



Office for Standards
in Education

Barnsley

Local Education Authority

Inspection Report

Date of Inspection: January 2004

Reporting Inspector: Aelwyn Pugh HMI



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Basic information

Name of LEA: Barnsley Local Education Authority

LEA number: 370

Address of LEA: Berneslai Close
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S70 2HS

Reporting Inspector: Aelwyn Pugh HMI

Date of Inspection: January 2004

Summary

Introduction

Barnsley is one of the most deprived boroughs in the country and is still suffering the after-effects of the ending of the coal industry on which it relied very heavily. Unemployment is high and almost 40% of its population live in wards that are among the 10% most disadvantaged nationally. The council places considerable emphasis on education, which it now sees as a vital element in the regeneration of the borough.

Despite increased spending on education, standards of attainment in schools remain below or well below average for similar authorities¹ and England as a whole.

When it was first inspected in 1999, the authority was judged to be poor. Following the appointment of a new chief executive and director of education, there was rapid improvement so that, when it was inspected again in 2000, the authority was found to be highly satisfactory with a strong capacity for further improvement. A new director of education was appointed in September 2003.

¹ Barnsley LEA's statistical neighbours are: Rotheram, Wakefield, Doncaster, Gateshead, Wigan, Redcar and Cleveland, Tameside, St Helens, Stockton on Tees and North Tyneside.

Main findings

Summary: The effectiveness of Barnsley local education authority (LEA) has declined since the last inspection and it is now unsatisfactory. There have been steady developments in the provision for special educational needs and social inclusion. However, the LEA’s performance in its key function of improving education in the borough is unsatisfactory. It does not monitor, challenge or support schools effectively and standards of achievement remain below or well below average. The rate of improvement has been too slow. Therefore, in several respects, the gap in performance between Barnsley and the rest of the country is widening. Corporately there has been insufficient awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the authority and the education service has not been held sufficiently to account. The new director of education has, in a short time, gained a clear grasp of the weaknesses of the LEA and is beginning to tackle them rigorously. However, these developments are in their infancy and new structures are not yet in place. Therefore, at present, the LEA’s capacity for improvement is not secure.

Areas of strength	Areas of weakness/for development
Corporate leadership of education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased priority given to education by the council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and evaluation of performance • Quality of planning at departmental level • Leadership of elected members and senior officers • Support for 14-19 education
Strategy for education and its implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning of school places • Admissions to schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of impact on raising attainment in schools • Use of performance data, including target-setting • Planning and implementation of the school improvement strategy • Monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools and targeting of support • Recruitment and retention of teachers
Support to improve education in schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning provision and value for money of management support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for school self-review • Planning and value for money of school effectiveness services
Support for special educational needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to inclusion in both planning and practice • Progress in translating the strategic plan into action • Close working relationships with other services and agencies • Extent to which statutory obligations are met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate challenge to schools to monitor the progress and attainment of SEN pupils
Support for social inclusion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration between services in support of vulnerable children • Reduction in exclusions • Improved attendance at secondary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for promoting racial equality

Recommendations

Key recommendations

Management of performance:

- Establish a rigorous performance management system for all senior officers. Implement this consistently and use it to identify and tackle weaknesses in the implementation of corporate objectives.
- Ensure that councillors are given a clear analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in achieving corporate aims and in service provision, and have the skills to scrutinise reports and other evidence and challenge underperformance. Where there are shortfalls in targets or slippages in timescales, indicate clearly to councillors what remedial action is being taken.
- Develop, in consultation with schools, performance indicators and success criteria to enable the authority to assess the impact of its school improvement service.

Planning and target-setting: ensure that educational priorities for 2004/05 are supported by operational plans and are consistently integrated with other major plans. Improve the target-setting process in schools so that targets take account of pupils' prior attainment and reflect additional resources aimed at raising attainment.

Monitoring, challenge and intervention: improve the quality of data analysis and the criteria for categorising and intervening in schools. Strengthen quality assurance procedures, so that there is consistent challenge to schools, based on good quality statistical evidence. Clarify the strategy for underperforming schools.

Other recommendations: In addition to the key recommendations, it is essential that the LEA implements the following, in order to improve the specific areas of its work that are unsatisfactory.

Corporate leadership of education

Support for 14-19 education: work with relevant partners to develop a coherent 14-19 strategy and to raise the attainment of pupils.

Strategy for education

Supply and quality of teachers: improve induction procedures for new headteachers and provide a better quality continuing professional development programme for teachers.

