



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF
BRADFORD
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

May 2000

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

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INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities*, which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the education department and in other council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 266 schools. The response rate was 74 per cent.
3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to one nursery, 14 primary, four middle, one secondary school, six upper schools and two special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4. Bradford LEA serves a large and ethnically diverse district, which is, broadly, more disadvantaged than most of England. Problems of poverty, poor health, vulnerability to crime and unemployment affect many localities. Significant variation exists between wards; some are predominantly poor and others affluent; some are populated mainly by the minority ethnic groups and others have little, if any, minority ethnic population.

5. Educational attainment is generally low, both by national standards and as compared with similar authorities. Standards are rising but nevertheless poor attainment and the insufficient pace of improvement reflect a poverty of aspirations, both in the schools and in the local authority. A sense that "Bradford is different", springs from strong local loyalties but can too easily engender the false and destructive belief that low standards are inevitable and the problems of dealing with them uniquely intractable.

6. The LEA serves the district very poorly. There are many factors which contribute to the weaknesses identified in this report, but first and foremost among them is poor leadership, political and professional, across the whole local authority over many years. However, the Leader, who has been in office for one year and ten months and the Chief Executive, who was appointed ten months ago, have begun to address these weaknesses, with particular reference to education, which is now the council's highest priority. Historically, this has not been the case. The schools have been under-funded for several years. Very recently steps have been taken to rectify this, but the levels of upper school delegated funding are strikingly low and some, owing to inadequate resourcing, are barely viable. The LEA's approach to delegation has had the effect of preserving central services rather than of meeting the needs of schools. The council has a history of political decision-making that has reflected departmental interests, has been competitive rather than collaborative, and has significantly reduced the council's ability to take coordinated action to tackle priorities. The Chief Executive's proposals to address these serious weaknesses include an outline plan which entails significant partnership with the private sector.

7. The LEA was, during this inspection, implementing a reorganisation of its schools on a very large scale. This reorganisation aimed to raise standards, provide value for money and promote greater social harmony but on its own it will not bring about the required improvements. The size and complexity of this reorganisation represent a very considerable challenge for the whole council. There is clear evidence that during the early stages of implementation, the project was poorly managed by the LEA, which created a great deal of uncertainty. The buildings programme is now operating to too tight a timescale. However, assurances have been received from the Director of Education, the managing partner and the council's representative that all pupils will be accommodated by the schedule of dates agreed with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and in line with the timescale to be published by the managing partner.

8. Bradford LEA has many competent people, but their work does not have its full effect, owing to longstanding weaknesses which reduce the LEA's attempts to support schools effectively. Plans and initiatives, although sometimes imaginative,

lack coherence with other related initiatives. Priorities are too numerous. Implementation is not supported by sufficient management capability and is seldom fully completed. The LEA does not target its resources effectively, nor does it consistently challenge its schools in a productive way or support them coherently. Budget-setting and management is poor, with substantial under- and overspends being commonplace on centrally controlled budgets. Often nettles are not grasped at a sufficiently early stage. Some administrative systems are too weak and not rigorously applied. Developments have taken place to improve the structures for consultation but these have only led to cosmetic improvements.

9. The following functions are performed well:

- support for numeracy
- support for governors
- early years
- admissions to school
- child protection.

10. The following functions are inadequately performed:

- the implementation of the Education Development Plan
- the allocation of resources to priorities
- the speed and openness of decision making, particularly financial decision making
- the funding of schools
- the monitoring of school budgets
- the provision of property services
- the provision of monitoring, challenge, intervention and support
- technical support for Information and Communication Technology in administration
- support for school management
- strategy for special educational needs and some aspects of provision
- provision for pupils who have no school place
- support for behaviour
- support for attendance
- support for minority ethnic pupils
- support for looked-after children
- measures to combat racism.

11. Moreover, the LEA is failing to meet its statutory duties in respect of the completion and review of statements of special educational needs and its maintenance of three unregistered units for pupils with special educational needs is a misuse of its powers.

12. Most worryingly, few people in the education department have any clear grasp of the seriousness of the situation. Fortunately, the Chief Executive and the Leader do realise that drastic measures are necessary. The LEA is not assisting its schools to raise standards. We do not believe it has the capability at this time to do so, or to address the many issues raised in this report.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

13. The metropolitan district of Bradford covers an area which ranges from dales and high moorland to inner-city terraced houses and outer-ring housing estates. It includes several small towns, which see themselves as distinct communities. Overall, while there are affluent areas, the district has a high rate of disadvantage. In 1998 the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) index of local deprivation ranked Bradford as 28th out of the 354 English local districts. Overall 22.8 and 29.6 per cent of primary and secondary aged pupils respectively are entitled to free school meals compared with 18.9 and 16.7 per cent nationally.

14. About a third of the pupil population are of minority ethnic heritage, mostly Muslim of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. A high percentage of these children are bilingual. The different cultural, religious and linguistic groups which are a distinctive feature of the district overall are not evenly distributed. Some schools have a population which is almost exclusively of bilingual minority ethnic origin, whereas others are almost entirely white.

15. This inspection took place during a major reorganisation of a three-tier system of 141 first schools (including one infant, one junior), 59 middle deemed secondary schools, and 20 upper schools. The reorganisation aims to raise standards of attainment, provide value for money and promote social harmony. The LEA has taken the opportunity provided by the reorganisation to plan significant improvements to the condition of school buildings.

16. When completed, the reorganisation will lead to the closure of 74 schools, significant changes in the character of a further 145 schools and the opening of ten new primary schools and four new 11-18 secondary schools, including two new Church of England voluntary aided schools. Application has also been made to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) for one independent Muslim girls' secondary school to become a voluntary aided school. The Roman Catholic voluntary aided and controlled schools include four 11-18 secondary schools and 20 primary schools. These schools had reorganised into a two-tier system some years earlier. By September 2000, schools will be organised in a two-tier system of 28 secondary schools, 158 primary schools, including one infant and one junior school, with standard age of school transfer at the end of Year 6. All middle schools will close.

17. A high percentage of three (79 per cent) and four (95 per cent) year-old-children have access to an educational place. The LEA maintains six nursery schools. The percentage of pupils who stay on into post-16 provision is below the national percentages, but is rising. All secondary and upper schools have sixth form provision.

18. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national averages. In primary schools, 2.3 per cent of pupils have a statement compared with 2.6 per cent nationally; in secondary schools it is

3.1 per cent compared with 3.9 per cent nationally. The LEA maintains 13 special schools and the percentage of pupils of secondary school age who are educated in special schools is low. Three pupil referral units for pupils who require education otherwise than at school are also maintained. Three unregistered centres provide education for pupils with special educational needs.

School performance

19. Standards of attainment are lower than national averages. Results from baseline assessment show that children have low levels of reading and mathematical skills on entry to school. Pupils make sound progress at Key Stage 1. Attainment in core subjects at Key Stage 1 is lower than national averages, although the difference between national and LEA averages is not significant in mathematics. At Key Stage 2, average attainment falls significantly. Many schools attain standards which are lower than schools in similar contexts, for instance 44 out of 59 middle schools attained standards below their benchmark group at Key Stage 2.

20. At Key Stage 3, the difference between LEA and national averages narrows. Nevertheless, attainment still remains significantly lower than the national average in all core subjects. Overall attainment at GCSE is poor. It is significantly below national averages for one or more GCSE passes at Grade A*-G; five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-G, and the pupils' average points score. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more subjects at grades A*-C is low (32.3 per cent compared with 46.3 per cent nationally).

21. Improvement is insufficient. Standards are rising but despite recent increases the rate of improvement barely keeps pace with national statistics.

22. In the first cycle of OFSTED inspection, 79 per cent of primary schools (which include only Years 1-4) were rated overall very good or good compared with 72 per cent nationally. In secondary schools (including upper schools and middle deemed secondary) only 45 per cent of schools were judged good or very good compared with 70 per cent nationally. Special schools overall are very varied. Some are judged outstanding whereas one required special measures.

23. Rates of attendance and authorised absence are in line with national averages. The level of unauthorised absence is high but has fallen recently. Permanent exclusions in primary schools are below the national average, whereas in secondary schools the rate is broadly in line with the average.

Funding

24. Spending below the Government's expectation, as stated in the published Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), has been a feature of Bradford's education budget since at least 1995. Bradford's SSA for education is £233.8m for 1999/2000. Per pupil, that is marginally below that for its statistical neighbours: (£2404 per pupil age 5-10 in Bradford compared with £2449 for statistical neighbours; £3112 for pupils age 11 to 16 compared to £3154; £3457 for pupils age 16+ compared to £4102).

25. The out-turn figures for 1998/99 show expenditure 7 per cent below SSA, £209.8m compared with £225.1m. Planned expenditure against SSA for 1999/2000 is £220.3m, which is 6 per cent below SSA. However, an additional £1m was delegated to schools in November 1999. In December 1999 the authority announced a three year financial strategy which will result in targeting increases in funding totalling £11m over a three year period.

26. School funding is low overall, reflecting the low overall education budget. The Section 52 return for 1999-2000, reports proposed expenditure in Bradford on schools as £2444 per pupil overall compared to the statistical neighbour average of £2631 and a national average of £2565.

27. Bradford's expenditure on education per pupil in comparison with other metropolitan LEAs is weighted towards younger age-groups. For 1999-2000 Bradford's proposed Individual Schools Budget is £1609 per primary pupil, £2040 secondary and £8412 per special school pupil. The comparable figures for LEAs in England on average are £1640, £2310 and £8018; for Bradford's statistical neighbours the figures are primary £1651 (103 per cent of the Bradford figure), secondary £2497 (122 per cent) and special £8413 (105 per cent). Comparisons are marginally distorted to Bradford's disadvantage, because the primary and secondary analyses do not fully reflect its middle school arrangements.

28. Provisional delegated budget figures were issued to schools in the final week of the inspection. These include £5m over and above inflation. LEA officers advise that a provisional calculation shows the estimated amount per pupil to be £1,792 per primary pupil, £2,288 per secondary and £8,698 special. Increases in funding will be above 10 per cent and enable the council to meet the Secretary of State's targets for increased delegation.

29. Delegation is below average. The 1999/2000 Section 52 statement shows that the delegated Individual Schools Budget was 77.6 per cent of the Local Schools Budget. This compares with an average of 79.8 per cent for metropolitan LEAs overall and for Bradford's statistical neighbours.

30. The initial Standards Fund allocation to Bradford for 1999/2000 at £17.7 million was the fifth largest gross allocation for any local education authority. The revised allocations by January 2000, including the LEA contribution, amounted to £223 per pupil in Bradford, compared to the average for metropolitan LEAs of £152. Even including this significant additional allocation of funds, predominantly for schools'

budgets, the percentage of budget delegated to Bradford schools (81.4 per cent) remains below that of both metropolitan and similar LEAs (82 per cent).

31. School budgets, especially in secondary schools, are in serious difficulties. The Section 122 out-turn for 1998/99 reports overall year-end balances in schools totalling only £207,137 (0.14 per cent). Eighty-one schools reported a deficit; approximately three quarters of those continuing from the previous year. Twelve of the twenty LEA Secondary Upper Schools carried forward a deficit, four above 2.5 per cent and six above 10 per cent of their total budget. Nine showed a worsening deficit over the year and therefore no evidence of an effective recovery plan. Overall, the deficit in secondary upper school budgets amounted to £2,095,786 or more than 5 per cent of the secondary schools' budget share. The quarterly monitoring reports which schools submit to the LEA predict an overall deficit for school budgets at the end of 1999/2000.

