based on adequate information;
- schools should be given information on the full cost of each service, so they can develop a better sense of value for money;
- services need to identify more precisely the full cost of implementing the EDP, and detail how they will be accountable to schools.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications for other functions

38 The EDP sets out the LEA's strategy for raising standards in schools. Some aspects of the LEA's provision for school improvement also feature in other key planning documents. For example, support for behaviour and attendance feature within the Behaviour Support Plan, and the Authority devotes considerable time and attention to these issues. In general, support for behaviour is carried out adequately and is beginning to have an impact on the schools at which it is targeted. However, support for attendance in secondary schools is not leading to sufficient improvement. These issues are discussed in more detail in paragraphs 128-135.

39 The LEA maintains services which provide effective support for schools in managing their administrative function. Personnel support, financial support and administrative ICT are functions which are effectively performed. Support for the maintenance of property is less adequate.

40 The management of admissions to schools is good. The provision of school places in the primary sector is adequately managed. However, there is a lack of clarity in the LEA's planning for secondary school places and for 16-19 education.

41 Overall, support for SEN functions in a way which promotes standards by improving the quality of education and the achievement of pupils with special needs. Support for literacy and numeracy has taken account of the needs of pupils with SEN, and schools have been able to adapt the advice given to their specific needs.

Monitoring, Challenge, Support, Intervention

42 The Achievement Division takes the lead in ensuring that the priorities within the EDP are delivered. The priorities for the Division and for the Inspection and Advisory Service (IAS) within it are those of the EDP. There is no detailed service plan, which defines precisely how these priorities will be implemented. This is a significant omission.

43 The IAS consists of 16 full-time equivalent professional staff and four administrative and clerical staff. The service cost per pupil is now in line with national and unitary averages.

44 The service has some highly competent staff whose work is consistently valued by schools. However, the service has not clarified precisely enough what constitutes its monitoring role and what constitutes its support role, and needs to ask with more rigour whether all that it does with schools as an entitlement is either necessary or appropriate.

45 For example, the School Improvement Cycle was introduced by the LEA in September 1998, with the agreement of schools. This cycle brings together the LEA strategy for target setting; support for management; support for teaching; monitoring and intervention. Schools focus on self-review and development through the school development plan. All schools receive four half-day visits yearly, along with a one-

day visit from their link adviser which focuses on classroom observation. In addition, further visits take place related to focused reviews which are negotiated with the school. These are undertaken by one or more advisers along with senior management of the school, and result in a report with recommendations which are shared with the school. They provide an accurate picture of standards, quality and management, and schools find them valuable.

46 The School Improvement Cycle is perceived by the LEA not only as a means of monitoring schools but also as a mechanism to support school self-evaluation. Given that this is the case, it would be logical to assume that the LEA would have targets to reduce its support to schools in proportion to the success of its strategy. The LEA needs to plan for this eventuality. Indeed, although the schools visited support the cycle, in some it did not match their already well-developed approach to self-review, and in others it was leading to dependency on the LEA rather than self-reliance.

47 The LEA does not need this level of information on all its schools to effectively monitor their progress, nor do all schools need this level of support. The service, therefore, needs to make more intelligent use of the information it holds on schools to plan and direct its own work.

48 Given that neither schools nor the LEA know what different components of monitoring and support cost, and a lack of clarity in the cost of support to schools causing concern, with serious weaknesses and in special measures, it is difficult for schools or the LEA to judge whether the service provides value for money.

The Collection and Analysis of Data

49 In the school survey, the LEA's provision of data on pupil performance and guidance on its use, was rated below satisfactory by secondary schools and just above satisfactory by primary schools. It was rated below average for all LEAs surveyed so far in both phases. If anything, the picture in the schools visited was slightly less positive. There were only three schools where practice was well developed, and these schools had made progress largely through their own efforts.

50 Fourteen schools were visited where performance data and target-setting are a focus for inspection. The data which has been available through the LEA's "Rainbow Pack", has had a limited impact on schools, and there has been too little guidance on its use to set targets. As a result, although the target setting process for literacy and numeracy in primary schools in the years 2000 and 2002 was well managed as a process and targets were agreed with schools, the targets set were not based on the comprehensive and detailed analysis of data. This was particularly the case in 1998 when targets were set with schools for 1999. As a result, some primary schools have exceeded their targets by a substantial amount, while others are some way away from meeting theirs.

Support for Literacy

51 The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) has been well introduced in Key Stages 1 and 2. Its introduction in the secondary schools has been less successful but is now better co-ordinated.

