



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF
BRADFORD
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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in conjunction with the
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INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection of Bradford local education authority 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) which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) 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. A report of the previous inspection was published in May 2000. Since this inspection took place, the Secretary of State directed the chief executive of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council to secure the LEA's functions regarding the education of school-age children by entering into a contract for ten years with Serco Limited, and by the establishment of an education policy partnership. This inspection, therefore, focused on the work of the new company, operating as Education Bradford, in discharging the LEA's functions regarding the provision of education to school-aged children and on the work of the education client team.

3. The inspection was based partly on data, some of which was provided by the LEA and Education Bradford, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with elected members, staff in the LEA client team and Education Bradford and in other council departments. Use was also made of the self-evaluation conducted by the LEA and Education Bradford. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to all its schools. The response rate was 58 per cent.

4. Group discussions were held with representatives of schools, the LEA's partners, and community representatives. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA and Education Bradford's work through visits to five primary schools and four secondary schools. Some of the visits also tested the views of governors, headteachers, parents and pupils on the support for minority ethnic pupils. Telephone interviews were held with headteachers of the pupil referral units (PRUs). The inspection also took account of relevant evidence from Her Majesty's Inspectors' national monitoring work.

COMMENTARY

5. Bradford LEA serves a large and ethnically diverse district, which is significantly more disadvantaged than most of England. Considerable variation exists between wards with areas of affluence and others, particularly in the inner city, where poverty, vulnerability to crime, and poor housing are significant features. Minority ethnic communities comprise almost a fifth of the authority's population and this is reflected in the school population with a third of pupils having English as an additional language.

6. Educational standards, while improving broadly in line with the national trend, remain below national averages in all key stages. The relative under-achievement of some minority ethnic groups, particularly those of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and black and African Caribbean heritage remains a serious concern. In the past, the council was slow to tackle these issues. Education was not prioritised, nor served well by the corporate centre. The LEA was characterised by poor political and professional leadership. The previous inspection, in January 2000, found that the overall performance of the LEA was very poor.

7. Since the last inspection, the council has brought about fundamental and radical change, at the Secretary of State's direction, through the outsourcing of the majority of the LEA's functions and the establishment of a strategic partnership for education. The chief executive and political leadership of the council provided strong and determined leadership for the outsourcing process. Improving educational standards for all groups is rightly seen as key to the regeneration of the district. There has been a significant investment in education and further financial commitments have been agreed as part of a three-year funding strategy for education. While the process of procurement and the appointment of key senior education personnel were necessarily rigorous, the time scale for change has been a lengthy one. Progress to address the weaknesses during this period, including the first six months of the contract, was limited and the quality of support for many schools deteriorated during this period.

8. In a relatively short time, however, since the establishment of the Education Bradford leadership team between January and April 2002 and the subsequent appointment of key middle managers throughout the summer term, Education Bradford is providing a clear vision and strategic direction for education in the areas for which it is responsible. Schools welcome and recognise the calibre and expertise of the new staff. A culture of high expectations and a determination to make the changes necessary for improvement are features of the new leadership. The partnership with schools has improved; consultation is more meaningful and there is a sense of optimism on the part of schools, tempered by caution as the impact of these structural and staff changes has yet to be felt by all schools.

9. Although there has been an improvement in the overall effectiveness of the LEA since the last inspection, the new structures and management processes are very recent and the overall performance of the LEA is currently unsatisfactory. Too few functions are good and there remain a significant number that are unsatisfactory, including a small number that are poor. A major schools' reorganisation programme was completed in September 2000 within the set timescale in terms of the transfer of

pupils. However, the associated buildings programme was problematic. A number of schemes were not completed on schedule, but, more importantly, the cost was high in terms of disruption more generally at school level. Other aspects of asset management planning also suffered. Despite the recent reorganisation, the LEA has found it necessary to bring forward more proposals for school closures and intake changes. Further disruption and uncertainty is likely for some schools.

The following functions are now good:

- the expertise of staff in services to support school improvement;
- the leadership of Education Bradford;
- support for numeracy; and
- support for Travellers.

A large number of functions and services have improved and are now at least satisfactory. The following are unsatisfactory:

- implementation of the LEA's strategy for school improvement;
- monitoring schools and challenging them to improve;
- support for information and communication technology (ICT) for administration;
- property services;
- assuring the quality and supply of teachers;
- the effectiveness of performance management of services to support school improvement;
- strategic planning for special educational needs (SEN) and systems for ensuring value for money;
- the strategy to promote social inclusion;
- the planning of school places;
- support for behaviour at school;
- support for looked after children; and
- strategies to combat racism.

The following functions are poor:

- strategic management of Excellence in Cities;
- support for ICT for curriculum use;
- asset management planning; and
- provision for pupils without a school place.

10. Progress overall since the last inspection has been satisfactory. This is especially the case in relation to corporate issues, support for school improvement and in some aspects of special educational needs. Progress related to aspects of social inclusion has not been adequate. In particular, weaknesses remain in the LEA's approach to the greater involvement of minority ethnic community groups in the planning and development of the strategies to raise achievement for all pupils.

11. In recent months, as the new management arrangements have become more established, progress has been good and the rate of change and improvement has been rapid. Chief officers, elected members and the leadership team of Education

Bradford have a shared understanding of what is required to take the LEA forward and are strongly committed to the continuous improvement of the service. The increasing coherence of planning, the support for school improvement and the better targeting of resources to need, make the potential for improvement promising. The capacity to respond to the recommendations in this report is highly satisfactory.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

12. The metropolitan district of Bradford serves a large ethnically and culturally diverse population of 486,000. Most people live in the city of Bradford, but there are also major centres in Shipley, Bingley, Ilkley and Keighley. The district also includes many smaller rural communities in the surrounding dales and high moorland. While there are areas of affluence, the district, as a whole, experiences considerable economic disadvantage.

13. In 2000, the Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions index of multiple deprivation ranked Bradford as the 33rd most deprived in the country in terms of its average ward scores, with deprivation focused in the inner city wards and in parts of Keighley. Unemployment rates are relatively high at 4.8 per cent compared to the national average of 3.1 per cent. Overall, 29 and 27.2 per cent of primary and secondary aged pupils respectively are entitled to free school meals compared with 21.6 and 16.8 per cent nationally.

14. Almost a third of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage, the majority being British Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. About a third of pupils have English as an additional language, which is well above the proportion found nationally in primary and secondary schools. The different cultural, religious and linguistic groups are not evenly distributed. Some schools have a pupil population which is almost entirely white, whereas in others the pupils are almost exclusively from minority ethnic groups. This largely reflects the pattern of settlement that has become established in which various minority ethnic communities choose to live together in areas where they have access to particular religious or cultural facilities.

15. Following a major reorganisation of schools in 1999/2000 from a three- to a two-tier system, Bradford now maintains 158 primary schools, 28 secondary schools, 12 special schools, seven nursery schools and six pupil referral units. An independent Muslim girls' secondary school, with the full support of the LEA, was granted voluntary aided status in September 2001. The school reorganisation programme aimed to raise standards and to match the pattern of provision more closely to need. The reorganisation also enabled the LEA to make some improvements to the standard of school buildings.

16. The reorganisation of schools did not address post-16 provision and all except three of the secondary schools are currently designated as 11 to 19 schools. An Ofsted area-wide inspection of all 16–19 education and training provision in the district, undertaken in January 2002, judged there to be no clear rationale for the current pattern of post-16 provision. There are a significant number of small sixth forms and many small teaching groups. The ensuing post-inspection action plan includes a review of post-16 provision across schools and colleges and the establishment of area-based federations across the district to consist of all 14-19 providers. The overall staying-on rate for 16 year-olds continuing in full-time education and training was 75 per cent in 2001, which is considerably lower than the

national average of 87.2 per cent in 2000. Youth unemployment is high at 7.9 per cent.

17. There is a high level of availability of educational places for three and four year-old children, with a place available for 86 per cent of three year-olds and all four year-olds whose parents wish to take it up. The early years and childcare service is the responsibility of the director of community development and lifelong learning and has not been included in the contractual arrangements with Education Bradford.

18. The percentages of pupils who have statements of special educational need is in line with national averages in primary schools (2.7) and below in secondary schools (3.7). A lower percentage (1.3) of pupils of secondary school age with statements attend special schools than nationally (1.8). For primary school age pupils, the figure is broadly in line with the national average.

Performance

19. Results from standardised scores of pupils on entry into reception classes are well below average.

20. The overall performance of schools in Bradford is below the national average at all key stages. The rates of improvement since the previous inspection have been broadly in line with the national trend, apart from mathematics at Key Stage 3 and in the percentage achieving one or more A*-G grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), where the rate is above the national trend. However, at Key Stage 1, the rate of improvement for pupils achieving Level 2 or above in writing is below the national trend. To date, there has been limited progress on closing the attainment gap as pupils progress through the key stages.

21. In 2001, attainment in the core subjects at Key Stage 1 was below the national average, but broadly in line with those for similar authorities. At Key Stage 2, attainment in the core subjects was well below the national average for 2001. In English, the level was also below that of similar authorities and well below for mathematics and science. At Key Stage 3, attainment in English and science was well below the national averages, and below average in mathematics, but, in all three subjects, the standards were broadly in line with similar authorities. Overall attainment at GCSE is poor. On all three key indicators for GCSE, standards are well below the national averages and below those for similar authorities¹. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades at 33.5 per cent was well below the national figure of 50 per cent in 2001.

22. Overall, pupils make sound progress at Key Stage 1. However, the progress of pupils between Key Stage 1 and 2, and between Key Stage 3 and 4, is well below the average rate. Between Key Stage 2 and 3, however, the rate of progress is broadly in line with the average.

¹ The LEA's statistical neighbours include Birmingham, Luton, Blackburn with Darwen, Kirklees, Rochdale, Oldham, City of Derby, Slough, City of Nottingham and Middlesbrough.

23. Provisional unconfirmed data for 2002 indicate improvements at all key stages. At Key Stage 1, all the literacy components have improved at a higher rate than nationally, especially in spelling. At Key Stage 2, the rate of improvement in all three subjects is above the national rate, but particularly in mathematics and science. At Key Stage 3, the improvement in English and science is at a higher rate than nationally. At GCSE, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades has increased by 2.2 per cent.

24. Overall, the performance of pupils from different ethnic groups shows considerable variation within and across the key stages. In the 2001 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils designated as Bangladeshi, Pakistani, White Other and Black Other in origin performed below those from other ethnic groups in English and mathematics. The performance of pupils at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 was similar. However, the overall performance of Black Caribbean pupils across the first three key stages showed a gradual decline, from being almost in line with the LEA averages at the end of Key Stage 1, to below at the end of Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Caribbean and Black Other heritage perform significantly below the LEA averages for one or more A*-G grades, five or more A*-C grades, and overall average points score in GCSE examinations.

25. The performance of looked after children in 2000/01 was well below the national average. Twenty-seven per cent of young people leaving care achieved one or more A*-G grades at GCSE, and 7.1 per cent achieved five or more A*-C grades.

26. The findings of school inspections show that the percentage of primary schools judged to be good or very good was above the national average and no school was in need of significant improvement. These figures are well above the average for similar authorities. At secondary school level, the percentage of secondary schools judged to be good or very good is below the national average and a higher percentage require much improvement.

27. Twelve schools have achieved Beacon status. At the time of the inspection, seven schools require special measures and 12 have serious weaknesses. Two further secondary schools have been formally identified as being in challenging circumstances².

28. Attendance in primary schools is satisfactory and rates are broadly in line with the national figure. However, attendance in secondary schools is below the national average. Unauthorised absence, at 0.9 per cent, is above average in primary schools and at 2.6 per cent, is well above the national figure for secondary schools. For 2001, the permanent exclusion rates from primary and secondary schools at 0.4 and 1.9 per cent respectively are broadly in line with the national figures.

² During the course of the LEA inspection, one of the schools in challenging circumstances was inspected and found to require special measures.

Funding

29. The LEA's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for primary and secondary education is above the average for metropolitan districts. Allocations of Standards Fund grant are significantly above the average amount. However, revenue grants from other sources to support the education service have been well below average in recent years, despite the comparatively high levels of deprivation found in local schools. The LEA has only recently established a framework to co-ordinate activity authority-wide in bidding for and deploying grant. Co-ordinating arrangements have similarly only recently been established within the education service. Schools have yet to see any benefit from these developments. Information and support for schools in seeking external funding have been very limited. Consultation with schools on grant application and deployment is good in the case of the Standards Fund, but inconsistent and sometimes unsatisfactory in other respects.

Council structure

30. The council comprises 90 elected members: 38 Conservative, 38 Labour, 12 Liberal Democrat and two Green Party. There is no party in overall control of the council, and the Conservative group holds the leadership. A multi-party executive committee, comprising 10 members, includes the party leaders and the five members who hold portfolios of responsibility. An executive member (Liberal Democrat) holds the portfolio for education.

31. The previous inspection in 2000 reported that the council had modernised its structures for political decision making in line with national policy. At that time, the terms of reference of the scrutiny committees were not co-terminus with the five priorities of the council and education did not have a separate scrutiny committee. Six overview and scrutiny committees, now including one for education, have the role of monitoring and evaluating the council's decisions and the performance of council departments. The council moved to full implementation of the modernised democratic arrangements in May 2002 and is well placed to meet the new statutory requirements for local government.

32. Following the previous inspection, education in Bradford has been subject to major structural and organisational change. The process to identify an external provider to deliver the majority of the council's education services became central to the council's commitment to make rapid and significant improvement. Following a rigorous and extensive procurement process, the council entered into a ten-year contract, underpinned by a direction from the Secretary of State, with Serco Limited. Operating as Education Bradford, the contract is for the delivery of services to support school improvement and started in July 2001. The direction also required the establishment of a stakeholder group, the Bradford education policy partnership, formed as a limited company by guarantee to carry out specific LEA functions. These are: to oversee the development of education in the district on behalf of stakeholders; to develop and review educational policy; and to exercise specific duties and decision-making powers in relation to special educational needs; the behavioural support plan and the school organisation plan. Clear protocols and procedures have been established for the partnership between the council, the education policy partnership and Education Bradford. The education policy

partnership makes recommendations to the executive committee, which determines policy and resources.