Support to improve education in schools

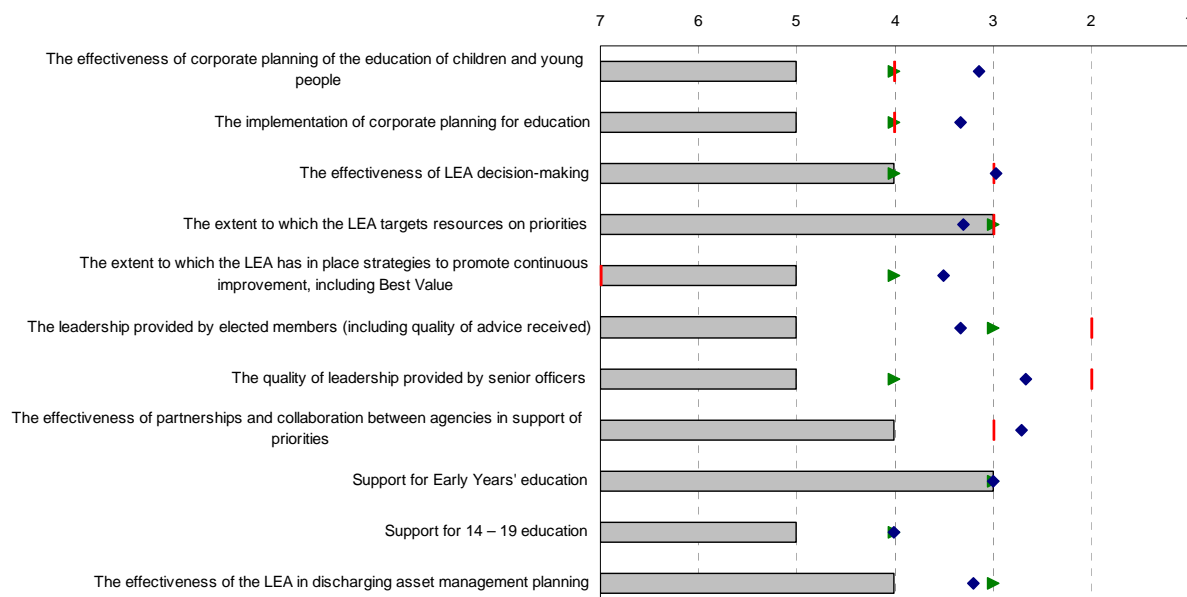
- **Leadership and management:** Establish a rigorous system for assessing the effectiveness of schools' leadership and management, using this to target support where it is most needed. Improve communications between link advisers and the governors' support team.
- **Support for national strategies at Key Stages 1 and 2:** Improve support for primary schools by carrying out a thorough analysis of reasons for underachievement. Deploy and monitor the work of advisers and consultants more effectively.
- **Support for particular groups of pupils:** Improve the data on the attainment of gifted and talented pupils and encourage all schools to participate in relevant activities. Strengthen the strategies for engaging Gypsy and Traveller children in education and co-ordinate the work of the Cultural Diversity Service with other projects.

Support for social inclusion

Promoting racial equality: ensure that all incidents of racial harassment are recorded and followed up and encourage all schools to participate in activities designed to combat racism.

Section 1: Corporate leadership of education

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

Corporate planning for education and its implementation

1. The quality of corporate planning for education and the effectiveness of its implementation have declined since the last inspection and are now unsatisfactory.
2. Corporate plans give consistent priority to education, which is seen as the key to promoting regeneration, creating a skilled work force, developing healthy lifestyles, reducing crime and promoting citizenship. Education is one of the four strategic goals of the Community Plan, which is reflected the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and the council's priority improvement framework. Councillors and representatives of the relevant partnerships have a shared understanding of these goals and a commitment to achieving them. Councillors' commitment is further reflected in the increased spending on education and the potentially controversial decision to promote the services of private sector providers, in competition with the council's own services, in order to ensure that schools have good quality support.
3. There are clear links between the corporate plans and the plans for SEN, social inclusion, adult education and strategic resource management within education. However, the link between the Education Development Plan (EDP) and corporate planning is tenuous. Stakeholders feel limited ownership of the EDP. This, together with lack of clarity in its aims and weaknesses in the definition of success criteria, limits its usefulness.

4. Within the education department, planning is inconsistent in quality and lacks clarity of objectives. Divisions have tended to work independently of each other and have not shared information or developed coherent and collaborative approaches to problems, particularly the raising of attainment. The implementation of the school improvement strategy has been further hampered by too heavy a reliance on schools buying curriculum and management support from their delegated budgets. Improvements, however, have been made in the promotion of social inclusion and support for SEN. There is good collaboration between education, health and social services.