52 Raising the standards of literacy in all key stages is a priority within the EDP. The original target of 62 per cent of pupils achieving Level 4 and above at the end of Key Stage 2 by the Year 2000 was revised to 68 per cent. This has been justified by the improvement in results from 1998 to 1999 which exceed the annual improvement needed to meet the 2002 targets of 77 per cent.

53 The LEA was a pilot authority for the National Literacy Project and the introduction of the NLS was well founded in the Project. Training has taken place for link advisers, and for other teams which provide support to schools; for example, SEN and EMAS.

54 In the School Survey, primary schools rated support for the teaching of literacy between satisfactory and good and above average for LEAs surveyed so far. The eight primary schools visited where literacy was a focus for inspection confirmed this view. In all eight, standards were improving and in seven, the support provided by the LEA was judged to have been either sound or better.

55 Support for literacy in the two special schools visited had been good and in both schools there had been improvements to teachers' awareness, and, in one school, pupils' motivation. Although the advice provided was not specifically tailored to the needs of pupils with SEN, it had been good enough to allow both schools to adapt it to their needs.

56 In the School Survey, secondary schools rated support for literacy between satisfactory and good, but below average for LEAs surveyed so far. The EDP recognises the need to improve support to English along with the introduction of the NLS into Key Stage 3. In two of the three secondary schools visited, English had improved and was a strong subject in the school. In both cases, this had been due to the school's efforts.

Support for Numeracy

57 The LEA has begun to successfully implement the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). Standards have improved at a faster rate than the national average in Key Stage 2 in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, but are nevertheless still below the national average, and improvement overall remains slow. It is too early to tell whether the LEA's initiatives in Key Stage 3 will have an impact.

58 Raising the standards of numeracy in all key stages is a priority within the EDP. Consultants have been appointed and actions within the EDP focus appropriately on meeting the targets set for numeracy, identifying and working with groups of schools, teachers and pupils. Responsibilities are clear; they include link advisers who, along with the numeracy consultants, will help implement and monitor the plan in schools.

59 Up to 1999, standards in numeracy had improved at a slower rate than nationally, and this year they improved only marginally at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 in the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 2, however, they improved markedly at two percentage points above the provisional national rate. This improvement suggests that the target for the Year 2000 is too low, but that the target for 2002 is attainable.

60 Prior to the introduction of the NNS, Bristol had been running its own Numeracy Project, with 20 primary schools and four secondary schools. The LEA's data demonstrates that the primary schools involved in this project made greater improvements in the National Curriculum tests than other Bristol primary schools. This was particularly the case at Key Stage 2.

61 Nine primary schools were visited where support for numeracy was inspected and in all nine schools there had been an improvement in standards. In five schools where judgements were made about the quality of support provided by the LEA, it was sound or better. This confirms the positive response of primary schools in the School Survey.

Support for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the Curriculum

62 Standards in curriculum ICT are improving, but not quickly enough. The LEA's strategy for the development of curriculum ICT is limited. Support to primary schools is satisfactory overall with some variation, but there is less evidence of support to secondary schools.

63 OFSTED data and the LEA's own audit indicates that pupils make slower progress in ICT in Bristol schools than pupils nationally or in similar LEAs. The LEA is therefore right to focus its attention not only on the implementation of the National Grid for Learning (NGfL), but also on improving teaching and learning using ICT. However, it is this aspect of the EDP which is least well defined; particularly with regard to strategies designed to bring pupils' achievement up to national standards.

64 Support for ICT was inspected in seven primary schools and one secondary school. In six of these schools, ICT had been a key issue for attention within the OFSTED report. Improvements were taking place in all the schools visited, albeit slowly. They were noticeable where ICT was well co-ordinated within the school, or where new hardware and software had been installed. The most recently inspected schools had been supported by the LEA in preparing an action plan to improve standards.

65 In the School Survey, primary schools indicated that support was satisfactory for most aspects of curriculum ICT. The exception was improvements for hardware and software. Secondary schools rated support below satisfactory and below average. The exception was support for the introduction of the NGfL. This picture was confirmed in visits to schools where support was broadly satisfactory in primary schools and unsatisfactory in the one secondary school.

66 Where schools had made progress, there was evidence of LEA support in:

- planning the school's objectives for ICT under the NGfL initiative;
- putting together a bid for new hardware and software;
- the installation of a new network which allowed pupils to work in class groups in a specialist ICT room;
- support in the preparation of a detailed scheme of work;
- training which provides teachers with appropriate skills and knowledge to teach the necessary elements of the ICT course.

67 At present, it is apparent that LEA advisory personnel are struggling to meet all their commitments, including reviewing the progress being made to meet EDP targets. As a result, schools which need the most support are not always getting it.