33. Education Bradford has a managing director and five directors for strategy, achievement, finance, change and traded services. Within Education Bradford, an interim management team was put in place between July and December 2001. The substantive leadership team took up their posts between January and April 2002. Education Bradford's school improvement strategy has grouped schools into four areas each supported by a multi-professional team led by an experienced senior officer, known as an achievement support manager. Some key middle managers did not take up their appointments until September 2002, at the time of the inspection.

34. The council has restructured its senior management team since the last inspection. The chief executive is supported by three assistant chief executives, one of whom has co-ordinating responsibility for education, community and social care. The council has maintained an LEA client team led by the director of schools (the statutory chief education officer) who reports to the assistant chief executive for education, community and social care. The education client team manages the education services retained by the LEA, in particular, the responsibility for setting the admissions policy and school places planning, the implementation of the schools' reorganisation programme and the associated building programme, asset management planning and contract monitoring.

The LEA's strategy for school improvement

35. The LEA's strategy for school improvement, including the Education Development Plan (EDP) was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. The first EDP lacked strategic coherence and was not an adequate approach to raising standards. The second EDP is now satisfactory, following the revisions required by the Secretary of State.

36. There had been no systematic evaluation of the first EDP and therefore Education Bradford was able to use only limited evaluative outcomes to inform the planning process for EDP2. Within these constraints, Education Bradford has carried out a satisfactory audit that takes account of current performance and external inspection. A satisfactory range of performance data, including local data on minority ethnic achievement, has been analysed in order to identify the priorities to be addressed. However, the data presented does not enable areas of under performance to be fully analysed; in particular, the attainment of pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups. It is proposed to undertake a further, more detailed audit in spring 2003 in collaboration with schools. This should assist in further refining the analysis of need and the targeting of resources and activities.

The EDP priorities are:

- priority 1: raising attainment in the early years and primary years;
- priority 2: provision for 11 to 14 year olds;

- priority 3: provision for 14 to 19 year olds;
- priority 4: schools causing concern; and
- priority 5: partnership and social cohesion.

37. The targets in the plan are extremely challenging and will require a significant step change in the rate of improvement. At the time when these targets were set, in spring 2001, they reflected appropriately high expectations of a continuing national trend in improvement to be achieved in 2003, coupled with a determination to challenge schools and the 'poverty of aspirations' identified in the previous inspection report. However, in some areas, such as Key Stage 2 English and at five+ A*-C grades at GCSE, the targets for 2003 are unrealistic. They require a 15 percentage point increase in Key Stage 2 English and almost ten per cent at GCSE between 2002 and 2003. In addition, the shortfall between the schools' aggregated targets and the LEA target is too wide, especially at Key Stage 2 English where the shortfall is eight per cent. Recent improvement trends both locally and nationally further reinforce the unrealistic rate of improvement required in order to achieve the 2003 target. The plan sets out a range of appropriate actions to raise standards of attainment in literacy, in particular by developing a more co-ordinated and coherent approach, involving a clear focus on raising minority ethnic attainment. However, the current activities in priorities 1 and 3 do not constitute a sufficiently convincing programme of how, drawing on pupil level data, challenge and support will be targeted on specific schools.

38. The revised EDP2 demonstrates a more coherent approach at the level of overall priorities. There is a better link between the audit and the national and local priorities, in particular, for priority 5: partnership and social cohesion. There is a good match between the priorities in the plan and those for education within the council's corporate plan. However, links with most of the other key educational plans are simply listed at the end of each priority and it is far from clear how activities interrelate with externally funded programmes such as Neighbourhood Renewal.

39. The proposed strategy for monitoring and evaluating the plan is generally sound and will be delivered through the newly established EDP steering groups and through the contract monitoring by the LEA client team. The quality of the success criteria is variable with some being very specific and quantifiable, particularly where they relate to targets in the contract. However, some of the criteria are framed in general terms such as 'an accelerated rate of..' or 'a reduction in..' These terms need to be further defined if steering groups are to monitor progress effectively across the different activity plans.

Recommendation

In order to improve the quality and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of the EDP:

- develop consistently sharp and specific success criteria that will enable progress to be measured.

Excellence in Cities

40. The Excellence in Cities (EiC) partnership programme has suffered from poor strategic management and it is not clear from the plan how effectively EiC strands are interwoven with the EDP. Most EiC strands are operating in all secondary schools in the district. Learning mentors, programmes for gifted and talented pupils and learning support units have also been extended to some primary schools. However, the EiC partnership has not managed the initiatives strategically. There has been very limited monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives, despite individual examples of good practice that have been reported in school inspection reports. Priority 3: raising attainment in Key Stage 4 incorporates appropriate links with EiC activities, but it is not clear how the programmes will complement each other and, in the case of EiC, add value.

The implementation of the EDP

41. The implementation of the first EDP was poor at the time of the previous inspection. Generally, the LEA has failed to achieve its statutory attainment targets in the first EDP. Attendance rates remain below the published targets. The percentage of schools requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses is above the national figure. While some schools have benefited from programmes of activity within the plan, the overall lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation, and the failure to achieve targets in the plan demonstrate that implementation of the first EDP was poor. Since April 2002, however, there has been a significant improvement in the implementation of EDP2 and programmes of activity are proceeding according to plan.

42. The management of EDP2 is in its very early days and the arrangements are only now coming into effect. The leadership team of Education Bradford has already identified key areas within the plan for intensive scrutiny at an early stage, such as literacy, and activity plans are being strengthened as a result. Achievement support managers convene the EDP steering groups, which are chaired by headteachers, and have the overall responsibility to monitor and evaluate progress. What is less clear at this stage however, is how the achievement support managers and the multi-professional teams will work to ensure that EDP activities are targeted on schools in a more coherent and proactive way.

The allocation of resources to priorities

43. In the last inspection, the LEA's targeting of resources to priorities was poor. It is now satisfactory. Steps have been taken which are broadly in the right direction. However, much work is still needed to ensure a reasonably precise targeting of resources to need. Funding over and above the increases in Standard Spending Assessment have been passed on to schools over the period of the last four years, reflecting the position of education as a key corporate priority. The LEA has also agreed to some significant mid-year funding supplements, in particular, to meet the short-term costs of the school reorganisation programme. Progress has been made in narrowing the gap between spending on education and SSA. Members have made a further three-year commitment, which will at least involve the passporting of education Standard Spending Assessment increases and seems likely to result in

some additional progress towards the SSA figure. Education is the only service to which such a commitment has been made. By contrast with the relatively modest incremental gains being made in revenue spending, the reorganisation of schools programme has been given the clearest possible priority in the LEA's overall capital programme.

44. Within the education budget, spending in 2002/03 is significantly below Standard Spending Assessment for primary education (92 per cent) and secondary education 11-15 (86 per cent), but very substantially above for under fives, sixth form, and youth and community provision. The spending on under fives and the youth service reflects their status as long-standing policy priorities. Spending on sixth forms is now a relatively minor sum following the transfer of responsibilities to the Learning and Skills Council. However, this age group was relatively favourably treated in the LEA's funding formula prior to the transfer. Overall revenue spending per pupil, inclusive of government grant, is above the average for metropolitan districts, rather more so for primary schools than for secondary schools, as indicated below:

	Bradford	Metropolitan Districts	All English LEAs
Primary local schools budget per pupil	£2,817	£2,672	£2,778
Secondary local schools budget per pupil	£3,427	£3,366	£3,478

Source: 2001/2002 Section 52 returns

45. The LEA lacks a detailed model of school spending need to guide its resourcing decisions. Changes in the LEA's net expenditure in the last two years have included some growth, in real terms, in delegated funding for secondary schools, but only marginally so for primary schools. The principal rationale for deploying available growth in this way has been the relatively unfavourable position of secondary spending against primary spending, taking the yardstick of metropolitan district averages. These are, at best, a crude measure of comparative spending need and have led the LEA in a direction that contradicts earlier work on the design of its funding formula. In the mid-1990s a needs led review of the formula resulted in a new profile of age weightings with lower differentials between the primary and secondary age groups, sixth forms excepted, than the average. The deployment of the recent growth, mainly to the secondary sector, has widened those differentials.

Recommendation

In order to target resources more fully to needs:

- ensure that the forthcoming review of the funding formula examines school spending needs in proper detail, both in absolute and comparative terms, and is set clearly within the context of an overall budget strategy for the education service, particularly in respect of support for special educational needs.

46. There has also been significant growth in spending on pupils with statements of special educational needs, and on home-to-school transport. The former is dealt with in section 3 of the report. The latter is partly a consequence of reducing the number of schools, through the recent major reorganisation, and partly because of above average inflation, as experienced by many other LEAs. In terms of other centrally funded activity, the budget figures for this year and last year reflect, as they should, the cost of the Education Bradford contract to the LEA. However, they do not closely reflect spending by the company, which has elected to front load its expenditure within the ten years of the contract; particularly in terms of strategic management and school improvement activity. The LEA and the contractor rightly recognise the need to review whether such spending is required in future years.

47. The LEA delegated a somewhat lower proportion of total spending on schools than the average for comparable LEAs last year, but devolved a significantly higher proportion of Standards Fund grant. Following the delegation of funding for pupils with statements of special educational need this year, it is likely that both figures will be above the average. For the first time, schools received helpful information on their likely allocations early in the budget making process this year. This was a big step forward and reflects the strength of political commitment to funding education. The further commitment to minimum levels of increase in education funding for the next three years has added significantly to schools' ability to plan their own budgets over the medium term.

48. Spending on education has exceeded the base budget for each of the last two years, largely because of the increases in spending on pupils with statements of special educational need. Steps have been taken to cap expenditure in such respects. Overall spending on education for the current year is expected to be within budget. Below the level of the total budget there have continued to be significant over- and under-spends on individual budget lines. This indicates that members have taken budget decisions for the years concerned based on poor estimates of spending need on individual aspects of provision. It also means that published budget statements, which are key documents in terms of public accountability, have provided a dubious reflection of real expenditure. Errors and inconsistencies in accounting treatment have compounded the problem. Following the transfer of management responsibilities to Education Bradford, spending in the great majority of these budget areas is now controlled by the company. The LEA's outgoings are fixed in terms of an overall contract sum. It remains important nonetheless that the pattern of expenditure on individual activities is accurately reflected in published documents.

Recommendation

In order to target resources more fully to needs:

- ensure that published budgets for individual activities reflect more accurately the pattern of expenditure.

49. The last inspection highlighted a very serious position in terms of schools with budget deficits, and inadequate monitoring and intervention by the LEA. The situation is now much improved, although the number of schools in deficit remains comparatively high and a few are still in serious difficulties. The current

arrangements for monitoring and intervention, which include a strong element of peer review, are well designed to ensure further improvement.

Promoting continuous improvement, including Best Value

50. The structures for achieving continuous improvement, including Best Value, have improved and are highly satisfactory. The previous inspection of the LEA took place at a time when only pilot Best Value reviews had been undertaken by the education service. It recommended the LEA involve schools as key service stakeholders and clients in future reviews and extend the range of consultees to include parents and pupils. Understandably, in the light of the outsourcing exercise and the major reorganisation of schools, the LEA subsequently decided not to conduct Best Value reviews of specifically school-related provision in the first two years of the five-year programme. The authority-wide review of asset management, however, was of relevance to the education service and was appropriately timed early in the review programme, given the problems referred to in the section on asset management below.

51. The first review with a specific focus on education was that of special educational needs, in year three of the programme. The position of this review within the wider review of SEN currently being undertaken by Education Bradford has been uncertain. Steps are now being taken to refocus the review, to clarify the position and to avoid duplication. Essentially the Best Value review will establish the framework and timescale to evaluate the six strategic intents for SEN already approved by the education policy partnership.

52. The timing and coverage of reviews in the future are currently subject to reassessment. It is intended, quite reasonably, to take account of both LEA inspection and Comprehensive Performance Assessment findings in the scheduling of activity. Comprehensive written guidance is provided for those conducting Best Value reviews. This is supplemented by training and discussion group activities and by support from specialist staff from the corporate centre. It is now established policy to include school representatives as members of all teams conducting relevant service reviews.

53. The external auditor has given unqualified approval to the 2001/02 Best Value Performance Plan. An appropriate range of education performance indicators is included in the plan, some of which are locally determined. These indicators reflect local policy priorities and targets within the Education Bradford contract.

54. A strong performance management culture exists within the council and management is held accountable for improving its performance on a regular basis against the targets in the corporate plan and Best Value Performance Plan. Councillors receive performance information routinely, including twice-yearly updates on the Best Value performance indicators. Within the education department this accountability focuses on the effective monitoring and delivery of the contract with Education Bradford and its associated targets. Contract reporting procedures have been agreed covering performance indicator information and monthly reviews of specific areas of work according to an agreed timetable. The education overview and

scrutiny committee also receives termly progress reports and an annual report in the autumn term on all areas of Education Bradford's work, together with a summary of available performance indicators.

55. The education client team and Education Bradford have instituted an effective system of self-review, which builds on the LEA's earlier work to monitor and evaluate its progress on the post-Ofsted action plan. Two reviews have taken place since spring 2002 and formed the basis for the LEA's self-evaluation prior to this inspection. The quality of this self-evaluation is good and reflects a sound awareness of relative strengths and weaknesses, coupled with the effective use of management information and feedback.