5. There has been a lack of detailed analysis of the performance of the education department and of the school effectiveness team in particular. Only a minority of the team's targets for 2002/03 were achieved, and the reporting of the team's results in the BVPP provides little indication of the quality of the work undertaken or of its impact on the identified priorities. Weaknesses in the council's performance management and scrutiny procedures mean that officers have not been held sufficiently to account by the corporate centre.

Recommendations

- Establish a rigorous performance management system for all senior officers and implement this consistently to identify and tackle weaknesses in the implementation of corporate objectives.
- Ensure that all councillors are given a clear analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in achieving corporate aims and have the skills to scrutinise reports and challenge underperformance effectively.

Targeting of resources

6. This aspect remains highly satisfactory. In response to the recommendation in the last inspection report, there has been effective consultation on the school funding formula. The proposals have been communicated clearly and adjusted to reflect schools' views. The revisions in the distribution of SEN funding are succeeding in promoting early intervention and so reducing the number of pupils with statements of SEN.

7. Before 2002-03, the council funded its education service below its Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), which was lower than for similar authorities. Since then, funding has begun to reflect the council's growing emphasis on education's key role in regenerating the area. In 2003-04, the council was not able to pass on the full increase in its formula spending to schools because of a prior commitment to increase the funding of social services. However, it has made a commitment to pass on increases during the next four years.

8. In recognition of high levels of deprivation, the schools and the authority receive a higher than average level of grant funding. Officers keep schools well informed of available funding and support them in the bidding process. However, the acquisition of grants is not sufficiently co-ordinated to ensure that the work aligns fully with strategic priorities.

9. In 2002-03, the level of funding retained by the authority was well below average. This detracted from its ability to target resources effectively on those schools most in need. In 2003-04, however, retained funding was increased in order to strengthen strategic management and school improvement. The growth in the budget for asset management planning has been used well to deal with increased capital funding and the authority's bid for Private Finance Initiative funding. The budget-setting process is timely and generally accurate. Officers ensure that spending on education remains within budget.

10. Despite comparatively low levels of funding, too many schools amassed high levels of budget surpluses. Officers and councillors responded well to this situation. Schools now receive three-year indicative budgets and headteachers and governors have been trained in the use of well-designed budget-modelling software that enables them to assess the relative advantages of different options. The authority has also reached an agreement with schools that, under certain circumstances, surplus balances in excess of a pre-determined level will be redistributed to other schools.

Recommendation

- Ensure that the acquisition and deployment of grant funding reflect the authority's developing vision and priorities for its schools.

Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value

11. Despite significant improvements since the last inspection, this aspect of the LEA's work remains unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in performance management have contributed to the LEA's difficulty in making early identification and analysis of the deficiencies in its school improvement service. Further improvements are planned, both corporately and within the education service.

12. The Best Value Performance Plan has been approved by the authority's external auditor. Much of the education section is clearly written and links well with the community plan. Evaluation, however, is a recurring weakness. A related weakness is the inconsistency in the implementation of performance management systems. Corporate arrangements seek to ensure that service delivery plans are aligned with corporate and community plans. Within the education service, this is not uniformly the case. Performance against a range of Best Value and local performance indicators is reported regularly to managers and to elected members, but too many indicators allow only an annual overview of performance.

13. The council has developed an effective approach to Best Value reviews. The few reviews conducted within the education service have been challenging and have led to clear service improvements. The review of SEN, still in progress, is promising in terms of its clarity of focus and its use of comparative data.

14. The council's brokerage service is developing and a satisfactory start has been made to supporting school management by the promotion of continuous improvement in the traded services offered.

15. There is now a clear commitment among senior officers to improve performance management. This is supported by a restructuring at corporate level and the introduction of a

council-wide 'comprehensive performance reporting and review framework'. Although there are still inconsistencies, the self-evaluation conducted prior to this inspection is far more rigorous than other evaluation documents seen within the LEA.

Recommendation

- Develop, in consultation with schools, performance indicators and success criteria to enable the authority to assess the impact of its school improvement service.

Leadership by elected members and advice given to them

16. The leadership provided by elected members is unsatisfactory. The council gives high priority to education but has not clarified its role in improving the service. Although the structures of corporate leadership and management are in place, these have not been applied with sufficient rigour to education. Scrutiny has been ineffective in identifying areas of weakness and ensuring improvement. Low performance in schools, weaknesses in educational planning and deteriorating relationships between the LEA and schools were not tackled until recently.