Support for Schools Causing Concern

68 Support for primary schools causing concern, with serious weaknesses and in special measures, is generally good. Support for secondary schools is more variable. In the case of a school in special measures for over two years, progress has been too slow. There have been improvements in the identification of schools causing concern and in the quality of support and intervention provided overall. However, the LEA has not carried out a detailed analysis of the cost of this work.

69 Nine LEA schools have been judged to require special measures since 1993; one special, two secondary and six primary. Three schools no longer require special measures and only one school, a secondary, has been in special measures for longer than two years. A further twelve schools have been identified as having serious weaknesses; nine, after receiving monitoring visits, have been found to be making satisfactory progress in implementing the recommendations within their inspection reports. The LEA has identified a further eight schools which cause serious concern.

70 The LEA has recently put in place a clear strategy for identifying these schools. Action is appropriately differentiated, depending on the severity of concern. The LEA had adopted a cross-service approach to plan and co-ordinate support for those schools with the most severe difficulties. Although schools with lower levels of need are expected to pay for additional support, this is not always adhered to, and support is provided centrally.

71 These views are largely confirmed through discussion with headteachers and governors of schools which have been, or are causing concern, and in visits to schools. Headteachers are clear: the LEA's intervention and support has improved; mechanisms are now in place for the early identification of schools causing concern; the monitoring of the LEA provides useful feedback to schools; and action and support to primary schools is appropriate and well co-ordinated.

72 Support for secondary schools has been more varied and less effective than support for primary schools. Decisions to close two secondary schools in special measures have taken too long. Both are now to be closed. However, one no longer requires special measures and the other is improving. The lateness of the decision has caused considerable consternation in the communities concerned.

73 Five schools were visited which had been identified as requiring special measures or with serious weaknesses. All five had improved since their Section 10 inspections. In the three primary schools, the support of the school's link adviser had been a key factor in improving management and in monitoring the schools' progress. All three schools had benefited from literacy support, and two schools from numeracy support. In a secondary and a special school, while support had been sufficient, it had been more variable in effect.

Support for Governors

74 Support for governors is generally good. The LEA has clear mechanisms for communicating with governors, and provides a well regarded training programme. There have been improvements in support recently. Overall, support provides good value for money.

75 A range of appropriate strategies is used to identify the needs of governors. Actions for improving the quality of governing bodies are clearly identified in the EDP as part of the priority to improve school leadership and management. These include training to ensure that governors carry out their statutory duties and become more self-evaluating. New arrangements have recently been put in place for the management of support to governors, and a Governor Support Unit has been established to work alongside schools' link advisers.

76 The survey of schools, interviews with representatives of the governors forum and visits to nine schools where support to governors was a focus, all confirm the judgement that support for governors is good. There are strengths:- in training, particularly the induction of governors; provision of information from the Governor Support Unit; support for appointments of senior staff; consultation and the newly introduced Newsletter. Link advisers have provided good information to governors.

Support for School Management

77 Improving and enhancing the quality of school leadership and management is a priority within the EDP. Strategies are appropriate, and actions clear. A number of the actions identified in the EDP were observed in the schools visited. The LEA is making a sound start in their implementation.

78 The LEA is re-drafting its guidance on School Development Plans; has put in place a successful series of training events for managers on classroom observation and reviewing pupils' work, and has offered a wide range of professional development for senior managers. In consultation with secondary headteachers, middle management training has been established in schools, and networks for subject specialists have been re-established to general acclaim in schools. A good programme of training is offered for new headteachers and for deputy headteachers. Headteacher and teacher appraisal is not taking place in the LEA's schools, but plans are in place which will ensure that the LEA and schools meet their responsibilities in the future.

79 Support for headteachers and other senior managers is rated above satisfactory in the School Survey and above average for LEAs surveyed so far. Support for

middle managers is satisfactory and average for LEAs' surveyed so far. Support for school self-evaluation is rated above satisfactory and above average. These views are largely substantiated through interviews with headteacher representatives, and in visits to 14 schools where management was a focus. All the schools have benefited from focused reviews negotiated by the LEA with the school, and from training in lesson observation and monitoring pupils' work. In the four secondary and six of the primary schools, the lessons learnt are being used as part of the school's own monitoring arrangements. However, two schools were visited which had received mini inspections prior to their OFSTED inspection. This, provided free of charge by the LEA, is a waste of valuable resources.