Council Structure

32. The council consists of ninety elected members; the Labour party has the majority. In December 1999 the council modernised the structures for political decision making. The changes are in line with national policy and aim to support and enhance greater corporate working arrangements. An all-party executive committee of 16 members includes eight executive members who hold portfolios of responsibility. An executive member holds the portfolio for education and lifelong learning.

33. Five scrutiny committees have the role of monitoring the council's decisions and the performance of council departments. The terms of reference of these committees intersect across the council's business but are not co-terminous with the five priorities of the council. Education, therefore, does not have a separate scrutiny committee; but is covered within the terms of reference of the economic committee. It is already apparent that a separate committee for education may need to be a future consideration. Community development and the coordination of consultation are fostered by the work of four area panels. As yet, schools participate very little in these panels.

34. The Chief Executive leads a team of seven executive directors including the strategic Director of Education. At the time of the inspection a proposed restructuring of the top management of the local authority was subject to consultation. As a result of this consultation, proposed modifications were made to the draft structure. These new proposals are now approved, and when implemented will appropriately strengthen the management structure for education.

35. The education department is led by a strategic Director of Education and a team of five assistant directors, each leading a major aspect of the department's work including school effectiveness, management support services, pupil and community services, contract services and the two year temporary post for school reorganisation.

The Education Development Plan

36. The Education Development Plan (EDP) has priorities that are appropriate and have the support of schools. The activity plans and the EDP addendum, however, are not an adequate approach to raising standards in the context of urban poverty and at a time of major changes through school reorganisation.

37. The plan is linked to the LEA's broader vision, processes and values. It is based on a detailed audit of the context of the LEA and schools' performance. The audit includes an identification of factors in school performance and the social context which contribute to underachievement. However, the audit over-stresses the social and economic factors that influence achievement. While these circumstances present challenges to schools, an opportunity has been missed for the LEA to take a strong lead to inspire schools to look beyond these economic and social explanations, and set out challenging targets, supported by clear strategies, to reach them.

38. The EDP identifies seven priorities, which are to:

1. raise pupils' achievement in literacy; numeracy; ICT and science;
2. raise the achievement of boys;
3. raise the achievement of ethnic minority pupils;
4. raise the achievement of disaffected pupils;
5. improve the quality of teaching;
6. improve the quality of leadership and management;
7. improve attendance.

39. The emphasis on Priority 1 gives due importance to the need to improve the core subjects of the curriculum. As a school improvement strategy, the plan overall is not sufficiently clear, coherent or focused to raise standards in this challenging context. Activity plans vary in quality. The numeracy, teaching and management and leadership plans are good and identify a number of clearly focused, sequenced and manageable activities that have the potential to raise standards.

40. As a whole, the plan lacks strategic coherence, for three reasons. Firstly, there is a substantial overlap between priorities 2, 3, 4, and 7. The links between these priorities have not been sufficiently well developed, and the strategy to tackle disaffection is too fragmented. This is exacerbated by the nature of priority 4, which does not focus, as the title suggests, on specific pupil groups but on the more nebulous perspective of raising pupils' motivation and self-esteem. Secondly, the activity plans do not consistently link in a coherent way to other related LEA plans, such as the crime reduction strategy and the behaviour support plan.

41. Thirdly, there is an absence of effective mapping of issues relevant to several priorities and activity plans. Issues such as continuity and progression between phases, raising the standards of minority ethnic groups and partnership with parents, are identified in some plans but not in others, hence any attempt to improve them risks being impeded by the lack of a consistent approach.

42. The links between targets and the activities which are required to reach them are explicit in literacy and numeracy, but not consistently precise and clear in other priorities. Success criteria are not often enough quantified. Targets in English at Key Stage 2 are suitably phased although improvements of roughly 7 per cent are required annually. Schools overall only made 3.3 per cent improvement in 1999, which is slower than the national rate. In mathematics at Key Stage 2 in 1999 results are within 2.7 per cent of the year 2000 target. Targets at GCSE in the EDP are insufficiently challenging, however, these have been raised in view of the Excellence in Cities initiative. The target for five or more passes at 40 per cent is still 6.3 per cent lower than the current national average. The target for average points score at 36 is 1.8 points lower than the current national score, and the proportion of pupils gaining at least 1 A*-G at 97 per cent is 1.3 per cent higher than the current national average.

Raising standards during reorganisation

43. Bradford's EDP was submitted to the DfEE before the Secretary of State for Education and Employment announced his support for the reorganisation of schools. The EDP was approved for the full term of three years with the proviso that the LEA develops specific plans for ensure that standards are maintained and continue to rise through the period of reorganisation. Bradford has complied with this requirement in a revised EDP for 2000-2002. However, the revised plan is insufficiently clear or focused to be able to support schools during the transitional period of school reorganisation. A concentration of activities focuses on meeting the needs of pupils at Years 5 and 6 who, following reorganisation, will remain in the 'new' primary schools but there is no similar concentration on meeting the needs of Years 7 and 8 who will transfer to the 'new' secondary schools. Supporting the wider groups of teachers who will be required to teach and cater for the needs of children of different age groups is not sufficiently addressed. The plan also includes activities which are additional to those which have already been identified in the EDP. The schools visited had only recently received it and found it difficult to follow.

The implementation of the Education Development Plan

44. Consultation took place on both the EDP and its addendum. Consultation also included schools and an appropriate range of partners and stakeholders through seminars. These were followed up by canvassing schools' views by questionnaire. Rates of response, however, were very low, representing 25 per cent of all schools.

45. Schools visited regarded the consultation as broadly satisfactory. Upper Schools felt that, in comparison, consultation on Excellence in Cities was much better because this had involved them as participants and not simply as consultees. These latter plans and initiatives are better focused on schools' activities and needs.

46. Overall, the implementation of the EDP is unsatisfactory. In the school visits there was evidence of the implementation of the priorities which are working within a national framework – such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Implementation of priority 5 (teaching) and 6 (leadership and management) is satisfactory. In other priorities there are examples of implementation of some activities, but these are rarely sustained or substantial.

There is slippage, because of staff absence, in implementation of the priority for disaffected pupils.

47. One or two of the primary schools which were visited receive a suitable package of support from the EDP which matches the schools' priorities and shows the capacity for raising attainment. Schools generally, with the exception of literacy, numeracy and ICT, are unclear about how to participate in the activities in the EDP. They do not know whether activities which they perceive as useful are taking place. In some cases, notably science and boys' attainment, even when schools are identified as participating in a priority area, they cannot always identify what is actually happening.

48. The LEA has a detailed and appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework. In addition, service provision will be monitored by the devolved funding reference group. Most priorities have significant monitoring and evaluation strategies incorporated in the activity plan.

49. A monitoring report has been prepared for the period April to October 1999. It reports good progress in priorities 1, 2 and 7, less effective progress for priorities 3 and 4. The report is neither clear nor rigorous. Only the report on the implementation of literacy includes monitoring by schools and teachers, albeit by questionnaire evaluations as a result of courses. Numbers and take-up of activities are not included for all priorities and activities. With the exception of teaching, the reports do not follow the order of activities in the activity plan. This makes it difficult to detect whether there is slippage, or to judge the progress on specific activities.

Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones

50. Plans for Excellence in Cities have been approved. LEA officers and schools believe that Excellence in Cities makes good the lack of a clear strategy to improve standards, particularly at Key Stage 4, in the EDP. Although schools are using additional funding entirely appropriately, in view of the low funding allocated to upper schools, it is questionable whether Excellence in Cities can do any more than supplement inadequate budgets.

51. The strategic overview of Excellence in Cities emphasizes the desirability of appropriately aligning resources to need, coordinating different initiatives, disseminating good practice, and monitoring and evaluation. However, it is not always sufficiently clear how these aims will be achieved. Schools have responded well to developments and are optimistic about their capacity to bring about improvement. In secondary schools visited, the three strands of gifted and talented, learning mentors and learning support centres had been implemented within the target timescales.

52. Approval was gained for establishing an Education Action Zone starting on 1 April 2000, and including 20 schools in South Bradford with the LEA as a major partner. Outcomes and targets in those schools have been enhanced to reflect zone involvement. Two small Education Action Zones have also been approved as part of Excellence in Cities. Schools have a reasonable view of how the Education Action Zone will complement rather than duplicate other initiatives. It is recognised that the

zone will enable schools to work together and develop better continuity between phases and also develop opportunities for life long learning.

The allocation of resources to priorities

53. The LEA does not target its resources effectively on priorities. Efforts to do so are fundamentally inhibited by the poor approach to budget planning and management. This is reported in section 3 (paragraphs 118-127) of this report.

The LEA's approach to ensuring Best Value

54. Bradford was a pilot local authority for the Best Value scheme. Some LEA services were subject to pilot scrutiny. The authority has adopted a Best Value Performance Plan, and over the next five years each of the education department's services will be subject to a Best Value scrutiny. Allied to the development of an effective performance management scheme, this could ensure that Best Value is achieved.

55. However, in the school survey 51 per cent of first schools and 70 per cent of the middle and upper schools described the effectiveness with which the LEA evaluates services to schools as poor or worse. The schools visited for this inspection did not recall being involved in Best Value pilot scrutinies and most suspected that the exercise was insubstantial. The pilot Best Value reviews did challenge services to improve their planning, delivery and evaluation. However, their success was limited by shortcomings in the approach. There was insufficient consideration of alternative modes of delivery. The reviews did not make firm enough judgements about the quality of the services based on outcomes; they did not consult parents as extensively as they could have; they did not sufficiently investigate the methods and outcomes of comparable providers, including other LEAs; they did consult representative headteachers but schools visited during the inspection had little knowledge of or confidence in the reviews.

Recommendations

In order to improve the strategic coherence of the Education Development Plan, the LEA should:

- develop better links between priorities 2, 3, 4 and 7, the behaviour support plan, the crime reduction strategy and the children's services plan to provide an adequate strategy to combat disaffection;
- improve the focus of activity plans by deciding the intersecting issues which affect attainment. Map and permeate the approaches to those issues in each priority;
- devise, in collaboration with schools, a convincing strategy which is understandable to schools to address the needs of school management and staff, following reorganisation, on such issues as the management of larger schools and teaching pupils in unfamiliar age groups;
- improve the link between activities and targets by devising success criteria which are quantifiable, and link to the projected improvement in targets.

In order to improve the management of the implementation of the Education Development Plan, the LEA should:

- ensure that schools are clear about the activities proposed for each priority, at least in the short and medium term, the outcomes proposed, and the criteria for participation;
- improve the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the EDP by developing a more systematic and rigorous approach, clearly defining the intended outputs and outcomes, which identifies and accounts for slippage and involves schools more significantly in the evaluation.

In order to improve the LEA's approach to achieving Best Value, the LEA should:

- involve schools as key service stakeholders and clients in the Best Value reviews and extend consultees to include parents and pupils.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions

56. Despite the difficulty of the context, attainment overall in Bradford LEA and in many individual schools should be considerably better. The onus for raising standards rests largely with the schools, but they are entitled to expect better support from the LEA than they receive. Many areas of LEA policy and its implementation, and the organisation and quality of support show weaknesses which reduce effectiveness.

57. The fact that secondary schools are poorly funded in itself casts doubt on the strength of an all-party agreement, or corporate consensus that education is the council's priority and at the heart of regeneration strategies. Moreover, the effectiveness of LEA policies and services is far too variable. A weak strategic approach to special educational needs, especially for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, poor, albeit very recently improving, provision to raise standards of attendance and for minority ethnic children, unresponsive services for the maintenance of school buildings and for hardware for ICT, all distract schools from the essential task of raising standards. There is no convincing evidence that the LEA has heeded sufficiently schools' views on the effectiveness and quality of services or that the schools are treated as if they are major clients. The lack of involvement of schools in Best Value Pilot Reviews suggests that they are not so regarded.

