



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF
BOURNEMOUTH
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

February 2002

Lead Inspector: Janet Mokades HMI

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

CONTENTS

PARAGRAPHS

INTRODUCTION 1 - 3

COMMENTARY 4 - 13

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context 14 - 16

Performance 17 - 19

Funding 20 - 23

Council structure 24 - 27

The Education Development Plan 28 - 33

The allocation of resources to priorities 34 - 42

Recommendations

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions 43 - 46

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention 47 - 53

Collection and analysis of data 54 - 58

Support for literacy 59 - 62

Support for numeracy 63 - 66

Support for information and communication technology 67 - 70

Support for schools causing concern 71 - 74

Support for governors 75 - 80

Support for school management 81 - 84

Other areas 85 - 88

Recommendations

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning 89 - 99

Management services 100 - 105

Recommendations

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

Strategy 106 - 110

Statutory obligations 111 - 112

Support for school improvement 113 - 114

Value for money 115 - 116

Recommendations

SECTION 5: ACCESS

Introduction	117
The Supply of school places	118 – 121
Asset management planning	122 - 125
Admissions	126 - 131
Provision of education otherwise than at school	132 - 137
Attendance	138 - 143
Behaviour support	144 - 148
Health, safety, welfare, child protection	149 – 153
Support for gifted and talented pupils	154 - 155
Looked after children	156 - 159
Minority ethnic children and Travellers	160 - 166
Social exclusion	167 - 169

APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS

**APPENDIX 2: BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH
EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES
BEST VALUE REVIEW OF EDUCATION TRANSPORT
BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
BEST VALUE REVIEW OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND FIELD
STUDIES**

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 also took account of the Local Government Act 1999 insofar as it relates to the work undertaken by the LEA on best value. 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 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, focus groups of headteachers and governors, 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 LEAs work was circulated to 41 schools. The response rate was 93 per cent.

3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to one special school, one first school, 11 primary schools, five secondary schools and the pupil referral unit. A further eight schools were visited as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy monitoring. 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. Bournemouth, despite having been a unitary authority only since 1997, has a long history of civic pride. It is a fast growing, prosperous town, with a vigorous financial services sector. There are also pockets of deprivation, and a good deal of low wage seasonal employment. The ethnic minority population is small, but growing.

5. Bournemouth's schools do at least as well and in some cases better, than national averages. Post-16 achievement is high and exclusions are very low, having reduced from 40 to seven over the last three years. Attendance is around the national average. Though results have not been improving as fast as elsewhere in the country, GCSE results have jumped this year.

6. Much has already been achieved in the LEA's short life. A determination to create a good learning environment has driven an extensive programme of school building and improvements. A commitment to inclusion has resulted in the closure of a special school, a reduction in the number of statements written and delegation of resources for special educational needs to schools. An ambitious class size plan has been fully enacted. Early Years places have been created for all four-year-olds. A Fresh Start school has been created very rapidly and achieved a fifteen per cent rise in its GCSE results this year. The special school that was in special measures has become a beacon school.

7. Elected members planned and prepared carefully for the unitary status granted to the borough in 1997. They had a vision and brought in new and energetic staff to oversee its realisation. The vision for a better Bournemouth embraced not just the prosperous majority but also the disadvantaged and vulnerable people and those living in the areas of urban stress. Better education was, and is, central to it.

8. This very good LEA is achieving goals which are still aspirations in many other authorities. Ambitious and courageous, it aspires to excellence and has already achieved it in some respects. It has very many strengths and though some things could be done better, no functions that are weak overall. The core vision of progress for all of Bournemouth's children is articulated and shared at all levels. Policy and practice reflect the commitment to inclusion and equality. The allocation of resources reflects priorities, has been shaped by consultation and is transparent. Leadership is strong, accessible and underpinned by very good communication and consultation.

9. In particular, the LEA has understood that raising achievement for all means putting inclusion at the heart of its school improvement work. It sees all its functions as facets of a whole and all are performed well.

Support for school improvement, in particular:

- support for school management and school self evaluation;
- support for governors;
- support for the use of performance data;

- support for literacy; and
- support for schools causing concern.

Support for inclusion, encompassing access and special educational needs, in particular:

- support for children in public care;
- child protection;
- support for behaviour;
- measures to combat social exclusion;
- support for ethnic minority children;
- support for special educational needs;
- support for attendance;
- education other than at school;
- the provision of school places;
- asset management planning; and
- admissions.

Strategic management, in particular:

- corporate planning and the implementation of plans;
- the advice given to members; and
- leadership by senior officers and by members.

10. Successful strategic management underpins the good performance of all these functions. Resources are matched to clear and common priorities at all levels so that commitments are translated into effective action. This is the hallmark of Bournemouth's approach and, together with the work done to establish very good communication and consultation, is how the LEA has earned and gained trust.

11. The authority is self-critical, admitting and learning from its mistakes and changing its practice. Its approach is characterised by boldness and the active exercise of intelligence. It has, for instance, already used Best Value reviews to secure real improvements in difficult areas such as inclusion and provision for emotionally and behaviourally disturbed (EBD) children. It has delegated high levels of funding to schools. Its 'opportunity to excel' school review process encompasses everything from finance to asset management to teaching and it has been highly effective in building capacity for autonomy in schools.

12. Ultimately it is members who are responsible for the very considerable achievements of the last four years. They picked the right staff and backed them. They have listened, learned and made good decisions. They have worked well together to better the lot of Bournemouth's children.

13. The capacity of the LEA to improve is beyond doubt. The director has gathered around him and shaped a cohesive and effective senior management team who work harmoniously together and have the highest of expectations for both their services and Bournemouth's children. Addressing the recommendations of this

report will not tax them. Achieving the overall excellence to which they aspire may, but they could well succeed.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

14. Bournemouth acquired unitary status on the first of April 1997, having previously been part of Dorset. Though tourism dominates the economy of the area, it is also a major centre for financial and business services. Bournemouth has a fast growing population and a high level of mobility concentrated in specific areas. Behind the prosperous image lies a significant degree of deprivation with eight out of the 19 electoral wards featuring amongst the one thousand most deprived nationally and a concentration of poverty in two of these wards. Drug abuse and homelessness are also features of this other Bournemouth. The ethnic minority population is small but growing, with the main groups being Korean and Portuguese from Madeira.

15. The school age population is 21,454. The percentage of pupils for whom a statement of special educational needs (SEN) has been written is a little below the national average. It is 2.6 per cent for primary aged pupils and 3.7 per cent for secondary aged pupils. The percentage of pupils entitled to free schools meals is 9.8 per cent in the primary phase and 10.7 per cent in the secondary phase, also below the national average. Though small, the local education authority contains a range of schools including selective, voluntary aided, single sex and comprehensive schools. Ninety three per cent of four-year-olds, that is, all those who want places, and 22 per cent of three year olds are on the roll of primary schools. Eighty seven per cent of pupils pursue post-compulsory education or training, 20 per cent of them in borough sixth forms.

16. The authority maintains 41 schools, four of which have attained beacon status. One of these is a special school. The LEA has no nursery schools. Of the 28 primary schools, 16 are community schools, 11 are voluntary aided and one is voluntary controlled. Of the 10 secondary schools, six are community, one is voluntary aided and three are foundation schools. One of the secondary schools was closed and reopened in September 2000 as a Fresh Start school, one is a technology college and two have specialist status, a language college and an arts college. There are two special schools and a pupil referral unit.

Performance

17. The performance of Bournemouth schools is in line with or better than national averages and is in line with that of statistical neighbours¹ at most key stages. The proportion of primary schools judged to be good or very good at their last OFSTED inspection was in line with the average nationally but lower than that for statistical neighbours. The proportion of secondary schools judged to be good or very good was broadly in line with the average nationally and for statistical neighbours.

18. The LEA's data on pupils entering Bournemouth primary schools indicates that attainment is better than the average for statistical neighbours and nationally.

¹ The statistical neighbours for Bournemouth are Poole, Southend, Torbay, Warrington, Brighton and Hove, Hillingdon, Bury, Sutton, Enfield and Dudley.

Attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics in 2000 was similar to national averages and that for pupils of statistical neighbours. Attainment in both subjects at Key Stage 2 was rising below the national rate. The 2001 results for English fell back slightly compared with the previous year and those for mathematics remain the same. The proportion of Bournemouth pupils achieving five or more A* – C grade GCSE passes in 2000 was in line with national averages and that for statistical neighbours but the rate of improvement was well below the national trend. However, the results for 2001 have increased sharply, by some 4 per cent, compared with the previous year. This is a little above national averages and represents a rate of improvement substantially higher than the national trend. The proportion achieving at least one A* - G grade is in line with national averages. The average points score at advanced level for Bournemouth pupils is above the national and statistical neighbour average but is improving at a slower rate. Progress between Key Stages 1 and 2 is in line with national averages and that between Key Stages 2 and 3 is above national averages. However, that between Key Stage 3 and 4 is well below the average progress.

19. For both primary and secondary schools the level of attendance is in line with national averages. Levels of exclusion in primary schools are similar to the national average whilst in secondary schools they are well below.

Funding

20. The Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for education for Bournemouth of £2,830 per pupil is below the averages for English authorities (£2,958), statistical neighbours (£2,938) and unitary authorities (£2,908). Spending is above the SSA by £569,000 in a context where there is overall pressure on the council budget and low reserves.

21. The council is active in securing capital funding. Gross capital spending for 2000/01 was £266 per pupil, well above the averages for all English authorities (£207), unitary authorities (£211) and statistical neighbours (£198). Capital expenditure from revenue is high. Capital grants for 2001/2 are £7.2 million as compared with £1.8 million in 2000/01. The capital expenditure budgeted for 2001/02 is £9.3 million.

22. New Deal for Schools money has increased progressively each year. At £93 per pupil it is above the averages for all English authorities (£77), unitary authorities (£80) and statistical neighbours (£76). Revenue and capital grants are targeted toward improving school buildings, adding school places and improving school security, science laboratories, secondary learning support units and access. Funding was secured to enable a school to be given a fresh start. Bournemouth is one of twelve LEAs who successfully bid for the Classroom of the Future initiative. It was awarded a grant of £1.23 million.

23. Overall, specific grants received are below average, reflecting the lower than average assessment of need. The gross standards fund of £164 per pupil is relatively low compared to the averages for all English authorities (£210) and unitary authorities (£199), but it is slightly above the average for statistical neighbours (£159). Non standards fund specific grant income is £18 per pupil which is below the

averages for England (£22), unitary authorities (£20) and statistical neighbours (£25).

Council Structure

24. No one party has overall control of the council. There are 27 Conservative councillors, 18 Liberal Democrats, 6 Labour and 6 Independent councillors. The groups work well together and there is a high level of consensus. The council currently has a traditional committee and sub committee structure though modernisation is underway. Co-opted representatives of education sit on the 26 strong education committee. In addition, a joint education and social services sub-committee deals with some matters common to both services.

25. Recent local consultation has confirmed the choice of a leader and cabinet model for the future council. The nine member cabinet will include six lead members, one for each priority on the Bournemouth community plan and full council will meet more frequently. Six matching scrutiny and review panels will meet at least quarterly to monitor the performance of council services and manage BV reviews. There will also be eight pilot area forums. A rolling programme of work on modernisation, including training for all concerned, is well underway. The initial reluctance of members to embark on modernisation has given the council a chance to learn from the experience of other authorities and although the timescale is short, officers and members are confident that the April 2002 deadline for these arrangements to be in place will be met.

26. Given the current composition of the council, there are unresolved issues about the nature of the cabinet. To set up a single party cabinet would require agreement from a second group whilst operating a cross party cabinet could pose problems. This issue has some potential to undermine the current high level of consensus, but constructive discussions are underway to reach a solution.