17. Councillors have been too dependent on over positive advice from officers and have not challenged it sufficiently. They now recognise the weaknesses and are working together with officers to improve the situation. Schools value the focus being placed on this by the leader of the council.

Recommendations

- Ensure that reports to elected members include clear analyses of strengths and weaknesses in service provision and performance.
- Provide support and training for members of the scrutiny commission to enable them to fulfil their role more effectively.

Leadership by senior officers

18. At the time of the last inspection, leadership by senior officers, several of whom had been recently appointed, was good. The early promise was not fulfilled and improvement in departmental performance has been inconsistent. Therefore this area is now unsatisfactory. There have been clear improvements in SEN and aspects of social inclusion but too little progress in the key area of school improvement. In the recent past, relationships between the LEA and the schools have been poor. On most ratings in the school survey, the authority fell into the bottom quarter of LEAs nationally.

19. The newly-appointed director of education has identified the main weaknesses and is beginning to remedy them. She is restoring relationships with schools and working with them to develop new structures for planning and delivery, which should ensure closer and more coherent interrelationships both within and between services. There is a high degree of enthusiasm for these proposals among headteachers, councillors and other stakeholders. However, they are unclear about how the ultimate vision will be achieved and about the

short-term objectives for the service during the transition to a radically new structure. At present, there are several vacancies in key posts and new strategies are at a very early stage of development. Therefore, although weaknesses are beginning to be tackled, the impact of recent changes is still to be felt and the capacity for improvement is uncertain.

Strategic partnerships

20. This area is satisfactory. There is sound partnership work between the LEA and a wide range of external agencies, which focuses clearly on achieving corporate goals. This includes collaboration with neighbouring authorities on professional training and production of teaching materials and multi-agency work with the health authority, social services, police, youth service, Connexions partnership and the voluntary sector. There is considerable emphasis on re-engaging disaffected young people in employment, education and training. The joint working on social inclusion and supporting pupils with SEN has been particularly successful.

21. Several projects, such as the development of ICT in community centres and community safety work to prevent crime, have led to sustained success. However, a lack of co-ordination of projects has resulted in some duplication of work. The lack of routine monitoring and evaluation makes it difficult to measure the impact of these initiatives, particularly on pupils' attainment.

Support for 14-19 education

22. Support for 14-19 education is unsatisfactory. A start has been made on developing the vocational curriculum for 14-16 year olds in schools and LEA officers have begun to work with the South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on education for 14-19 year olds. This development has not yet produced a coherent strategy that facilitates collaboration between schools, colleges of further education and work-based learning providers.

23. Only one school in Barnsley has a sixth form. Its curriculum focuses mainly on General Certificate of Education (GCE) AS/A2 courses and there has been little collaboration with other providers to ensure a wider range of vocational courses. Some of the GCE A-level subjects have very small class sizes and are uneconomic.

24. Through involvement in the Increased Flexibility Project, secondary schools have extended the range of vocational courses available to their Year 10 and 11 pupils, over half of whom now take either vocational General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) or General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses. As a result of European funding, there has also been a dramatic rise in the number of pupils taking other vocational qualifications, in a wide range of subjects. For example, some 380 post-16 pupils are currently following National Vocational Qualification courses, mainly at Barnsley College. Despite the initiatives described above, pupils' attainment is low and, in 2002, there was a fall in the proportion of Year 11 pupils entering education, employment or training.

Recommendation

- Work with relevant partners to develop a coherent 14-19 strategy and to raise the attainment of pupils.