SECTION 2: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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

56. Until the commencement of the contract with Education Bradford, little progress was made in addressing the weaknesses in the LEA's support for school improvement. For many schools, the quality of support deteriorated during that period. With the increased level of school inspections following the completion of the reorganisation programme, the numbers of schools requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses began to increase significantly. Since January 2002, Education Bradford has moved rapidly to tackle the weaknesses identified during the previous inspection and recent progress has been good. Most aspects of the support for school improvement are now satisfactory, but it is too early to judge the impact on standards in schools. However, there are recent examples of where rigorous and well-targeted intervention has had a positive effect. The leadership team of Education Bradford has a good understanding of the improvements that are required and provides strong leadership and a clear strategic direction for school improvement. This approach is welcomed by schools.

Monitoring, challenge and intervention

57. At the time of the previous inspection, the LEA's approach to monitoring, challenge and intervention was unsatisfactory, as it was unnecessarily complex. The schools visited were aware of the policy, but some that were in difficulties were unclear about the additional support they would receive. Education Bradford's current approach is at an early stage of implementation, but it is sound and has considerable potential.

58. Consultation with schools on the new policy and procedures for monitoring, challenge and intervention has been limited but sufficient, given the enormous challenges that must be faced quickly in order to bring about necessary school improvement. The recently produced draft strategic framework for school improvement is a good document that clearly defines monitoring, challenge and intervention. It rightly distinguishes between the school's role to self-evaluate and bring about improvement, and Education Bradford's responsibilities to monitor, challenge, intervene and support, and to spread best practice. The criteria and procedures for monitoring and evaluating schools are made plain. By the end of 2002, all schools will have been classified in accordance with transparent performance criteria. Support, ranging through five levels from light to intensive, will be allocated according to this classification.

59. The standards of some schools in Bradford have been allowed to fall to an unacceptable level. It has now been made clear that intervention will be rigorous. The new approach has challenge built into its strategic framework, its process of classification and its system of monitoring by multi-professional teams. Its overall effect has yet to be demonstrated, but a small number of individual schools have already benefited from rigorous monitoring, challenge and intervention and have made improvements.

The focusing of LEA support on areas of greatest need

60. The previous inspection judged the targeting of support to be unsatisfactory as there was insufficient differentiation to meet schools' needs. Education Bradford's approach is rightly based on evaluation with schools of their level of performance and additional support allocated according to their identified needs. This is a major step forward and, although implementation is at an early stage, the position is now satisfactory overall with some examples of positive impact in individual schools.

61. In consultation with a representative sample of schools, a core package of support has been devised. This support is available to all schools in nine key areas including: attendance; the appointment and induction of newly-qualified teachers, headteachers and deputy heads; child development and learning; and the education of pupils from minority ethnic groups. All schools will be able to purchase additional support in any of the identified areas, according to their individual needs, and the core package for schools causing concern will be more intensive.

62. The level of differentiation is appropriate and there is a clear distinction between support that is available as an entitlement for schools, and that which they may choose to purchase through traded services. The range of support and training available for purchase is currently limited, but there are sensible plans to extend it.

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

63. The previous inspection found the LEA's monitoring and challenge to be unsatisfactory as duplication of effort and major weaknesses in its approach reduced its effectiveness. Education Bradford's strategy for monitoring and challenge has considerable potential, but is not yet fully implemented. Although there have been several examples of positive effects in individual schools, the effectiveness of monitoring and challenge is not currently satisfactory overall. The need for Ofsted intervention in schools is still too common.

64. The new approach to monitoring, in the strategic framework for school improvement, is suitably differentiated. Monitoring is one of the responsibilities of area multi-professional teams, enabling the identification of schools' strengths and weaknesses through information and expertise from school improvement officers, the secondary support team, educational social workers, educational psychologists and ethnic minority achievement advisers and teachers.

65. Education Bradford aims to identify schools' weaknesses at an early stage so that effective intervention can take place. It was, therefore, sensible that all schools had a visit from a school improvement officer or consultant in the summer term of 2002 and the allocation of up to three days annually for 'light touch' schools is justified until Education Bradford and the schools get to know each other. However, early intervention in schools with weaknesses has not been adequate in the past and Education Bradford is not in a strong position to change this until it has improved its knowledge of schools through effective monitoring. School improvement officers' written records of summer term visits are helpfully detailed, focused and evaluative, and provide models of good practice for members of multi-professional teams. Although headteachers receive the reports, copies are not sent to chairs of

governing bodies, other than those in schools causing concern, to aid them in the development of self-managing schools.

Recommendation

In order to improve the overall effectiveness of monitoring and challenge:

- ensure that all records of monitoring visits are sent routinely to the chairs of governing bodies.

66. At the time of the previous inspection, the LEA's use of performance data was satisfactory. Since then, improvements have included better individual pupil data and the production of school-specific profiles, summaries and commentaries. Training in the use of the profiles is planned. Although the overall effects are not yet demonstrable, productive links have been forged between the analysis of performance data, school self-evaluation, school improvement planning, the classification of schools and target-setting, as recommended in the previous report. The proposed role of the secondary support team and school improvement advisers in setting targets with schools meets the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Schools have felt that the setting of targets in the past has been so challenging that it has been unrealistic, but the process has now been strengthened since Education Bradford and the schools will have access to the same data on individual pupils. However, while the intention is still to set challenging targets, this shared access is unlikely to remove the gap that currently exists between Education Bradford's very high targets and the aggregated schools' targets. The electronic transmission of data operates satisfactorily and schools report that the transfer of data from primary to secondary schools improved this year after unsatisfactory practice in 2001.

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

67. Support for under-performing schools was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. Education Bradford has recently devised a suitable policy and good procedures. Although these have not yet had time to take full effect, the provision is now satisfactory. Positive interventions in some individual schools causing concern illustrate the effectiveness of the new approach.

68. The proportions of primary and secondary schools found by their last section 10 inspection to require some or much improvement are in line with national averages. However, the proportion of Bradford schools with serious weaknesses or in special measures is approximately twice that found nationally. All eight schools in special measures were placed in the category since October 2001, following the moratorium on school inspections during the reorganisation. Education Bradford has inherited a number of schools that were identified as causing concern by the LEA, but the full list will not be completed until its own more robust and transparent system for monitoring and classifying schools has become fully operational. This will take time to develop and, as monitoring was not sufficiently rigorous in the past, the current response to schools' failings is more often one of reaction than of early intervention.

69. Nevertheless, monitoring by the achievement support managers and their multi-professional teams is beginning to produce evidence that will be reinforced this term by the school classification process. The multi-professional teams now review schools regularly and reports on schools causing concern are issued termly to the education client team, and every six weeks to elected members.

70. Examples of effective, rigorous intervention in individual schools illustrate the considerable potential of Education Bradford's procedures for schools causing concern. In line with a recommendation of the previous inspection report, very effective use is made of consultant headteachers who work alongside schools' senior managers. For instance, in the case of one secondary school, there were significant improvements in test and examination results at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in behaviour and ethos. In another example, a primary school previously causing concern to the LEA had its progress confirmed by a recent section 10 inspection.

71. Schools' efforts to emerge from serious weaknesses and special measures are managed and co-ordinated by the achievement support managers who lead the area multi-professional teams. The work in primary schools is led by school improvement officers, and by the secondary support team in secondary schools. They call on a range of services to organise planned, co-ordinated and differentiated support that is closely matched to the school's key issues for action and other identified needs. The headteacher and governing body chair of one such school acknowledged the effectiveness of this structured support. The LEA has exercised its legal powers appropriately to intervene in schools, when required. In a small number of cases, headteachers have been removed from posts and in others, additional governors have been attached to governing bodies.

72. Education Bradford's heavy investment of staffing resources in the comparatively small number of interventions it has made so far raises the issue of sustainability of support. There is not yet a consistent approach to exit strategies for schools coming out of serious weaknesses and special measures.

Support for literacy

73. Support for literacy is satisfactory, although there are weaknesses as well as strengths. This same judgement was made in the previous inspection. No detailed fieldwork was carried out in the current inspection, but there is no indication that the quality of support has deteriorated. Primary schools judge the support to be narrowly satisfactory, but of variable quality.

74. Progress has been made on the recommendations of the previous inspection report. The number of staff who support the National Literacy Strategy has increased and support has been extended to more schools, but both staffing and support are still viewed by Education Bradford and the schools as insufficient to meet all schools' needs.

Support for numeracy

75. The support for numeracy was good during the previous inspection. No fieldwork was carried out, but the evidence from Education Bradford and the schools

is that the quality of provision has been maintained. Many comments from schools are highly complimentary about the quality of training and support. Performance in national tests has not reflected the quality of provision, but preliminary Key Stage 2 results for 2002 show a marked improvement of six per cent.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

76. Support to schools for raising standards in ICT is poor. This is very different from the previous inspection when the LEA's support for raising standards in ICT was satisfactory. Following the recommendations in 2000, the LEA identified and supported 15 schools where standards and use of ICT were unacceptably low, but this action has not been sustained.

77. The absence of an ICT strategy and development plan has led to reactive and poorly co-ordinated support for schools. In the school survey for the inspection, schools rated the support for ICT in the curriculum as poor, in the lower quartile of all local education authorities inspected. Education Bradford has very recently begun, in consultation with the ICT strategy group and schools, to develop a clear vision and focus. A draft ICT development plan, including challenging targets and time-scales, has been developed. This ambitious plan is highly unlikely to be realised given the current limited capacity in place to support schools.

78. Some improvement has been made in the distribution of resources through the ICT strategy group and through the work of an ICT consultant, but monitoring of these resources remains weak. Guidance and sample ICT development plans were made available to support schools in their application for National Grid for Learning funding, but there has been no recent monitoring of the quality or appropriateness of these school plans. Despite greater transparency and the use of a matched funding formula for National Grid for Learning, the ratio of computers to pupils remains below the government targets for 2002 in primary and secondary schools. Education Bradford currently lacks reliable data about the hardware and infra-structure provision in schools, although plans are in hand to rectify this weakness.

Recommendation

In order to improve the distribution of resources for information technology :

- undertake a rigorous audit and identify the level of provision of ICT hardware and infra-structure in schools.

79. The current knowledge about the attainment and progress of pupils in ICT is weak. The findings from an LEA sample survey in spring 2001 indicated significant concerns about ICT standards and the quality of performance data for ICT. At Key Stage 3, the standards in ICT were below the national average in 2001. Despite the outcomes of the survey, the LEA did not rigorously challenge schools to raise standards in ICT. Targets for ICT have been set for Key Stage 3 for 2002/03, but are not based on reliable attainment data.

Recommendation

In order to improve the targeting of support for information technology:

- establish and maintain reliable attainment data about the performance of pupils.

80. Excellence in Cities funds three school-based city learning centre hubs and associated satellites to enable learners in the city to access high quality ICT facilities as part of a co-ordinated approach to raising standards. A recent review of this provision was carried out jointly by Education Bradford and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The review has identified serious weaknesses in the strategic partnership and the leadership, management and governance of the city learning centres and satellites. There are individual examples of good practice, but the overall leadership of the EiC partnership has been weak. The partnership is currently preparing an action plan to address these serious weaknesses.

Recommendation

In order to improve the support for information technology :

- integrate the management and implementation of the ICT strand of EiC within the LEA's overall strategy and ICT development plan.

81. Education Bradford has recently restructured the ICT support service. An ICT Key Stage 3 consultant has been appointed and, despite serious difficulties in recruiting high quality staff, effective action is being taken to attract additional specialist staff. Positive developments to improve the available support to schools include the use of specialist and Beacon schools and advanced skills teachers working with Education Bradford's traded service. Training for teachers through the New Opportunities Fund was delayed in many schools, coming at the same time as the school reorganisation. Twenty-five schools have completed training and 172 schools are now in the programme to meet the New Opportunities Fund target for 2003. New Opportunities Fund training is available from a range of providers but the quality has been variable.

82. Education Bradford is improving the strategic planning and leadership for curriculum ICT. Initiatives such as the Bradford learning network and the laptops for teachers initiative are being effectively managed. However, despite recent attempts to appoint a curriculum co-ordinator for ICT, the current lack of capacity to monitor and support schools seriously undermines the ICT strategy

Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3

83. Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3 was not included in the previous inspection. The current provision is highly satisfactory. The national strategy has been adopted and is being implemented effectively. The schools are positive about the quality and impact of the support they receive.

84. A good start was made in English and mathematics because effective consultants were already in post. Good appointments have also been made in other

subject areas, but continuing vacancies in mathematics and ICT restrict the pace of development. The training has been well received and schools are particularly appreciative of the expertise of consultants working alongside teachers in classrooms. The consultants operate as a cross-curricular team and schools report improvements in teaching and learning approaches. However, arrangements for effective continuity from primary to secondary schools are not yet fully developed.

85. Schools' needs for additional support are identified through monitoring by the secondary support team. Clear contracts for the support are being agreed between the Key Stage 3 strategy manager and individual schools. Leading teachers have been identified to aid the dissemination of good practice in English and there are similar plans for mathematics and science.

86. In 2002, preliminary results in Key Stage 3 tests show improvement from a low baseline. However, although schools receive good quality data for their own use, there is insufficient central analysis of overall trends and patterns to aid further improvement. A computer programme that analyses strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance in national tests is well established in the primary phase and has been introduced into secondary schools, but it relates only to mathematics. There is no evidence currently of the effects of the strategy on attendance and exclusion rates.

Recommendation

In order to improve the targeting of support for the Key Stage 3 strategy:

- develop robust systems for monitoring the effects of the Key Stage 3 strategy on pupils' achievement and the performance of schools.

Support for minority ethnic groups, including Travellers

87. In the previous inspection, support for minority ethnic pupils, including Travellers was unsatisfactory. It is now satisfactory overall, with some strong features.

88. The LEA has responded well to the recommendations in the previous report, and has made steady progress in most areas. However, the significant under-achievement of some minority groups, particularly those of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African-Caribbean heritage remains an issue for Bradford, as it does for many other local education authorities around the country.