27. The chief executive currently leads a six strong directorate management team. With modernisation, this will reduce to five. The director of education is a member of the directorate management team and himself heads a four strong team of heads of planning and resources, student services, learning and achievement and lifelong learning.

The Education Development Plan

28. The Education Development Plan (EDP) provides a good basis for school improvement. It is coherent and based on a clear and thoughtful underpinning rationale. The priorities of the EDP are well articulated and reflect both national priorities and the local context. They are:

- improve progress and attainment in literacy;
- improve progress and attainment in numeracy;
- improve progress and attainment in information and communication technology;
- develop a more inclusive approach to education which raises attainment and attendance of all children;
- improve attainment and progress where it is presently a concern;

- implement fully aspects of teaching provision that will reinforce attainment and progress;
- enhance the quality of leadership and governance; and
- support for schools causing concern.

29. The priorities are based on a rigorous and detailed audit. The activities are well set out to link actions with success criteria but there is some unevenness in the quality of success criteria across the EDP. This has resulted in a lack of precision in evaluating some aspects of the effectiveness of the plan. The LEA's recognition of this is reflected in the draft of the next EDP. The processes for monitoring the EDP are well set out and in place. There are good links between the EDP and the business planning processes which result in the clear allocation and tracking of resources.

30. The EDP clearly reflects the council's corporate priorities, and contributes to a coherent approach to meeting the LEA's overall aims. It dovetails with, but does not duplicate, other plans.

31. The consultation process was a clear strength in the development of the EDP. The LEA consulted widely and secured agreement on the main themes underpinning the plan. This has resulted in a shared commitment from schools, LEA officers and elected members to meeting the targets in the EDP. Schools value the transparency of the process of consultation and feedback on the EDP, and the thoroughness of the LEA's approach. It has provided schools with a clear understanding of the LEA's priorities and, especially for primary schools, of how their school priorities relate to the wider agenda.

32. The LEA inherited inadequate data on its schools. Hence the initial target setting lacked a firm basis and schools have not consistently met the targets set at Key Stage 2 or GCSE. GCSE results rose significantly in 2001, but the rate of improvement prior to this was below the national trend at both Key Stage 2 and GCSE. Whilst the LEA and its schools acknowledge that the targets for 2002 are aspirational, there is a confidence that standards are rising, notably at Key Stage 2, and that the targets are now both well founded and appropriately challenging.

33. Fed by the LEA's supportive school self-review process, implementation of the EDP has been good overall, with particular success in reducing exclusions, increasing inclusion and, this year, increasing performance at GCSE.

The allocation of resources to priorities

34. The allocation of resources to priorities is good with some outstanding features. The council is very clear about its priorities for education and it strategically focuses resources towards them. In almost all respects its strategy is very effective in delivering resources to the front line. The long-term priorities of raising achievement, lifelong learning, and quality and Best Value are brought together in a strong overall planning framework which effectively aligns plans and strategies with resources. The clarity of the resourcing strategy and the focusing of resources toward shared aims is very good.

35. Central costs are low but the impact of the leadership of the LEA on key strategic functions is high. Central administrative costs for 2000/01 were well below average (£51 per pupil) and have been reduced to £47 per pupil in 2001/02. The costs of meeting statutory and regulatory duties is in line with comparable averages. Increased priority has been given to the monitoring of learning and achievement to bring it closer to the average and to increase the impact of the inspection/advisory service. Spending on SEN as a percentage of the LSB is broadly average and an additional £0.9 million has been delegated into school budgets. SEN costs are under control. Access costs are below average. A distinctive feature is the central spending on the arts, field studies and outdoor education.

36. The business planning process is good and service budgets are monitored effectively. Consultation on the planning and review of the education budget and on changes to the school funding formula are very good and based on an effective schools/LEA partnership. School budgets are rigorously monitored.

37. A strong investment is made in social inclusion and SEN. The increased investment in early years, primary education and inclusion has the support of schools. Spending on pupils excluded from schools is very low because there are so few.

38. A high proportion of funding is delegated to schools (88 per cent of the LSB). The devolution of standards fund is also high (79 per cent). Budget planning is based on a three-year cycle both at LEA and school levels. Three-year budget plans for schools are supported with good strategic information. Whilst delegation is high, school funding per pupil is below comparable averages.

2000/01 Individual Schools Budget: Per pupil	Bournemouth	Statistical Neighbours	England	Unitary authorities
Primary	1,793	1,840	1,869	1,807
Secondary	2,358	2,572	2,559	2,524
Special	8,507	9,227	9,357	8,560

Source CIPFA

39. The LEA operates activity-led funding based on an agreed and transparent rationale. Historically, the formula delivered very high proportions of funding to Key Stage 4 and sixth forms. Good progress has been made in achieving a better balance of funding across the key stages. The priority given to SEN and inclusion is reflected in the formula. Funding for high incidence SEN statements and most of the money from the closure of a special school has been delegated to schools. This funding is clearly identifiable in school budgets. SEN is given greater priority in the primary phase and social inclusion higher priority in the secondary phase. SEN formula factors are based on prior attainment except for pupils of infant age, where the SEN element in the formula is currently based on data of pupils no longer in that phase. For 2002/03 it will be based on prior attainment. However the prior attainment measure proposed is presently insufficiently robust.

40. Very good progress has been made in reducing the number of schools with deficits. There are high reserves particularly in the primary sector (9.4 per cent); 71

per cent of primary schools and 50 per cent of secondary schools are carrying forward reserves above the threshold set by the council. Members and officers monitor surpluses and deficits rigorously. The majority of surpluses are for major building work and ICT developments.

Best Value

41. Best Value reviews, in almost all cases, have contributed very effectively to the ambitious LEA improvement agenda. The council's arrangements for conducting best value reviews in education are good and the reviews have led to some very good improvements in significant areas. Best Value is a well established and integrated part of the council's approach to planning and review. It is effectively linked to community planning, performance management and Investors in People. The education directorate's business plan takes the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) into greater depth with an impressive range of outcome focussed local performance indicators. The individual action plans from the year 1 Best Value reviews have been brought together to inform the next year's business plan. The external auditor has confirmed that the Best Value Performance Plan met statutory requirements.

42. The largely thematic programme of reviews has been strategically planned to support the education directorate's challenging improvement agenda. The scoping of reviews has generally been good with the exception of the review of school improvement. Reviews are led by directors from services outside the education department This provides rigour and valuable wider expertise. Member involvement in reviews is very good. A member unconnected with the service is a part of the review team. These arrangements generally ensure a good level of challenge. Members have recently reviewed progress with the action plans of the first four reviews to be undertaken. This has increased their impact and brought the outcomes into the next round of service planning. Comparison in the reviews is broadly sound, indeed some comparative information is sharp and illustrative. In other instances, there is insufficient use of data and examination of good practice elsewhere. The area of competition was tackled very effectively in the transport review and in the current review of accessing school places which is to be followed by a review of SEN place provision. Consultation is very good and has enabled issues to be sharply identified. The principles of best value are effectively linked into the LEA's approach to working with schools and schools are encouraged to apply best value principles.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions

43. Within the Bournemouth vision, social inclusion is seen as central to raising achievement in schools. School improvement processes are broadly conceived and designed to cover the full spectrum of functions for which the LEA and schools are responsible. The over arching lifelong learning strategy is strongly focused on areas of social deprivation and on empowering parents. Learning centres attached to schools or libraries run programmes in such areas as parenting skills, adult literacy, English as an additional language and numeracy, and provide opportunities for pre-school work with families and young children. Schools value the contribution this work makes to raising standards and expectations.

44. The LEA's work to create a family of schools has borne fruit in enabling the sharing of specialist expertise. It has for instance ensured that other primary and secondary schools have access to specialist advice and support for modern foreign languages from the language college and that the ICT resource base in the Bournemouth education and development centre also supports SEN work in mainstream schools.

45. Support for schools in the recruitment and retention of teachers, though at an early stage of development, is good. Whilst Bournemouth does not experience the acute recruitment problems of some LEAs, the quantity and quality of candidates across a range of posts is of increasing concern to schools. The LEA has established a broadly based strategy group to establish a coherent approach to the recruitment and retention of teachers. Appropriate steps have been taken to identify recruitment issues through, for example, data analysis and school survey. The LEA is pragmatic in the use of a range of local and national strategies in addressing recruitment issues, such as collaborating with other LEAs in the appointment of a recruitment strategy manager and accessing national funding, such as the starter homes Initiative.

46. The relationship between recruitment and retention is clearly understood and is identified through opportunities for professional development. The support for supply teachers is a good example of this. Having recognised schools' concerns, the LEA is tackling the quantity and quality of supply teachers through both revision of recruitment procedures and provision of quality training. Support for newly qualified teacher is well-managed, highly regarded and effectively supported by link inspectors in schools. The retention of experienced teachers is fostered through extensive use of the Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) scheme to promote professional development. In recognising the complexities of the issues and through the actions it has taken, the LEA is well placed to support schools in managing the recruitment and retention of staff.

Monitoring, challenge, support, and intervention

47. The way the LEA fulfils the functions of monitoring, challenge, support and intervention is good but there are a few weaknesses.

48. Since assuming responsibility for education in 1997, the LEA has sought to build the capacity within schools for effective self-management, as the foundation for secure and sustained school improvement, and to reduce the number of weak schools. This strategy has been successful. There is considerable evidence of effective and improving leadership and governance within schools. The number of schools judged to have serious weaknesses is falling steadily as a consequence of effective LEA intervention and there are now no schools requiring special measures.

49. The LEA's programme of monitoring of schools is effective in providing both LEA and school staff with detailed insight into schools' strengths and weaknesses. The relative role and responsibilities of the link inspector and schools in the monitoring of school performance has evolved in response to changing government guidelines. It is well documented and understood by headteachers and governors. The current monitoring programme, though appropriately differentiated for the majority, ensures that the minimum allocation for effective schools is one and a half days. The most successful schools now warrant a lighter touch.

50. Over the past two years LEA officers and schools have collaborated in developing the 'opportunity to excel'(O2E) process as an innovative and flexible school review tool. A series of good practice standards have been developed for all relevant aspects of school management, governance and professional practice. These are used during monitoring visits by link inspectors as part of a structured analysis of key aspects of school performance. They are also used effectively in conjunction with other self-review processes such as Investors in People (IiP). Headteachers, governors and LEA officers confirmed that reviews have led to a much more constructive dialogue on school improvement and much improved internal challenge from governors and senior managers. Their use as part of target setting processes is ensuring that targets set by schools are demanding. Effective as the process is, it could still be improved. There is scope for simplification and for further development of quality assurance processes to ensure consistency.

Recommendation

In order to improve the way the LEA fulfils the functions of monitoring, challenge, support and intervention:

- streamline and simplify the 'opportunity to excel' process and establish quality assurance arrangements to ensure the proposed outcomes are expressed sharply

51. The LEA has provided effective and well-differentiated programmes of support to schools aligned to the priorities of the EDP. In general, support is provided in accordance with the principles of intervention in inverse proportion to success. Centrally funded support is restricted to that for schools designated requiring priority support or associated with the implementation of national initiatives. However, for the current academic year, link inspectors intend to provide between two and four days additional support per school, to develop approaches to evaluating teaching and learning and the implementation of performance management. Most schools are quite capable of purchasing such additional support, if needed, from delegated funds and those that cannot are already in receipt of priority support. Furthermore,

despite detailed consultation, most headteachers interviewed during the inspection were either unaware of this element of support or considered it, incorrectly, to be unspecified pastoral support.