80 The LEA offers a good range of in-service training which is linked to the priorities within the EDP, and which the primary schools visited, in particular, find well matched to the needs they have identified within their school development plans. Where expertise is not available to the LEA (for example in design and technology), there were examples in two of the secondary schools visited of effective consultant support brokered by the LEA. However, this brokerage role has not yet been formalised. Both primary and secondary schools were able to point to good examples of in-service training provided by the LEA; and to demonstrate the impact it had had on teaching, resource development and management. Documentation provided by the LEA, and interviews with senior managers and teachers in schools, indicate that the LEA's support to newly qualified teachers is sound and meets requirements.

Recommendations:

81 In order to improve school improvement:

- the Achievement Division should put in place a detailed service plan, which identifies more precisely planning for the implementation and sequencing of the EDP over a three year period, monitors the cost of support to schools, sets targets, and models proposals for the delegation of additional funds to schools;
- the strategy for monitoring and supporting schools should be re-evaluated, to take account of the better use of data to target support at those schools which need it most;
- plans for the provision of a comprehensive set of performance data for all schools need to be put in place. These should be accompanied by suitable written guidance and training opportunities on the use of data for target setting;
- the LEA should monitor standards in ICT in each school and put in place appropriate levels of support;
- inspections or reviews which duplicate OFSTED inspections of schools should stop, as they are a waste of resources;
- support to secondary schools causing concern should be reviewed and improved.

SECTION THREE: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate Planning

82 Education features as a high priority in the corporate planning of the Council. Relationships between officers and schools are, on the whole, good, and schools feel well consulted on the priorities of the LEA. However, there are instances where decisions have been taken late and where leadership and a vision for the future have not been as well articulated as they could have been. There is, in addition, a considerable way to go before the LEA has developed an appropriate customer-provider relationship between its services and schools.

83 “Achievement in Bristol” is well linked to the overall strategy of the Council. Elected members, within a context of service cuts and increasing Council Tax, have made their commitment to education explicit by affording education greater financial protection than other Council services over the last three years.

84 The key strategic objective of the Council is to raise achievement; within a context of Best Value, equality of opportunity, sustainable development and urban regeneration. The overall objectives of the Council are refined into policy objectives, which are translated into plans: for example the EDP, the Behaviour Support Plan and the Early Years and Child Care Development Plan. Nevertheless, there are some key areas where the Council has not clearly communicated its intentions, for example, in long term planning for school improvement, in the removal of surplus places in the secondary sector, and in provision for 16-19 education. A lack of openness about the process in the second of these areas, and decisions taken late in the day, have left the Council open to charges that decisions have been taken behind closed doors and that consultation has been a paper exercise.

85 Elected Members of the party forming the administration are well informed, and all Members receive detailed information on standards in schools and on the progress being made in meeting the objectives set for education.

86 Urban regeneration features as a key strategic objective for the Council. The Education Directorate has gradually become more actively involved in this through a range of partnership arrangements. Partners generally confirm the valuable contribution of the LEA in Single Regeneration Bid activity, and in putting together the bid for the Education Action Zone.

87 The LEA has good and improving links with a number of agencies which serve as the basis for projects involving the LEA, Learning Partnership West, WESTEC and other agencies and which provide pupils with opportunities to participate in work related education, industry activities and related events.

88 At a corporate level within the Council, there is no evidence of cross-referencing or monitoring of cross directorate strategies. However, there is evidence in the detailed planning of projects that good relationships exist at officer level. Good examples of this are the Early Years Partnership and the Quality Protects Management Action Plan.

89 Central recharges to Education are high and not fully delegated to the Education Department. In 1999/2000 the overall re-charge was for £3.7 million. Fair Funding has provided much needed impetus to improve specifications for services to schools and to accelerate the delegation of funding to the Education Department. However, the cost of remaining recharges has not been fully justified and there is no evidence to suggest that they provide value for money.

90 In 1997/98, the Education Department and then the Council introduced medium term financial planning. This facilitated more informed decision-making about the funding of priorities, but a coherent and integrated planning and quality framework did not accompany it. The absence of such a framework continues to limit the Council's capacity to make the best use of the resources available to it. Recent reviews of some services demonstrate that the Council has the capacity to subject services to fundamental performance review and to produce service improvement plans.

Support to School Infrastructure

91 Management Support Services generally provide adequate, often good, support to schools.

92 Management Support Services such as Finance, Personnel and Admin ICT are provided both corporately within the City Council and by the Education Directorate. Building Services and Legal services are provided corporately; Contract Advice and Management (which includes cleaning and ground maintenance) are provided by Education. Funding for Personnel, Finance and Legal services is delegated to the Education Directorate.