89. There is now a more extensive range of data available relating to the performance of under-achieving groups. It is, however, too early to judge how these data will help to underpin a more accurate target setting process, which will identify the additional support required to help raise the overall levels of attainment of these pupils. The current criteria for devolution of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, while focused on the three significant groups of under-achieving pupils, are unclear to schools. In particular, the rationale for specialist support work has not been based on an audit of schools' needs, and has not been shared with schools. The failure to monitor the quality of the minority ethnic support service in order to assess its cost-

effectiveness is also a weakness in the current provision. However, Education Bradford has set in train changes to the criteria for the devolution of Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant funds from April 2003. The new proposals will provide for a broader level of school support across all ethnic groups, with greater flexibility for focusing on individual pupils rather than whole groups. This is an appropriate move to ensure greater transparency in relation to support structures, and to relate more specifically resources to individual pupil needs.

90. Following the Macpherson enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, the authority recognised the need to respond quickly to the issues raised in the report. A detailed pack of information was provided for all schools, which appropriately included the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) 'Learning for All' standards. A recent thematic review of how schools were using these standards revealed a mixed picture. This has now been taken up by the seconded lead officer for minority ethnic support, and is receiving greater attention. This is timely, as it links well to the recently issued guidance relating to the implementation of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. This latter work has been particularly helpful to schools. It is clearly written and clarifies, unequivocally, schools' statutory obligations in relation to the general and specific duties of this Act. Currently, however, there is no bilingualism policy and the new racial harassment policy will not be enacted until January 2003.

Recommendations

In order to improve the quality of support for minority ethnic pupils:

- produce a bilingualism policy to aid the work of the specialist support services and schools; and
- develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy to help assess the effectiveness of the specialist support services.

91. The education service for Traveller Children is effectively managed and very well led by its co-ordinator. The service's priorities clearly focus on continually improving the access, attendance and achievement of Traveller pupils. In all three areas to date, there has been considerable success. The positive impact of the service's staff is also reflected in the high levels of trust and the very good relationships established with the Traveller communities. The service works productively with a number of other departments and agencies, in particular in responding to the varied and challenging needs of the Roma asylum seeker pupils and their families. There have also been useful contributions to the race equality training. The links between the education service for Traveller Children and the newly established multi-professional teams are in the early stages of development, but, nevertheless, they provide a valuable opportunity to align more closely the strengths of the service with the school improvement agenda.

92. The work in schools is well planned and based on careful assessment of individual pupils' needs. A flexible model of teaching support is employed with an appropriate mix of in-class and withdrawal sessions. The service level agreement, drawn up with schools, sets out clear parameters and outcomes for pupils' support. Schools value highly the work of the education service for Traveller Children. The

success of the work in schools is underpinned by the very good contribution of the service's education social worker, who undertakes a pivotal role in working with families, other departments and agencies. The education service for Traveller Children provides a valuable range of resources and information for schools and parents to use. The development of schools' awareness and understanding of Traveller culture and lifestyle remains a continuing priority. Overall, the education service for Traveller Children provides excellent value for money.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

93. The support for gifted and talented pupils was not included in the previous inspection. The current provision is satisfactory overall.

94. All support for gifted and talented pupils is provided through Excellence in Cities, which is now managed within the achievement directorate. There are two associate co-ordinators of the gifted and talented programme. Schools report that management of the programme is now more focused and the support is of increasing value to them. The secondary schools are grouped in clusters that take considerable responsibility for the work in their schools and areas. Support in the primary phase has been established successfully through a pilot programme in ten schools, aided by a Beacon school, which is rightly to be expanded to a further 40 schools. This expansion is to be aided by the establishment of cross-phase partnerships, with the ultimate aim of widening the impact of the gifted and talented programme to all primary and secondary schools. The work in schools and in clusters is organised by a network of co-ordinators that meets regularly.

95. Relevant training has been provided and best practice networks formed. Target setting, albeit of mixed quality, is established in the schools. However, continuity from primary to secondary schools is under-developed, and monitoring and evaluation are weak. Currently, the management of support for gifted and talented pupils is not sufficiently well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the work within and across Bradford schools.

Recommendation

In order to improve the quality of support for gifted and talented pupils:

- develop a robust system of monitoring and evaluation which will inform the management and deployment of support for gifted and talented pupils; and
- improve continuity and understanding of support for gifted and talented pupils between primary and secondary schools.

96. A recent audit, completed by 90 per cent of the schools, is being followed up by interviews that will lead, belatedly, to the establishment of costed action plans in each school. The Excellence in Cities gifted and talented action plan was approved by the DfES in 2002. A sound draft policy for work with gifted and talented pupils links well with the action plan and will be the subject of consultation with schools in the autumn term.

97. A range of activities and summer schools has been held. Not all have been well targeted and the reported outcomes have been variable. The use of ICT in supporting gifted and talented pupils is not well developed.

Support for school management

98. At the time of the previous inspection, support for school leadership and management was unsatisfactory overall, with mixed quality and effectiveness. The relevant recommendations of the previous report have been implemented and the provision is now satisfactory. There is, however, much potential for further improvement. The policies and procedures are new and their overall effect is not yet evident, but there are several examples of schools where needs have been identified and effective support provided.

99. Rightly, Education Bradford has placed a very high priority on supporting and improving leadership and management as a key process in bringing about school improvement. This is evident in EDP priorities 1, 2 and 3 and in the core package of training and support that is available to all schools. Schools have been consulted appropriately and agree with this emphasis. The support is well targeted, for example, on the leadership and management of schools in difficulties and on newly-appointed headteachers and deputy heads.

100. A strength of the support is the relevant experience, knowledge and understanding demonstrated by those who give it. Experienced consultant headteachers provide effective in-school development in both primary and secondary phases, and Education Bradford has taken considerable care in the appointment of competent school improvement officers. Communication and consultation with schools are now good. Headteachers feel that they are beginning to have an influence on what happens. For example, they identified the focus for dissemination of good practice under the talented people working together project and they suggested the inclusion of financial benchmarking data in school profiles. Appropriate induction and mentoring procedures have been established for headteachers and deputy heads appointed since September 2001, and national senior management development programmes are well targeted. Headteachers report that they now receive improved support when managing teacher competency procedures, as recommended in the previous inspection report.

101. Education Bradford intends to develop greater school autonomy and to intervene only when necessary. To do this, it will need to have the confidence that schools are able to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and manage their improvement effectively. Many schools have received training in self-evaluation, but their participation has been optional and their practice is variable. Education Bradford recognises that the effectiveness of its plans and procedures for school improvement will depend on reliable and consistent practice in self-evaluation. It therefore intends, rightly, to target support and training in this area on schools with the greatest needs.

Recommendation

In order to develop greater autonomy of schools:

- enable all schools to adopt reliable and consistent self-evaluation procedures that will help them to manage their own improvement.

102. The current programme of continuing professional development, including support for middle managers in schools, is limited, but links well to Education Development Plan priorities. A coherent programme of continuing professional development is being assembled and links are being established with other providers. Education Bradford does not yet advise schools on consultants and services, other than its own, which they can purchase to meet their identified needs. This was recommended in the previous inspection report but, not unreasonably, other priorities have taken precedence at this early stage in the development of a new school improvement system. Education Bradford plans to issue some advice in the future. Specialist client support for the procurement of some services is available on a traded basis. Contact details of alternative suppliers have been issued by some education services.

Support for governors

103. At the time of the previous inspection, the support to school governors was highly satisfactory and both Education Bradford and the schools confirm that this continues to be the case. No fieldwork was carried out in the current inspection. Examples of development include an increase to 94 per cent in the proportion of schools that purchase the support, and a two per cent increase in the proportion of governors recruited from minority ethnic groups.

The effectiveness of services to support school management

104. Although the performance of the services is satisfactory overall, support for administrative ICT is a weakness. Marketing material for the services offered by Education Bradford is drawn together in a single document with reasonably consistent format. However, a number of important services continue to be offered by the LEA itself. These are not included in the Education Bradford document and make their own, individual approaches to schools. This is unhelpful. While the descriptions of service range in the marketing material are satisfactory, the provision of clear performance criteria is limited and inconsistent service by service. Choice is reasonable and meets the needs of most schools. Pricing information is clear. Very little information is provided on schools' entitlement to centrally funded services and there is little specific advice on schools' responsibilities should they decide not to purchase a traded service. Overall, the material does not provide schools with what they need to make fully informed purchasing decisions.

105. The absence of clear information for schools on their entitlement to centrally funded services is not confined to those where Education Bradford is a provider. However, it does reflect a degree of continuing uncertainty about the precise division of responsibilities between the LEA and Education Bradford within the contract. The situation is being managed reasonably satisfactorily at present by both sides working

flexibly to avoid discontinuity of service to schools. However, the weakness in the current marketing material is one example of a negative outcome arising from the uncertainty.

Recommendation

In order to improve the support for school management:

- bring together the services provided by Education Bradford and the LEA, in both the marketing material and the arrangements for consultation with schools.

106. Education Bradford has taken positive steps to strengthen arrangements for dialogue with schools on service specification and performance. Designated officers, known as traded account executives, provide a focal point for contact concerning any service within the Education Bradford portfolio. A group comprising school representatives has just been established to provide a discussion forum. However, the services provided by the LEA itself are not included in these arrangements and it undertakes its own individual surveys of school views. As with the marketing material, this is unhelpful. There are satisfactory arrangements for ensuring that the support services play an appropriate part in LEA monitoring of school performance. The linking of the traded account executives' responsibilities to the multi-professional team areas is a positive step.

107. The **Education Personnel Service** was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. It has improved since then and has few areas of weakness. The last inspection raised two areas of particular concern: the cost and potential impact on standards of the 'no redundancy' commitment given prior to the reorganisation of schools programme and reservations about the robustness of the LEA's approach to teacher capability and competence. On the former, it is clear that the programme was expensive. However, a significant proportion of the cost was met by a drawing on corporate contingencies and hence did not have to be found from the education base budget. Very few teachers now remain in schools on a supernumerary basis. The great majority have secured permanent positions in the schools where they were placed initially as supernumerary, suggesting that the initial placements were appropriate. Criticisms about competency procedures have been addressed and schools' evaluation of the casework support from human resources advisers is generally good.

108. An appropriate balance is now drawn in guidance for schools between respecting the rights of employees and improving educational opportunities for pupils. The format used includes a helpful distinction between procedures, which must be followed, and aspects of good practice associated with them. The emphasis has moved away from the highly prescriptive approach, which characterised the LEA in the past. Benchmarking data on items like staff absence and the recruitment and retention of staff are not provided to schools and this is a weakness.

109. The **Education Finance Service** was satisfactory in the first inspection. No fieldwork was carried out, but the school survey indicates that the service remains so.

110. **Information and communication technology support for school administration and the development of an information management strategy** for the LEA is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the first inspection. As then, the principal source of dissatisfaction for schools is response time where support through a site visit is required. Education Bradford intends to reduce the need for such visits for software support through extending on-line working within school systems by helpdesk staff. This is limited at present. The main problems, however, are in the area of hardware repair and maintenance. There are serious concerns about this aspect of support. Education Bradford is currently considering a range of options for improving the service, principally through extending the involvement of the private sector.

111. A number of component parts of a satisfactory ICT and information management strategy are in place. Previously separate working groups with headteachers looking at ICT strategy and data collection issues have recently been combined. At present, however, there is only a very early draft of a strategic plan. This is not helpful, either in terms of ensuring delivery of the necessary improvements, or of enabling schools' and the LEA's planning to dovetail. Reasonable steps are taken to consult schools on data collection issues, to avoid duplicate requests, and to make the products of data analysis available to schools. The great majority of schools use the same basic software, which is an asset. The LEA has been relatively slow in developing its central school and pupil database. However, the input of data on pupils' performance has been completed. On-line data exchange with schools is limited in the main to e-mail attachment. Connection is through the local cable network and hence of reasonable capacity and speed. Improvements in bandwidth are ongoing. However, the system is too prone to problems and provides an unreliable basis for communication with schools. The recent establishment of a free standing Education Bradford ICT system, albeit with appropriate links to the council system, is felt to offer much better opportunities for the rapid development of direct data exchange with schools.

112. Schools and the LEA agreed to withdraw from the regional broadband consortium in order to use the local telecommunications provider for broadband services. All secondary schools and 12 primary schools currently have access to fast broadband connections. All schools have an internet connection. The recent development of the Bradford Virtual Learning Environment provides all schools with a virtual private network and funding has been identified to develop the on-line curriculum content.

113. **Property services** support to schools was unsatisfactory during the last inspection. It remains so. However, the weakness lies principally in problems associated with the reorganisation of schools, as outlined in section 4, where the LEA over-stretched its capacity to deliver the building works needed. Opinion of the traded service that supports schools on more day-to-day repairs and maintenance matters and with their own improvement projects is different. The level of buy back is high and the last customer survey conducted by the service indicated that the great majority of respondents were happy with the support provided. This includes help with developing the school's own asset management plan. It is unclear, however, how this will dovetail in future with the regular dialogue planned between the LEA

and each school on asset management issues, which will include the monitoring of progress and a review of outstanding building condition and suitability needs.

114. Support for cleaning and caretaking, grounds maintenance, and catering was not covered in the first inspection. Support for **cleaning and caretaking** is satisfactory. Improvements have been made to staff cover arrangements, which were an earlier weakness. A direct service is offered, but only limited client support. **Grounds maintenance** support is satisfactory with few major weaknesses. It is provided on a similar basis to cleaning. Cost benchmarking indicates comparatively low rates for primary school work and about average for secondary school work.