Recommendation

In order to improve the way the LEA fulfils the functions of monitoring, challenge, support and intervention:

- relaunch the programme of extended link inspector support to schools clarifying its purpose better

52. The leadership of services to support school improvement is good. The expertise of professional staff is broad and relevant and staff development programmes have ensured that officers are kept up-to-date with initiatives at a national and a local level. Non-core curricular areas are well covered by consultants or by secondments from schools and there is increasing focus on brokering support for schools. Systems of performance appraisal are effective and a rigorous system of work planning ensures activity is aligned to EDP priorities. However, a policy of substantial over programming of staff within work plans, coupled with the tendency for link inspectors to provide support to schools above minimum entitlement, has resulted in over commitment of link inspectors. Furthermore, the combined responsibility for numeracy and ICT is too much for one individual. The cost per pupil of the school improvement service is lower than in other unitary LEAs and the LEA provides good value for money.

Recommendation

In order to further enhance the effectiveness of link inspectors:

- review the allocation of responsibilities within the team and increase the degree of differentiation in monitoring activity

53. The recent best value review of services that support school improvement (see appendix 2) included some useful recommendations. However it was premature as these services are currently being subject to a further fundamental review as part of preparation for the new EDP.

Collection and analysis of data

54. The LEA's support to schools for the use of performance data is good. The quality of data provided for schools has improved and is good. The individual pupil level data now supplied is being used much more effectively to raise standards. The rigorous use by schools and the LEA of better quality data has resulted in a more secure target setting process. These improvements are recognised by schools, who value the data provided and agree that it appropriately augments the autumn package.

55. The management of the LEA service for data collection and analysis is very good. The service manager works well with the senior inspector to meet schools' needs, to contribute to the development of inspectors' expertise and to assure the quality of the target setting work with schools. The LEA has a clear commitment to providing practical support for schools through better data and more manageable systems. Recent developments include a detailed analysis to enable schools to compare the performance of different groups of pupils, and improvements in the transfer of information between Key Stages 2 and 3. The LEA is also working to support schools in tracking the impact of pupil mobility.

56. The LEA's baseline data is not yet secure. Some schools have chosen to use a commercial scheme rather than the LEA baseline scheme. Whilst LEA officers have tried to support schools by reconciling the schemes in the data they provide to schools, most schools do not have sufficient confidence in baseline data to use it effectively. The LEA has not taken a strong enough lead in baseline assessment. Consequently it is unable to assess starting points, diagnose needs, measure progress and target resources with consistency.

Recommendation

- Review jointly with schools the use of baseline assessment data in order to secure agreed criteria for the data and a shared understanding of its use.

57. The LEA's support for schools in the use of data is a strength. Schools consistently praised the quality of discussions with their link inspector on reviewing standards and setting targets. Link inspectors are well informed and bring a wider perspective to the discussion. Schools value their understanding of the data and their knowledge of the school. Discussions are detailed and help schools to relate performance data to the implications for the learning of individual pupils. The rigour of this process has resulted in greater confidence in the targets set by schools. Both schools and the LEA recognise the impact of better data on the quality of target setting.

58. The LEA's aim to foster self-reviewing and self-improving schools has been reflected through its support for the use of data. Schools recognise that the LEA has been instrumental in taking the improvement agenda forward and that, for some schools, this represented a 'culture change' in setting challenging targets and raising expectations. Most schools identified the role of the LEA in developing staff expertise and confidence in the use of data, to the extent that many schools now see it embedded in school practice. A measure of the success of the LEA's strategy is schools' recognition of their ownership of school improvement in the context of challenge and support from the LEA. The LEA's governor training programme has also contributed significantly to schools' increased understanding of the use of comparative data to measure improvement.

Support for literacy

59. Support for literacy within schools is very good, as are the prospects for accelerating performance at all key stages. The performance of Bournemouth schools at Key Stage 1 reading and writing and Key Stage 2 English tests is in line with national averages. However, the rates of improvement are below the national trend except for Key Stage 1 reading. The aggregate 2001 Key Stage 2 results of 75 per cent at level four or above is some nine per cent lower than the LEA's 2001 target. It also represents a small fall compared with the previous year. The LEA's detailed analysis of pupil and cohort performance has shown that the underlying performance is better than the aggregate results would suggest and that there has been broad based improvement which promises to lead to accelerating aggregate performance at Key Stage 2. However, the LEA's target of 88 per cent level 4 or more at Key Stage 2 for 2002 remains challenging.

60. The EDP strategy has been implemented well by the strategy manager supported by full time primary and secondary consultants. Selection of schools to receive additional support is based on a robust and accurate analysis of an appropriate range of quantitative and qualitative data. The additional support is well planned and customised to the specific needs of the school and efficiently co-ordinated with other support, which may be provided where the school is a cause for concern category. Results have improved in ten of the fourteen and where LEA support had been effective the withdrawal of additional support was prompt.

61. LEA support extends beyond the national literacy strategy. The LEA has made good progress in appointing expert literacy teachers (ELTs) and their work is being well co-ordinated by the primary literacy consultant. An expert headteacher has been effective in providing assistance to early literacy support. The Key Stage 3 strategy has been successfully launched and has gained the commitment of secondary English teaching staff. Data analysis is being used effectively in the development of customised programmes of support for schools. The LEA has rightly recognised the need to improve standards of writing and the primary consultant is leading on a project focusing on boys' achievement which includes for example the imaginative use of drama and fiction to challenge gender stereo-typing. There are effective links with the work of the ethnic minority achievement service. Programmes of support for family literacy within schools are thriving and are well supported by the LEA. Innovative initiatives such as the one day family learning spell workshop build community support for the literacy drive and contribute to raised expectations.

62. The results of the school survey and inspectors judgement during school visits confirm that LEA support for literacy is good for almost all primary and satisfactory and improving in secondary schools. All schools hold the NLS strategy manager and consultants in high regard.

Support for numeracy

63. Much of the LEA's support for numeracy is good but there are some weaknesses in key areas. The aggregate performance at Key Stages 1 and 2 is in line with national averages. However, the rates of improvement at both stages are less than those found nationally. Some 72 per cent of the LEAs' pupils achieved level four or above in the 2001 Key Stage 2 tests. This is the same as for the previous year and is some five per cent below the LEA target for 2001 and ten per cent less than that for 2002. While most schools are making progress some have fluctuated or remained static. The LEA has identified in each case factors, such as long term sickness of key staff, that have contributed to impaired performance.

64. The EDP sets out a clear and coherent programme of support for numeracy. However, the LEA has yet to fully exploit the analysis of increasingly informative available performance data in the targeting of action and the evaluation of outcomes. The LEA's support for numeracy is soundly managed. The strategy manager provides effective leadership despite also having responsibility for the ICT team. A good range of quantitative and qualitative data is analysed to identify schools for additional support as either intensive or supported schools. The programmes of additional support for schools are geared to the specific needs of schools and monitoring of progress by the maths team and link inspector is comprehensive and informative.

Recommendation

In order to improve the quality of support for numeracy:

- use performance data analysis more effectively in targeting action and evaluating outcomes.

65. The LEA has a well-organised directory of leading maths teachers (LMTs) despite a steady loss of LMTs as a consequence of promotion. The take up by teachers of the opportunity to observe a LMT has been disappointing but the feedback from those who have used this facility has been positive. The launch of the Key Stage 3 strategy was positively received by secondary schools and the secondary consultant is working well with secondary school mathematics staff. However, recruitment of LMTs' to work in secondary schools has been difficult and only half of the six for which the LEA has funding will be appointed.

66. Schools' responses to the school survey indicated that, while most schools consider support for numeracy good, overall in primary schools, it is not as highly regarded as the average for other LEAs. Nonetheless, support for numeracy was judged by inspectors to be good in nine of the sixteen schools where it was examined during school visits and unsatisfactory in only one.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

67. Support for ICT is satisfactory with some significant strengths and schools are positive about the help they receive. The LEA, through its EDP, has a clear vision and strategy that focuses on raising attainment through improved resources in schools and the wider community. Most pupils achieve standards above the national average and the quality of teaching, as judged by Ofsted reports, is better than that seen nationally. Some progress is being made in developing systems for a paperless communication between schools. The LEA is developing an Intranet site which, for example, informs about courses for staff and about pupils' standards in core subjects. The technical support for primary schools is still limited but the authority is trying to find some different ways to improve this support by clustering schools into local groups. The ICT resource base at the Bournemouth education and development centre benefits pupils with SEN across the borough. The authority continues to seek innovative ways of securing funds to further improve provision across the borough. The success in winning a substantial national grant for an exciting project, to develop the Hengistbury Head environment site as a classroom of the future, will benefit all pupils.

68. Funds from the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) have been used well by the authority to increase resources in schools. Many schools have set up dedicated rooms for ICT and this strategy has helped improve teachers' confidence and skills through greater access to resources. The ratio of computers to pupils is in line to meet the targets set for 2002. In addition all secondary and some larger primary schools are linked to the internet via broadband technology which speeds up communications and ensures more successful connections. Governors have a good understanding of their future role in the replacement and purchase of resources.

69. Good guidance and information about the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) providers, enabled schools to make a successful choice regarding the correct type of training. This has resulted in most teachers nearing completion of their training and becoming more competent in using ICT. The LEA has supported teachers through training in basic ICT skills and given additional support where needed. Though there has been no recent audit of improvement in staff skills to see where future development may be required, the authority recognises that more support needs to be given to develop the use of ICT across other subjects.

70. The assessment of ICT is at an early stage. The advisor has recently run a course about ICT assessment which was welcomed by schools. The borough has only recently collected data from Key Stage 3 teachers' assessment to compare performance of pupils in different schools. As a result there is little evidence to judge whether standards are improving because of government and local initiatives.

Support for schools causing concern

71. The LEA's support to schools causing concern or likely to do so is good. Monitoring by the LEA ensures that intervention is prompt and well informed. Schools causing concern receive effective and well-planned support that aims to build the capacity for school self-management.

72. The number of schools judged to require special measures or to have serious weaknesses has halved over the past two years and none now require special measures. Three primary schools have been judged to have serious weaknesses, there is one fresh start secondary school and another secondary school has been identified as a school facing challenging circumstances. A further six schools (including the new pupil referral unit) are receiving priority support. Thus there are a total of eleven LEA schools deemed by the LEA to be cause for concern or to require priority support.

73. Monitoring of schools is effective and leads to prompt and well informed intervention where necessary. The triggers for inclusion into a cause for concern category and procedures governing subsequent support are clear, well defined and are considered fair and transparent by headteachers and governors. Support is well co-ordinated, normally by the link inspector, and is clearly focused on establishing a sound foundation of effective school senior management and governance. Action plans set out well-balanced and imaginative programmes of support from the LEA and ensure the school's centrally funded entitlement, of up to 30 days, is well targeted. Secondment of consultant headteachers has been effective in supporting weak senior management teams. Specialist support, particularly from the literacy and numeracy teams, has been used well to address middle management and quality of teaching issues. The progress of schools is monitored diligently in a half termly reports to meetings of the designated officer, the headteacher and chair of governors. Progress is overseen by the LEA's strategic management team and is the subject of regular reports to the education committee. These confirm that all schools in receipt of priority support are improving and most are making good progress.

74. The LEA responded promptly once the Kingsleigh secondary school was judged to require special measures in December 1999 and it reopened as a new school under the Fresh Start scheme from September 2000. Support for the new governing body and senior management team has been of high quality and has involved, inter alia, the appointment of a highly experienced and well-respected chair of governors for the new governing body.

Support for governors

75. The LEA's support to governors and governing bodies is excellent. The LEA has successfully promoted school autonomy, providing governor support and training tailored to this aim, and it ensures governors participate effectively in school improvement processes.