Asset management planning

25. The quality of asset management planning is satisfactory.

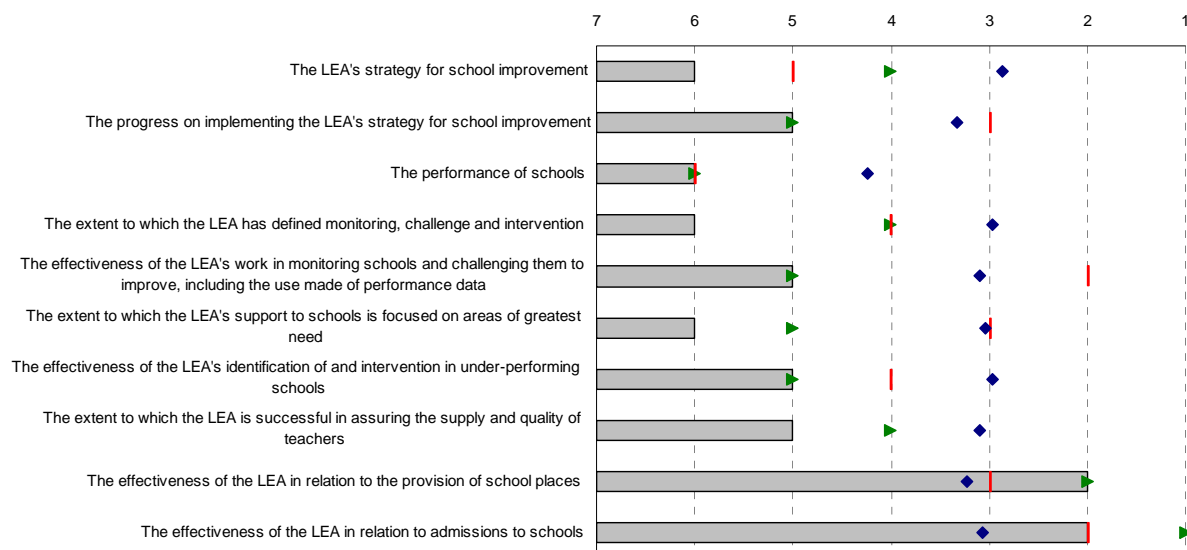
26. Although the local policy statement for 2003-04 initially failed to meet Department for Education and Skills (DfES) requirements, it now sets out clearly the three priorities for the authority's use of increasing levels of capital funding. Schools are consulted annually about the priorities and understand how they operate. All urgent repairs, identified in the first survey of the condition of school premises, have been completed or are programmed for attention. However, the latest round of surveys is beginning to reveal further defects in buildings and inaccuracies in the initial data. As a result, the total condition backlog has increased since 2000. A major Private Finance Initiative project will replace 16 primary schools and one nursery school and will lead to the building of 13 new primary schools.

27. Asset management planning is increasingly well linked to school organisation planning. As well as tackling the condition of buildings, projects are focusing increasingly on sufficiency and suitability issues, removing surplus capacity from schools, improving the quality of provision and, in some cases, providing community facilities.

28. Although many of these projects have the potential to contribute to raising standards, they are not linked sufficiently closely to school improvement. The authority works well in partnership with schools to combine its own capital resources with devolved resources but it does not monitor the quality of schools' own asset management planning.

Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

The strategy for school improvement and its implementation

29. This is the area of greatest weakness in the LEA's performance; the optimism expressed in the last inspection report has not been justified. The LEA has had insufficient impact in raising the low attainment in Barnsley schools because of weaknesses in planning, weak monitoring and evaluation and poor use of data to target resources to areas of greatest need. The LEA has been more successful in improving provision for special educational needs and social inclusion. Admissions procedures and planning for school places are good.

30. The LEA has had a poor record in educational planning over the last four years and has had to resubmit its Education Development Plan (EDP) on more than one occasion. Schools were not consulted sufficiently in the process and therefore do not identify with the final result. Because of the high level of dissatisfaction with the EDP, the new director decided to dispense with it and to adopt a radically different approach to educational planning. Schools have been fully involved and approved a new, clear articulation of priorities for the LEA. This is not yet a plan, however. For instance, it is not costed or supported by underlying operational plans. In this transitional period, the school effectiveness division lacks a clear, guiding framework.

31. A further weakness is that the LEA has not used data strategically to inform planning, to allocate resources, to challenge schools or as a basis for rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Reports to councillors have been too positive, emphasising year-on-year improvements but failing to alert members to weaknesses in schools' performance, particularly in relation to statistical neighbours. Comparisons of Barnsley schools with similar schools in other LEAs have contained inaccuracies that distorted the picture.

Evaluation is a weakness generally but the latest evaluation of pupils' attainment is more rigorous and is indicative of the director's expressed intent to base developments on rigorous, balanced analysis.

32. Target-setting in Barnsley lacks credibility. Key Stage 2 targets for 2002 were unrealistic and remain so for 2004. However, this tends to mask other deficiencies in the process. The LEA's targets are not sufficiently based on pupils' prior attainment and this undermines the processes whereby targets are increased through participation in Excellence in Cities (EiC) or through local public service agreements. To complete a dismal picture, schools' targets are often too low. A combination of these factors results in significant gaps between LEA and schools' aggregated targets at Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and GCSE level. Planning and resource allocation do not give confidence that these gaps will be reduced, or that 2004 attainment targets will be achieved.

33. The EiC initiative is now managed satisfactorily and has strong leadership, after a difficult period. A sound structure has been established and key co-ordinators are in place. Headteachers felt that the LEA had initially been obstructive to the EiC but that EiC initiatives were now supported by LEA services at strategic and operational levels. Collaborative approaches between the LEA and EiC are at an early stage, but structures are in place and a positive climate has been created. Secondary schools, for example, have agreed to resource an oracy project in the primary schools. Evaluation, however, remains a weakness.