93 Apart from ICT, management support services are not currently delegated to schools; although all will be by April 2000. Schools visited were unclear about their entitlement, did not have information about the full range of services on offer, or about the full cost of support provided to their school. There has also been a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the quality of services or of ongoing performance management. Despite this, schools gave many examples from each of the key services of responsiveness to individual need.

Finance

94 Bristol's financial advice and support to schools is satisfactory overall. The team of financial advisers provide responsive financial and technical support to schools on the planning and control of school budgets. Other strengths include school budget information and consultation on the LMS scheme.

95 In 1998/99 13 schools had a budget deficit greater than 2.5 per cent, an increase of six schools since 1997/98. The LEA now provide explicit guidance to ensure there is adequate explanation by schools of surpluses, and advice is given about deficits, through the new Scheme for Financing Schools.

96 Payroll is generally sound and was judged to be better than satisfactory in the School Survey. Internal audits were also rated better than satisfactory by schools and above average for other LEAs surveyed so far.

Personnel

97 The personnel service is an improving service, which provides better than satisfactory support for employee relations and casework.

98 Advice on Health and Safety is appropriately provided by Corporate Personnel. There are comprehensive personnel policies with a number being updated. The LEA gives a high priority to the management of change, capability and staff absence which is particularly helpful to schools. The late issue of contracts and confirmation letters was cited by almost all schools visited as unsatisfactory and needs improvement.

99 The Personnel Service has undergone a Best Value review with Payroll and is subject to a service improvement plan. The merger of these two services will lower costs and improve the service to schools.

Administrative ICT

100 Support for administrative ICT is good in places and improving. Service plans have clearly defined targets and priorities are appropriately linked to activities. The service has been stretched in the past, but recent expansion should assist it to maintain and develop its systems and services. There are sound feedback and evaluation systems in place which are driving the improvements that are needed.

101 There is scope to improve the use of the recently introduced Intranet and e-mail facilities. Only half of the ten schools visited make more than minimal use of this. Electronic exchange was judged by schools to be less than satisfactory although higher than the average of other LEAs in the School Survey sample. Currently there is dual use of paper-based and electronic exchange of information between schools and the LEA. Heads are aware that there will be an increase of information flow through the Intranet but are unaware of the nature, range and detail of planning functions that would be supported by it.

Property Services

102 Bristol's school buildings have suffered from a long history of under-investment, which predates local government re-organisation. The backlog of repairs and maintenance work is estimated at £45 million. The City Council has budgeted for £1.6 million worth of capital maintenance in 1999/2000 which is a substantial increase from £0.8 million in 1998/99. However, the Council has not remedied its lack of borrowing approval and grant by increasing revenue funding to improve its stewardship of the building stock.

103 The Council strategy ensures that:

- the education element of the annual capital guideline has been used exclusively for education;
- capital receipts from the disposal of education property have been recycled within education;
- surplus place removal and school amalgamation programmes lead to the renewal of school buildings;
- maintenance spending is one of the highest priorities;
- one-off monies have been allocated for capital improvements.

104 However, bids for borrowing approval, New Deal for Schools, and Private Finance Initiative Credits, have had limited success. Bids for Supplementary Credit Approval in relation to surplus place removal, school amalgamations and the implementation of the SLD review have been more successful.

105 The LEA is aiming to have condition surveys completed by January as part of its work towards the Asset Management Plan. However, none of the schools visited had a clear view of the priority their outstanding work was being given. A Best Value review of building services has just been completed which will result in the devolution of management/administration resources to service departments. These developments will assist the Council to provide a more systematic and client-led focus to its work. However, stronger co-ordination and monitoring will be needed to ensure that planned maintenance proceeds.

Recommendations:

106 In order to improve strategic management:

- elected Members should ensure that decisions are made in a timely way and that the process through which they are made is clear;
- there should be better co-ordination of the implementation of the Intranet and its application to school improvement, ensuring that all schools understand its capability and its capacity for supporting school management;
- there should be improvements in the information shared with schools about the progress being made with the repair and maintenance backlog and the priority allocated to tasks outstanding in each school.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Strategy

107 The Authority's policy for special educational needs was formed in consultation with schools and is grounded in an analysis of needs. Since 1998 the LEA has provided a unified service within the Children and Community Division for supporting special needs. The LEA strategy commands the support of most schools, and reflects current government thinking.

108 The LEA strategy for special needs is reflected in the priorities that are identified in the EDP. In addition to the EDP priorities, the recently produced SEN Action Plan lists further activities designed to improve provision for pupils with special needs; for example, improving support for parents of pupils with special needs. Teams within the Children and Community Division list yet further areas for action. The list of actions is long and is insufficiently prioritised.