58. Bradford local authority took appropriate steps in 1997 to identify the extent of stress faced by council employees. The stress audit found that council employees and, in particular, teachers, face high levels of stress. This is substantially higher than amongst staff working in the National Health Service or among employees in the general population. Teachers experienced the highest levels of stress and reported the highest level of work demand, increases in workload and the greatest reductions in the resources available. There are no authoritative comparisons with teachers nationally. The education department has made some attempt to develop services for training and support, although as yet some still have to come to fruition.

59. A large scale reorganisation of schools was poorly managed in its early stages and led to delays of four to five months in implementation, particularly with regard to appointing the managing partner and making a start to the buildings programme. This has led to uncertainty amongst governors, headteachers, teachers and parents. Very recently a stronger and more appropriate management structure has been put into place. A significant number of logistical arrangements for buildings, staff placement and resources still have to be finalised. While the determination and commitment of members and LEA officers to reorganise primary and upper school management remains unshaken, uncertainty will make it more difficult for the LEA to manage transition in a positive way. Nevertheless, the Director of Education, the Chief Executive, the managing partner and the council's representatives are confident that it is achievable.

Monitoring, challenge, support and intervention

60. The LEA's approach to monitoring, support, intervention and challenge is unnecessarily complex. It often results in duplication of effort and has major weaknesses which reduce the effectiveness, in particular of assigned inspector monitoring visits. All the schools visited knew of the LEA's policy for monitoring, support, challenge and intervention. In some schools, including some schools causing concern, the additional support which the school can anticipate when in difficulties was, however, unclear.

61. The approach fulfils the wording of the Code of Practice for LEA-school relations, but not the spirit. The LEA has assigned an inspector/adviser to every school for monitoring purposes in line with a differentiated approach and the purposes outlined in the Code of Practice. All schools will receive at least one visit a year and those who perform below and well below their benchmarked groups will receive additional visits.

62. However, not all schools that are performing below benchmark group have been identified for additional visits. Schools causing concern generally receive a higher allocation of support. In addition, schools scheduled for closure have received additional monitoring visits. The allocation of EDP resources, combined with monitoring visits, does not target the support in a sufficiently differentiated way to meet school needs.

63. The assigned inspector's annual monitoring visit focuses predominantly on the process of target setting. Often additional aspects, such as monitoring of the implementation of literacy, numeracy and the progress of newly qualified teachers, have been included. Inspectors are well prepared for the visits and receive a suitable amount of data to review the school's performance. The visit focuses predominantly on the mechanics of target setting to ensure that schools have completed the process in a rigorous way. The schools visited all received a written report on the visit identifying some likely points for action, but in the main this has fallen short of recommendations to raise or review targets. In the 28 schools visited, only four LEA written reports raised concerns or criticisms about the way in which the school's targets had been set, even though they were often set too low.

64. The principal and senior adviser subsequently review the targets in the light of the school performance together with the assigned inspector's report, and agree the targets in writing on behalf of the LEA. In schools where targets are not sufficiently high, letters are sent to schools asking them to review their targets. Letters were sent to a number of schools at the time of the inspection. This challenge to raise targets has not evoked a positive response, and, in the main, schools resent it.

65. The approach is too blunt an instrument to facilitate improvement. It is inefficient because of duplication between the work of the assigned inspector and the managers of the inspection and advisory service, and has other inherent weaknesses. For example, the procedures draw a false and unusual separation between the procedures for challenge and support. The intention of the Code of Practice is that monitoring, challenge, support and intervention are mutually dependent processes. Challenge is expected to suffuse support, monitoring and

intervention and vice versa. It was clear during discussions that some schools need more support to devise an effective strategy to meet the targets. They found difficulty in identifying improvements which could raise standards, and that the support they needed was not necessarily available.

66. Support is largely purchased by schools and provided by the link inspector/adviser. Link inspector/advisers and assigned inspectors have different roles. Routine communication between them does not always take place. This is a deliberate policy and it has been agreed with schools that the services which they purchase maintain confidentiality and respond to the school's own agenda unless there are significant and serious concerns. The assigned inspector, therefore, does not always know the strategy for support or whether it is sufficiently strong to meet the challenge.

The Inspection and Advisory Service

67. Management systems are orderly and diligent but lack a capacity to promote continuous improvement. A careful unit plan maps out the main initiatives and their time allocations. The plan is based on an audit of the main service achievements in the preceding year. It also includes an analysis of staff perceptions of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats. However, there is no response to these findings in the internal service development, management or deployment of staff. A key factor facing the service is the reduction over the last three years in the percentage of schools which purchase the service. No thorough analysis involving schools investigates this and no planned action is taken which counteracts the trend. The annual service report contains information rather than evaluation. More useful evaluation which could lead to development has taken place in relation to in-service training.

68. Details provided of the workload management and the differential rates of purchase of inspector/advisers show considerable variation in workloads. Schools have a choice when they purchase link inspector/advisers. While there are some excellent and effective individuals, variation in quality is too great. The service has taken steps to establish induction, training and performance review for inspector/advisers. However, there is no clear analysis of the skills inspector/advisers require to conduct their general role, and more rigorous work is required to achieve greater consistency. The meeting and training day programme provides effective up-dates of national and local initiatives, and opportunities to develop new skills in data analysis and ICT. These are complemented by some individual external training opportunities.

69. The service is comparatively large and can cover most subjects of the curriculum. It has a fairly good balance between primary and secondary phase specialists, but only about half the inspector/advisers have senior management experience in schools. The service augments the availability of credible management expertise by four consultant heads. These heads are placed as substantive heads in difficult schools with a view to improving the schools' performance, and on one day a week they support other headteachers or LEA initiatives. This pattern of deployment enables them to use their skills to improve a particular school, but it does not maximise opportunities to improve the management

skills of colleague heads by working alongside them. The staffing of the service is not sufficiently flexible, and does not make enough use of secondments or the associates or consultants, to ensure that the service and schools have access to different skills and recent and relevant school experience.

70. Rates of delegation at £264,600 are low when compared with the service expenditure of £1,844,600, or the EDP budget for 1999-2000 of £1,701,100 plus £450,000 for support for schools causing concern, and the programme of regular visits to schools. No further funding has been delegated to schools in 1999. The funding which is delegated does not give schools sufficient choice of other providers. The service has not as yet been the subject of a Best Value review. While there has been some evaluation of particular projects, such as the teacher quality initiative, the service has little evidence of the effectiveness of link or assigned inspector/advisers.

Support for target setting and the use of performance data

71. The LEA's circulation of data to schools is satisfactory. It provides a comprehensive range which was originally devised to support the needs of the three tier system, and pre-dated the circulation of data nationally. The LEA has an intention to rationalise the data in view of the two-tier system and the national data circulation. The data include a useful analysis of local circumstances, although the LEA has not had access to pupil level data until recently, or comprehensive data on ethnicity. No written analysis to help schools identify the key points or questions which will help effective use is included. The LEA has, however, taken steps recently to collect pupil level data using a more sophisticated database, which will facilitate extensive analysis. The implementation of unique pupil numbers is on schedule.

72. The schools visited made variable use of the data. Training provided by the LEA on both use of data and target setting was generally helpful. LEA guidance details an appropriate approach to target-setting, and includes a balance between individual pupil predictions and whole school factors. It also links the target-setting process with school self review and development planning.

73. These procedures are not consistently used by schools. The rigour of the target-setting process and its effectiveness in supporting school improvement are variable. Nine schools visited used the data very effectively to set targets and used the process to stimulate improvement. In the other schools, too much emphasis was placed on setting the target on the basis of prediction of pupils' performance. Improvements across the school had not been effectively considered or quantified to add challenge to the predictions. Assigned inspectors had visited all schools to discuss the target setting process but in all but one or two schools the visit had not been effective.

Support for literacy

74. Support for literacy is satisfactory, although there are both strengths and weaknesses. The LEA did not meet its target for literacy in 1999. In 1999 results were very poor at 59 per cent, representing a gain of only 3.4 percentage points on the previous year and the lowest gain in the region. However, boys' reading did

improve by 16 per cent. Attainment in writing is much weaker than in reading. The LEA's English targets for 2000 and 2002 are modest - 66.5 and 75 per cent of pupils attaining Level 4 or above - but will nevertheless be hard to attain.

75. The LEA has a history of successful initiatives - particularly for reading and oracy - which it has continued to support. In the schools visited, the better reading partnership is particularly effective and widely used. Initiatives such as "Talking partners" and "Guided Talk" focus on the needs of bilingual learners and provide schools with effective resources and training.

76. Implementation of the National Literacy Strategy is satisfactory. In thirteen schools visited for this inspection, support was satisfactory in eleven and unsatisfactory in two. The EDP activity plan is a comprehensive and very ambitious three year programme which includes many different initiatives. It has two potential weaknesses. The plan lacks focus and clear priorities because of the number of activities envisaged. Furthermore, 45 schools, a higher percentage than most LEAs nationally, have been identified as needing intensive support. With the staffing which is available this has left insufficient time to support literacy coordinators in schools which are not targeted for intensive support.

77. Initial training was reasonably well received by most schools. Additional literacy support training has been very well received. Schools highlight weaknesses such as the lack of guidance, until recently, for working with mixed age classes. The lack of support networks for coordinators in the non-intensive schools is a major weakness. Recently, appropriate attention has been given to the weaknesses identified in pupils' attainment; additional support has been provided, particularly for writing. Staff funded under the Ethnic Minorities and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG), who work in Key Stages 1-3, are being trained in the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and the Year 7 literacy framework.

78. LEA inspector/advisers have taken part in OFSTED training for the inspection of literacy and numeracy. Monitoring of the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has taken place. The evaluations have led to useful reports with some pertinent recommendations about future training needs. Summer schools have been usefully evaluated, and the gains in the learning outcomes of the children who attended have been measured and are encouraging.

79. There has been no extension of the approaches to develop a Key Stage 3 project. Additional training has been offered to middle school teachers who are transferring to teach Year 5 and 6 in primary schools. Upper schools, however, have had an opportunity to learn about the approach of the National Literacy Strategy in a two day course, and meetings of heads of English departments have considered improved approaches to the teaching of literacy.

80. The LEA has two literacy consultants, with some additional contribution from other staff. However, it is clear that the staff are over-stretched. Originally the LEA bid for a third, but was unable to find its share of the funding. There are recent and appropriate plans to extend the staffing, which should, on this occasion, be implemented.

Support for numeracy

81. Support for numeracy is very good. Nevertheless, low attainment is a major issue. The 2000 and 2002 targets are modest at 58 and 70 per cent respectively. The 1999 results at 55 per cent are 13.7 per cent below the national percentages, although results improved marginally faster than the national rate.

82. Support for numeracy is planned, well-targeted, expert and timely. The LEA was one of 12 pilot areas for the National Numeracy Project in 1996, and established a very effective teaching base as a training resource for mathematics. The EDP priority includes 16 activities, each of which has a staged programme of development. The activities are varied and comprehensive but also focused and well targeted. Links are drawn with improving attainment in multi-ethnic primary schools and developing language skills through mathematics, although there are no specific developments in the use of ICT. Implementation of the activity plan is highly satisfactory and monitoring and evaluation demonstrate that strategies are being effective.

83. The LEA has three consultants, increasing to five in May 2000, managed by the mathematics inspector. The consultants are capable and well respected and schools consistently report that training is very good. The team has taken effective action to ensure that support is well focused to make maximum improvement and has organised a significant amount of training for staff of new primary schools, with particular emphasis on those transferring from middle schools to primaries. Schools value the training being matched to individual needs rather than receiving a standard package. This includes analysing teacher needs and providing opportunities to observe the consultants teaching demonstration lessons. The programme is also well supported by the LEA's leading maths teacher programme which runs a numeracy support network for school coordinators in primary schools.