115. **School meals** provision is satisfactory. Schools can purchase a directly managed service, a limited client support service, or a management service for their own staff. Virtually all primary schools purchase a service, as well as the majority of secondary schools. The take-up of free and paid meals is slightly above the average for other LEAs. Production costs are close to the average. Useful measures are taken to publicise free school meal entitlement and encourage take-up. Dialogue with pupils, parents, and schools on meal content and choice is good. Appropriate steps are taken to establish the needs of minority ethnic groups and to make provision accordingly. The service actively promotes healthy eating.

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

116. This area was not previously inspected. The support for assuring the supply and quality of teachers is unsatisfactory. The LEA had a teacher recruitment strategy manager at the time of the last inspection and the delay in developing an effective strategy is a significant weakness. Recruitment and retention are being integrated within Education Bradford's human resource structure and leadership of this area is improving. This is reflected in recent initiatives such as extending the links with higher education, the launch of the recruitment website and better information on routes into teaching.

117. A teacher workforce survey was completed in September 2001. Collecting this base data was a protracted process, but it does now provide information about gender, ethnicity, sickness absence and teacher turnover. The EDP appropriately identifies teacher recruitment, redressing the age profile of teachers in the district and a workforce that more closely reflects the ethnicity of the district as priorities. Better communication and consultative arrangements have been put in place through the EDP process. The teacher recruitment and retention group includes school representatives and has a remit to monitor teacher recruitment strategies and share best practice. The draft strategy was being consulted on at the time of the inspection.

118. The percentage of unfilled vacancies is around one per cent, in line with the national average, but schools in challenging circumstances are finding it hard to recruit the number and quality of teachers required. Support for schools has focused on improving the quality of recruitment materials and intensive work to fill vacancies in schools in challenging circumstances. The early indications are that this refocused support is leading to improvement. Nevertheless, too much of the earlier

work centred on collecting data without a clear understanding of how it would be used to improve recruitment and retention strategies.

119. There is no policy for continuing professional development and it is unsurprising that the school survey rated the support for the professional development of teachers as unsatisfactory. Education Bradford is improving consultation with schools about their needs. The core package offered to schools in September is clearly based on raising achievement linked to the five priorities in the EDP. After a slow start there is now effective support for the development of advanced skills teachers in primary and secondary schools. Traded services offered by Education Bradford and the link with Serco Limited potentially give schools choice and access to a wider range of relevant expertise. It is too early to comment on the effectiveness of this support, but there is a concern amongst schools about the cost of the traded services.

120. The support for newly qualified teachers is satisfactory. The expectation is that all newly qualified teachers have an induction tutor and over the last year there have been no failures and only four extensions. The ethnicity of newly qualified teachers gaining qualified teacher status in 2001 more broadly matched the wider community in Bradford than in the past. It is a weakness of the support that there is no review of why, when compared with similar authorities, an above average number of newly qualified teachers leave the authority's schools at the end of their first year of teaching.

121. The induction for headteachers was supported by a trained group of mentors and the assigned inspector. During the last year the programme of support suffered disruption with key personnel changes and the take up was very low. Education Bradford has taken appropriate steps to redress this and the recruitment and retention action plan prioritises the induction of all teachers new to Bradford.

Recommendations

In order to improve the supply and quality of teachers:

- co-ordinate and make better use of the information available from the work force profile and vacancy monitoring to improve forward planning;
- promote information about routes into teaching within the district in order to attract a wider representation of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds; and
- identify the reasons why newly qualified teachers leave Bradford LEA and work in partnership with schools to improve the retention rate.

The effectiveness of services to support school improvement

122. The previous inspection found that the services to support school improvement were unsatisfactory. Although there are still weaknesses, the services are now satisfactory, with signs of good progress.

123. The major responsibility for supporting schools in their efforts to improve rests with the achievement directorate. Its establishment is so recent that its overall effectiveness cannot yet be judged, but there are several examples in individual schools of its positive effects on school improvement. Progress so far illustrates strong leadership at director and achievement support manager levels. Strong features of the leadership, which headteachers confirm, are a clear strategy, a shared vision, and a determination to get things done. While it has taken time to appoint staff and there are still important vacancies, those that have been appointed are deployed within a structure well suited to supporting school improvement, notably through the area multi-professional teams and the secondary support team. The level of expertise of staff within the achievement directorate is high and their experience is well suited to supporting school improvement.

124. Planning for school improvement is well advanced in Education Bradford's thinking, but is currently incomplete on paper. For example, there are no headship training plans and few service plans as yet. However, the EDP is the most important plan for school improvement and provides a suitable strategic framework while other plans are completed.

125. Education Bradford is developing a consistent system of performance management across the achievement directorate. At present, while some services, such as education social work and educational psychology, have their own established procedures, other school improvement staff have no consistent system other than regular informal reviews.

126. Although there is currently insufficient evidence to judge overall effectiveness, the services to support school improvement have demonstrated good potential, have had positive effects in a number of individual schools, and offer satisfactory value for money.

SECTION 3: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Summary of effectiveness of LEA's special educational needs provision

127. Strategic planning and value for money of special educational needs provision remain unsatisfactory, but significant progress has been made with meeting statutory obligations and support for school improvement. There is a clear strategic direction to SEN policy linked to inclusion and raising the levels of achievement for pupils with special educational needs. However, the pace of the review of special schools since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The steps taken to reduce the reliance on statements of SEN and focus on early intervention and prevention to improve the use of resources are at an early stage, but are appropriate. Through the mainstream support groups and multi-professional teams, an effective start has been made in supporting decision making and accountability at the local level amongst groups of schools. There is a clear commitment in the SEN strategy and work programme to achieve rapid improvement and Education Bradford is building the capacity to ensure it is delivered.

The LEA's strategy for special educational needs

128. Strategic planning for SEN remains unsatisfactory, although there has been progress since the time of the previous inspection when it was weak. The development of the strategic plan for SEN takes account of the need to promote inclusion and raise the levels of achievement for young people in Bradford who have special educational needs. The strategy is supported by a comprehensive review of special educational needs. Although this is welcome, the last inspection identified the need for an urgent review of specialist and special school provision. Planning remains at an early stage and the special schools are rightly concerned about the limited amount of progress with this element of the review.

129. Following the previous inspection, an inclusion and achievement strategy group was established. External consultants supported this group to undertake an extensive consultation with schools and other key stakeholders and report the outcomes to the education policy partnership. In April 2001, the education policy partnership formally agreed six strategic intents to guide the review of policy and provision for special educational needs. Education Bradford's SEN strategic plan 2002-2007 builds effectively on the earlier development work and appropriately reflects national policy for inclusion and the new SEN Code of Practice.

130. Although the SEN review is at an early stage of implementation, the annual work plan for special educational needs is sound. It sets out, in an ambitious programme, the actions and time scale to support each of the strategic intents and bring about rapid improvement in key aspects of SEN provision. Successful implementation of the programme should address many of the concerns expressed by schools in the pre-inspection survey. In this, they rated the support for SEN as unsatisfactory, although there are now early indications of greater confidence that Education Bradford is providing sound strategic direction for SEN policy. Schools and other stakeholders are effectively involved in the key decisions that have to be taken about the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream

schools. They understand and support the objectives of the review, particularly the need to reduce the reliance on statements of SEN, to release resources to support early intervention and to redefine the role of special schools. However, the practical implications of the speed of the changes, the capping of the spending on SEN statements and the continued lack of provision to meet the need of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties remains a concern for many.

131. Central to Education Bradford's strategy for reducing the reliance on statements is early intervention and prevention. Mainstream support groups, which are composed of school representatives, have been established very recently to co-ordinate the support and the resource allocation for SEN at a local level. Special educational needs co-ordinators in their 'family groups' of schools are able to bid for the additional resources available to support pupils with special educational needs rather than seeking a formal assessment for a statement of SEN. The mainstream support groups and the area multi-professional team, which includes SEN specialist advice, review and moderate the bids and allocate the resources for *school action plus*. The groups met for the first time in June and the evaluation of the process by co-ordinators and officers show it was well managed and moderated.

132. Education Bradford's strategy and review of SEN prioritises the redefining of the role of special schools in the continuum of SEN provision. The decision to defer a review of specialist and special school provision until the reorganisation of mainstream schools was completed in 2000 was described in the previous inspection report as an opportunity missed. The education client team's audit of special schools shows that the existing accommodation is unsatisfactory in nine of the 12 special schools and this has been reaffirmed by school inspections. A recent report to the education policy partnership describes the current SEN provision and offers a set of proposals and key questions on which to base the review. However, the level of necessary detail on which to consult with schools and the wider community, including a funding strategy, has not yet been adequately established. Progress with the special school review element of the SEN strategy has been too slow.

Recommendation

In order to improve the strategy for special educational needs:

- urgently bring forward firm proposals to support the review of specialist and special school provision to meet the commitment to inclusion, the role of special schools as centres of excellence and to replace accommodation that is in poor condition or unsuitable for the curriculum.

Statutory obligations

133. Education Bradford's overall performance is satisfactory: it is taking reasonable steps to meet the statutory obligations that it has been contracted to perform on the behalf of the LEA in relation to special educational needs. The last inspection criticised the LEA for the time taken to complete statements of SEN. The

assessment and administration of statements has improved as a result of putting in place an audit and tracking procedure. The rate of completion in 2001 increased to 85.28 per cent of statements, excluding those delayed by other agencies, within the recommended 18 weeks. In cases where medical advice arrives late, the completion rate is similarly satisfactory.

134. The LEA maintains statements for 3.4 per cent of the school population, a figure which is in line with similar local education authorities. The supporting advice from educational psychologists and medical services is detailed, but the specificity of the resulting statement is less satisfactory. Education Bradford is reviewing all statements in order to improve the quality and to make the allocation of additional resources to statements more transparent. Target setting at the annual review process and the quality of individual education plans are variable. This is recognised, and training for special educational needs co-ordinators has been identified as a priority.

Recommendation

In order to improve the standards of pupils with special educational needs:

- ensure that the provision necessary to meet the needs of the child is specified clearly on the statement; and
- ensure that special educational needs co-ordinators are effectively supported to improve the quality of individual education action plans and target setting at annual reviews.

135. The parent partnership service is provided by a national voluntary agency. A detailed contractual agreement forms the basis of the service. There are identified service outcomes, mutual responsibilities and a published annual report. The partnership works in close co-operation with Parent Link, a local voluntary organisation, and relationships with Education Bradford are good. Parents are effectively supported by this arrangement.

School improvement

136. The support for school improvement is satisfactory. In the previous inspection, the effectiveness of services in exercising their SEN functions to support school improvement was unsatisfactory. The learning and support services lacked the resources to respond to need, the support for special educational needs co-ordinators was very limited and the monitoring of SEN provision was not part of a planned programme.

137. Satisfactory progress has been made to address these concerns following the outsourcing of SEN services to Education Bradford. The SEN handbook has provided schools with effective guidance about the criteria for statutory assessment and the unit allocation for statements against needs, but it has not been updated recently. Revised criteria for assessment that reflect the new Code of Practice have been drafted and there is a sound plan to consult schools and support special educational needs co-ordinators before they are introduced.

138. At an early stage of the SEN review, Education Bradford initiated the redirection of the funding for SEN to support *school action plus*. This is key to the strategy to resource earlier intervention and provide appropriately for pupils with special educational needs within mainstream schools. The family groups of co-ordinators and area mainstream support groups worked effectively in the summer term to allocate the redirected SEN resources for additional support to individual pupils, groups of pupils or clusters of schools at *school action plus*. Special educational needs co-ordinators received sound training and support to prepare the proposals. A review of the effectiveness of the work with co-ordinators is being undertaken this term in preparation for a future round of proposal writing.

139. A full review of the SEN support services is being undertaken. Schools value the expertise of individuals within the services, but the review indicates that support is not always effectively matched to the level and pattern of need. The educational psychology service has a clear service plan and it is playing a full part in the multi professional teams. The resources of the learning support service are deployed through the mainstream support groups as additional resource at *school action plus*. This creates a good opportunity to develop and share practice. Through the wider review of specialist and special school provision there is a commitment to re-assess the support for pupils with hearing and visual impairment and autistic spectrum disorder against the level of need.

140. Target setting for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools has not been well integrated within the school improvement strategy. The use of the P-scales is inconsistent and the small cohorts of pupils, together with the severity and range of need in each school, resulted in targets not being set. All special schools are included in the programme of target setting visits for school improvement officers this term. Effective systems to collect and monitor the attainment and progress of all pupils with SEN are only now being put in place.

Value for money

141. Measures to ensure value for money remain unsatisfactory, but there has been improvement since the last inspection. The previous report criticised the LEA for failing to monitor and evaluate the provision for SEN and the outcomes for pupils in terms of their progress. In addition, serious problems were identified with the model of support to schools at stage three of the Code of Practice.

142. The outsourcing of SEN services to Education Bradford has placed a sharp focus on the costs of services and the disproportionate cost of SEN statements when compared with those of similar local authorities. The statement budget was overspent by £1 million in 2000/01 and an additional £1.25 million was required to meet the commitment in 2001/02. This resource was devolved to schools in 2001, but it was not matched by action to change a culture of over-reliance on statutory assessment and statements to meet the special educational needs of pupils. Education Bradford has acted promptly, in consultation with schools, to delegate the funding for statements in 2002/03 and it has capped the budget. The statutory assessment panel has also been reactivated and is beginning to challenge requests for formal statements with some rigour.

143. The revised assessment criteria for SEN have not, as yet, been the subject of consultation with schools. In the interim, schools are aware that 4.5 per cent of the delegated budget should support special educational needs provision and that the value of the units allocated to new and existing SEN statements has been reduced. This is to free up the funding allocated by the mainstream support groups which supports the *school action plus* stage of the Code of Practice. Greater transparency about the way SEN resources are allocated is beginning to be achieved. However, there is not yet a robust system to monitor the progress made by all pupils with SEN against the resources spent.