109 The Schools Survey rate the Authority's planning and implementation of its strategy for special educational needs, and schools' involvement in key decisions about special needs resource allocation, as above average. This view was substantially borne out in all but the special schools visited as part of this inspection.

Statutory Obligations

110 The LEA complies with its legal obligations including equal opportunities and disability legislation. However, it is not meeting its statutory responsibilities with regard to the time taken to issue statements. At the time of the inspection only 43 per cent had been completed within the required 18 weeks. Annual reviews of statements are sometimes late, and in one special school many pupils did not know where they were to be placed by the close of the school year.

Improvement and Value for Money

111 A significant feature of the LEA's overall expenditure is the amount allocated to meet SEN. This comparatively high level of expenditure reflects the correspondingly high number of statements of special educational need: 6.7 per cent of secondary pupils and 4.6 per cent of primary pupils in Bristol schools in 1998. One consequence of this high rate of identification has been the top slicing of the AWPU. This is a symptom of growth that has as its origin 500 unresolved statutory assessments that transferred from the previous LEA.

112 School Based Special Education Needs Assessment (SSENA) is helping to reduce the number of statemented pupils who have learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties, by targeting support for pupils at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice with *prima facie* high incidence, low level SEN. The process involves headteachers and SENCOs in the Moderation of Assessments Panel (MAP) and the Resources Allocation Panel (RAP). As a result of the SSENA arrangements the rate at which statements were growing has halved, and the RAP has no backlog of cases for consideration. The appointment of a statementing officer has helped to

improve the quality of statements, and those seen as part of this inspection were judged to be of good quality, detailed and relevant to pupils' needs.

113 The revised arrangements for statementing pupils have reduced the involvement in the process of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Educational psychologists now have more time to act in a consultative role, helping schools to enhance the quality of pupils' learning through assessment of need and through providing advice. Part of the EPS remit now is to raise the achievement of lower attaining pupils. The EPS is held in high regard by most schools who welcome the change of emphasis in its functions.

114 As a consequence of this work, the District Auditor's Review of 1998 reported that provision for SEN represented good value for money. In addition, the LEA has begun the process of benchmarking its SEN provision.

115 The process of reviewing the provision for pupils with special needs is helpfully built into the established school processes for self-improvement. 'The Bristol SEN Manual' contains comprehensive information about every stage of the Code of Practice and provides useful information for schools. The SENCOs in the schools visited described it as a valuable source of information. The manual contains a detailed 'special provision matrix' that indicates how decisions are made about the allocation of resources for pupils with special needs.

116 Procedures function effectively in a way which promotes standards by improving the quality of education and the achievement of pupils with special needs. In a recent evaluation of progress in implementing the EDP, mainstream schools stated that they were achieving better than expected value added outcomes for pupils with special needs.

117 The Special Needs Support team makes a significant contribution to raising standards by providing advice to teachers and by directly supporting pupils with special needs. The service works through the Child and Family Support Centres, the Primary Inclusion Team, and through providing in-service training. The focus on schools experiencing difficulties, and coaching for teachers in challenging situations, is particularly useful. The involvement of SENCOs in training for the literacy and numeracy strategies is regarded as valuable by the schools. Support for literacy had been particularly effective in the two Special schools visited.

Recommendations:

118 In order to improve special educational needs provision:

- team action plans should be more precisely related, where appropriate, to the overall priorities identified in the EDP;
- the percentage of draft statements produced within 18 weeks should be increased to meet statutory responsibilities;
- evaluate pupil outcomes and relate them to the cost of services provided as part of an overall strategy for SEN in preparation for Best Value.

SECTION FIVE: ACCESS

119 Overall, the LEA meets its statutory responsibilities in this area. However, its function with regard to school places is not performed efficiently in the secondary sector. The result is that resources are diverted from curricular provision and that a number of pupils are not placed in, or attending, the most suitable education.

The supply of school places

120 The LEA has made progress with its strategy for reducing surplus places but still has a long way to go before an appropriate balance is achieved between this and meeting parental preference. Its strategy for reducing the efflux of pupils to independent schools and schools in other LEAs has, at its heart, raising pupil achievement at the end of Key Stage 4, and here progress remains too slow. The lack of transparency in its strategic intent in relation to secondary provision needs to be addressed, as this is the cause of considerable anxiety to schools and parents.

121 The LEA's programme of amalgamations of infant and junior schools has reduced surplus places in the primary sector to below the national average, and provides acceptable value for money. Visits to four schools in the primary sector that had been amalgamated indicated that the LEA's planning and support for these schools had generally been good. Its proposed action on infant class sizes is well thought through, and has been subject to consultation.