34. Implementation of the school improvement strategy is unsatisfactory and there has been insufficient progress on the recommendations of the last report. In 2002, the LEA missed its targets for Key Stage 2 numeracy and literacy and for five or more higher GCSE grades by margins greater than the national shortfall. However, it met its targets for improving attendance and reducing exclusions. It has low numbers of schools requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses. Of concern is the fact that the LEA is unable to demonstrate the effectiveness of a wide range of initiatives, including EiC.

35. The new director has correctly diagnosed these weaknesses and has already set in train remedial actions but it is too early to assess their effectiveness. A key part of the new strategy is to recruit a new senior management team and re-organise the school effectiveness team. This is being well received by schools. In the transition period, the LEA has received good support from consultants who have provided effective leadership in translating the director's vision into action. However, the initiatives are currently very dependent on temporary post-holders and several key personnel who should be contributing to policy-making have yet to be appointed. There are parallels with the period following the first critical inspection. The LEA must ensure that this time the new direction is sustained. The LEA cannot yet demonstrate that it has the capacity to implement plans to secure the improvements in support for school improvement identified in this report.

Recommendations

- Ensure that educational priorities for 2003/04 are supported by underlying operational plans and are consistently and coherently integrated with other major plans in the authority.
- Ensure that initiatives are rigorously evaluated, include a focus on outcomes, and are robustly reported to elected members. Where there are shortfalls in targets or slippages in timescales, indicate clearly what remedial action is being taken.
- Improve the target-setting process, so that targets take account of pupils' prior attainment but also reflect additional resources aimed at raising attainment.

The LEA's monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools and the targeting of support

36. This important aspect of the LEA's work is unsatisfactory. Although relationships with individual link advisers are often good, those between schools and the LEA have been strained. This is evident in the lack of mutual understanding regarding protocols and criteria for intervention in schools. The tensions were increased by the poor implementation of a well-intentioned LEA policy to promote autonomous schools. As part of this policy, all schools were allocated a core allocation and all other services were only available on an expensive subscription basis. Insufficient resources were retained to support schools causing concern and this severely handicapped the LEA's capacity to intervene. Furthermore, the policy also applied to other services, which schools were obliged to pay for in order to use the database. This militated against effective sharing of data and, hence, monitoring.

37. There has been insufficient challenge to schools, particularly for leadership and management, target setting, and resource management. There has been no rationale for allocating support to schools and this has often been very dependent on the link adviser. The quality of written reports to headteachers and governors varies from good to poor but on balance is unsatisfactory. A major weakness has been the poor quality of data.

38. The LEA is seeking to remedy these weaknesses and has made rapid progress, so that the situation is now beginning to improve. The buy-back policy has been abandoned. The database has been considerably improved with pupil-level data and a programme of data investigations is planned. These should provide much improved information on the attainment of underachieving groups and the effectiveness of LEA initiatives. Plans to create a cross-service review of schools are well advanced. More challenge is implicit in the new categorisation of schools, which is designed to be hard-edged and is a basis for a more appropriate policy for targeting resources at schools. The schools are very critical of current arrangements but welcome wholeheartedly the new initiatives. They do, however, have reservations because of the extent of changes taking place at a time when there is considerable turbulence within the LEA. The schools acknowledge the expertise of external consultants and testify to the impetus they have given to current work.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of data analysis, criteria for intervention in schools and the categorisation of schools.
- Strengthen quality assurance procedures so that there is consistent challenge to schools, based on good quality statistical evidence.

Effectiveness of the LEA's identification of, and intervention in, underperforming schools

39. This is a mixed picture, but overall it is unsatisfactory. The LEA has been successful in maintaining low numbers of schools requiring intervention by Ofsted. No school has been identified as requiring special measures, as underachieving or having an inadequate sixth form since 2000. There are currently three schools with serious weaknesses but no such school has slipped into special measures. A strength has been the support given to governors. This includes providing additional governors with relevant expertise and securing their involvement in a strategic monitoring group that oversees the school's progress. This illustrates quite strongly that the LEA is able to provide effective support when Ofsted has diagnosed significant weaknesses. Somewhat paradoxically, school inspections show that the percentage requiring improvement and not making sufficient progress is relatively high. This reflects the weakness in the LEA's own identification processes. Another weakness is the lack of an exit strategy that ensures a phased withdrawal of support when schools improve and move out of a very low category.