76. From the outset, officers of the LEA correctly recognised that shortcomings in the performance of governing bodies needed to be addressed if effective school self-management was to become a reality. The actions under activity 7.3 of the EDP, support for effective governance, sets out succinctly a comprehensive programme of support to ensure all governing bodies fulfil their proper role in school improvement. The results of monitoring of governance using 'opportunity to excel' reviews, judgements included in recent Ofsted inspection reports and feedback from governor representatives on the link governor network, confirm that the LEA's aim has been

achieved in most schools. In those where weaknesses remain the problems are well understood and are being addressed

77. Induction training provided for new governors is up to date and well-resourced and valued by governors and governing bodies. Effective consultation between officers in governor services and governors means that the programme of short training courses are fresh, relevant and competitively priced ensuring a high level of buy back. There is a well-targeted programme of customised training and support for individual schools.

78. The two and a half professional staff in the governor services team provide efficient and effective support and advice to governing bodies. Considerable care is taken to ensure that information is provided promptly in a digestible form for example a termly report from the director of education provides a succinct and readable summary of current local and national educational developments. Regular forums aim to ensure consistent performance of clerks and feedback has prompted new guidance circulars and the preparation of a clerks' manual.

79. The LEA provides very good support to the governing bodies of schools causing concern or facing particular problems, such as amalgamation. It has a good track record of appointing effective governors to support weak governing bodies and ensuring, as far as possible, that LEA support results in strong and cohesive governing bodies that work well with school senior managers. For example, to support the governing body of the fresh start school, the governor services co-ordinator acted as the fresh start project officer for two terms.

80. The level of governor vacancy is monitored regularly and currently stands at 12 per cent, below the national average. Recruitment drives for all categories of governor have ensured the level of vacancy has not significantly affected the performance of governing bodies. The service intends to use the Bournemouth website to complement effective recruitment advertising through the local press.

Support for school management

81. The LEA's support to school management is good. The LEA's strategy for school improvement is based on the premise that secure and sustained school improvement is built upon consistent and effective school management. The judgements in recent Ofsted inspection reports indicate that the management of over 70 per cent of schools is good or better, which is in line with national averages. Nevertheless the LEA aims to improve the quality of school management so that all schools will be in a position to be judged good by Ofsted inspectors by 2002. The EDP sets out a coherent, comprehensive and well thought through strategy to achieve this aim.

82. School link inspectors provide good support to senior managers. The reviews have been effective in building the capacity within schools for self-review. They have provided LEA officers with clear insights into the strengths and weaknesses of management in schools. Induction and mentoring for new heads is well managed and is held in very high regard. Support for the professional development of existing

heads is well organised and resourced. The LEA has assiduously promoted professional networking for head and deputy heads.

83. The LEA offers a comprehensive range of courses to support continuing professional development of teachers. Needs are identified through regular consultation and monitoring processes and increasingly as a result of opportunity to excel reviews. Course evaluations are overwhelmingly positive. The establishment of the Bournemouth education and development centre has enabled the LEA to better meet training needs. The development of partnerships with higher education establishments and improving arrangement for brokering training is increasing choice available to schools. The arrangements for supporting newly qualified teachers are well organised and effectively monitored.

84. The LEA's success in supporting middle managers is variable. Despite the effort put into this area by the LEA there is some dissatisfaction within schools about the quality of LEA support for middle managers. Effective support for primary school middle managers has come, for example, though the implementation of the LEA's literacy and numeracy strategies. The focus on developing the skills of middle managers and co-ordinators has been amongst the most effective elements of priority support for schools causing concern. Networking arrangements for co-ordinators are improving but attendance is uneven. The support provided by Advanced Skills Teachers is well managed and monitored. Nevertheless the LEA's monitoring of school performance has identified continuing weaknesses at school middle management level. This provided much of the justification for the extension of link inspector support for this year. While the nature and purpose of this support has been misunderstood by schools, the conclusion that schools and the LEA need to focus on better supporting middle managers is sound.

Other areas

Early Years

85. Support for early years is satisfactory with some significant strengths and is successfully led and managed by the Early Years' Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). A wide range of different providers make a contribution to learning and achievement in the community, particularly in areas of social deprivation. The effective partnership, now established, has overcome some initial difficulties regarding direction and vision. As result the leadership has become more sharply focused on raising the quality and quantity of the provision available

86. Good progress has been made on the implementation of the early years plan. This is in keeping with the authority's vision on inclusive education and includes clear criteria for quality services. These are promoted and regularly monitored by the partnership. There is a qualified teacher and special needs co-ordinator in every nursery setting. Consequently the identification of pupils' special needs is becoming more rapid. There is good training and support through a range of quality courses and network group meetings. This has led to improved teaching and care. Nearly half of the schools surveyed agreed that support for early years was good, although 8 per cent thought it poor.

87. The number of places for three and four year olds has increased although the ambitious local target for full provision for three-year-olds, was not met last year. Day care nurseries and privately run playgroups cater for the majority of three year olds and six primary schools have nursery classes which catered for 17.2 per cent of three year olds in 2000-1. Not all of the available places in these nursery classes were filled in 2000/01, but given that there is no LEA maintained day care provision, full time places for three year olds in the maintained sector are insufficient to meet parental demand. Further provision for childcare and early education places is planned through the development of community centres and nursery schools in five local areas. Funds have been secured for this development and will be targeted to areas of social disadvantage. As a result of these new initiatives, the authority should meet its target for three-year-olds by 2004.

88. Whilst children with complex special needs are identified early and good provision is made, the process of identifying pupils with learning needs is often delayed because confidential records are not being passed to receiving nursery settings. Some of the voluntary sector providers are uneasy about transferring records and, as a result, schools have to make further checks on this important information. In addition, a significant number of schools are frustrated by the lack of leadership from the authority in sorting out the current situation with regard to baseline assessment.

Recommendation

In order to speed up the identification of pupils with learning needs:

- establish procedures to ensure all schools receive confidential records about children before they reach early education.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate Planning

89. Corporate planning in Bournemouth is distinguished both by its clarity and by the extent to which it incorporates community planning. The council is ahead of the field on the latter, having embarked on it early in 1999 and officially inaugurated the Bournemouth partnership in April 2000. The partnership brings together over one hundred diverse organisations, all committed on a non partisan basis to building a better Bournemouth. The planning processes are transparent and coherent: community consultation and planning feed into the community plan which defines community priorities. These determine corporate priorities as encapsulated in the Best Value Performance Plan and this in turn gives rise to service priorities which shape business plans. Thus, priorities are linked and traceable through from one level to another, performance management arrangements throughout the council are meshed in to the achievement of community objectives and staff can see how their individual objectives contribute to the achievement of the council's community objectives.

90. This clarity is supported by the move to a three year financial planning cycle. The budget strategy balances an ambitious improvement agenda with the low level of reserves and the potential for overspend. An increase in council tax is under consideration and central restructuring has been agreed. A rigorous process of annual service direction reviews is used to ensure that business plans are being fulfilled, to revise them when necessary and to prioritise action. Thus the council has moved forward rapidly on major programmes of change and development such as the improvement of school buildings, the implementation of the class size plan or the re-focusing of provision for special educational needs.

91. The education priority, "learning throughout life", features prominently as one of the five priorities at all levels of planning. So too does social inclusion, actions to promote which figure under two further priorities, "developing communities and tackling crime" and "caring for people". Education also subscribes to the overall priority of ensuring quality services and value for money. Its aim is to work in partnership with parents, teachers, headteachers, governors and the community in raising achievement, lifelong learning, quality and best value.

92. These commitments are more than rhetoric. This is an ambitious and courageous LEA with a very strong shared vision and underpinning values. Across the professional, political and community spectrum, people articulate the vision with conviction; it is simply that the well being and progress of all Bournemouth's children are paramount if achievement is to be raised. This consensus is the fruit of principled, charismatic, intelligent and strategic leadership by the director and his team, backed by members, who set out from the beginning to create an accessible and responsive organisation with a shared vision and common values. The task has not been an easy one and there have been setbacks along the way. Not all the headteachers have welcomed change and a few still do not. But the overwhelming view, endorsed by the inspection, is that the LEA has benefited from exceptional leadership.

93. Building the consensus has involved developing exemplary communication and consultation strategies. These have included not just the professionals but also parents and communities, not just paper but also face to face communication. The personal skills of the director have shaped a "putting people first" approach and ethos. The LEA building has been adapted to draw in and welcome education stakeholders, staff and the wider community with the ground floor of the building converted into a well used education information, advice and guidance facility. A carefully designed café hosts informal meetings of staff, groups of parents, retired teachers, governors and others. Newsletters, regular cycles of meetings with governors and headteachers and visits to schools by the director, sometimes accompanied by the chief executive, ensure communication between the LEA and schools. Education committee meetings are timed to ensure that headteachers can easily attend. A member of the Bournemouth youth council has a seat on the education committee and so do selected secondary school pupils on a rotating basis.

94. Consultation too is fundamentally built in to the LEA's way of working, so much so that some headteachers complain of consultation overload, though all agree that too much is better than none and that outcomes are shaped by the consultation. For instance, the funding formula grew out of thoughtful and listening partnership with schools and amendments to the draft policy on special educational needs suggested by the parent partnership were incorporated in the final version.

95. Commitment to the common vision has been cemented not just by good communication and consultation but also by practical measures such as a high level of delegation to schools, and the determined and successful pursuit of external funding. These, together with clarity and openness about funding and a substantial and well targeted building programme have created confidence that improvement will continue.

96. The director and senior managers also work closely with members. Here too a carefully designed strategy for development has ensured that members fulfil their roles well, are familiar with schools, well informed about national and local changes and equipped to make decisions. 'Key Issue' sheets initiate discussion of new ideas between the chair and officers; these are then carried forward though discussion with other members. The pre-education committee agenda meetings enable members to raise issues, request additional information related to items due for decision or direct officers to rethink. Officers prepare clear and informative reports for the education committee, setting out options and their implications. A special annual joint meeting of the education committee and officers agrees the priorities for the education business plan. Members take regular reports on the progress of the EDP and from schools on the outcomes of their Ofsted inspections.

97. The concept of partnership is well developed and inherent in the way in which Bournemouth seeks to work at every level to promote inclusion and raise achievement. The education department is outward looking in its approach and totally committed to working in partnership with all relevant agencies, to further the opportunities for children on a wide range of fronts. This has enabled it to be effective in establishing very good working relationships with almost all its schools, including some from the independent sector, and the unions.

98. Productive collaboration has been developed with the early years partnership, the Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, the careers service and the local colleges, in order to realise the authority's vision for life-long learning. Working closely with the police, the LEA has been very effective in reducing unauthorised absence and in developing drugs education in schools. Imaginative collaboration with voluntary organisations such as Relate, theatre in education and the training and advisory group for the work related curriculum has contributed extensively to the work with disaffected and vulnerable young people. Relationships with the diocesan authorities are satisfactory but the same degree of openness and trust that exists with other partners has not been achieved.

99. Through its bold approach to Best Value reviews, the authority has sought to develop those partnerships that are not as effective as they should be at a strategic level, namely those with health and social services. This has achieved a noticeable measure of success, particularly with the health authority, although there is still some way to go before the full impact is felt in schools. The LEA works in active collaboration with neighbouring authorities in order to share good practice and develop economies of scale; its successful bid to become lead authority on child protection in the Southwest is such an example.

Management services

100. Overall, the quality of **management services** is good. A comprehensive range of council services is available. Many schools use these services, some have successful in-house arrangements and others buy good quality services from neighbouring LEAs or private sector providers. Where services are provided by the council, contracts are clearly defined and choice is available in the level of service provided. Support for schools in the **procurement of services** is satisfactory with strengths outweighing weaknesses.