Support for Information and Communication Technology

84. Support for improving the standards in Information and Communication Technology is too variable and has some significant weaknesses. Support was rated unsatisfactory in six schools and satisfactory in nine schools visited. The annual report on the standards and quality of Bradford schools reports overall that standards are below national expectations, teaching variable and the curriculum too narrow. Standards in ICT vary greatly between schools. Insufficiently challenging targets that only 50 per cent of 14 year olds will reach Level 5 and above by 2002 have been set, but are subject to review in the light of improved performance in 1999. The 1999 teacher assessments at Key Stage 3 showed 48.6 per cent of pupils already achieving Level 5 and above. It is projected that by 2002 all serving teachers will have the confidence to use ICT in the curriculum

85. The LEA has been successful in bidding for additional resources and seeking initiatives to support ICT. The education technology strategy is currently under revision as a result of a review of existing plans for the National Grid for Learning, for which the LEA achieved Pathfinder status, and initiatives such as reorganisation and Excellence in Cities. The LEA is also part of the Yorkshire and Humberside regional broadband project (comprising 15 LEAs) to develop high-speed information

communications network across the region's schools. Progress is being made so that the LEA is on target to meet the Government's expectation of 90 per cent electronic communication by 2002. However, currently there is little use of electronic mail. A policy exists for the linking of the LEA's administrative provision to the National Grid for Learning initiative, but this is not yet functioning efficiently.

86. The EDP priority links appropriately with national initiatives such as the National Grid for Learning, training through the New Opportunities Fund and liaison with local industrial partners. The plan has a clear timescale, success criteria, costs and responsibilities for LEA personnel. The implementation of the activity plan, however, is patchy and unclear; training seems to have fallen behind. It has now been revised with the agreement of schools. The National Grid for Learning implementation programme is on schedule and includes middle schools where the buildings will continue to be used following reorganisation. Schools have to produce an agreed ICT plan before being included in the National Grid for Learning initiative and receive good support to achieve this.

87. There are termly evaluation and monitoring visits to schools undertaken by the inspection and advisory service to address each priority area, resulting in termly progress reports. Action outcomes include phase specific workshops for teachers to develop confidence and competence. These are considered very useful by schools but are not matched to the wide range of competence of school coordinators. The LEA's National Grid for Learning Internet site provides schools with useful curriculum materials. Staff value the provision. Schools also receive appropriate advice on the use of the New Opportunities Fund for in-service provision.

88. Advice varies significantly in its quality and usefulness. Some schools state that advice is good, others that it is poor. Views of schools are clearly influenced by whether they have received the advisory support for the National Grid for Learning funding and the upgrading of facilities.

89. A significant number of schools have very limited access to internet and the computer ratio in the reorganised secondary schools is set to be below the national average. This will be addressed in part by provision from the Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zone initiatives. The four year programme for implementing the National Grid for Learning also means that some schools will fall further behind in the provision of computers and ICT services. The LEA is relying too heavily on this to solve the problems of schools with weaknesses in the use of ICT. This will be too late for schools who are in the last cohort. At the time of this inspection, clear advice had not been given to the schools which were closing as a result of schools reorganisation, on the appropriate allocation of computer equipment.

Support to schools causing concern

90. Nine schools have been judged to require special measures since 1993. At the time of the inspection, of these schools, only one remains in special measures and is scheduled to close. In addition, since September 1997, seven schools have been identified as having serious weaknesses. One of the schools no longer requires special measures but has serious weaknesses. Only one school with serious weaknesses, when monitored, was found to require special measures. The LEA has

identified a further 27 schools which are causing concern but these have not yet been identified by OFSTED inspection. However, the number of schools requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses may not be up to date as, in view of the schools' reorganisation, OFSTED inspection of schools has been postponed.

91. The LEA's policy for supporting the three categories of schools which give rise to concern sets out appropriate arrangements for monitoring their progress. The procedures, however, do not give in sufficient detail a stepped early intervention strategy, whereby early concerns are brought to the attention of the head and governing body, who have a time-limited opportunity to put these right.

92. All schools requiring special measures took more than eighteen months to be removed. In four schools, progress was too slow and the schools required longer than two years to reach an acceptable level. Seven schools which had caused or are causing concern in one of the three categories were visited in this inspection. In addition, reports of three further schools' history were read, including the school which is currently in special measures.

93. Overall the effectiveness of LEA support in these ten schools is mixed. Support was effective in five of the schools. Good procedures for monitoring of the quality of teaching enabled one school to move forward rapidly to a position where the quality of teaching improved until it was consistently satisfactory or better. In two schools effective support from the Interdisciplinary improving behaviour and attendance team had addressed behavioural issues. Effective support is provided to governing bodies. There are good procedures for co-opting additional governors to schools requiring special measures. In two schools this had been exceptionally effective and enabled the schools to move forward in a purposeful way.

94. In the remaining five schools, support had either been too slow, had not successfully stemmed further deterioration or had not initially been effective. In all but one school, which is now scheduled to close, support, eventually, has proved effective and the schools have improved. In some schools the LEA's procedures are not followed in a sufficiently tight way. The timetable of monitoring and meetings in at least two schools is not at all clear and it is not possible to find a strong, regular and persistent strand of monitoring and support.

95. In at least three schools there was a reluctance to tackle problems when they related to the headteacher or senior management. Support was invariably provided in curriculum areas, but although the inspector/adviser had correctly located the reasons for lack of progress in senior management, the LEA was slow to address this.

96. The role of the appointed monitoring inspector/adviser is spelt out clearly in the LEA's procedures, but it is not sufficiently clear who is responsible for providing the management support for a head when the school does or does not purchase link consultancy. The link inspector/adviser frequently has a role in supporting heads but will not be included in the dialogue about the needs and the progress of the school in, for example, feedback from HMI monitoring visits. Similarly, it is not clear in every school who provides this support when the school does not purchase the service.

Coordination and review of the effectiveness of the support of all services working in a school are not sufficiently strong in some schools.

Support for school management

97. Support for leadership and management is identified in the LEA's draft school improvement strategy (1999) as the heart of the school improvement strategy. However, LEA support for school management is mixed in quality and effectiveness. Of the 28 schools visited, support was satisfactory in only half. In the first cycle of OFSTED inspection, management and efficiency were rated better than the national averages in first schools, with 72 per cent of schools rated good or very good compared with 65 per cent nationally. In secondary schools, however, including upper and middle schools, 53 per cent of schools were rated good or very good compared with 60 per cent nationally.

98. The EDP includes a clear set of activities to support schools in developing aspects of leadership and management. The activity plan in the EDP is implemented according to requirements, and monitoring is satisfactory. The LEA has organised an annual leadership programme for the past four years. Strong links exist with colleges, universities and local business and industry for inputs to the programme of seminars, lectures and workshops. The programmes offer an award in education management. Some courses are also offered to teachers and assistants.

99. There are good links between the National Professional Qualification for Headship and Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers schemes. The leadership programme sustains a network for heads and deputies. The support for new headteachers, however, is not satisfactory. The HEADLAMP initiative is not operating efficiently for all new headteachers. Arrangements for mentoring new headteachers are unsatisfactory as they can only benefit from mentoring by serving and experienced headteachers on request.

100. Schools report that link inspector/advisers give valuable support when they are purchased. Much will be dependent on the effectiveness of the link inspector/adviser, as this work is not centrally planned, monitored or evaluated. Visits by assigned inspectors have a narrow focus. There are insufficient links drawn between target setting, school self-review and development planning. Deficit budgets in some schools are not being tackled with sufficient determination, owing to the combination of ineffective support and poor funding.

101. The LEA draft school improvement strategy identifies effective school self review as a key process, but development in the schools is too variable. The LEA made an early start through the provision of published guidelines in 1997. However, the support provided to implement the guidelines has relied too heavily on the work of the link adviser who is purchased by the school, instead of being integral to the work of the assigned inspector/adviser. These guidelines, however, are scheduled to be relaunched as a priority in the addendum to the EDP.

102. The EDP sets out a sensible range of activities, including middle management training, to develop and sustain good teaching. The LEA promotes a number of

national initiatives in a helpful way and has initiated a number of helpful projects, such as the teacher quality initiative, which have been very effective in schools. Schools, however, report that the LEA does not always sustain projects or evaluate them successfully so that good practice can be disseminated. Schools have not always been satisfied with the in-service programme but the current programme relates much more closely to the EDP priorities and the schools' own priorities. The brochure is circulated termly, which does not assist schools with long term planning.

103. The programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers is appropriate. Only two teachers in the last academic year have been supported through competency procedures. This is very low in comparison with the reports made by headteachers in some of the schools visited about the number of teachers who face difficulties. These cases were well supported by the advice and involvement of the LEA.

104. Training of management and teachers to meet new needs in a two-tier system is not well planned and has been insufficient. Audits of training needs of teachers have been conducted which demonstrated that it is clearly impossible for the LEA to meet all the training needs of school management or teachers. The LEA has taken the view that training for reorganisation should permeate training courses for current priorities and initiatives. This would have been a sound strategy if it had been adequately planned, specific requirements identified and a coherent strategy devised and disseminated. The responsibilities of the LEA and of the schools for preparation and training for reorganisation have not been made clear. With one exception, the LEA has not identified, commissioned or provided advice to schools on other training providers who may be able to support school management and teachers.

105. The training in support of reorganisation has focused mainly on the needs of teachers who are transferring from middle schools to primary schools. In February 2000, rather late in the day, a bid has been made to the Teacher Training Agency to fund a conversion course for middle school teachers in association with Leeds Metropolitan University. Teachers in middle schools have had the opportunity to visit schools to help with career choices, and a further two days of supply cover has been provided so that they can visit the school to which they are transferring or to attend courses.

106. Support to school management has focused predominantly on the requirements of closing schools. Good guidance has been provided on the logistical requirements of closing schools and all closing schools have received a visit from their assigned inspector/adviser. Some early work in 1998 has taken place with secondary heads on appropriate curriculum models and staffing structures. Very short two hour courses were arranged for heads of primary schools to begin to look at the transitional issues. A short course of four seminars has been provided to heads of middle schools who are transferring to primary headship. Recognising their own training needs, the heads have sensibly formed their own network and are each subscribing to fund a provider for higher education to meet their training needs. Forty three LEA training courses have been arranged which are broadly relevant to reorganisation, although about half of these focus on current educational initiatives. Very little training in preparation for reorganisation took place in the school year

1998-99. Middle school teachers who are transferring to primary schools have been well served by additional courses on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Support for governors

107. The school governor service has many strengths, including a well-planned and coordinated range of activities for governing bodies. It has a clear set of aims and priorities with an appropriate structure to support the work of governing bodies. The buy-back rate by schools is consistently high across the different phases and the service is considered better than satisfactory.

108. The shortfall in the number of LEA representatives on governing bodies also leaves some groups with limited influence in making their views known to the elected members. Eleven per cent of governors have not been appointed and posts are vacant, although it has been understandably difficult to recruit governors to closing schools. Appropriate strategies are in place to identify additional governors for schools causing concern. Effective and imaginative strategies have been developed to recruit and support governors from minority ethnic groups. Arrangements for the appointment of shadow governing bodies in preparation for the opening of new schools was effectively organised.

109. The LEA, however, has not devised effective and consistently applied procedures or support to raise the awareness of governors' of their responsibilities in schools that have deficit budgets. In spite of these shortcomings, the school governor service is well managed, has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses, and has planned effectively to rectify the shortcomings. The responsiveness, expertise and flexibility result in the provision being highly valued by schools. The activity plan in the EDP is being implemented in an effective way and monitoring is thorough.