Recommendation

- Clarify the strategy for underperforming schools, including a strategy for when and how to withdraw support.

Supply and quality of teachers

40. The LEA's support for assuring the supply and quality of teachers is unsatisfactory because of inconsistencies in provision, weak monitoring and a slow response to emerging difficulties.

41. The inconsistencies are illustrated by the LEA's induction programmes. A working group drew up proposals in 2002 to provide mentors and an induction programme for all headteachers new to the borough. This policy was never implemented. The Headlamp training, however, is well regarded by schools. In 2002, only 59% of newly-qualified teachers were retained for a second year, well below the national average, but the retention rate improved markedly to 93% in 2003. The LEA provides a wide range of professional development courses but schools report that there is too much variation in quality. The proportion of cancelled courses, often at short notice, is well above the national average. The LEA has a good record in supporting schools in appointing head and deputy headteachers.

42. There are few teacher vacancies but primary schools, in particular, have experienced difficulty in making good quality appointments. The LEA responded by setting up a working

group but its effectiveness was limited since it had no budget. The LEA acknowledges that co-ordinated support for recruitment and retention is in the early stages of development.

Recommendations

- Improve induction procedures for new headteachers.
- Provide a continuing professional development programme that is of consistently better quality and more accurately reflects the needs of teachers.

Providing school places

43. This area of the LEA's work has improved and is now good.

44. Pupil numbers in primary schools are falling. The authority has kept pace with this decline, mainly by amalgamating infant and junior schools and by removing temporary accommodation. In January 2002, the level of surplus places in primary schools was 5.9 %, a significant improvement on the previous year, even though surplus capacity at that time was already well below the average for similar authorities. Changes in the way that the capacity of schools is measured have contributed to this improvement and to a reduction in the proportion of schools in which there is surplus capacity. The authority made good use of grant funding to reduce all Key Stage 1 class sizes to below 30, and schools and the LEA have worked well together to maintain this position since grant funding ceased.

45. Secondary school rolls will begin to fall after this year. In 2002, surplus places were in line with those in similar authorities and fell slightly the following year. The authority makes good use of data in planning school organisation. The forecasting of pupil numbers is very accurate and the school organisation plan draws clear conclusions about the need for further reduction in capacity in both primary and secondary sectors in the future. Clear criteria have been established, in consultation with schools, for the review of primary schools as numbers fall. Links with asset management planning are good. Capital funding is being increasingly applied to ensuring that surplus capacity is used to provide extended provision or other benefits to the community.

46. The authority has published outline plans for a major reorganisation of secondary schools, involving a significant reduction in the number of schools. At this stage, however, there are few details. This uncertainty has contributed to the less than satisfactory judgement expressed by secondary schools in the school survey.

Admissions to schools

47. The LEA's performance in this area continues to be good.

48. Ninety-eight per cent of parents gained places for their children in their preferred secondary schools in 2002/03. This was well above the average for statistical neighbours.

49. Admissions arrangements comply fully with current legislation. Parents receive clearly written guidance and all those who submit an application by the deadline receive an offer on the same day. The LEA's over-subscription criteria are clear and fully reflect the