101. The planning and resources business unit of the education directorate has a strategic role. It does not provide traded services except for governor services. Its independence from council services places it ideally to broker services and to be objective in monitoring quality and value for money, whether services are council or externally provided. At a time when this role is developing, the monitoring of council services is good. The role does not however extend to services provided by the private sector or other LEAs.

Recommendation

Improve management services by:

- introducing systems to monitor the quality of management services irrespective of provider, within Best Value principles, without placing bureaucratic burdens on schools.

102. Support for **financial management** is good and there is effective support for school self evaluation (O2E). Financial information is accurate. ICT systems enable schools to plan, project and monitor their three year budgets. These systems have

been effectively supported until recently where staff absence has left a gap. The finance and administrative forum and newsletters help to share good practice and to support financial management. Payroll provides a good service to the majority of schools. Surpluses are rigorously scrutinised and officers, supported by members, challenge undue surpluses. Alternative providers also offer well regarded services. Schools are normally audited every two years. Audits are thorough, with the minimum level of cover deemed necessary. With increased financial responsibilities delegated to schools and the questions being raised by members and officers resulting from high levels of surplus, and the provision of services, the audit model is at present in some cases not deep enough. Revised procedures are to be introduced for 2002/03 in recognition of this.

Recommendation

- Review the level of audit procedures in order to take account of the increased financial responsibilities of schools.

103. Support for **personnel** is good. The council's personnel service has rapidly developed its skills in the education field. It provides good advice and guidance and deals effectively with administrative issues related to payroll. Casework, particularly capability issues, are strengths. Good personnel support was provided in the closure of a special school and with a fresh start school. Schools buying services from outside the LEA are also satisfied with the quality of service they receive.

104. Support for **ICT in school administration** is good although some schools have had frustrations with administrative systems in changing from one supplier to another. There are understandable criticisms from a small minority of schools but these are taken good account of in planned service developments. Strategic planning for ICT is good and very good progress has been made with connectivity; most schools presently have a broadband connection. Training to support school administration is good and the quality of support for administrative officers is very good. Good progress is presently being made with putting in place the systems and technology to support less burdensome and secure data exchange. Schools are well placed for the new electronic return of pupil data to take effect in January 2002. Curriculum and administration networks are being integrated to facilitate better access for teachers to administrative software, for example, for assessment management. Technical support for curriculum and administration are presently separate. The latter is presently over-stretched. Changed arrangements need to be sought to better fit the developments in the ICT strategy.

Recommendation

Improve management services by:

- expanding the review of support for administrative ICT, to include hardware and systems support for integrated curriculum and administration networks.

105. Support for **property management** is satisfactory with significant strengths. The range of property services is effectively linked to asset management planning. Schools are clear about their responsibilities and some schools have had particularly effective support from property services. Professional advice to schools on the use of devolved funding and in the management of building projects is satisfactory overall and in a number of instances it has been very good. Support for **grounds maintenance** is good. School grounds were observed to be well kept. Almost half of schools have their own provider whether private or in house and this works well. Support for **cleaning** is satisfactory overall but there are some dissatisfied schools. Some schools manage their own cleaning effectively in-house. The **School meals service** is, on balance, satisfactory overall. Independently provided secondary catering is good. Primary school meals are entirely based on packed lunches. Free meals meet nutritional standards.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION

Strategy

106. Bournemouth has a clear and effective strategy for special educational needs which has enabled it to make good progress since becoming a unitary authority. The strategy is effectively linked to the borough's inclusion policy and is supported by sound policies for specialist provision such as language support and sensory impairment. It reflects extensive and transparent consultation with schools and the community to audit provision and identify future needs. There is a clear and comprehensive SEN development plan and service delivery plans, which are rigorously monitored and regularly reviewed by officers. Effective use has been made of a Best Value review of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) provision to shape strategy in this area of particular difficulty. The LEA has succeeded in creating a culture of inclusion and this is supported by schools, who share the vision, and are prepared to adopt a range of flexible approaches to meeting the special educational needs of individual children.

107. There are three key strands to the strategy. These strands are clear to all concerned. The first strand involves the cessation of high incidence statements and their replacement by increased delegation of funds to mainstream schools. This frees schools to meet special educational needs flexibly. Coupled with the delegation of additional funds following the closure of a special school, this has secured a high level of inclusion and given mainstream schools the autonomy to manage SEN effectively.

108. The second strand involves reducing the use of out-borough special schools and the maintenance of a small but high quality provision for pupils with complex SEN in a Bournemouth special school and in a number of mainstream schools with resourced provision. Alongside this, the beacon special school has been developed as a centre of excellence to provide high quality outreach support for mainstream schools. Strong and often innovative leadership is developing this strand further through initiatives such as the creation of an advanced skills teacher post for inclusion, the development of an ICT resource base and the provision of a specialist unit for autism. Good consultation, careful planning and adequate resourcing of these developments has ensured their success.

109. The third strand to the strategy is the provision for pupils with EBD. This is more long-term, and the LEA recognises that the plan entails establishing the right environment and recruiting staff with the requisite expertise. The strategy is coherent and involves developing the special school for 11–16 pupils, including residential care, a resource base attached to a primary school to meet the needs of primary aged pupils and a 6 place unit for girls attached to a secondary school. The educational psychology service (EPS) is used effectively to support pupils with EBD in mainstream schools. Whilst implementation of the strategy is at an early stage, schools value the support received and recognise the LEA's determination to secure the very best provision for these pupils.

110. The SEN strategy is well managed by the head of student services through a number of strong teams, which are well led by effective and efficient managers. The

direction and guidance provided for schools on the provision for pupils with SEN are of high quality and the services provided are good. The good, clear strategy coupled with efficient services has bolstered the confidence and autonomy of schools in managing special educational needs.

Statutory obligations

111. Bournemouth takes very effective steps to meet its statutory responsibilities for SEN. 98.6 per cent of statements (after exceptions) are completed within the expected 18-week period. This represents a very significant improvement since local government reorganisation.(LGR) The LEA has effective systems in place for identifying and assessing pupils with SEN. Schools are provided with good guidance on the use of the robust criteria for determining a referral for statutory assessment. The process for referrals for a statement is transparent and fair, and statements are of good quality. Provision is appropriate and reflects the content of statements. The annual review of statements is thorough, with good representation from the LEA. The liaison work of the LEA caseworker is valued by schools and is a particular strength of the provision. Transition plans are well managed. Steps are being taken to secure appropriate joint funding and management of out of borough placements by health, social services and education.

112. Parents are well informed about their rights and parents interviewed commended the support of the Parent Partnership Scheme. LEA officers clearly recognise the need to maintain impartiality in the role of independent conciliation and the plan to use a purchase model for mediation when required meets the requirements of the new Code of Practice. The effectiveness of LEA procedures is demonstrated by the very low number of tribunals.

Support for school improvement

113. The LEA's support to improve schools' capacity to manage SEN is very good. There is effective monitoring of the progress and achievements of pupils with SEN through the LEA's self-review scheme for schools. Schools recognise and value the role of the SEN inspector in school improvement, such as the development of value-added methods to meet the needs of pupils with SEN. The development of an LEA database is contributing to more effective tracking of progress made by pupils with SEN. However, the lack of a protocol for the transfer of information about children with SEN from early years providers to first and primary schools is a weakness.

114. Support for special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) is very good, through both the SENCO network and the provision of high quality training. So too is the provision of support services to schools. The educational psychology service is rightly highly regarded by schools for the clarity and efficiency of its assessment of pupils' needs. Enhanced provision through additional specialist appointments to the psychology service and revised, flexible ways of working illustrate the LEA's effective targeting of resources to meet identified needs. Language support is a strength and the quality of support for sensory impairment is very good. Speech therapist support is insufficient to meet the needs of schools. Strategic links with health and social services are improving. The support for governors in meeting their statutory responsibilities for SEN is exemplary.

Value for money

115. The LEA provides good value for money for SEN. Resources are well matched to the needs in schools. The overall budget for SEN is broadly average and there has been a shift in funding toward delegating more money into school budgets. Although expenditure on placements outside the LEA is higher than that of statistical neighbours, the LEA has prioritised the need to reduce out of borough placements and redress the situation it inherited.

116. Delegation of funding is higher than the unitary and national average and this reflects the LEA's inclusive strategy. The arrangements to evaluate the use of delegated funding for SEN have not kept pace with the funding changes. Thus though the LEA has robust systems for tracking the comparative progress of pupils with different special needs, the annual inclusion development meetings are not used consistently to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's strategic provision. The activity led funding for special schools has a clear rationale and is fair.

Recommendations

In order to improve evaluation of the effectiveness of provision:

- ensure that annual inclusion development meetings have a consistent focus on evaluation and that appropriate LEA personnel attend.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

Introduction

117. The LEA has developed a robust strategy on all access issues that has the wholehearted support of elected members. There is a strong belief, which is shared by the director and his senior officers, that the well-being and progress of all children supported by effective place planning, admissions arrangements and quality school environments, are of paramount importance if standards of achievement are to be raised. This strategy is manifest in the EDP, which has a separate priority to promote inclusion, and is translated into seamless operations through productive working partnerships between all business units in the directorate. The LEA is working at a higher level than many other authorities in respect of the quality of data it collects on vulnerable children, the assiduity with which it tracks their development and the targets it sets for their achievement. It has been successful in translating its vision into effective working practices in the vast majority of its schools.

The supply of school places

118. The planning of school places is good. There are four per cent surplus places in the primary sector and eight per cent in the secondary sector. The LEA has been active and strategic in addressing the increasing pressure on school places and the imbalance between supply and demand. The school organisation plan, now updated to cover 2001-05, is based on thoughtful and reliable forecasting. The plan is good in many respects but it does not sufficiently set out conclusions for the full five year period. The approach to place planning has the overwhelming support of headteachers and consultation is very good. There is broadly satisfactory liaison with diocesan authorities via the school organisation committee and good liaison with neighbouring LEAs.

Recommendation

In order to better aid the strategic planning of school places:

- set out conclusions in the school organisation plan to cover the full five year period of the plan.

119. The infant class size plan provided the opportunity to rationalise primary school places according to the capacity of buildings, community need and parental preference. It has been well managed and targets have been achieved. Over time, it will reduce overcrowding at Key Stage 2. Most primary schools provide all through schooling and their size and standard numbers based on multiples of 30 give good economies of scale. Action is being taken to change the age of transfer to coincide with the end of KS1 for the three remaining first schools. Planned expansions are underway in five primary schools and growth in places is planned for in the south and east of the borough. Over 2,200 early years places have been provided in LEA schools including places in areas of social deprivation through opportunities afforded by the infant class size plan.

120. Secondary school provision has been expanded in the last two years with 50 extra places for increased pupil numbers. Temporary places have been provided to accommodate an unusually large year group in 2001. Further increases in capacity are planned to meet identified 'basic need'. Place planning includes the development of specialist school status. Specialisms presently covered are the arts, languages and technology. Post-16 provision is available in the two grammar schools, and the Catholic comprehensive school. These are highly viable sixth forms. One other school has a small sixth form and the LEA and school have actively taken measures to increase its size. For pupils in schools without sixth forms, many choose places in the nearby sixth form provision in Hampshire and Dorset.

121. Special school places have been reduced as part of the LEA strategy to increase inclusion in mainstream schools. Bournemouth makes considerable use of places in independent schools and this is being examined as part of a Best Value review.

Asset management planning

122. Asset management planning is good and Bournemouth's approach has the strong support of schools. Substantial funding has been targeted to tackle the backlog of condition related works at LGR, improve the supply of school places and rationalise primary provision around more cost effective standard numbers. Some schools still have buildings requiring improvement or temporary buildings requiring replacement but overall, impressive progress has been made.