Recommendation

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the resources allocated to support pupils with special educational needs:

- establish, in consultation with schools, a comprehensive system to monitor and evaluate the progress made by pupils with special educational needs.

SECTION 4: PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION

Summary of effectiveness in promoting social inclusion

144. During the previous inspection, the LEA's effectiveness in promoting social inclusion was unsatisfactory. The authority's intentions to make provision for vulnerable young people and to promote equality of opportunity had not been fully realised. While there had been some success in developing a wide range of early years provision, there were weaknesses in other key services to support vulnerable and disaffected young people and the organisation of support for minority ethnic pupils was in a turbulent state at that time. Although the strategy to promote social inclusion remains unsatisfactory overall, there have been considerable efforts in recent months, both in education and across the council as a whole, to raise awareness about the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people in the authority and to address weaknesses. However, consultation with minority ethnic communities is insufficiently developed and does not ensure their engagement in the planning of a more coherent approach to promoting good race relations and to raising the attainment of minority ethnic pupils.

The strategy to promote social inclusion

145. The strategy to promote social inclusion remains unsatisfactory. Although the council recognises the importance of promoting social inclusion as a contributor to creating a more harmonious and equal community for people from all ethnic groups, action since the previous inspection has been too slow. The previous Ofsted inspection recognised that the LEA had plans to improve social inclusion, but progress was generally unsatisfactory. This was generally the situation prior to the racial disturbances during the summer of 2001. However, the Cattle, Ouseley and Denham reports have provided the authority with a catalyst for change. There is now satisfactory strategic liaison between education, social services and health over improving social inclusion for vulnerable pupils. Liaison with the police is good, and recent collaborative work on truancy sweeps has made a difference to the attendance of some pupils.

146. There is an appropriate emphasis in corporate documents given to the importance of raising pupils' attainment and expectations: 'safer and more cohesive communities' is one of six corporate priorities. The council has responded to the requirement from the Home Office to produce an outline community cohesion plan. Partnership involvement has been limited to date, but the plan is about to be circulated for consultation. It is generally a sound document, with appropriate references to raising educational attainment for under-performing groups, and the development of inclusive activities such as the youth parliament, the youth Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, and cultural diversity activities through the local university. However, there is, as yet, very little detail for community groups to judge how the council will deliver on the aims and priorities within the plan.

147. Existing local initiatives, such as the supplementary schools and the home study project, funded by the Single Regeneration Budget, offer the potential to help raise standards among under-performing pupils. Others, like the achievement forum with its focus on strengthening parental involvement in education and learning, have

not been fully implemented. Support from minority ethnic groups was strong at the initial area based meetings of the achievement forum in summer 2001. However, progress since then has been slow. Although community representatives welcomed the opportunity for involvement in this initiative and its focus on raising educational attainment, many feel frustrated at the way the process has been conducted and the lack of sufficient progress.

148. Consultation with community groups is not yet sufficiently effective. Almost all representatives interviewed during the inspection expressed the view that consultation was often too late, and that policies and plans presented in draft form rarely included detailed action plans and outcomes that would provide a clearer indication of how the council's intentions would impact upon the different communities. Quite rightly, many community groups feel that they can make a significant contribution to the local debate about raising pupils' performance and improving race relations, as part of a council-wide strategy to promoting social inclusion.

Recommendation

In order to improve the strategy to promote social inclusion:

- ensure the development of effective consultation and communication procedures with the full range of community groups in Bradford.

149. The council has obtained additional funding, which is being directed towards areas of greatest need. Single Regeneration Budget funding has been key to the development of some socio-economically deprived wards in the town. Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy funds have also brought an additional £23 million to the district for a range of community activities, only some of which include education. The local strategic partnership scheme 'building bridges' has provided £75,000 for a twinning project, as part of the community cohesion activity. The linking of schools from different parts of the district has started well, and the early indications are that productive contacts are being established between schools that comprise different ethnic communities. Funding from the Excellence in Cities programme has been targeted at promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable pupils, through the establishment of learning support units and the appointment of learning mentors. However, weak strategic management and poor monitoring and evaluation of the scheme have meant that more successful solutions to some of the social inclusion issues have been underdeveloped.

The supply of school places

150. The LEA's performance in this area of work is unsatisfactory. The last inspection took place during the major reorganisation of the LEA's schools from a three to a two-tier system. The building programme to support the reorganisation was judged even then to be operating to too tight a timetable. Subsequent experience has borne out this judgement. Of more concern for the future, however, are the doubts that surround the resulting pattern of school provision. Rolls in a significant number of the reorganised schools do not closely reflect the projections on which planning was based. The LEA is now embarking on a further round of

reorganisation proposals to address projected surpluses and deficits in provision in local areas. A prolonged period of uncertainty for many schools has been the result and further disruption will occur.

151. The LEA has yet to achieve acceptable levels of accuracy in the forecasting of pupil rolls. Forecasting at individual school level, and for small groups of schools, can be problematic following a major reorganisation. Patterns of parental preference may be uncertain and can take some time to become established. To some degree the same can be said of forecasts for small groups of schools. This is particularly so when the groupings are as small, too small in some cases, as those used for planning purposes in Bradford. Above this level, however, it ought to be possible to achieve reasonable levels of accuracy, particularly in a LEA that does not have high levels of pupil mobility. At sector level, and even for the LEA as a whole, the most recent projections have included some significant inaccuracies. There also continue to be significant fluctuations in the medium term forecasts produced each year. Given the necessary lead in times, particularly where major building work is required, these are of key importance in developing reorganisation proposals.

152. Education Bradford believes that improvements in its forecasting methodology have been made and that the forecasts have changed as a consequence. However, schools continue to lack confidence in them. In part, this reflects a poor explanation of the underlying methodology; recent steps to improve this through area based discussions have not succeeded in wholly convincing many involved. These reservations about roll forecasting do not, of course, mean that every proposal for change currently being brought forward is necessarily misguided. In many cases the forecasts show such a clear case for adjustments in the pattern of provision that it is very unlikely indeed that the proposals will be proven to be wrong. Issues of confidence and continuing uncertainty for schools are, nonetheless, important factors and the recent record suggests that even the next round of changes will not establish a fully robust pattern of provision for the medium and longer term.

153. What cannot be doubted is Education Bradford's preparedness to bring forward proposals, including unpopular changes, where its forecasts indicate this is needed. Proposals have recently been brought forward for changes in the majority, albeit not yet all, of the areas where the forecasts indicate this is necessary. However, many of these proposals are not in areas identified in the most recent school organisation plan (which is less than one year old) as being likely to require change. This has reinforced the impression on the part of schools that the LEA is operating on an essentially hand to mouth basis and lacks both a firm grasp of developing need and a clear overall strategy. The plan also lacks any kind of worthwhile coverage of possible developments in post-16, SEN, and provision for pupils without a school place. The first two of these are both subject to imminent review and it would clearly have been wrong to pre-empt the findings of these exercises. Nonetheless, it would at least have been appropriate to indicate that account had been taken, even if only in general terms, of the accommodation needs most likely to stem from them. In terms of consultation with schools and other key stakeholders, new structures and processes provide good opportunities for dialogue. Working relationships are also good. What currently hampers the process, however, is the quality of the information and analysis brought forward for discussion.

Recommendations

In order to improve the quality and accuracy of planning for school places:

- improve the quality and accuracy of the forecasting of pupil numbers for planning purposes; and
- revise the school organisation plan to give a more comprehensive picture of its forecasts and plans for each local area, better coverage of potential changes in post-16 and special educational needs provision, and a clearer indication of the implications of promoting its school improvement and social cohesion objectives for school place planning.

154. The LEA has recently issued a draft local policy statement for asset management planning which emphasises the intention to link the provision of school places firmly to its school improvement and social cohesion objectives. It echoes the last school organisation plan in the latter respect, but strikes a new note in the former. The expansion, where possible, of popular schools is now given more prominence. In neither document, however, is a very clear idea given of what the LEA sees as the implications of promoting these two key objectives for school place planning.

Admissions

155. The LEA's performance is satisfactory overall, but there are some weaknesses in the policy aspects of its work. The previous inspection praised the LEA for the preparation for the major reorganisation of schools, which involved the transfer of three year groups to secondary schools at one time. Administration of the admissions processes remains good. Individual applicants are treated sensitively and professionally, information flows to schools meet their needs, and deadlines are met. Special provision has been made to support the needs of minority ethnic groups, including refugees and asylum seekers. Although there is not a common application form for the secondary transfer exercise, the LEA operates an effective clearinghouse system. This avoids multiple offers of places to some applicants and unnecessary refusals to others. It is proposing helpfully to introduce a similar system for primary admissions next year. The time scales for each stage of the main primary and secondary reception exercises meet at least minimum guideline standards and in some instances, best practice.

156. The principal problem with the LEA's admission policy as currently expressed is that it is not made clear to parents precisely how decisions will be made when a school is oversubscribed. A range of criteria is listed, but without priority ordering. The lack of both predictability and transparency that this involves is unsatisfactory. The confusion over the existing policy also undermines the value of the explanatory information for parents provided by the LEA. In most other respects the booklets and letters provided are good, although explanation of the entitlement to apply to more than one admissions authority is also unsatisfactory. The LEA is currently consulting on possible changes to its policy, partly in recognition of the need to reduce confusion for parents. It is not clear, however, how its favoured option of "loose feeder" arrangements linking primary schools to particular secondaries, would

improve the situation. Consultation documents are insufficiently clear about this option and schools remain uncertain about its practical implications.

Recommendation

In order to improve information on admissions for parents:

- ensure that the published admissions policy enables parents to see in advance precisely how places will be allocated at oversubscribed schools.

Asset management

157. The performance of the LEA overall is poor. The previous inspection report drew attention to a failure to anticipate fully the implications of the major schools reorganisation programme and to the disruption that followed. As indicated in the section on the planning of places above, further problems have occurred since and some still remain. The LEA seriously overstretched itself. A price was accordingly paid at school level. In some cases there was delay in the completion of projects. However, problems mainly involved disruption to the smooth running of schools and the need for their staff to play a much bigger role than originally anticipated in ensuring acceptable project design and management. There was also a mismatch in some cases between what schools understood they could expect from the programme and what it eventually proved possible to deliver. Credit is due for the considerable element of the programme, which was delivered broadly on schedule. However, the cost was high in terms of disruption at school level. The contractors engaged by the LEA, to deliver the building programme, generally performed their tasks well. Planning of the programme by the LEA, however, was much less satisfactory, as was its support when required for individual project management.

158. The reorganisation also affected other aspects of asset management work. The LEA has failed to meet the deadlines set for the submission of data on building condition and suitability to the DfES by considerable margins. Even with revised target dates agreed with the DfES, the LEA has managed to meet only minimum requirements for its asset management planning submissions to date. Some aspects of its work are still deemed unsatisfactory and work continues on the required revisions.

159. These delays and inadequacies in the asset management process have affected schools. Written reports on the surveys of condition of buildings are only now being issued and there has been no regular programme of discussion with each school to monitor progress and review future needs. The design of the reports themselves is not helpful in assisting schools with their own planning. There has been, thus far, very little discussion with schools collectively on the priorities for future building programmes. However, the funding and access strategy groups did have the opportunity to comment on the LEA's statement of priorities prior to submission to the DfES in July this year.

160. To an extent, the very small room for manoeuvre in resourcing terms can justify this relative dearth of consultation. The LEA has been able to fund very few works outside of the reorganisation programme and, accordingly, these have had to

be restricted to items of the highest priority. The LEA now has an extremely mixed building stock, with many new or newly refurbished buildings, but many others in poor condition. Current budgetary provision is inadequate to meet the needs identified as requiring attention within the next year, let alone the sums necessary to maintain the building stock in an acceptable condition over the medium and longer term. The LEA is pinning its hopes on the development of a very large Private Finance Initiative scheme (circa £200 million) to deliver both further school reorganisations and to meet outstanding condition and suitability needs. The DfES has provided some funding to help with the development of these proposals. Without such a scheme, or something like it, it is hard to see how expenditure in the future will do other than fall very significantly short of need. Reasonable steps are taken to compare service costs with those of other providers and with national benchmarks. The LEA has recently undertaken a Best Value review of its asset management activities authority-wide and options for the future, including a major outsourcing, are currently being considered.

Recommendations

In order to improve asset management:

- begin a programme of regular meetings with schools to monitor progress and review future needs; and
- significantly enhance the funding available for the maintenance and improvement of school buildings.

Provision of education for pupils who have no school place

161. During the previous inspection, the support for pupils without a school place was very poor. Although progress has been made on all the recommendations from the previous inspection, the current provision remains poor. This is due primarily to the current long-term placement of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties at the pupil referral units.

162. Satisfactory records of pupils who are out of school are maintained and updated regularly to ensure that no children are lost to the system. Permanently excluded pupils become the responsibility of the home tuition service on the day after they are taken off the roll of their mainstream school. There is also some appropriate supplementary support for pupils still on the roll of their mainstream school, who are at risk of being permanently excluded.

163. The provision for pupils in the registered pupil referral units currently meets the requirement for full-time education. However, the referral system for permanently excluded pupils is unnecessarily complicated by the present organisation of the PRUs, currently catering for both the short-term need of excluded pupils and the long-term needs of those with a statement of special educational need for emotional and behavioural difficulties. The current provision includes six registered pupil referral units. There are also two centres based in a primary school that cater respectively for pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2, and from Key Stages 2 and 3, who have been excluded or have a statement of special educational need for emotional and behavioural difficulties. These two centres are part of the authority's

new provision for vulnerable pupils, and it is too soon to judge their impact. There are some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties requirements, whose long-term needs extend beyond that which can be reasonably provided by the pupil referral units. Two of the six pupil referral units are newly registered hospital PRUs, but there is a lack of clarity among officers regarding this provision. There is a lack of a clear strategy for these pupil referral units. Education Bradford is aware of most of these weaknesses and has planned, quite appropriately, to address them fully in the new behavioural support plan.