OTHER AREAS: Early years provision

110. The LEA has a coherent, strategic approach to developing early years provision. The authority has recently established an Early Years and Childcare Service which manages its six nursery schools and co-ordinates early years and childcare work. This service has made a significant contribution to the work of the vigorous Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership in promoting links between maintained and private early years provision. Services for special educational needs have also made helpful contributions in supporting non-maintained providers. There has historically been very strong support from the inspection and advisory service for early years developments.

111. The authority has made some promising developments in provision. For instance, its nursery schools all have considerable strengths; the authority is currently establishing one Sure Start project and has received Government approval for another.

112. The LEA has received early funding to extend provision for 3 year-olds. At present there are not sufficient funded places overall for all 3 year-olds and 4 year-olds, though there are more than enough for all 4 year-olds across the whole district.

The Early Years Partnership has submitted plans to the DfEE to achieve the target of places for 83.3 per cent of 3 year-olds. The authority is considering a new admissions procedure that would ensure that priority is given to the 4 year-olds in gaining access to this provision. The authority is also working with the Partnership to extend the diversity of provision, as the current range is limited in some areas. Further expansion is therefore being considered, but the situation is less well advanced than it would have been if nursery provision had been included in the review of schools which was conducted as the basis for the reorganisation proposal. The authority has now conducted a re-mapping of nursery provision and a final report with recommendations was approved in Autumn 1999.

Recommendations

In order to improve the LEA's approach to provide support, challenge, intervention and monitoring, the LEA should:

- ensure that assigned inspector/advisers are empowered as officers of the LEA to agree school targets;
- train and monitor the work of inspector/advisers to ensure that challenging targets are agreed with schools;
- revise with schools the system of link and assigned Inspector/advisers to ensure that processes for setting targets are appropriately linked to the discussion of schools procedures for self evaluation, development planning and staff development.

In order to improve schools' opportunities to choose the support which is required for school improvement, the LEA should:

- consider the level of delegation of funding for inspection and advice with a view to an increase;
- extend the use of secondments and consultants so that the inspection and advisory service has access to more staff who have recent and relevant experience of the management of primary and secondary schools;
- provide better guidance to schools on the effectiveness of services which are available locally for purchase.

In order to improve target setting and the use of targets to enhance school improvement, the LEA should:

- ensure that the LEA's guidance on target setting is followed by all schools and that schools link targets to an appropriate school improvement strategy so that the target can be met.

In order to improve support for literacy, the LEA should:

- proceed with plans to enhance the number of staff who work to support the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy;
- In the light of new staff:
 - extend support which is available to schools which do not receive intensive support;

- develop a strategy to improve standards of attainment in literacy in secondary schools.

In order to improve support for ICT, the LEA should:

- identify schools where standards and use of ICT are unacceptably low and ensure staff have an intensive programme of training and that access to National Grid For Learning is accelerated;
- make arrangements for computer equipment to be transferred securely and equitably from schools which are closing.

In order to improve the support for schools causing concern, the LEA should:

- extend procedures to ensure the early identification of difficulties and to ensure better co-ordination and monitoring of the effectiveness of support;
- ensure that schools' agenda for improvement is monitored and, if insufficient progress is made, the management difficulties in the schools are tackled speedily;
- suspend the usual arrangements for the purchase of link inspector/adviser support while the school is in difficulties; ensure that schools receive as an entitlement professional support of an inspector/adviser who acts as the lead and coordinating adviser for the LEA and identify another inspector/adviser who will assist with the monitoring of the school's progress.

In order to improve support for management and leadership of schools, the LEA should:

- develop a sustained programme of training, support and consultancy to improve the schools' strategies for self review and evaluation;
- devise a mentoring scheme for new headteachers;
- make systematic use of competency procedures for teachers who are in difficulties;
- in co-operation with schools and, where necessary, other providers, devise an effective and coherent programme of training for teachers and school managers to prepare and support them in the transitional period of developing effective primary and secondary schools.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

The clarity, coherence, consistency and feasibility of corporate plans

113. The local authority drafted its first community plan in 1997 to cover a three year period. It defined five priorities, namely; rebuilding communities; partnerships for regeneration; better education for all; a clean, healthy and valued environment; and fighting crime for a safer district. The plan was drafted on the basis of considerable consultation with the community and accompanied by a real attempt to involve the district's population in tackling some of its problems. It is a good plan, but has had little impact on education because the autonomy of departments has been stronger than allegiance to intersecting corporate priorities. Nevertheless, the local authority has devised effective corporate plans, such as the children's services plan and the crime reduction strategy, in response to national requirements. These plans help to link the work of several departments but have not had a profound effect on the education department's priorities.

114. The LEA's over-arching strategic statement provides a general approach to developing a coherent overview of national and local initiatives. Strategic statements for each major division are expected to translate the corporate plan into action. These do not provide a secure basis for LEA strategic development or service improvement. Priorities are not clearly defined. Targets and objectives are too numerous and timescales too vague to provide a clear strategic direction. They do not form the basis for effective monitoring of progress or meaningful links to a system of performance management. These statements have little impact and, in practice, the performance targets which are set for senior staff effectively shape the departmental day to day priorities.

115. A new planning process is devised for 2000/2001 for the whole local authority which includes a twenty year vision, a five year integrated strategy community plan, strategic statements and service portfolios in preparation for Best Value studies. The new planning process is in the early stages of development and it is too early to judge whether it will overcome the weaknesses of the previous system.

The speed, openness and effectiveness of decision making, particularly financial decision making

116. Structures are in place for effective consultation. A large number of working groups have been established, each having a clear remit and including headteacher participation. Governor consultation is also well structured with area forums selecting representatives to an LEA consultative group. The LEA also works very effectively with trade union representatives. Nevertheless, schools have real concerns about the effectiveness of consultation. They often feel that decisions have been taken before their views are heard and not in a sufficiently transparent way. Governors expressed concerns about the short timescale often imposed on them for comment on strategic plans, such as the EDP, and the limited influence they have on policy decisions through lack of consultation in the early stages of policy planning.

117. Partnership is fragile and there are very few examples where headteachers and representatives of schools work collaboratively with LEA officers to seek solutions to problems and issues. Despite the openness and honesty of the Director of Education, a level of mistrust continues to exist in relationships between members, officers and schools. This is continually being fuelled by the very poor arrangements for, and lack of involvement of schools in, budget setting and financial planning.

118. Financial planning and management in Bradford have been poor. The present Chief Executive and the Leader of the council have recently announced their intention to raise the levels of funding for education in Bradford through a three year financial strategy (paragraph 25); schools generally welcome and believe their commitment. The budget recently approved by the council should ensure that the LEA meets the Secretary of State's requirement to achieve a minimum 6 per cent increase in delegation and to delegate at least 80 per cent of the Local Schools Budget (LSB). However, fundamentally different approaches to planning and management are also required.

119. There have been two particular shortcomings in the local authority's strategic budget planning. First, there has been limited, if any, strategic overview of the council budget by members to ensure that the allocation of budgets to departments is planned to support policy and service priorities. There is a widespread view, supported by some members, that the strategic budget planning process has been a tussle between groups of members with a departmental allegiance, and not a process rooted in collegiate responsibility for the direction of the council. The 1998/99 Audit Management letter recommended, "Members and strategic directors should ensure that continued progress is made on budget reporting and control. In particular, longer term budgets and monitoring should be linked more clearly to the authority's corporate and service plans."

120. Second, within the relevant committee and caucus groups there has been insufficient consideration of the service implications of budget options. This led, for example, to an approach based on a banded weighting for budget reductions in which the band to which a service was allocated reflected its relevance to the policies of the majority group members. There was little, if any, reference to the likely impact on different services and different budget options.

121. Until recently, officers were required to make formal budget reports to members on the basis of exception reporting of performance against budget; in effect, 'headline' statements which showed the overall balance of the departmental budget. This approach subsumed service and schools' budgets in a way which inhibited appropriate scrutiny. There appears to have been, effectively, acceptance by members of under-budgeting and over-spending.

122. Bradford has been relatively slow to delegate budgets from the education department to schools; up to and including 1999/2000 it has retained higher central budgets than comparable LEAs. A narrow approach to delegation which, in effect, left most services only part delegated and part subsidised by central budgets, has protected them from the full rigours of scrutiny by schools exercising choice.

123. A third of the secondary schools, and more than a quarter of primary schools surveyed, describe consultation on the Local Management of Schools as poor or worse. The clarity and fairness of the formula are regarded as poor or worse by 56 per cent of primary schools and 71 per cent of secondary schools. The most obvious concern is the low level of funding for upper schools. The LEA has made some amendments to its LMS scheme for 2000/2001 following consultation. Aspects of the LEA's consultation on its LMS formula for 2000/2001 were unsatisfactory. The initial reaction of secondary schools is one of severe disappointment to the published budget shares.

124. Budget management has also been weak. Significant under- and overspending on service and management budgets has been a regular occurrence. The District Auditor has drawn the authority's attention to the need for accurate management data. Although the director has introduced rigour into budget monitoring in order to ensure that the education directorate's overall budget is not in deficit at the year end, the variation in individual budget outcomes, compared to initial projections, indicates shortcomings either in the planning or the day-to-day management of budgets.

125. Support for and monitoring of the management of school budgets, particularly in the secondary sector, have also been poor. Schools report that they have been allowed until recently to accumulate deficit budgets without challenge from the LEA. Schools with deficits report that they did not receive any appropriate advice on how, while maintaining an adequate curriculum in their school, they could deal with the deficit. Briefings from inspector/advisers have alerted elected members that upper schools could not balance their budgets without affecting the curriculum.

126. In the past year, the LEA has begun to operate procedures for budget approval and to subject deficit proposals to closer scrutiny. Schools have been required to submit a recovery plan not exceeding three, or in exceptional circumstances, five years. They do not feel that the LEA has been helpful, or shown any sense of shared responsibility and believe that they have been left, by and large, to solve the problem themselves. The LEA has taken the unusual step in some cases of reducing the monthly budget allocation to schools which had not yet agreed a recovery plan, to only the amount necessary to cover contractual obligations. The schools concerned had no evidence that the impact on children's education was considered before this decision was made. There is a widespread view amongst schools, including those with recovery plans, that they are produced mainly to release the annual budget and do not provide a realistic basis for planning or prediction.

127. The LEA's approach to increased delegation is poor and appears to be focused mainly on the conservation of its own services. The late advice to schools of the levels of new delegation and budget share, alongside a commitment that the LEA's services will not cost more than the amount delegated to them, has the effect of ensuring that schools have no real option but to commit themselves to buy back those services for another year. There is no time for a proper assessment of alternatives and no attempt by the LEA to advise schools on how to assess the alternatives or on what they might be.

The quality of leadership given by elected members and senior officers

128. The leadership provided by members has been unsatisfactory, but under the influence of the council's leader, with the advice of the Chief Executive, it has begun to improve. The council has taken steps to modernise its political structures and working arrangements. There is, however, still some way to go before the developments lead to changes more significant than structural. Although it is still not systemic, an attempt has been made to adopt more corporate working practices, rather than members adopting allegiance to departmental committees. Historically, these arrangements reduced the council's ability to implement corporate priorities and contributed to a perception in schools, which is hard to overcome, that education is in reality not a priority of the council.

129. The Leader and Chief Executive give strong and effective leadership. However, members are still confused about their appropriate strategic role for education in the context of autonomous and self improving schools. In particular, they need to recognise the importance of effective consultation with schools and their governing bodies, and to identify the appropriate strategic policy items which need to be considered by the executive committee. The level of detail at which political decision making and scrutiny is required in the new system is not entirely clearly defined. This has led some members of the ruling party to continue to consider items which have not been referred to the executive committee in a one party group. Schools continue to perceive the power of members historically and have a tendency, which is not common in most other LEAs, to take administrative matters to members too readily before approaching officers. This unhelpfully impedes the work of officers and sometimes distracts members from the need to adopt a suitably strategic approach.