123. Condition surveys have been expertly undertaken and recorded since 1998. Repair and maintenance money was delegated a year earlier than required by the DfES. Many schools have accumulated devolved capital to address substantial projects in the next two years. The DfES judged the asset management plan to be satisfactory. The LEA has conducted the suitability assessment well. Verification and moderation took place in partnership with schools to identify priorities in the extended times granted by the DFES. A school self-evaluation tool (O2E) enables each school to assess their approach to asset management against 5 standards.

124. The effective partnership between schools and the LEA has led to good developments which meet local needs. Priorities are clear, transparent and strategic. Policy and practice reflect the commitment to inclusion, equality and physical and curricular access. Secondary schools capital schemes have improved specialist facilities in parallel with providing additional places. In the Fresh Start secondary school an 8 classroom art/technology block and a replacement science block is being provided. In the primary sector, four major projects are under way including a new school building. Primary developments have effectively addressed the need for more school places, anomalies in the age of transfer and changes in admission numbers as well as improving the suitability and condition of buildings. There have been 3 new primary buildings. The preparation for two of them was undertaken prior to LGR. The LEA was fortunate to inherit a new secondary school built by its predecessor authority in 1995.

125. The programming and management of building projects is good and there is little slippage with contracts. Schools feel involved in design work, good technical expertise is at hand and building work is effectively supervised. Landlord responsibilities for structural building maintenance are undertaken effectively. Costs are transparent and closely monitored; they have been within DfES guide costs overall.

Admissions

126. The management of admissions is good. The LEA successfully works with a diverse range of admission authorities. Arrangements for admissions and appeals comply with the Code of Practice and have the strong confidence of schools.

127. The primary phase operates a fully coordinated admissions timetable between all admission authorities in Bournemouth. Good relationships lead to a highly efficient process. Well thought out changes to infant school admissions numbers have increased the level of first choices. The wide diversity of secondary schools gives rise to a complex situation to manage. The movement of pupils between authorities, largely into Bournemouth, adds to the complexity. The timing and phasing of secondary admission decisions has been improved and the admissions team have been proactive in helping admission authorities to work together well. The admissions forum has been appropriately used for consultation on admission arrangements.

128. Good quality information is provided for parents on admissions and appeals. This is supplemented with a one-stop information service which provides a contact point for parents. Parents' evenings are visited at key transfer points by the staff from the service. For families where English is not the first language, parents can access an interpreting scheme. This is being further developed through the admissions forum.

129. The success in meeting parental wishes for school places is good., given the pressure on places. For the September 2001 admissions, 97 per cent of parents were offered their preferred choice at reception age, all parents were offered their preferred choice when moving from first school to junior school and 93 per cent of parents were awarded their highest preference for community schools following selective and voluntary aided choices. Overall, three quarters of parents are awarded their first choice of secondary school when selective and denomination places are taken into account. School places for children with SEN are dealt with effectively. Admission criteria are fair and reasonable.

130. Despite the pressure on school places the level of appeals is broadly average. In 2001/02 almost three-quarters of appeals were heard and just over a third were successful, which is below average. Over a three year period appeals have reduced. Exclusion appeals have reduced to none. Appeals are dealt with in time to enable induction to schools by mid summer term.

131. Much progress has been made with admissions and the LEA is seeking to improve this still further with a best value review of admissions and school places.

Provision of education otherwise than at school

132. The provision for all groups of pupils educated other than at school is good overall and improving fast. An effective long-term strategy has been established. In the past year, the LEA has moved from home tuition to establish a learning support centre in order to increase significantly the number of hours pupils are offered and to ensure greater accountability for the quality of the service. Elected members and secondary head teachers are represented on the management committee and are involved in determining the overall priorities.

133. Pupils have access to 20 hours currently and the arrangements to increase these to the required 25 hours by September 2002 are firmly in place. The LEA has been successful in reducing the number of pupils receiving tuition other than at school, through achieving higher rates of reintegration than those achieved nationally. Since the establishment of the centre, the number of pupils leaving with an accredited qualification has leapt from one to every pupil in the last year.

134. The centre initially encountered difficulties in staffing that have now been addressed effectively by establishing a partnership with a local secondary school based on a five-year service level agreement. The head has assumed responsibility for management overview with the head of centre becoming a member of the school's senior management team. Great strides have been made since September and the centre is now providing a sound broad based education for its pupils in a bright learning environment where they feel safe and secure. The LEA has established an element of flexibility in its staffing to respond to any increase or decrease in numbers.

135. The LEA's medium-term strategy is both imaginative and resourceful and has the capacity to provide appropriate and separate provision for younger pupils and for those at Key Stage 4. The centre is based on the 'revolving door' principle, and is an essential part of the LEA's strategy to develop schools' capacity to provide an alternative curriculum. To this end an exit plan is established for each pupil on the day of admission. The centre aims to provide a high level of flexibility in the curriculum offered and by enabling schools to purchase provision on a dual registration basis, encourages schools to do the same. Close links have been established with the careers service, local colleges, the youth service and voluntary organisations to provide high quality experiences in sport, the arts and work-related activities.

136. The LEA has very well established and very effective means of referral and of monitoring the progress of pupils through the children causing concern group. There are good relationships with neighbouring LEAs to ensure that pupils do not fall through the net. A strongly coordinated approach enables up-to-the-minute records to be readily available on pupils' welfare, attendance and achievement. Individual cases are discussed on a weekly basis and adjustments made to personal support plans with agreed actions by members of the group. This leads to the needs of pregnant schoolgirls, school phobic and sick pupils being clearly identified and to a planned reintegration into full time education wherever possible. Where pupils are too sick to attend, teachers attached to the centre provide five hours of home tuition. Pregnant schoolgirls are encouraged to attend for as long as possible and every

effort is made to find a suitable placement after the birth, including the award of a discretionary grant for further education. Attendance is closely monitored and where pupils' attendance patterns are found to relate to different elements of their individual provision, the programme is altered to promote greater engagement.

137. The LEA actively monitors the provision and progress of the 45 children whose parents choose to educate them at home. On the rare occasion when the provision is judged to be unsatisfactory, an attendance order has been issued and the pupil successfully reintegrated into school.

Attendance

138. Support for attendance is good overall and all statutory requirements are met. The decision to devolve the service to secondary schools and the necessary transition has been managed well. Two-thirds of schools rate the service as at least good and primary schools rate it higher than schools in other authorities, in spite of the fact that a few primary schools have experienced significant discontinuity in personnel.

139. The educational welfare service (EWS) is fully committed to supporting the authority's drive to promote social inclusion. There is a dedicated member of staff who works with excluded pupils, children in public care and those who have been bullied. The service is proactive in working with other agencies, particularly the police, Relate and the health authority, and in using the media effectively to back up its campaigns. Although the LEA uses prosecution as the ultimate sanction where absence is condoned, this is kept to a minimum by the more effective use of parenting orders in primary schools, pre-court assessment meetings and work with the careers service at Key Stage 4. Support is provided on a one-to-one basis for children causing concern over the transition from primary to secondary school.

140. Devolvement has brought benefits by increasing the number of staff promoting attendance in secondary schools and by broadening their role. The service is fully staffed at the centre. The LEA has capitalised on these changes by insisting that all staff, whether based in schools or at the centre, work towards a professional qualification. School-based educational welfare officers (EWO) are supported in their role through regular meetings with the EWS and to establish consistency of practice and continuity between the phases. This has the potential to improve further the quality of the service and to introduce greater stability in the long term.

141. The LEA has been successful in bringing down the rates of unauthorised absence in both primary and secondary schools year on year, was very close to its primary target in 2001 and is optimistic that it will meet both targets by 2002. This has been achieved as a direct result of borough wide initiative involving the police and local shopkeepers in challenging pupils who are out of school without a 'Pupil Pass' backed up by specific school initiatives such as 'Stick and Tell' which offers motivation to primary pupils and a time saving way of notifying absence for parents.

142. The service has good monitoring procedures and uses the information to prioritise its work with primary schools and to alert secondary schools to the possibility of the withdrawal of the devolved service where unsatisfactory attendance

is not being tackled effectively. Recent improvements in the system for data collection enable local and comparative data to be analysed. Wide ranging surveys involving schools, pupils and parents have enabled the service to target improvement where it is needed. However, although the criteria for allocating time to schools is transparent, the present system of target setting has not provided sufficient incentive for improvement in primary schools whose levels of attendance and unauthorised absence are in line with national averages. Nor has it enabled schools that have not reached the LEA's universal target to benefit from the social skills work undertaken in schools that have.

Recommendation

In order to further improve attendance :

- introduce individual school targets in primary schools and deploy staff to better target needs.

143. Comprehensive guidance is provided to schools in relation to statutory requirements, procedures to be followed and a wide range of initiatives that address listening to pupils, promoting attendance and encouraging punctuality. The EWS takes a robust line on punctuality in advising schools to close their registers ten minutes after the start of the day. It has plans to take the same line on holidays taken in term time because overall levels of attendance, which had improved and are still just above national averages in both primary and secondary schools, have fallen in the past year because of the significant increase in the number of applications for extended holidays.

Behaviour support

144. Support for behaviour is good. The LEA has been successful in developing a comprehensive strategy for promoting good behaviour in close consultation with schools and other agencies. This encompasses a variety of provision, specialist and mainstream, to meet the clearly identified needs of pupils at different tiers. The aim is to develop centres of excellence, to spread good practice and to share the load in supporting pupils with challenging behaviour. The strategy is mapped out with great clarity in the second Behaviour Support Plan (BSP), which explains in accessible language the levels of provision, and the complementary roles and responsibilities of the LEA and schools in meeting pupils' needs.

145. The LEA has made good use of government grants to implement a range of successful initiatives to reduce exclusions significantly. Figures compare very favourably with the national picture, particularly at secondary level. Challenging permanent exclusion targets have been exceeded and maintained at a low level, having reduced from 40 to seven in the last three years. The LEA has a good record for reintegrating pupils back into full time education on a permanent basis. Fixed-term exclusions are lower than the national average in secondary schools, have reduced to a low level in primary and the high levels in one special school are being brought down. The LEA has used its evaluation of major initiatives to develop its

strategy for inclusion in a forward thinking and imaginative way. Following on from its inclusion project, it has just appointed an AST for inclusion to consolidate the good work that was achieved in working with pupils and parents and in spreading good practice.

146. The children's support service provides a coordinated package of support to schools that is well organised and managed. The successful impact of the LEA's inclusion strategy has increased the amount of the time that educational psychologists use flexibly in school to work directly with groups of pupils and to provide guidance and training for teachers and teaching assistants. The small but effective behaviour support service has been integrated with the EPS to form the psychology and behaviour service from autumn 2001 to ensure that there is no overlap or gaps in provision. Already, greater collaboration in their work with school staff to develop inclusive provision has led to a drop in the number of referrals. Most schools recognise their responsibilities and value the quality of the advice and support they receive in fulfilling them. The formation of the new service is intended to open the door to purchased services for schools, although the plans are in their infancy.

147. In an authority that is working successfully with its schools to develop their capacity to become more inclusive, it is not surprising that shortcomings in resources, training and support have been identified, particularly in primary schools. The council has been responsive to needs and has transparently delegated the money resulting from the closure of a special school for children with EBSD to primary and secondary schools. The EPS has moved swiftly to reassign work within the newly combined team to limit the impact of seconding a behaviour support teacher to a school causing concern. Funding for an additional behaviour support teacher is being identified for the coming year and a specialist educational psychologist has recently been appointed to develop a strategic training plan.