122 Planning school places in the secondary sector is a complex task. The relative unpopularity of some of Bristol's maintained secondary schools constitutes a significant strategic difficulty for the LEA. In 1998, only 80 per cent of Year 6 pupils transferred to Bristol schools at Year 7. This was an improvement from the previous year when the figure was 77 per cent. This change is in part due to the abolition of the Assisted Places Scheme, and to a reduction in the availability of places at schools in neighbouring authorities.

123 Currently, there are 17 per cent of surplus places in secondary schools, an improvement from April 1996 when there were 25 per cent. However, there remain five schools with more than 25 per cent of places unfilled (all small schools). The LEA has approached two schools for a significant reduction in capacity and another school for removal of accommodation. In June 1999, the Education Committee published statutory notices for the closure of two schools with the greatest number of surplus places. The late timing of this proposal in the academic year created some anxiety for parents. Although there is a School Organisation Plan, there is insufficient clarity about the future actions the LEA intends to take to address the secondary school places problem.

124 There are a number of inappropriately small sixth forms in schools. The LEA has a policy of supporting sixth forms that can deliver its 16-19 entitlement curriculum, either independently or in collaboration with other schools or colleges. This provision does not provide value for money and should be subject to urgent review.

Admissions

125 Admissions are well handled by the LEA. Admissions literature is effective and is offered in community languages. The LEA's handling of appeals is also efficient and effective. There has been a substantial increase in appeals over the last two years. A high proportion were for one selective school, which is now non-selective. However, this change is unlikely to reduce the number of appeals until standards improve within other LEA schools.

126 Given the changes which are taking place in the organisation of Bristol schools, and their impact on parental preference, the admissions and appeals process would benefit from a more comprehensive review than is currently the case.

Attendance

127 Attendance in Bristol secondary schools is well below the national norm and is not improving sufficiently. The LEA has a clearly defined range of actions within the EDP designed to reduce unauthorised absence rates by the Year 2002. These include the publication of policies and guidance for schools, mechanisms for schools to audit their own practice, and the establishment of cross service projects to develop and disseminate good practice.

128 Secondary schools in the School Survey rate support for attendance below satisfactory and below average for all LEAs. Four secondary schools were visited where attendance was a focus. All four schools had developed a range of strategies for dealing with poor attendance and punctuality. In two schools attendance was improving while in two others it remained static; well below 90 per cent. Overall, the Education Welfare Service provide adequate support, but there is considerable variation between officers. However, all meet the requirements of the service level agreement with schools – visiting regularly, checking registers, giving advice, pursuing persistent non-attenders and, when necessary, parents were prosecuted by the LEA.

129 A number of projects have been initiated by the LEA to improve attendance, for example, the Improving Behaviour in Secondary Schools project, and anti-truancy work with the police. The signs are that they are beginning to have a positive impact on schools.

Behaviour Support

130 The management and reduction of behavioural problems are significant challenges for schools and the LEA, and a priority within the EDP. The Behaviour Support Plan is comprehensive in coverage, offers a clear vision and practical advice to schools. Targets are clear, objectives are specifically related to groups of pupils in different phases; for example, Black Pupils and looked-after children. Projects are being used to pilot different approaches to provision; and guidance is given on the respective roles of the LEA, schools, and voluntary agencies.

131 Overall the LEA's work is having an impact in the primary schools and there has been a recent reduction in the proportion of Black Pupils who have been

excluded. The work of the Out of Schools' Pupil Support Team and the EBD Team is generally well regarded in the schools visited, although a small number of schools were unsure how to access this support. The Primary Inclusion Project has been operating for two years, and Standards Fund money has been provided for a third year. The project provides a trained multi-agency team which responds rapidly to support schools when a child is in danger of permanent exclusion. Performance indicators suggest that the team has an 82 per cent success rate in keeping these children in schools.

132 The needs of schools have been recognised and the EBD team has been strengthened; work has been appropriately targeted and there have been moves to improve training for schools on behaviour management.

133 Four secondary schools were visited where support to behaviour was a focus. In these schools support was generally satisfactory. The advisory service have recently undertaken behaviour management reviews in two secondary schools, and case studies of good practice are being disseminated at meetings of schools and research is taking place on teaching in an urban context. A range of potentially helpful projects have been piloted to explore ways in which behaviour might be improved. For example, the standards fund Improving Behaviour in Secondary Schools initiative taking place in three of the schools visited is reported to have resulted in reductions to exclusions and improved attendance.

134 A range of multi-agency approaches target pupils, they include: Child and Family Support Centres, Bristol Mediation and the National Pyramid Trust. District Children's Officers attend permanent exclusion meetings and manage the process of pupils' reintegration into appropriate provision. The time taken at 10 weeks gives officers some concern and targets have been set to reduce it to six weeks.