164. The provision for pupils who are receiving hospital tuition is appropriately differentiated according to their physical ability and level of need. Pupils at the recently formed unit for pregnant schoolgirls are also receiving full-time provision appropriate to their needs. The monitoring of those pupils educated at home by their parents, as part of education otherwise than at school, is generally satisfactory. While notes of visit from officers are generally evaluative, many do not indicate sufficiently clearly that the attainment achieved by the individual pupils seen is appropriate to their age and abilities. However, the LEA has acted to prosecute some parents for non-attendance of their children at school when the quality of their provision for education otherwise than at school has been of an inappropriate and unsatisfactory standard.

165. Although there are intentions for the newly formed multi-professional teams to take a more active role in the support provided for pupils with no school place, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this strategy.

Recommendation

In order to improve the quality of support for pupils who have no school place:

- clarify the respective roles and functions of all PRUs in relation to meeting the short-term needs of excluded pupils, and for those pupils who have a statement of special educational need for emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Attendance

166. At the time of the previous inspection, support for attendance was unsatisfactory. Some progress has been made since that time and the current provision is now satisfactory, with some areas of weakness remaining.

167. Attendance at primary level since the previous inspection has generally kept pace with the national trend. At secondary level, however, attendance has more often been well below that found nationally, although the percentage difference reduced marginally in 2001. Authorised absence is in line with national averages in the primary and secondary phases. The long-term trend at secondary level, however, has generally been above that found nationally. Unauthorised absence in primary schools has improved marginally over the last two years, but still remains higher than the national average. The secondary schools' figure is well above the national average, as it has been since the previous inspection. This is due almost exclusively to the extended holiday leave that some pupils take for trips abroad to

visit relatives. This issue was raised in the previous inspection report and, although the LEA has clarified its procedures relating to unauthorised absence and extended holiday leave, the problem has not yet been fully resolved to the satisfaction of headteachers.

168. The pre-inspection survey showed that both primary and secondary schools rated the support for attendance to be significantly lower than that found in other LEAs inspected. The major concern, expressed by headteachers interviewed during the inspection, centred on the lack of a dedicated education social worker in some schools. This problem is due in part to difficulties in recruiting specialist staff. Although senior officers are aware of the problem, they have not yet found a satisfactory solution.

169. Attendance targets in the EDP are generally appropriate, but there is a lack of transparency with regard to their negotiation with schools. This lack of transparency also applies to the current deployment of education social workers, which was also an issue in the previous inspection. However, a new strategy for attendance support has been developed. Although it makes clearer the deployment of specialist support staff, it has yet to be discussed with schools. Given the current recruitment problems, the authority may not be able to deliver fully on this intended support provision.

170. The new strategy sensibly places a greater emphasis on improving attendance, as opposed to tackling rates of authorised and unauthorised absence. In this way, the service intends to become more pro-active and involve itself in preventative measures for those pupils whose attendance is poor. The strategy has been informed by recent attendance initiatives that have been run within the authority. The two that have been most successful are the traffic light scheme and truancy sweeps. The truancy sweeps have been successfully carried out in collaboration with the police and other agencies, and have made a positive contribution to improved attendance rates at targeted schools. The traffic light scheme focuses on targeted year groups, and deploys a range of strategies to improve overall attendance. The strategy is very clear, and concludes with the prosecution of parents whose children fail to reach an acceptable level of attendance. This features as a prominent part of Bradford's rigorous and appropriate approach to its statutory responsibilities where, currently, the percentage of prosecutions is above that found nationally. Although it is early days for these initiatives, there are some encouraging outcomes in relation to tackling the poor attendance of some pupils.

171. The education and social work service collates and analyses data from all schools. While this is good practice, the information gained from these analyses, and from the attendance initiatives, are not used systematically to inform future strategy, to identify service priorities that are shared with schools, or to aid the measure of cost-effectiveness of the service.

Recommendations

In order to develop further the support for attendance:

- ensure all schools have adequate access to support from the education social work service that is targeted according to need;
- consistently share best practice arising from attendance initiatives with all schools; and
- communicate the priorities of the education social work service to all schools.

Behaviour support

172. Support for pupils with behavioural difficulties was poor at the time of the previous inspection. Although some progress has been made, the overall provision is still unsatisfactory.

173. Headteachers interviewed during the inspection generally praised the quality of school-based support work from specialist officers. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the procedures and criteria for the full behaviour support provision made by the authority, particularly for pupils placed in the pupil referral units. Recent developments that link the learning support services with the newly formed multi-professional teams are now providing schools with a more coherent strategy of support for those pupils who exhibit particularly challenging behaviour in schools. While there has been some scrutiny of the use made by schools of their Pupil Retention Grant funding, this has not yet been used to inform the specific activities provided by the specialist support services.

174. Since the previous inspection, exclusion rates at both primary and secondary levels have generally been in line with the national averages. In 1999/00 and 2000/01, Bradford easily achieved the targets set by the DfES. However, the unvalidated data for 2002 shows an overall increase in the exclusion rate, which means that for the first time since 1999, the LEA will not meet its DfES annual target.

175. The contract with Education Bradford includes some very challenging targets to reduce exclusions at both primary and secondary levels, particularly in schools with learning support units and learning mentors. These targets equate to a 20 per cent overall reduction by the end of 2002/03, with zero permanent exclusions in primary schools with learning support units and in secondary schools for Year 11. In order to meet these targets and to provide other aspects of a broader behaviour support programme, a new behaviour support plan has been written and is currently being circulated to schools for consultation. The new draft plan is clearly written, and appropriately links different aspects of behaviour support into a coherent continuum of provision. The accompanying action plan is generally clear, but lacks sufficiently targeted milestones for each proposed activity, as an aid to monitoring ongoing progress.

176. Clearer links have been made to the provision for special educational needs, although further clarification is needed in relation to the support for pupils with a

statement of special educational need for emotional and behavioural difficulties. Although it is intended that mainstream schools will play a more active part in the overall provision for emotional and behavioural difficulties, it will not be possible for them to meet the specialist needs of pupils with long-term requirements. The current provision for pupils with a statement for emotional and behavioural difficulties in the pupil referral units is unsatisfactory, and can only be seen as a temporary provision, as the PRUs are not designed to cater for pupils with specific long-term emotional and behavioural needs.

177. Bradford has been involved in two important initiatives, which have been designed to reduce disruptive behaviour. The behaviour improvement programme, which began in June 2002 as part of the national Street Crime Initiative, has made an encouraging start. This initiative has focused on three secondary schools and their contributory primary schools. However, like so many other recent developments within the authority, it is too soon to judge its overall effectiveness. Bradford has also been involved in the Excellence in Cities programme since 1999. This programme has suffered from poor strategic management. There has been insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the impact that learning support units and learning mentors have had on pupils with challenging behaviour. There are, however, clear intentions in the draft behaviour support plan to co-ordinate and link the work of individual learning support units and learning mentors.

Recommendation

In order to improve the quality of behaviour support:

- ensure that there are better systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of learning support units and learning mentors on the overall support for pupils with challenging behaviour, and in reducing disruptive behaviour.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

178. There was no substantial fieldwork carried out in this area. However, in the previous inspection, this aspect was satisfactory overall. A similar provision remains.

179. Most health and safety guidance is clear and advice is readily available to schools. The LEA's procedures for ensuring that they and schools meet their statutory obligations with regard to child protection are satisfactory. A register of nominated school staff is updated annually, and includes details of recent and relevant training provided by the local authority and the area child protection committee training group. There is, however, very limited monitoring and evaluation of the effect of this training on school provision and, therefore, the authority has no clear sense of the cost-effectiveness of its overall support for child protection. Recent developmental work, with a private contractor, to develop a database that collates information from all agencies involved in child protection matters is a sensible approach to greater liaison between social services and education.

Looked after children

180. In the previous inspection, support for looked after children was unsatisfactory. Although some progress has been made in relation to the issues raised in that report, the current provision remains unsatisfactory,

181. The performance of looked after children in 2000/2001 was well below the national and the LEA's targets. Twenty seven per cent achieved one or more A*-G grades at GCSE and only 7.1 per cent at five or more A*-C grades. The targets set in the Quality Protects management action plan are below government targets, but are more generally in line with the current performance of pupils within the authority. Although more accurate pupil level data are now available within the authority, there has, as yet, been insufficient analysis of the performance of all children in care, especially those placed in out-of-authority care.

182. Overall support for looked after children has improved since the last inspection. Training on the compilation and use of personal education plans has begun, with the authority well on its way to meeting its 85 per cent target of training for nominated teachers and social workers by the end of October 2002. However, there is no clear evaluation and monitoring strategy, which assesses the contribution of personal education plans to the raising of attainment of looked after children. The 'education matters' steering group, which has been set up to review and monitor the performance of looked after children, has yet to contribute to this aspect of the work.

183. The authority takes its statutory duty of care role very seriously. A corporate parenting panel has been set up, and meets on a regular basis. While this is appropriate, almost all headteachers interviewed during the inspection indicated that they knew little about the panel, its role and functions, and how it links to those children in care on the rolls of their schools.

Recommendations

In order to improve the provision for looked after children:

- develop further the corporate parenting role of elected members; and
- develop a more detailed analysis of the performance of all looked after children as an aid to more appropriate target setting and resource deployment.

184. Although the school survey and headteachers interviewed during the inspection indicated that co-ordinated action from social services and education was still in need of further improvement, collaboration between education and social services is improving and is now satisfactory. Appropriate plans are in train to more effectively co-ordinate areas of common interest. A detailed list of children in care is provided by social services for education, and procedures for updating the register and informing schools of any change in the status of children in care are clear. A list of designated teachers is also held, and is updated annually. However, there is currently no measure of cost-effectiveness in relation to the work of the combined services for looked after children.

Measures to combat racism

185. When the LEA was inspected in 2000, this aspect was unsatisfactory. It remains so, largely because of the slowness to address some of the key issues raised in the previous inspection report. One key recommendation was to develop a more coherent and more vigorous approach to promoting good race relations, particularly in terms of liaison with minority ethnic communities. Although this has started, much of the activity is recent in origin. The draft community cohesion plan is currently being circulated, and a new racial harassment policy is to be published in January 2003. Overall, the council has started to address many of the areas that support measures to help combat racism, but so much is new that overall effectiveness cannot be judged at this time.

186. The council responded very quickly to the recommendations of the report arising from the enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. It also responded to the Commission for Racial Equality guidance 'Learning for All', which promotes greater racial awareness. The statutory responsibilities arising from the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 have been effectively distributed to all schools, and have also been given a high profile across the council.

187. The race equality scheme, published in May 2002, has succinctly captured some of the key areas for the council. It is a useful document that should help schools address race equality matters, but it is so new that headteachers and governors have yet to see any specific outcomes that relate directly to their own work in schools.

188. Equality targets have been set, but the current employment of staff from minority ethnic groups is very low in comparison to the population within Bradford as a whole. As is the case elsewhere, relatively few teachers and council workers are in senior management positions. The council is aware of this and has developed an appropriate fast track management programme to encourage and support the training and development of black senior officers within the council.

189. The authority is beginning to recognise the need to link different departments across the council in order to tackle ethnic segregation. However, this approach is in its infancy and, as yet, provides no specific outcomes that can be measured for impact. Early work on initiatives within housing is encouraging, but these have yet to make any significant impact on community settlement within the district.

190. Schools report racist incidents to the LEA, but there is uncertainty among some schools about the response expected or required from the LEA. Overall, it appears that there is some under-reporting of racist incidents in schools. From July to December 2001, only four reports of racist incidents were made to the LEA. From January to April 2002, no reports were made. From April to September, the LEA received 30 reports. This latter increase in reporting coincides with training for schools in race relation matters. Many of the schools visited during the inspection reported some tensions within the local community, and many parents and pupils interviewed gave examples of racist behaviour out of school. However, most of these schools also believed themselves to be reasonably cohesive when compared to some of the local communities that they serve. The opportunity for pupils to study

other religions remains a prominent part of the curriculum in Bradford schools. This work is supported strongly by the Interfaith Education Centre and by the development of the agreed syllabus for religious education. Education Bradford is taking a leading role in the development of this support for schools and in the development of an enhanced citizenship curriculum, which reflects the local needs of Bradford's diverse communities.

191. The links with local communities to discuss racism are recognised as an important part of the council's overall approach to developing a community cohesion strategy. However, much of this work to date has been mainly reactive and piecemeal in approach. Many community groups have a sense of frustration at the slowness and lack of transparency of the communication and consultation process. However, there is now a sense of urgency among officers to engage in purposeful dialogue with all the communities that Bradford serves.

Recommendations

In order to improve the measures to combat racism:

- ensure there is a clear procedure within the LEA for following up on recorded and reported racist incidents in schools;
- ensure that all schools are fully aware of how the LEA will act upon reported racist incidents; and
- develop a council-wide strategy for combating racism, which links into the broader community cohesion strategy for the district.

SECTION 5: CORPORATE ISSUES

Introduction to corporate issues

192. In contrast to the last inspection, education is now established as one of the top corporate priorities for improvement. There has been a significant investment in education since the last inspection and further financial commitments have been agreed as part of a three-year funding strategy for education. The chief executive and political leadership of the council have shown strong and determined leadership in their commitment to raise educational standards across the district. The procurement process for the outsourcing of most of the education functions was a radical move. Elected members and senior officers have responded positively to the establishment of a strategic partnership for education. It is to the credit of the authority and Education Bradford that, to date, the process has been managed with considerable success. These changes have led to improvements in the culture and relationships within the education service as a whole. The partnership with schools is now a more appropriate one in which greater trust and confidence are developing between headteachers, officers and members. Education priorities feature strongly within corporate plans and the essential contribution of education to the social and economic regeneration of the district is fully recognised.