148. Good structures and systems are in place to identify needs, to monitor progress and to prioritise work. Analysis of data has identified that pupils with EBSD are not making as much progress as other pupils on the SEN register. As a result, these pupils are the focus for this term's monitoring visit. The LEA recognises that its evaluation procedures are not well developed and this has resulted in training that has not been sharply focused. The annual inclusion development meeting is not sufficiently well established in all schools to enable them to evaluate the impact of additional funding or to develop a strategic approach to managing behaviour.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

149. Procedures for health, safety, welfare and child protection are very good. The LEA has a well-developed strategy that runs through its plans and across services based on a detailed analysis of need. Schools speak highly of the quality of training and advice they receive and undertake their responsibilities seriously.

150. There are good systems in place to ensure that the local authority and schools comply with statutory requirements. The documentation provided to schools on health and safety is comprehensive and well produced. The authority has established an effective training programme that is based on a clear audit of need.

Schools have been provided with detailed framework for monitoring and evaluating their own practice against statutory requirements. Good progress has been made in the development of risk assessment in schools but there is still more work to be done.

151. In an authority where there are specific areas with a very high incidence of substance abuse, the LEA is proactive in tackling drug related issues. It has formed very effective partnerships with the police and voluntary organisations to provide a comprehensive and well-coordinated curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. All school have a drugs education policy and the majority cover drug-related incidents.

152. The authority gives a strong lead on child protection matters and has been identified by the DfES as lead for a cluster of authorities in the Southwest. There is a high proportion of children on the child protection register which has made this a priority across all agencies and led to a high level of cohesiveness. Thorough steps are taken to meet all statutory obligations to protect children from significant harm. The LEA plays a full part on child protection matters through its directorate child protection group. Its wide representation and clear brief ensure that a strategic response is made to education specific recommendations of the area child protection committee. The LEA has very clear procedures for reporting and tracking matters concerning missing children.

153. Good inter-agency collaboration between education and social service has led to the implementation of common protocols for staff working in schools, which have been adopted across the borough for checking any adult who comes into contact with children. There is a well-established multi-agency approach to training to meet the needs of a variety of audiences. Every school has a designated co-ordinator and most schools a designated governor. The training programme is closely monitored for quality and attendance; all schools received training in the current year to meet specific needs. A recent evaluation of training has identified the need to provide a sharper focus and to develop a programme for early years providers. The LEA has plans to establish benchmarking procedures through its regional work.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

154. Support for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory and developing well. The LEA has established a sound basis to support schools' work with gifted and talented pupils, although it is at an early stage of development and not yet embedded in all schools. A co-ordinator leads the support for gifted and talented pupils identified in the EDP. The action plan is informed by pupil performance data, but the relationship between activities and success criteria is insufficiently focused, resulting in some weak evaluation.

155. The LEA has successfully raised the profile of gifted and talented pupils, not least through wide consultation on the recently published policy. The establishment of a working party is enabling the LEA to develop its work in close consultation with schools. The overall provision appropriately reflects the breadth of the LEA's definition of gifted and talented pupils and include data analysis, in-service training on teaching and learning, a teachers' network and provision of summer schools.

The LEA recognises that some aspects of support for gifted and talented pupils, such as pupil tracking, are at a developmental stage. It is strengthening its provision for gifted and talented pupils through EDP 2. There is a clear strategy for moving forward which incorporates working with a wide range of partners to provide enrichment and extension for gifted and talented pupils. This is an effective way of balancing the limited officer time for leading the project with the aim to ensure quality provision for all gifted and talented pupils.

Looked after children

156. The LEA makes very good provision for children in public care. There is a coherent strategy and jointly established protocols based on a detailed identification of need. From the chief executive down, all officers make the needs and achievements of children in public care a prime responsibility. Elected members also take their corporate responsibility seriously, not only through receiving regular reports on progress towards targets but in giving priority to vulnerable pupils, including those in public care, when allocating discretionary grants.

157. The LEA is making good progress towards challenging performance targets on reducing exclusions, and increasing the percentage of pupils gaining one and five GCSEs or more. The education and social services directorates work closely together and the targets in the Quality Protects management plan and the EDP reflect high expectations. The LEA has appointed 1.5 teachers who work directly with individuals, schools, residential children's homes and social services. There is a comprehensive training programme managed jointly by education and social services for designated teachers, social workers and foster carers. There are also termly network meetings for designated teachers that provide a good forum for sharing good practice as well as receiving valuable input from a wide range of professionals and from foster carers.

158. Excellent monitoring procedures have been established at authority and school level with generally good exchange of information between all parties. The children causing concern group demonstrates the good parenting undertaken by the authority. It has wide representation, including the manager of the local children's home. Each designated teacher is contacted at least half-termly to check on children's morale, educational progress and attendance and the group scrutinises this information on a weekly basis and knows all its children very well. On school visits staff demonstrated the same good level of knowledge of each child's rate of progress.

159. There are secure procedures in place to monitor those children educated out of the borough and to identify children in the care of other authorities who are educated in Bournemouth schools. By January 2002 all pupils will have a personal education plan. The voices of children in public care have been heard and acted upon, and their achievements celebrated. They are involved in decision-making, participate in national events and have recently taken on a role as joint trainers.

Minority ethnic children including Travellers

160. The support for children of minority ethnic heritage is very good and has improved significantly since the LEA established its own provision based on a detailed analysis of need. The support for the very small number of Traveller children in the authority is presently bought in from a neighbouring authority and is satisfactory.

161. The LEA has a small number of minority ethnic pupils when compared with its statistical neighbours and nationally, with Portuguese speakers from Madeira and Koreans forming the largest groups. The majority spend no more than two years in the authority and often considerably less. With such small numbers, it is to the LEA's credit that the establishment of an accurate database has been a priority. Through effective consultation it has developed a three level system of support that is tailored to meet the needs of individuals and schools. There is a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and to raising the awareness of all staff on racial issues and bilingualism.

162. Schools are clear about the level and nature of support that is available and value the quality of the work undertaken by the ethnic minority achievement service (EMAS). The service is part of the learning and achievement unit and is effectively managed by an inspector. Beneficial links have been forged with the literacy team. The three teachers in the EMAS team are strategically deployed and bring expertise and enthusiasm to their work with schools. As a result, the majority of pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress.

163. Very good procedures are in place for new arrivals, who receive a support programme that is planned, delivered and evaluated by the EMAS team in partnership with the school. There is a colourful and comprehensive welcome booklet for primary schools that provides very good guidance to teachers on how to celebrate cultural diversity, the rationale for supporting bilingualism, language correction techniques and emotional issues.

164. In the short time it has been operating the team is moving from providing support for individual pupils to working with teachers and teaching assistants, so that they in turn become expert in supporting their pupils. This is an effective use of time and ensures that schools develop the capability to manage for themselves. The team has been successful in producing high quality bilingual resources, in establishing innovative ways of supporting older pupils and in their work with parents.

165. There is clear emphasis on raising achievement, with specific targets in the EDP. There are well-established monitoring procedures to ensure that schools analyse the results and track the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups who speak English as their first language. The recently purchased database enables the LEA to analyse the attainment and progress of pupils in all minority ethnic groups and within the constraints of small numbers to set realistic targets. The underachievement of Portuguese speaking boys is currently being tackled.

166. The LEA sets targets for attainment and attendance for the few Traveller children who attend a small number of its schools. In the past year, there were 18 living on unauthorised encampments and 12 travelling with the fairground and circus. Progress is monitored regularly and results indicate a measure of success for those who stay long enough to benefit. The progress of the very few identified resident Travellers is also monitored regularly. Attendance targets are set for both resident and short-stay Travellers. There is a good level of satisfaction from schools receiving support.

Social exclusion

167. Bournemouth borough council takes social inclusion very seriously and the community plan has contributed significantly to the LEA's strategy and actions to tackle disadvantage and disaffection amongst young people. A number of effective and innovative initiatives involve joint working across departments within the council as well as partnerships with a range of voluntary organisations. Family centres address issues associated with poverty and disadvantage and focus on developing parenting skills. Schools are supported in developing alternative Key Stage 4 curriculum packages for disaffected adolescents. New boundaries are bravely crossed in tackling drug addiction through drama work using ex-addicts. Good work is being done to tackle homophobia through the personal, social and health education curriculum in schools. Joint working with the youth service results in disaffected adolescents being rescued from the streets and put on course to change their lives through high quality training that equips them for employment. Ethnic and faith communities represented on the SACRE have made a valuable contribution to shaping the religious education curriculum in Bournemouth schools.

168. Corporate moves to respond to the Macpherson report on the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence have been satisfactory. A policy officer for equalities has recently been appointed and there is a training programme to raise awareness of the implications of the recommendations in the Macpherson report across the directorates within the council.

169. The LEA has provided schools with clear guidance on how to report racist incidents. Schools report that the pro forma for logging racist incidents provided by the LEA has enabled them to become more confident and robust about reporting racist incidents. The LEA has intervened immediately and appropriately on the few occasions where a racist incident involving violence has been reported by a school. The education committee has recently ratified the LEA's robust diversity plan which aims to equip teachers and governors to deal with racist incidents in school and to deliver race equality education in the classroom. The theatre in education team are working effectively in schools tackling racism issues. The LEA is doing all that it can, promptly, sensitively and in its usual consultative mode, to respond to the Macpherson recommendations.

APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the way the LEA fulfils the monitoring, challenge, support and intervention:

- streamline and simplify the 'opportunity to excel' process and establish quality assurance arrangements to ensure the proposed outcomes are expressed sharply.

In order to improve the way the LEA fulfils the functions of monitoring, challenge, support and intervention:

- relaunch the programme of extended link inspector support to schools clarifying its purpose better.

In order to further enhance the effectiveness of link inspectors:

- review the allocation of responsibilities within the team and increase the degree of differentiation in monitoring activity.
- Review jointly with schools the use of baseline assessment data in order to secure agreed criteria for the data and a shared understanding of its use.

In order to improve the quality of support for numeracy:

- use performance data analysis more effectively in targeting action and evaluation outcomes.

In order to speed up the identification of pupils with learning needs:

- establish procedures to ensure all schools receive confidential records about children before they reach early education.

Improve management services by:

- introducing systems to monitor the quality of management services irrespective of provider, within best value principles, without placing bureaucratic burdens on schools.
- Review the level of audit procedures in order to take account of the increased financial responsibilities of schools.

Improve management services by:

- expanding the review of support for administrative ICT, to include hardware and systems support for integrated curriculum and administration networks.

In order to improve evaluation of the effectiveness of provision:

- ensure that annual inclusion development meetings have a consistent focus on evaluation and that appropriate LEA personnel attend.

In order to better aid the strategic planning of school places :

- Set out conclusions in the school organisation plan to cover the full five year period of the plan.

In order to further improve attendance:

- Introduce individual school targets in primary schools and deploy to better target needs.

APPENDIX 2:

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

The review began in March 2000 and was completed in March 2001. This was a very ambitious and timely cross cutting review that encompassed the role of the local health authority as well as the education and social service directorates in meeting the needs of children with EBD. Therefore, time was needed at the outset to establish basic principles before determining the course the review would take. The partnership between education, social services and health was not considered to be working effectively. The cost of external provision for children with EBD was high and the LEA's second Behaviour Support Plan was being prepared. The review team established a sensible rationale for concentrating on the provision for those children whose needs are met in mainstream schools, with the declared intention of addressing more complex needs in a subsequent review.

Inclusion is at the heart of the authority's drive to raise achievement. The Dorset wide children and mental health strategy (CAHMS) provides a framework for best practice; a four-tier model of provision for children with EBD against which the review team mapped out provision, roles and responsibilities for each service, schools, parents and carers.