Provision for Pupils Educated otherwise than at School

135 The LEA Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for Schoolgirl Mothers and Portage arrangements were not visited as part of this inspection. However, a recent OFSTED inspection of the PRU and documentation indicates satisfactory provision in these areas. There is no PRU provision for Key Stage 3 pupils who are excluded from school. They are provided with five hours home tuition. A range of projects are run for Key Stage 4 pupils. An example is a bridge course run by a voluntary organisation INCLUDE which is contracted by the LEA to provide full-time education for 40 Key Stage 4 pupils in two colleges of further education. Documentary evidence and the LEA's own analysis of the work of INCLUDE indicates that this provision offers value for money. Provision for hospitalised children is sound.

136 In order to meet its statutory responsibilities, the LEA needs to ensure that pupils who are excluded from school are provided with a full time offer of education.

Health, Safety, Welfare and Child Protection

137 Documentary evidence and guidance on health, safety, welfare and child protection are sound and indicate that the LEA is meeting its statutory responsibilities in these areas.

Looked-After Children

138 A Quality Protects Management Action Plan is in place. There is guidance to schools and responsibilities for the implementation of the plan are clear.

Ethnic Minority Children

139 The LEA recognises that much remains to be done to ensure that pupils from ethnic minority groups achieve their full potential. Recent initiatives put in place are aimed at improving the achievements of these pupils. Data on pupils' performance by ethnic background is now available to schools. The LEA provides support for pupils with English as a second language through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) which was formed in September 1999, and which provides a detailed menu of LEA provision. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the service, but it is competently led and is staffed with suitably experienced personnel. Schools express satisfaction with the support it offers. A helpful document illustrating good practice has been published under the auspices of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, indicating such matters as classroom strategies; teaching English as a Second Language; the involvement of parents, and making provision for those at risk of exclusion. In the visits to schools, some very good examples of co-operation with parents from minority ethnic groups were seen; for example in the interpretation of popular children's stories into mother tongues. Good quality teaching resources are available to support the work with pupils from ethnic minority groups.

Recommendations:

140 In order to improve access:

- medium-term planning should be put in place for school places so that stakeholders are in no doubt about the precise steps the Council intends to take to meet its strategic objectives;
- urgently implement plans to review post-16 provision and work with schools and other stakeholders to produce a clear strategy for development;
- steps should be taken to ensure that all schools are aware of ways in which the EBD service can support schools, and how to access the service;
- improve attendance in secondary schools by putting in place the actions identified in the EDP;
- improve provision for pupils in Key Stage 3 who are excluded from school.

APPENDIX

Recommendations:

In order to improve the LEA strategy for school improvement:

- the EDP needs reviewing to ensure that actions are taken in a planned sequence and communicated to schools. School targets should be based on adequate information;
- schools should be given information on the full cost of each service, so they can develop a better sense of value for money;
- services need to identify more precisely the full cost of implementing the EDP, and detail how they will be accountable to schools.

In order to improve school improvement:

- the Achievement Division should put in place a detailed service plan, which identifies more precisely planning for the implementation and sequencing of the EDP over a three year period, monitors the cost of support to schools, sets targets, and models proposals for the delegation of additional funds to schools;
- the strategy for monitoring and supporting schools should be re-evaluated, to take account of the better use of data, to target support at those schools which need it most;
- plans for the provision of a comprehensive set of performance data for all schools need to be put in place. These should be accompanied with suitable written guidance and training opportunities on the use of data for target setting;
- monitor standards in ICT in each school and put in place appropriate levels of support;
- inspections or reviews which duplicate OFSTED inspections of schools should stop, as they are a waste of resources;
- support to secondary schools causing concern should be reviewed and improved.

In order to improve strategic management:

- elected Members should ensure that decisions are made in a timely way and that the process through which they are made is clear;
- there should be better co-ordination of the implementation of the Intranet and its application to school improvement, ensuring that all schools understand its capability and its capacity for supporting school management;
- there should be improvements in the information shared with schools about the progress being made with the repair and maintenance backlog and the priority allocated to tasks outstanding in each school.

In order to improve special educational needs provision:

- team action plans should be more precisely related, where appropriate, to the overall priorities identified in the EDP;
- the percentage of draft statements produced within 18 weeks should be increased to meet statutory responsibilities;

- evaluate pupil outcomes and relate them to the cost of services provided as part of an overall strategy for SEN in preparation for Best Value.

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- improve provision for pupils in Key Stage 3 who are excluded from school.

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