130. Officers generally provide satisfactory information and advice to elected members of all parties, particularly when requested to do so. New arrangements may have unduly reduced the flow of information to the opposition parties. In particular, there are two important areas of school re-organisation and the education budget where the information and advice provided to members have not been sufficiently informative or regular.

131. The quality of leadership provided by senior officers is very varied. The Director of Education inherited a department which had experienced a period of uncertain leadership and was not working effectively. She has worked to change the culture so that it is more confident and open in its communications with schools and has better systems for more collaborative working across the education department. She has the credibility and respect of the department and of most schools, which is a considerable achievement.

132. In her time as director, the LEA has responded to all the initiatives required of it at a time of considerable educational change. At the same time, the LEA has reviewed and begun to implement the wholesale re-organisation of schools with, in the initial stages, few additional resources. Nevertheless, despite these achievements, the department, its relationships with schools and the efficiency of all services, have not moved as fast or as far as is required to provide effective support to school improvement. The overall management of reorganisation is unsatisfactory

and has been dogged by inadequate planning, poor communication with schools and governing bodies, and delays, particularly in the building programme. The leadership of school improvement has not been sufficiently inspirational or ambitious to help to shift low standards. In areas of special educational needs and financial management there are a number of serious and longstanding difficulties which have not been tackled in a satisfactory way.

Partnership

133. The LEA liaises appropriately with a range of partners, and in some cases this has led to good collaborative action. Its joint work with the police authority is very promising, and there is strong strategic support from both authorities for the operational work of the crime and disorder partnership and the youth offending team. Useful initiatives are undertaken in schools liaison, for example on school security, and the LEA and the police recently co-operated to use their new statutory powers regarding truancy. The strengths of the LEA's partnership in early years are covered elsewhere in this report (paragraphs 110-112).

134. The Integrated Children's Services Plan provides a useful context for links with the social services department, the health authority and other agencies and has facilitated helpful negotiation about priorities for action. Useful work has been undertaken with the social services department in improving provision for looked-after children though this work now needs to be further developed. There has been longstanding and useful co-operation with the health authority on aspects such as a teenage pregnancy project. However, the LEA has not identified how it can use its own planning systems to make greater use of the full range of health authority expertise, for instance in mental health.

135. The need for the LEA to develop a deeper long term collaboration with minority community groups is covered elsewhere in this report (paragraphs 183-184). However, of particular note are the effective proactive strategies used by the school governor service to recruit and support governors from minority ethnic groups (paragraph 108).

136. Good liaison and joint working exist between the LEA and the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The LEA is viewed by the TEC as a very pro-active partner in setting up initiatives. The TEC has also contributed funding and expertise to a number of initiatives including advice to schools embarking on Investors in People status. The careers service is also closely involved in supporting schools with work experience placements, and recognises the good access that is provided to headteachers and the LEA to discuss employment issues.

Management services

137. Management services provide a service of variable quality. Payroll, human resources and finance provide good, basic operational support and meet their statutory duties. However, support for ICT hardware maintenance and support for buildings maintenance are poor. In most instances schools were at pains to distinguish their criticisms of the service from their appreciation of the efforts made

on their behalf by individuals in the service in what schools regard as constrained circumstances.

138. The human resources service is professional and effective. It has restructured its organisation and systems to ensure that it can become increasingly focused on the needs of schools. However, some schools feel that, because of the LEA's overall culture, there is an unwillingness on its part to deal directly with matters of competence. This is supported by the evidence of the low number of teachers (two) who received support under competency procedures. (see paragraph 103).

139. At the earliest stages of planning, the council gave a commitment that reorganisation would not result in a loss of jobs. The teachers of closing schools have been placed in new primary or secondary schools. This placement process has been conducted anonymously. There is no certainty in this process that the most effective teachers have been identified for placements. In the main, upper and first school headteachers have not expressed reservations about the way in which the process was conducted. However, whether the new staff teams will work remains to be seen.

140. The process could also result in high costs. At the conclusion of the inspection, there were still 209 un-placed teachers. The LEA expects this number to decrease. The LEA has offered early retirement to a number of middle school heads and deputies. Some have been asked to continue as transitional staff in new primary schools at the LEA's expense.

141. Finance services are provided to schools mainly through a purchased bursar service which is appreciated by headteachers. Advice and support on the planning and control of school finance at this level are satisfactory or better. School budget statements are clear. There is good support for schools in day to day financial management.

142. Support from the education technology service for ICT in administration and technical support to schools is unsatisfactory. It is heavily criticised in the school survey and this was confirmed by this inspection. The help-desk is a valued service, but there is widespread dissatisfaction about the poor technical support, long delays between referral and receiving support, which renders quite large networks inoperative for lengthy periods. The annual report on the service is positive and congratulatory. It is only through a recent LEA survey that the extent of the dissatisfaction has been revealed.

143. Schools', especially secondary schools', views of property services are adverse. The council as a whole was slow to recognise the implications of the schools' reorganisation for property services. It is apparent that the LEA does not have the capacity to manage and deliver the programme. One manifestation of this was the failure to secure adequate temporary accommodation for schools' use in September 1999, which resulted in unavoidable school closure on one or two days for 72 schools and partial closure of up to four days in 12 schools. Schools have continuing concerns about capital programme management for September 2000 and the years beyond.

144. The LEA has been aware for some time of the shortcomings in its building stock. The LEA is meeting the deadlines for asset management planning. The service, however, is difficult to access and found to be unsympathetic. Nevertheless, the building programme for reorganisation will greatly improve the condition of school buildings.

Recommendations

In order to improve planning and performance management, the LEA should:

- complete the review of the planning process across the local authority;
- devise procedures for effectively monitoring and evaluating progress on the plans;
- link the requirements of the plans and the planning cycle to the programme of Best Value reviews and appraisal targets for individual staff.

In order to improve consultation with schools, the LEA should:

- devise a policy and framework for consultation with schools and governing bodies which identify the appropriate methods for consultation for the different categories and items of the LEA's work and indicate the reasonable expectations which schools can have of the outcome and feedback;
- ensure that documents which provide the basis for consultation are accessible to, and identify key points for, busy governors and school staff;
- adopt a more regular procedure for working with school staff on devising solutions to the implementation of major policies.

In order to improve financial management and control, the LEA should:

- ensure, as recommended by the external auditors, a continued improvement in the approach to budget planning and management;
- involve schools more closely in strategic budget planning for the education service and, in particular, ensure that they understand the rationale behind the strategic approach;
- review the alignment and sufficiency of resources for schools and LEA services in the light of the need to raise the standards of attainment of pupils.

In order to implement effective arrangements for fair funding, the LEA should:

- improve the transparency of approaches to budget delegation;
- set realistic service prices which relate to changes in levels of need and use;
- help schools to exercise informed choice about the purchasing of services;
- improve the quality of LEA services, in particular property and ICT services.

In order to improve the effectiveness of support for the maintenance of ICT hardware, the LEA should:

- set appropriate service standards for response to requests for maintenance of hardware, and monitor the response rate carefully.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Strategy

145. The LEA's strategic planning for special educational needs (SEN) is weak. The SEN policy is sound, but a development plan to improve provision in line with the DfEE's Programme of Action (1998) have only been sent to schools for consultation very recently.

146. The reorganisation of special schools has been planned and introduced separately from mainstream school reorganisation. As a consequence major opportunities to enable special schools to improve inclusion opportunities further have been missed. In particular, opportunities have not been created in the mainstream reorganisation for shared sites but the LEA is now seeking to improve their accommodation. Provision for pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties is currently inadequate, and longstanding discussions about improving it have been inconclusive until very recently.

147. Three centres, which are not registered as schools or pupil referral units, are used to educate about 36 primary and secondary aged pupils. The existence of the centres in this form represents a misuse of the LEA's powers. Some pupils have attended the centres for more than two years. The LEA intends to close the centres within the context of special school reorganisation, but has had the intention to do this for a number of years. In addition, some Key Stage 3 pupils attend a pupil referral unit for statemented pupils. This provision is unsuitable because pupils remain there for a long period. The unit does not prepare pupils for reintegration into school. Having received a critical OFSTED report, the LEA plans to close this unit.

148. The special school development plan seeks to produce a 'vibrant and sustainable special school system offering quality and flexibility in the delivery of services and provision forging new relationships with mainstream schools'. However, the plan does not indicate how this will be achieved, as it fails to set out a vision for SEN in Bradford. It has no detailed view on how special schools should develop their role, or how they will work with mainstream schools, even though there is a proposal for joint registration. No attempt has been made to debate and discuss a range of new models, some already put forward by the headteachers themselves. Mainstream schools have not been involved in the important debate about change in special provision which will affect them, and which could offer them support in managing their own pupils with SEN. This is belatedly now the subject of further discussion between the LEA and schools.

149. Information to parents is sound, and in some areas good. Whilst it goes beyond statutory guidelines, parental representatives would prefer information about the support available for parents to be publicised earlier. The LEA has established a parent partnership scheme managed by a voluntary body. This allows useful dialogue between the authority and parents, but there is evidence that the LEA needs to implement its plans to further improve partnership with parents, in particular by making its consultation procedures more sensitive to parents' needs.

Statutory obligations

150. The LEA fails to meet its statutory duties in two respects. First, owing to long term shortages of staff, the percentage of statements completed in the recommended time is too low at 44 per cent. The LEA has published targets of 75 per cent for 2000 and 85 per cent for 2001, but aspects of the strategies which will be required to reach the target still have to be clarified. In addition, attendance by the LEA at annual reviews is irregular and transition plans are not managed consistently.

151. Second, with regard to provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the LEA fails to ensure that schools in the area are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide education suitable for different ages, abilities and aptitudes, and special educational needs of pupils of school age. Since 1994 the LEA has maintained two (now three) unregistered units for pupils with statements of special educational needs. In addition, the LEA has placed children with statements of special educational needs on a long term basis in the Whinburn Pupil Referral Unit. The number of pupils, in particular of primary school age, who attend the units, is increasing. The LEA has approved plans to close these units but has had a commitment to regularising their status since 1996.

School improvement and value for money

152. Support to schools to enable them to improve the education for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is unsatisfactory in 15 schools visited and satisfactory in one school. The current level of early intervention at stage 3 of the Code of Practice is inadequate and insufficient to meet pupils' needs. The learning and behaviour support services and the pre-Five team are generally unable to respond to referrals in an acceptable time owing to a lack of resources. Schools are unclear about the funding for stage 3 which has already been delegated. The level of funds delegated to mainstream schools to support pupils with statements, however, is almost double the national average. Hence the demand for statements is high. There are currently no plans to tackle this problem. The further delegation of funds for stage 3 support is to be considered in detail in the future, but if the existing funding weightings are maintained, further delegation is likely to be limited.

153. Support for pupils with sensory impairments and with physical difficulties is effective, well targeted and helpful. Support from the educational psychology service is generally sound, although many schools felt that the time available was too limited for their needs. With the exception of one innovative project, the support services, including the educational psychology service, do not work in multi-disciplinary teams.

154. The level of funds delegated to mainstream schools to support pupils with statements is allocated in the form of a number of units based on need with a cash value. This method of funding allows better forecasting and monitoring of the budget and has been a good development, although the LEA has not entirely convinced all schools of its merits. Schools, especially larger upper schools, have gained greater levels of flexibility to meet the needs of pupils with statements but smaller first or

middle schools have sometimes found that funds are eroded by increases in staff costs which are beyond their control.