The review had to surmount a number of difficulties: the health community and the local authority do not take the same approach to Best Value due to differing national requirements, and the quality and quantity of management information retained by the three partners is too variable. Social services provision was constrained by a large budget deficit and the health community whilst wishing to be a full partner and to provide challenge, regrettably felt unable to subject its service to a fundamental Best Value review. Nevertheless, the health community remains committed to the improvement of all the services. One of the local health trusts has lead responsibility for the implementation of the action plan through the Bournemouth operational group.

The review team did not fundamentally challenge the provision. It decided not to look to alternative providers because there was insufficient confidence in the commissioning power and agreement of priorities of other agencies. Furthermore, the service provision in education had already been reviewed and funding had been delegated to secondary schools. It was decided, properly, to challenge whether there was a need for two directorates. External challenge was provided by an independent elected member, whose role was important in simplifying procedures and terminology, and an external director, who played a skilful role in moving forward a complex process. Strong internal challenge came from the managers of three services wrestling to reconcile three very different ways of working in order to better meet the needs of the children.

The cross cutting scope of the review meant that comparisons were difficult to make. The authority sought benchmarking data with limited success and recognised that little had been done previously to obtain suitable data to compare cost effectiveness. The education service compares well with other authorities with the small number of

permanently excluded pupils in the top 25% nationally. The review was very effective in challenging all partners to establish common ground and a shared language.

The widespread consultation exercise identified significant shortcomings in the provision, which were largely to do with poor communication, a lack of resources and a lack of co-ordination between services. It has had a significant impact in the development of the Behaviour Support Plan, which takes very good account of all that was learned. The issue of competition was explored. Although aspects of the service under review do not currently have the capacity to take on all the local and health authority functions, insufficient work has been done to procure specialist services from the voluntary and private sectors for schools or to advise schools how to provide their own.

The initial improvement plan provided a comprehensive overview of appropriate actions to be taken by the three agencies. However, its timescales were unrealistic and it lacked specific success criteria, resourcing and monitoring arrangements. These limitations were identified and comprehensively addressed in the revised improvement plan and further developed in the Behaviour Support Plan, which is in its final stage of consultation.

The Children's Support Service is a good service. A key part of its work is strongly focused on meeting the needs of children with EBD and their parents in order to raise achievement. Along with the other partners in this review, it has made significant developments to its planning and practice as a direct result of what has been learned. Action planning is not moving at the same pace, however, because of internal staffing matters, and budgetary constraints with social services. In spite of this, the review has led to best value principles becoming embedded in the way services work and a better understanding of how to mesh together the work of different agencies whose priorities are set in different areas. It is seen by service providers and elected members as being the first step towards providing a fully integrated service to meet the needs of the local community.

The cross cutting review has been a catalyst for change and has inspired a cultural shift in ways of working. There is much greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different agencies. The review process has created a momentum and a clear commitment to work together in a planned and productive manner. There is clearer identification of budgets as a direct result of the review with levels of funding reviewed on a six monthly basis. The prospects for improvement are promising.

Recommendations

- Establish procedures to obtain more robust comparative data to demonstrate cost effectiveness; and
- identify specialist services from the voluntary and private sector and advise schools how to provide their own support.

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The review of school improvement was completed in December 2000. In order to provide the basis for a manageable review process, the scope of the review was restricted to three key components: the support for the development of school staff and governors, the support for the use of performance data, and the role of the school link inspectors. Together these services represent much of the core role of the LEA in supporting school improvement. However, the description of the scope of the review is not clear and the specific purpose and objectives of the review are not sufficiently explicit.

The review includes a detailed, balanced and accurate analysis of the remit of these services and the way they are to be evaluated in the context of Best Value. The linkages between corporate and service objectives are well set out. There is limited evaluation of the success of the LEA's support for school improvement. A District Audit review and comparison with a beacon council provided some affirmation of service quality. However, while a concurrent EDP monitoring report is included, the evaluation of outcomes is variable. It does not focus on the particular contributions of the three services that are the subject of the review and there is no overall analysis of school attainment and progress.

In the absence of robust national or local benchmarks relevant to the services under review, the review team adopted a broadly sensible approach to comparing costs and performance with other LEAs. Analysis of financial returns to the Department for Education and Skills confirmed that per pupil costs were lower than those for other unitary authorities. The range and scope of courses provided by the LEA, to support staff development, compared well with those of other LEAs. A concurrent review of the school improvement service by District Audit and comparison with a beacon LEA provided evidence that data management was good and Bournemouth's approach to intervention in schools was effective. However the value of this comparative information to the review is limited. The assertion that the link inspector role is 'more effective' in Bournemouth 'than in many other LEAs although it is difficult to make such a judgement' is not supported by the evidence presented in the report.

Consultation with service users was well managed and indicated that schools and other stakeholders had a high regard for Bournemouth's support for school improvement. This was confirmed by the more recent responses to the Audit Commission school survey. There is a sound analysis of the options for alternative service delivery. However, the extent of challenge provided by the review is uneven and generally insufficient. Analysis of feedback from service users is positive. However, the absence of an evaluation of the impact of services on improving educational outcomes and the weaknesses in the scope of the review limit the potential for fundamental challenge to the way that the LEA supports school improvement. In addition, the review team did not include independent external professional expertise thereby limiting their ability to challenge service assumptions.

The changes proposed for the data management and staff development parts of the service should lead to improvement and will reinforce schools' self-management. The proposed changes in the link inspector role are less well supported by the

evidence. While increasing the allocation of link inspector time to schools is certainly popular with schools, there is insufficient explanation of how this would help schools to improve more efficiently.

The action plan included within the review is clear but lacks detail. However, the recommendations have been efficiently translated into service development plans that have secured the commitment of senior managers, members and schools. The proposal for an extended link inspector role which focuses support on school performance management and improving teaching and learning, in order to embed school self management.

The LEAs support for school improvement has been judged, during this inspection, to be good and cost-effective. However, the LEA is now undertaking a fundamental reappraisal of its school improvement strategy as part of its preparation for the next phase of educational development planning. The conclusions of the best value review of the three core services should be revisited during this process. The prospects for improvement are good.

Recommendation

- In order to ensure school improvement services are properly aligned to the revised school improvement strategy that will emerge from the next phase of educational development planning, the conclusions of the review should be re-examined as part of the EDP planning process.

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF EDUCATION TRANSPORT

The review of education transport, reported in March 2001, was part of a wider cross-cutting review of transport. The education transport service provides home to school transport for about 800 pupils to mainstream schools, 150 pupils to colleges and 300 pupils with special educational needs. The review was effectively scoped as part of the ambitious inclusion agenda and the aims of providing access to quality learning, widening opportunities and ensuring equal opportunities. The service provided met the aims in many respects at the time of the review but it is now poised to improve access to learning with improved efficiency. There are implications for the Best Value review of admissions/ planning for school places.

Recommendation

- The BV review of admissions/planning for school places should seek further reductions in transport costs.

Compared with national indicators the service is cost-effective; spending on home to school transport in 2000/01 was £45 per pupil which is below average for English authorities (£68), unitary authorities (£69), and statistical neighbours (£55). Costs are rising however, well above inflation and the council rightly took the opportunity to address the underpinning issues. The action plan addressed the key issues, giving actions, time-scales and responsibilities. It spotlighted the need to reduce costs, particularly of car and taxi transport which had risen by 73 per cent over two years.

To improve efficiency, the management of home to school transport has been transferred to the passenger transport unit in social services. Now, all passenger transport is under the management of a single team. Use of the social services vehicle fleet is being explored to reduce the use of taxis and the minibus fleet offers scope for transporting pupils with SEN. Journey times are to be re-scheduled to make fuller use of the vehicle fleet by including home to school transport. Improved taxi contract arrangements have been achieved. Travel escorts are to be trained in behaviour management and provided with mobile telephones. Service standards, performance indicators and targets have been developed. The potential for further improvements reduction in management costs has been explored.

Comparative information on costs demonstrates relatively low cost per pupil with comparatively less management staff. The council did not seek comparison, however, on practice elsewhere. Consultation was very good. It also demonstrated that major stakeholders consider the standards of the service to be good or very good. Consultation involved headteachers, passengers entitled to transport assistance or with SEN, transport escorts and transport providers, both minibus and taxi operators. Challenge was used effectively in providing more cost-effective solutions to school transport. Within the tendering arrangements, competition is aptly used. The minibus tenders are for a period of three years and the contracts for taxis are let annually. Contracting arrangements are rigorous.

This is a good service which has excellent prospects for improvement.

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND FIELD STUDIES

The review of outdoor education and field studies was completed in December 2000. The Hengistbury Head Centre is situated on a site of special scientific interest and offers specialist field study courses, linked to the National Curriculum and water activities, including sailing and canoeing. The decision to undertake the review in the first year of the Best Value programme was a sensible one. The Centre buildings are old and in need of considerable refurbishment. Centrally retained expenditure on outdoor education in Bournemouth is high reflecting the priority placed on this. The continued existence of the centre has been the subject of regular discussion in the annual budget debate and schools were surveyed as to whether the finding should be delegated in full to schools.

The review took account of the 1990/2000 budget for the centre of £176,908, of which £92,254 was projected to be earned as income. In fact this figure was exceeded slightly. Community, non-schools, use accounted for some 35 per cent of the income with the remainder earned from schools in and beyond Bournemouth. This involved over 9000 pupil sessions and nearly 3000 sessions for the public.

The review scope was identified by the service review team in consultation with the centre staff. The team challenged the means by which the centre operates and rejected an option to explore the privatisation of the service on the grounds that the centre ran to almost full capacity and would not be viable without the council's subsidy. A survey of all schools indicated that a majority (50 per cent of all schools and 75 per cent of respondents) wished the LEA to retain the core funding for the centre. This was affirmed in the LMS consultation exercise with schools.

It did, however, give good consideration to changing the mode of delivery, which led to the decision to bid for the DfES Classroom of the Future initiative. This was successful and the future of the centre is now assured as the LEA has secured well over £1 million to rebuild and develop the centre as an ICT learning resource. A further benefit has been to improve collaboration between the education and leisure and tourism departments, leading to a further bid for lottery funds to be made for the establishment of a visitor centre.

Good efforts were made to compare the costs, activities and overheads of the centre with two other local authority centres. This gave a favourable impression of the cost-effectiveness of the centre. Consultation was thorough and built upon the detailed surveys and evaluations of customer satisfaction that the centre undertakes routinely. Appropriate use was made of a focus group to explore options and to draw up priorities for the action plan. An assessment of the competitiveness of the service was made but was not undertaken extensively as the service is trading in the market.

Nevertheless, the review has triggered several significant outcomes. It was subject to a rigorous scrutiny by the service review panel and the action plan priorities have been built fully into business and service planning. Good monitoring and evaluation procedures operate and they indicate that progress is being made in each of the five priority areas. For example, the priority relating to inclusion has enabled charges to special schools to be held at the same level as for mainstream pupils. So far, some

£2700 of the LEA core funding has been used to ensure that young people with special needs who require higher levels of supervision and instruction have the same access as their peers.

The service is a good one and is in high demand. It offers high quality instruction and its safety record is very good. Despite some limitations in the conduct of the review, it has led to significant change and there are excellent prospects for the improvement of the service.

Recommendation

- Future reviews should take greater account of comparisons with expenditure in other LEAs so that the service provision can be challenged more fundamentally.

© Crown copyright 2002

**Office for Standards in Education
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE**

Tel: 020 7421 6800

This report may be produced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are produced verbatim and without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

A further copy of this report can be obtained from the Local Education Authority concerned:

**Bournemouth Borough Council
Dorset House
20-22 Christchurch Road
Bournemouth
BH1 3NL**

Or from the OFSTED website: www.ofsted.gov.uk