Corporate planning

193. Corporate planning processes were judged satisfactory at the last inspection. Although education was prioritised within the relevant corporate plans, a lack of effective corporate working meant that the impact on education had been limited. Targets and objectives for education did not provide a clear strategic direction nor form the basis for effective performance management. A new planning process for the whole local authority was in the early stages of development.

194. Progress since the last inspection has been good. There is a highly effective corporate planning cycle in place and, although newly established, implementation is satisfactory. The council's first corporate plan (2002 –2005), published in May 2002, is structured around six priorities, the first being 'young people and education'. The plan acknowledges the urgent need to raise educational standards across the district and identifies twelve key targets for improvement linked clearly to those in the EDP and in the contract between the council and Education Bradford. A major strength of the plan is the clarity with which the council's performance management framework is set out and how this, in turn, relates to the long term '2020 Vision' for the district, the draft five-year community strategy and the Best Value Performance Plan. The council's planning model seeks to integrate service and financial planning frameworks, but this is in the early stages of development and the two processes are not yet sufficiently well integrated.

195. Within the education department, the recently published strategic plans for Education Bradford and for the education client team are closely aligned to the corporate plan and reflect clear priorities, targets and responsibilities at departmental level. At a corporate level, there is a much clearer understanding of the priorities for

education and how they will contribute to the long-term strategy to promote the social and economic regeneration of the district. The newly established role of the assistant chief executive for education, community and social care is ensuring stronger links between education and the corporate centre.

196. The system for monitoring the implementation of plans is satisfactory and within the education department this takes full account of the added dimension of the strategic partnership arrangements for education. All council services regularly review performance against the agreed key indicators with regular reporting to the council management board. The education strategic management group, comprising the chief executive, assistant chief executive, director of schools, the managing director of Education Bradford and the chair of the education policy partnership meet on a regular basis to ensure appropriate linkages between education and the corporate centre. Monitoring of progress in terms of the processes, outcomes and service delivery is a central feature of the contract with Serco Limited and regular reports are provided to the education policy partnership and to the education overview and scrutiny committee. Procedures for the scrutiny of educational issues are clearly set out, but there is currently a lack of shared agreement and understanding within the education overview and scrutiny committee regarding their role in relation to that of the education policy partnership.

Decision making

197. Arrangements for the council's decision making, particularly financial decision making, were a serious weakness at the last inspection. Although structures were in place for effective consultation, schools and governors had serious concerns about their effectiveness. Difficult decisions had not been taken. A lack of trust existed between members, officers and schools, fuelled by the very poor arrangements for the involvement of schools in budget setting and financial planning.

198. There has been significant progress since the last inspection to address these serious weaknesses. An appropriate range of consultative and management groups has been established including strategy groups for finance, achievement, access, ICT and management information and for monitoring and evaluation of the post-Ofsted action plan. These groups are chaired mainly by headteachers and include appropriate membership of officers from Education Bradford and the LEA client team, together with school and representatives from the education policy partnership. Schools acknowledge that consultation has improved and welcome the greater transparency in education decision making. The partnership between schools and Education Bradford is in its early stages and still evolving. However, recent consultations on the revised EDP and involvement in policy development for SEN, behaviour support and 14-19 education in the district are all indicators of schools becoming more effective as partners and not merely recipients of draft documents. The education policy partnership also fulfils an important role in furthering the involvement of schools and other stakeholders in education developments. The independent chairperson has considerable expertise within the field of education and has played a crucial role in establishing the credibility of the partnership with schools and elected members.

199. The previous inspection found that arrangements to involve schools in discussions on the LEA's budget were poor. The current arrangements are a great improvement on this, at least in terms of consultative structures and processes. The main reservation concerns the extent and quality of the information and analysis presented for schools' consideration. This has thus far been limited, both in terms of overall budget strategy and the more detailed aspects of spending. This is not because the LEA holds major issues back from consultation with schools. It reflects the limited extent of analysis and overview within the LEA itself. Major reviews of spending are planned for the near future, in particular of the funding formula. The new approach to consultation should serve the LEA well in these exercises.

Leadership of officers and elected members

200. The previous inspection report identified poor political and professional leadership as major factors in the poor performance of the local education authority. The chief executive, who was appointed less than a year before the inspection, had made proposals to address these serious weaknesses, including an outline plan for a significant partnership with the private sector.

201. The leadership of members has improved and is now satisfactory. Elected members have a clearer view of the importance of education within the work of the council and have reached an all-party agreement to prioritise education through the budget process. The leader and the chief executive provided strong leadership in the radical move to outsource the majority of the education functions and services to support school improvement. The establishment of the education policy partnership, with its remit to develop education policy and an independent chair, was seen by some as too radical and a removal of their democratic role. However, the education portfolio holder and the two shadow portfolio holders from the other main parties are members of the partnership and together provide an important interface with the wider council. The emerging relationship between the council, the education policy partnership and Education Bradford is appropriate and governed by a clear protocol.

202. The advice provided to elected members is satisfactory overall. Officers from the education client team and Education Bradford ensure that members are kept well informed of key policy issues and developments through a programme of regular briefings and meetings. Members have a clearer understanding of their role in relation to schools and are better informed on matters relating to school improvement. However, there have been weaknesses in the quality of information provided regarding school places planning.

203. On the commencement of the contract with Serco Limited in July 2001, interim management arrangements were made. A transitional team was in place until December 2001 and focused largely on setting up systems for the operation of the contract and the development of key strategies, such as EDP2 and SEN. Progress during this period was limited. The recruitment of the leadership team for Education Bradford, in order to secure high calibre staff, took longer than anticipated. The majority of schools felt unsupported during this period and confused about the new arrangements.

204. The managing director of Education Bradford and his leadership team are all relatively recent appointments since January 2002, but have quickly established their individual and collective role with schools. Schools acknowledge the strong leadership and clear strategic direction that they provide. As managers they bring recent relevant expertise, which is having an immediate effect in areas such as school intervention and the development of the 14-19 strategy. The structure of Education Bradford and the appointments that have been made have the capacity to drive forward the agenda for change and to provide the necessary challenge and support for schools.

205. The education client team has played an important role in establishing with Education Bradford an effective strategy for the monitoring of the contract. From the outset, the close working between the two parties has enabled a strong focus on the quality of service delivery rather than an over-emphasis on the fine detail of the contract. Together they have identified areas requiring further clarification, outstanding issues associated with the output specification or variations in the contract, and suitable progress has been made. However, there are weaknesses in the management of other services that have been retained by the LEA; in school places planning, and asset management, which have been identified in earlier sections of this report.

Partnership

206. The last inspection judged the council's partnership work in support of priorities across several agencies to be satisfactory, and this remains the case.

207. There is a strong tradition of partnership working within Bradford. An umbrella organisation with the prime objective of economic regeneration of the district was first established in the early 1990s. This aspect of the council's work has developed considerably since then, most notably in its involvement in the accredited local strategic partnership, Bradford Vision, and the development of the long term vision and direction for the district, known as '2020 Vision'. The council has worked in partnership with Bradford Vision to produce the community strategy as a five-year delivery plan for the '2020 Vision' and in the development and implementation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

208. The Bradford learning partnership is one of eight partnerships operating within Bradford Vision. It is within this arena that schools, colleges, the LEA, Education Bradford, and the local Learning and Skills Council have collaborated effectively on the development of the district's response to Ofsted's area-wide inspection of 16-19 education and training and the proposals for 14-19 provision.

209. The education client team and Education Bradford have demonstrated a strong commitment to enter into and support a number of productive partnerships. However, as yet, an overall strategic approach to the co-ordination of partnership working has not been established, in particular in relation to regeneration activities and the interface with schools. The Single Regeneration Budget has funded a number of successful school-based activities, most notably the better reading partnership. However, it is not clear how initiatives of this kind fit into the overall strategy to raise standards of literacy or how this work will be sustained beyond the

duration of the project funding. A widely held view expressed by key partners, and further reinforced by external review and evaluation, is that the model of area-based regeneration activities has resulted in a lack of coherence. Education has not been a strong presence within regeneration programmes, to date, and schools are rightly concerned that opportunities for greater collaboration to tackle issues of underachievement and disaffection may be lost.

Recommendation

In order to ensure that education activities feature more strongly within the planning and delivery of the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy:

- improve the quality of strategic planning and co-ordination between the education client team, Education Bradford and the management of the Neighbourhood Renewal programme.

210. Partnership links between education and social services are developing. The co-ordinated database for looked after children and the development of a joint database for child protection, are good examples of collaborative working. The appointment of a senior council officer, with responsibility for developing the services for children across social services, health and education, creates the potential for greater collaboration and coherence in service delivery. The partnership with the health authority has improved and is working well at a strategic level and at an operational level through the joint initiative on teenage pregnancy.

211. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership is well established and has a close working relationship with the local authority's early years and childcare service, which manages the seven nursery schools and co-ordinates provision. The council has a strong commitment to early years education and has agreed substantial levels of funding for under-five provision. Within Education Bradford, two school improvement officers with early years expertise have time allocated to work with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and the early years and childcare service.

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has made a number of fundamental recommendations which are key to further progress in the LEA. Work should begin on them immediately. They are:

In order to improve the quality and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of the EDP:

- develop consistently sharp and specific success criteria that will enable progress to be measured.

In order to target resources more fully to needs:

- ensure that the forthcoming review of the funding formula examines school spending needs in proper detail, both in absolute and comparative terms, and is set clearly within the context of an overall budget strategy for the education service, particularly in respect of support for special educational needs; and
- ensure that published budgets for individual activities reflect more accurately the pattern of expenditure.

In order to improve the overall effectiveness of monitoring and challenge:

- ensure that all records of monitoring visits are sent routinely to the chairs of governing bodies.

In order to improve the distribution of resources and support for information technology:

- undertake a rigorous audit and identify the level of provision of ICT hardware and infra-structure in schools;
- establish and maintain reliable attainment data about the performance of pupils; and
- integrate the management and implementation of the ICT strand of EiC within the LEA's overall strategy and ICT development plan.

In order to improve the targeting of support for the Key Stage 3 strategy:

- develop robust systems for monitoring the effects of the Key Stage 3 strategy on pupils' achievement and the performance of schools.

In order to improve the quality of support for minority ethnic pupils:

- produce a bilingualism policy to aid the work of the specialist support services and schools; and

- develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy to help assess the effectiveness of the specialist support services.

In order to improve the quality of support for gifted and talented pupils:

- develop a robust system of monitoring and evaluation which will inform the management and deployment of support for gifted and talented pupils; and
- improve continuity and understanding of support for gifted and talented pupils between primary and secondary schools.

In order to develop greater autonomy of schools:

- enable all schools to adopt reliable and consistent self-evaluation procedures that will help them to manage their own improvement.

In order to improve the support for school management:

- bring together the services provided by Education Bradford and the LEA, in both the marketing material and the arrangements for consultation with schools.

In order to improve the supply and quality of teachers:

- co-ordinate and make better use of the information available from the work force profile and vacancy monitoring to improve forward planning;
- promote information about routes into teaching within the district in order to attract a wider representation of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds; and
- identify the reasons why newly qualified teachers leave Bradford LEA and work in partnership with schools to improve the retention rate.

In order to improve the strategy for special educational needs:

- urgently bring forward firm proposals to support the review of specialist and special school provision to meet the commitment to inclusion, the role of special schools as centres of excellence and to replace accommodation that is in poor condition or unsuitable for the curriculum.

In order to improve the standards of pupils with special educational needs:

- ensure that the provision necessary to meet the needs of the child is specified clearly on the statement; and
- ensure that special educational needs co-ordinators are effectively supported to improve the quality of individual education action plans and target setting at annual reviews.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the resources allocated to support pupils with special educational needs:

- establish, in consultation with schools, a comprehensive system to monitor and evaluate the progress made by pupils with special educational needs.

In order to improve the strategy to promote social inclusion:

- ensure the development of effective consultation and communication procedures with the full range of community groups in Bradford.

In order to improve the quality and accuracy of planning for school places:

- improve the quality and accuracy of the forecasting of pupil numbers for planning purposes; and
- revise the school organisation plan to give a more comprehensive picture of its forecasts and plans for each local area, better coverage of potential changes in post-16 and special educational needs provision, and a clearer indication of the implications of promoting its school improvement and social cohesion objectives for school place planning.

In order to improve information on admissions for parents:

- ensure that the published admissions policy enables parents to see in advance precisely how places will be allocated at oversubscribed schools.

In order to improve asset management:

- begin a programme of regular meetings with schools to monitor progress and review future needs; and
- significantly enhance the funding available for the maintenance and improvement of school buildings.

In order to improve the quality of support for pupils who have no school place:

- clarify the respective roles and functions of all PRUs in relation to meeting the short-term needs of excluded pupils, and for those pupils who have a statement of special educational need for emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In order to develop further the support for attendance:

- ensure all schools have adequate access to support from the education social work service that is targeted according to need;
- consistently share best practice from attendance initiatives with all schools; and
- communicate the priorities of the education social work service to all schools.

In order to improve the quality of behaviour support:

- ensure that there are better systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of learning support units and learning mentors on the overall support for pupils with challenging behaviour, and in reducing disruptive behaviour.

In order to improve the provision for looked after children:

- develop further the corporate parenting role of elected members; and
- develop a more detailed analysis of the performance of all looked after children as an aid to more appropriate target setting and resource deployment.

In order to improve the measures to combat racism:

- ensure there is a clear procedure within the LEA for following up on recorded and reported racist incidents in schools;
- ensure that all schools are fully aware of how the LEA will act upon reported racist incidents; and
- develop a council-wide strategy for combating racism, which links into the broader community cohesion strategy for the district.

In order to ensure that education activities feature more strongly within the planning and delivery of the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy:

- improve the quality of strategic planning and co-ordination between the education client team, Education Bradford and the management of the Neighbourhood Renewal programme.

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