155. Training opportunities for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) are very limited, and the provision is often not in sufficient depth to meet their needs. In particular, a small number of schools visited during the inspection needed more guidance on managing SEN issues. A network for SENCOs has only recently been established. Training for teachers provided by the support services tends to be school based rather than part of a programme aimed at achieving the LEA's overall strategic objectives. Training of learning support assistants, provided by the learning support service is, however, well established and effective in developing the necessary skills.

156. Monitoring of SEN provision is not part of a planned programme, but it has been identified by the LEA as in need of development. Attempts have been made to evaluate outcomes, but no outcome measures in terms of progress made by pupils have emerged. A recent project supported by the Standards Fund explored methods of monitoring, but many of the potentially useful outcomes have not been implemented. Some information is gathered incidentally through the monitoring programme of the inspection and advisory service. A programme of monitoring resource provision in mainstream schools has been drawn up, although schools were not aware of this. The information generated is not systematic enough to enable judgements to be made. Data on how schools use their SEN budget is not collected. Performance outcomes for pupils with special educational needs are not analysed. Support services focus mainly on individual pupils rather than overall provision and so systemic weaknesses may not be identified. As a result, it is almost impossible for the LEA to judge value for money

157. Given the weaknesses in meeting the timescales with which statements are written, the insufficient response to meeting pupils' needs at stage 3 of the Code of Practice, the lack of a planned programme of training linked to strategic objectives, the weaknesses in strategic planning and the lack of monitoring systems, SEN provision provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision for special educational needs, the LEA should:

- meet statutory requirements in relation to the time that it takes to complete statements of special educational needs;
- clarify the status of the three unregistered units and proceed with urgency to implement suitable plans to provide sufficient schools to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs;
- produce a strategic plan for special education, which takes account of the DfEE's Programme of Action and gives a clear direction to all schools in relation to their role in inclusion;
- monitor and evaluate the provision for SEN, taking clear account of the outcomes for pupils in terms of their progress;
- resolve the problems with current model of support to schools at stage 3 of the Code of Practice.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The provision of school places

158. The school review and proposals for reorganisation took steps to remove surplus places. A weakness of the proposals is the extent to which the future development of cost effective sixth form provision was effectively considered. The review advised schools to collaborate with other schools, colleges and post-16 providers. However, at least five upper schools have comparatively small sixth forms and under the reorganisation two new sixth forms will be opened. This may create inefficiency, since the requirements for buildings, staffing and resources of the new secondary schools will take into account the needs of sixth form pupils.

159. Owing to delays, the building programme to support reorganisation is operating to too tight a timescale. The LEA appointed a preferred managing partner at the end of March to ensure that all aspects of the reorganisation project, notably but not only the capital aspects, are subject to project planning and management of high quality. The managing partner has thirty working days to scrutinise the contract before final agreement, and has already announced its early intention to commence work on five sites in May.

160. By the end of the inspection, contingency arrangements had been agreed for all but six schools. These schools, together with a further 13 primary schools, form an accelerated buildings programme. Contracts have been agreed enabling work on classroom blocks to begin with a proposed completion date in early September. The council has received assurances that the buildings will be completed in a timely way. At the end of the inspection, thirty planning applications were outstanding and contracts for mobile classrooms had not been let. Managing the transitional arrangements for closing and opening schools may necessitate schools making unavoidable closures of up to five days at the start of the Autumn term.

Admissions

161. The management of school admissions achieves good outcomes. The admissions unit has a good record for meeting parental preferences and regularly achieves in excess of 90 per cent parental first choice allocations at primary-secondary transfer. It has prepared well for the demands of the year 2000 transfer which, with the closure of middle schools, will require the simultaneous transfer of the present Years 6, 7 and 8 to secondary schools. The parent guide published by the unit to help parents with the transfer arrangements is clear and helpful. An admissions forum has been established to review admissions criteria for 2002 secondary transfer.

162. A Best Value Review which took place in 1999 recognised the hard work of the small number of staff, but also noted the need for development of ICT, and linkages with other sections of the LEA, as recommended by the auditors in 1997.

Provision of education otherwise than at school

163. The LEA has very recently improved its provision for excluded pupils by establishing a panel which allocates resources for early intervention and preventive work. Two pupil referral units for secondary aged, non-statemented pupils assess and prepare pupils for entry into a new school or to attend a college course. Nevertheless, there are still weaknesses. Pupils attending pupil referral units receive tuition of five half days. Pupils receive five hours home tuition only while they are awaiting, or when they are not allocated, a place at a pupil referral unit. Sometimes there is an undue delay before home tuition commences. The LEA intends to open an additional pupil referral unit and increase the hours of tuition, but has no firm plan of action. A third pupil referral unit and three unregistered units provide education for pupils with SEN. These units are discussed in paragraph 147.

164. The LEA has satisfactory procedures for locating pupils who have been or are still on a school role but whose whereabouts are unknown. There were 125 pupils in this situation over the last 12 months. The weakness in the current procedure is that there is no coordination of the LEA's list with other neighbouring LEAs or with the social services department.

165. About 60 children are not educated at school because of parental preference. The authority has a generally appropriate system for monitoring the nature and quality of provision for these children, but the inspection and advisory service have not visited Year 11 pupils.

Attendance

166. Improving attendance is the main function of the education social work service (ESWS). This service has undergone major management changes recently in an attempt to make it more effective and to provide better value for money. It is now a markedly improving but still unsatisfactory service. Many of the activities now sensibly planned through the EDP and service plan should have been undertaken some time ago.

167. Some schools visited currently experienced or had very recently experienced poor, or even very poor, provision from ESWS, and upper schools in general are very critical of the service. Difficulties cited include weak targeting of support, lengthy and bureaucratic procedures, lack of focus in education social workers' work, very variable quality of support, and inconsistency of staffing. There are indications that each of these weaknesses is being tackled by the service, although progress is too slow.

168. The ESWS targets support to schools where objective indicators have shown a high level of need. This system is, in principle, sound. However, the lack of an ICT database has resulted in the actual deployment of link workers not always being matched to schools' needs, as was shown in some school visits during this inspection. The service recognises this and is working towards an improved formula for next year. Early evidence suggests that the targeting strategy may be meeting success: there is now an improving trend in attendance in a number of targeted schools. The service intends to focus its efforts principally on unauthorised

absences. Referrals are made on appropriate criteria. However, response to referral does not always result in a sufficiently prompt home visit.

169. Ninety-eight prosecutions were made in 1998-99. The service has embarked on a pilot project to improve the use of statutory powers. It has also worked well with the police force in a local Truancy Watch scheme that has raised the profile of attendance issues. The authority's policy for tackling the problems for pupils when families take extended leave abroad is clear and appropriate, providing parents with an opportunity to take four weeks absence from school, but it is reported that this is not always operated correctly by parents, and some pupils are away longer, possibly losing their place in a school. The LEA's approach to persuading local communities has not been effective on this issue and individual schools require greater support.

Behaviour support

170. At present the main thrust of the LEA's work in behaviour support is provided through a branch of the learning support service which, in response to referrals by schools, works with individual pupils and gives guidance to staff. In addition, schools have access to specialist support for pupils at risk of exclusion. Excluded pupils who are admitted to a new mainstream school can receive reintegration support from a pupil referral unit. In addition, curriculum advice is available from the inspection and advisory service, the educational psychology service assesses individual pupils' needs, and the education social work service undertakes casework with excluded pupils.

171. The range of provision is, therefore, considerable, but too little of it is effective. Schools have sometimes found the quality of support provided from the EBD team to be good, but overall it has been very variable. Several schools visited had had to wait too long for the EBD team to respond to referrals. There is also a need for a more specialist support for schools with pupils who present very acute behavioural difficulties. Links between schools and mental health facilities are insufficiently direct, despite the health authority's willingness to become more closely involved. The access to specialist support for pupils at risk of exclusion was appreciated in one school but the existence of this provision had not been made clear by the LEA to all headteachers. The outreach support from the pupil referral unit was found beneficial by two schools visited. Overall, however, this is a picture of fragmentary provision that is not well matched to the needs of schools.

172. The behaviour support plan is potentially a strong document. It sets challenging targets, establishes good principles of liaison with other agencies, and appropriately emphasises the needs of particular high risk groups of pupils. School visits during this inspection suggested that it has had little impact, as its aim of making a better continuum of provision has not been fulfilled.

173. The LEA has recently piloted a small multi-agency project in one area of the city, focusing on the behaviour and attendance of particular pupils. The LEA's monitoring and evaluation of this project have been insufficient. However, evidence from several visits during this inspection suggested that the strategy of focusing a range of resources for a limited period is proving helpful to these schools, not least in raising staff awareness of the inter-linkage of issues concerning pupils at risk. The

LEA does not have a clear plan for whether or how this initiative will be continued within the context of the proposed new outreach service or through Excellence in Cities.

Child protection

174. The authority has sound procedures for ensuring that schools meet their obligations with regard to child protection. An annual check is made of staffing responsibilities within each school, and a suitable range of training is offered to the named person and to other staff. The authority maintains a database of the training record of each school and endeavours to ensure that schools keep up-to-date with their training. In addition to this work, courses on specific topics, such as domestic violence, are run for schools and for interested teachers.

Looked-after children

175. The education department has been involved with the social services department in a strong and purposeful project to improve provision for looked-after children. The project raised the profile of this group of children and has led to some interesting joint initiatives. During this period there was a considerable reduction in the number of looked-after children excluded from school. The LEA has not analysed attendance trends over time, but the large majority of long term looked-after children now have attendance rates of over 85 per cent. The education department continues some development work: for instance, following analysis of the disappointing GCSE results of a recent cohort, seminars have been held for foster-carers to discuss how pupils can be supported in preparation for examinations, and the matter has been made a priority for social workers.

176. Despite these beneficial developments, LEA support to improve the attainment of looked-after children is unsatisfactory. The authority has set targets that would represent a marked improvement from the present low standards of attainment, but nevertheless the targets are still low. Many schools have a designated teacher whose responsibility it is to oversee the progress of looked-after children and these staff received an orientation to the task several years ago. However, the children's educational progress is not automatically monitored by the authority, although in some cases teachers will provide information during a care review. LEA officers with responsibilities for this area of work do not have an accurate knowledge of children's school placements. There is no integrated database which records their educational attainment and attendance along with other aspects of their care record. There is no systematic recording of educational data on looked-after children educated out of the district. The LEA has in hand some plans for improvement, but they do not fully cover all these issues.

Minority ethnic groups

177. The LEA last year made a major shift of focus in its work to support minority ethnic pupils. The bulk of this work, supported by the government's EMTAG grant, is now managed by the inspection and advisory service, with a clear remit to tackle under-achievement by minority ethnic groups. Given the significant relative under-attainment of Pakistani- and Bangladeshi-origin pupils, this is an appropriate aim.

However, the targets that have been set for attainment by these two groups are still too low.

178. Some of the activities planned through the EDP for supporting minority ethnic pupils, such as identifying groups' needs and locating good practice, while worthy in themselves, are very late in the day for a city with such a long history of diverse settlement as Bradford. Similarly, it is a major weakness that the authority has been so slow in collecting statistical data systematically that it cannot state accurately the achievement of each group at the end of all Key Stages. The addendum to the EDP provides objectives that are more clearly related to pupils' needs, although it does not make use of information available elsewhere in the LEA about attendance or exclusions. The authority has produced a useful operational action plan which gives good detail of planned activities on language and learning.

179. The LEA is now working with schools to ensure that each of them also has an appropriate plan, focusing on pupils' achievement and setting targets for improvement. At present, though, some schools are behind schedule in doing this. Those visited during this inspection, however, were generally clear about the need to use specialist staff in an appropriate way, working within the mainstream and emphasising relevant language development activities. Several, however, required further or more sophisticated strategic direction than had been provided by the LEA so far.

180. The deployment of specialist staff devolved to schools has been a complex process, made difficult by school reorganisation and the LEA's lack of data about pupils' needs. Staff who were previously employed by the LEA on its Section 11 project have generally been retained at schools as an interim measure, and are now seen as centrally managed EMTAG staff. True devolution will begin next year. Criteria for the deployment of support are currently inappropriate. Funding is devolved on the basis of pupil numbers, but using a generalised indication of each ethnic group's needs, rather than actual pupils' needs. Schools with less than ten per cent of pupils of ethnic minority origin receive no support. However, not all schools acquiring a Year 5 cohort this year have been given additional specialist staff, and there has been some negotiation about individual schools' needs, not all of which have been met through these arrangements. These complexities, taken with the inherent instability of staffing in this area of work because of the temporary nature of many posts, and of some competency issues that have arisen, had led to poor staffing arrangements in several schools visited. In three schools the poor management of staffing by the LEA over recent years had led to very poor provision.

181. In a significant number of schools visited it was apparent that there were thought to be issues about the competence of some former Section 11 staff in relation to their intended work within the EMTAG scheme. This appears to be because the former project operated in a much more restricted way than the new scheme will do. Some headteachers are concerned about the implications of this for their attempt to raise standards of attainment.

182. The authority has provided training programmes for the specialist teachers in their new role, including attention to the demands of the National Literacy Strategy, but has not done enough recently to develop mainstream teachers' understanding of

the needs of developing bilingual pupils although a substantial project was in place until 1997. Specific projects are working satisfactorily alongside the main literacy strategy. The LEA provides a limited amount of support for pupils who have returned from extended leave abroad through the use of peripatetic teachers and guidance materials. However, this is a weakness in view of the significance of the work for some schools.

Measures to combat racism

183. One year after the publication of the Macpherson Report, the LEA has produced a good pack of resources as a major contribution to helping schools to combat racism. This includes helpful analyses of good practice and clear guidance on school processes, and a working group is in place to review progress in schools. A programme of action is in preparation to follow up the Macpherson pack, with activities to combat racism. The authority has long had a procedure for monitoring racial harassment in schools and provides appropriate guidance to headteachers. Its InterFaith Centre is a strong contributor to the curriculum and supports schools in effectively meeting the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education and collective worship. A conference concerning racial harmony was held very recently which attracted pupils from a large number of schools. The authority has supported initiatives to train and recruit minority ethnic teachers, and they now amount to about 6 per cent of the teaching force. In addition, the LEA has made application to DfEE for one independent Muslim girls school to become voluntary aided (paragraph 16) and worked effectively to recruit and support governors from minority ethnic communities (paragraph 108).

184. Alongside these positive initiatives, the LEA now has to go further and look deeper. It has not been sufficiently vigorous in liaising with community groups about the relationship between maintained school provision and the many supplementary schools in the city. Discussions with local communities have not entirely tackled the implications of extended leave abroad. In more general terms, it has not made a sufficiently clear educational response to the tendency for different ethnic communities in Bradford to live separately and use different schools. This has not been a clearly articulated aspect of the schools review. These matters are, of course, extremely difficult to tackle, but schools do now need the LEA to build on its good response to the Macpherson Report by giving a stronger, long term strategic lead.

Social exclusion

185. The authority intends to make provision which protects vulnerable young people and promotes equality of opportunity. It has had some success in developing a wide range of early years provision. However, there are some key weaknesses in its services that at present cause this to be an unrealised aim. Support for minority ethnic pupils is currently in an organisationally turbulent state. The efforts to redesign the support for school attendance have led to some improvements but have not been fulfilled. The behaviour support services and the provision for pupils out of school have certain weaknesses. In each case the LEA either has improvement plans to hand, or is in the process of making improvements, but at present this is, overall, an area of work that is not satisfactory.

Recommendations

In order to improve pupils' access and entitlement to education, the LEA should:

- continue with the education social work service's present improvement plans, with particular attention to guaranteeing a consistent level of quality in its service;
- ensure that the inspection support and advisory service monitors regularly the provision for every pupil of statutory age educated at home;
- increase the quantity of home tuition for pupils out of school;
- draw up clear plans for extending the hours of tuition in the pupil referral units;
- correlate the LEA's list of mislocated pupils with that of the social services department in order to increase the possibility of locating any children who might be out of school;
- continue with its existing improvement plans for EMTAG, but giving particular attention to supporting staff development and training, both of specialist staff and of mainstream teachers;
- improve behaviour support with urgency by making it more available and broader in its scope;
- monitor the educational progress of all looked-after children more frequently and more rigorously;
- improve the process and reliability of informing schools about the admission of looked-after children;
- develop a more coherent and vigorous approach to promoting good race relations, make better use of liaison with minority ethnic communities, and develop a strategic response to the tendency of communities to make a restricted choice of schools.

APPENDIX

RECOMMENDATIONS

Section One

In order to improve the strategic coherence of the Education Development Plan, the LEA should:

- develop better links between priorities 2, 3, 4 and 7, the behaviour support plan, the crime reduction strategy and the children's services plan to provide an adequate strategy to combat disaffection;
- improve the focus of activity plans by deciding the intersecting issues which affect attainment. Map and permeate the approaches to those issues in each priority;
- devise, in collaboration with schools, a convincing strategy which is understandable to schools to address the needs of school management and staff, following reorganisation, on such issues as the management of larger schools and teaching pupils in unfamiliar age groups;
- improve the link between activities and targets by devising success criteria which are quantifiable, and link to the projected improvement in targets.

In order to improve the management of the implementation of the Education Development Plan, the LEA should:

- ensure that schools are clear about the activities proposed for each priority, at least in the short and medium term, the outcomes proposed, and the criteria for participation;
- improve the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the EDP by developing a more systematic and rigorous approach, clearly defining the intended outputs and outcomes, which identifies and accounts for slippage and involves schools more significantly in the evaluation.

In order to improve the LEA's approach to achieving Best Value, the LEA should:

- involve schools as key service stakeholders and clients in the Best Value reviews and extend consultees to include parents and pupils.

Section Two

In order to improve the LEA's approach to provide support, challenge, intervention and monitoring, the LEA should:

- ensure that assigned inspector/advisers are empowered as officers of the LEA to agree school targets;
- train and monitor the work of inspector/advisers to ensure that challenging targets are agreed with schools;

- revise with schools the system of link and assigned Inspector/advisers to ensure that processes for setting targets are appropriately linked to the discussion of schools procedures for self evaluation, development planning and staff development.

In order to improve schools' opportunities to choose the support which is required for school improvement, the LEA should:

- consider the level of delegation of funding for inspection and advice with a view to an increase;
- extend the use of secondments and consultants so that the inspection and advisory service has access to more staff who have recent and relevant experience of the management of primary and secondary schools;
- provide better guidance to schools on the effectiveness of services which are available locally for purchase.

In order to improve target setting and the use of targets to enhance school improvement, the LEA should:

- ensure that the LEA's guidance on target setting is followed by all schools and that schools link targets to an appropriate school improvement strategy so that the target can be met.

In order to improve support for literacy, the LEA should:

- proceed with plans to enhance the number of staff who work to support the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy;
- In the light of new staff:
 - extend support which is available to schools which do not receive intensive support;
 - develop a strategy to improve standards of attainment in literacy in secondary schools.

In order to improve support for ICT, the LEA should:

- identify schools where standards and use of ICT are unacceptably low and ensure staff have an intensive programme of training and that access to National Grid For Learning is accelerated;
- make arrangements for computer equipment to be transferred securely and equitably from schools which are closing.

In order to improve the support for schools causing concern, the LEA should:

- extend procedures to ensure the early identification of difficulties and to ensure better co-ordination and monitoring of the effectiveness of support;
- ensure that schools' agenda for improvement is monitored and, if insufficient progress is made, the management difficulties in the schools are tackled speedily;

- suspend the usual arrangements for the purchase of link inspector/adviser support while the school is in difficulties; ensure that schools receive as an entitlement professional support of an inspector/adviser who acts as the lead and coordinating adviser for the LEA and identify another inspector/adviser who will assist with the monitoring of the school's progress.

In order to improve support for management and leadership of schools, the LEA should:

- develop a sustained programme of training, support and consultancy to improve the schools' strategies for self review and evaluation;
- devise a mentoring scheme for new headteachers;
- make systematic use of competency procedures for teachers who are in difficulties;
- in co-operation with schools and, where necessary, other providers, devise an effective and coherent programme of training for teachers and school managers to prepare and support them in the transitional period of developing effective primary and secondary schools.

Section Three

In order to improve planning and performance management, the LEA should:

- complete the review of the planning process across the local authority;
- devise procedures for effectively monitoring and evaluating progress on the plans;
- link the requirements of the plans and the planning cycle to the programme of Best Value reviews and appraisal targets for individual staff.

In order to improve consultation with schools, the LEA should:

- devise a policy and framework for consultation with schools and governing bodies which identify the appropriate methods for consultation for the different categories and items of the LEA's work and indicate the reasonable expectations which schools can have of the outcome and feedback;
- ensure that documents which provide the basis for consultation are accessible to, and identify key points for, busy governors and school staff;
- adopt a more regular procedure for working with school staff on devising solutions to the implementation of major policies.

In order to improve financial management and control, the LEA should:

- ensure, as recommended by the external auditors, a continued improvement in the approach to budget planning and management;
- involve schools more closely in strategic budget planning for the education service and, in particular, ensure that they understand the rationale behind the strategic approach;
- review the alignment and sufficiency of resources for schools and LEA services in the light of the need to raise the standards of attainment of pupils.

In order to implement effective arrangements for fair funding, the LEA should:

- improve the transparency of approaches to budget delegation;
- set realistic service prices which relate to changes in levels of need and use;
- help schools to exercise informed choice about the purchasing of services;
- improve the quality of LEA services, in particular property and ICT services.

In order to improve the effectiveness of support for the maintenance of ICT hardware, the LEA should:

- set appropriate service standards for response to requests for maintenance of hardware, and monitor the response rate carefully.

Section Four

In order to improve provision for special educational needs, the LEA should:

- meet statutory requirements in relation to the time that it takes to complete statements of special educational needs;
- clarify the status of the three unregistered units and proceed with urgency to implement suitable plans to provide sufficient schools to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs;
- produce a strategic plan for special education, which takes account of the DfEE's Programme of Action and gives a clear direction to all schools in relation to their role in inclusion;
- monitor and evaluate the provision for SEN, taking clear account of the outcomes for pupils in terms of their progress;
- resolve the problems with current model of support to schools at stage 3 of the Code of Practice.

Section Five

In order to improve pupils' access and entitlement to education, the LEA should:

- continue with the education social work service's present improvement plans, with particular attention to guaranteeing a consistent level of quality in its service;
- ensure that the inspection support and advisory service monitors regularly the provision for every pupil of statutory age educated at home;
- increase the quantity of home tuition for pupils out of school;
- draw up clear plans for extending the hours of tuition in the pupil referral units;
- correlate the LEA's list of mislocated pupils with that of the social services department in order to increase the possibility of locating any children who might be out of school;
- continue with its existing improvement plans for EMTAG, but giving particular attention to supporting staff development and training, both of specialist staff and of mainstream teachers;
- improve behaviour support with urgency by making it more available and broader in its scope;

- monitor the educational progress of all looked-after children more frequently and more rigorously;
- improve the process and reliability of informing schools about the admission of looked-after children;
- develop a more coherent and vigorous approach to promoting good race relations, make better use of liaison with minority ethnic communities, and develop a strategic response to the tendency of communities to make a restricted choice of schools.

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