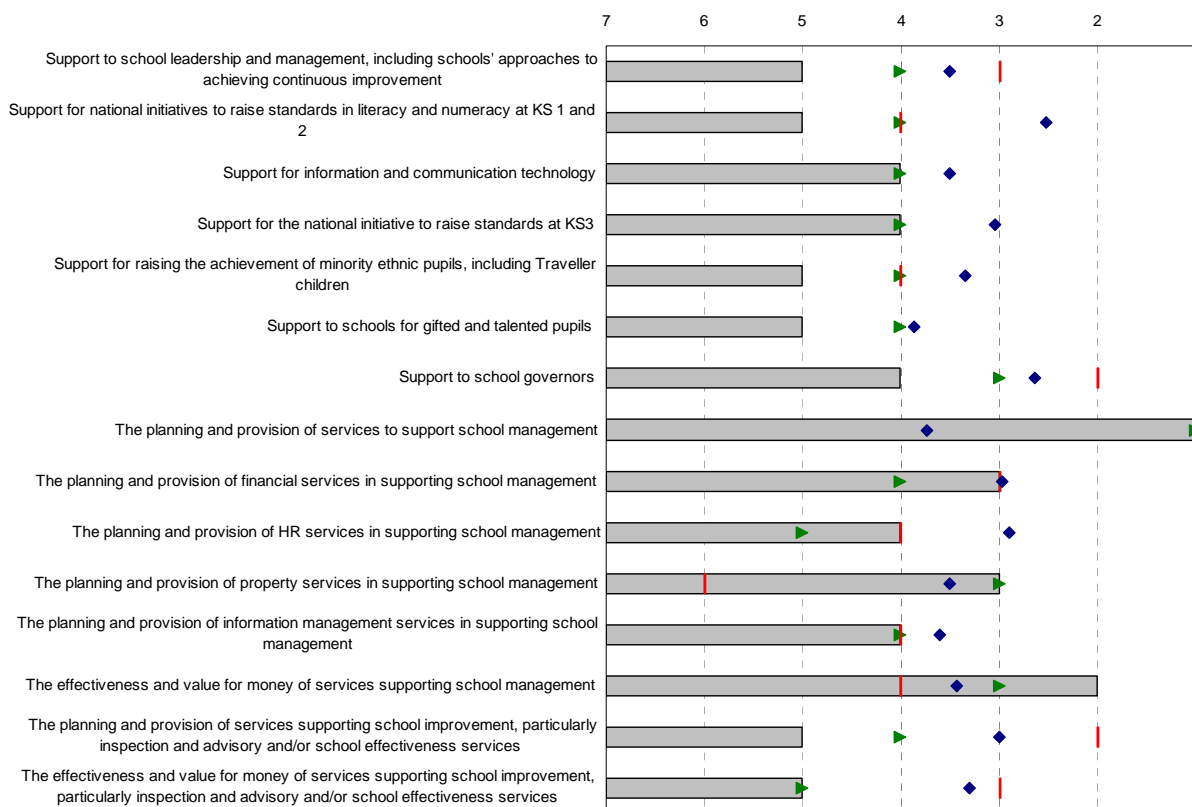
council's emphasis on inclusion by giving priority to pupils with SEN and those looked after by the authority. The LEA has a good success rate in working with schools to find suitable places for pupils who have been or are likely to be excluded permanently.

50. The authority works well in partnership with other admissions authorities. It is ahead of the schedule set by the DfES in implementing a co-ordinated admissions system for both primary and secondary schools for 2004/05. Secondary admissions are also co-ordinated with one neighbouring authority, and plans are in hand to extend this to all neighbours by 2005/06.

51. Though similar to the national average, the proportion of parents successful in appealing against the authority's admissions decisions increased slightly in 2002/03. The authority plans to reconstitute its appeals panel in the near future and to provide further training for its members.

Section 3: Support to improve education in schools

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement

52. Support for school leadership, management and continuous improvement has declined and is now unsatisfactory.

53. There are key weaknesses in the support. Officers do not know enough about schools' strengths and weaknesses to establish priorities and to target the work of the school effectiveness team. Self-evaluation has been a core element of the school improvement strategy but its effectiveness has been undermined by too great a readiness on the part of link advisers to accept over-optimistic evaluations from schools. The lack of knowledge of schools, combined with the absence of rigorous performance management, has resulted in the unsatisfactory support provided for the national literacy and numeracy strategies, for raising the attainment of minority ethnic and Traveller pupils, and for gifted and talented pupils.

54. The identification and dissemination of good practice are unsatisfactory. Networks to encourage the sharing of best practice have varied in their effectiveness. There are signs of emerging co-operation within the EiC initiative, the local 'leadership collaborative' and the Key Stage 3 strategy, but these have yet to make a significant impact.

55. The support provided for developing leadership and management in schools is unsatisfactory. The LEA does not have a strategy for this provision and the programme of training for senior managers has failed to meet their needs consistently. Attendance has been low at some conferences. The support for new headteachers is inconsistent, although the Headlamp initiative is valued by them. Too little has been done to develop the quality of middle managers.

56. Although the LEA's processes for identifying weaknesses in leadership are poor, the work to support weak schools identified by Ofsted, and reported in Section 2 above, has been effective. When the work of school effectiveness has been accurately targeted, it has produced sound results. There is also strength in the planning for, and provision of, management support services, particularly in terms of innovative approaches to brokerage. However, there are crucial vacancies in the school effectiveness team. The consequent uncertainty means that the capacity of the LEA to improve its support for raising the quality of education in schools is insecure.

Recommendations

- Establish a rigorous system for assessing the effectiveness of schools' leadership and management and use this to target support where it is most needed.
- Evaluate the impact of support rigorously and report progress to governing bodies.

Support for the implementation of national initiatives in Key Stages 1 and 2

57. Support for the implementation of national initiatives has declined and is unsatisfactory. The support provided has failed to raise attainment sufficiently to match progress, either nationally or in similar authorities.

58. The LEA does not have a system for deploying the work of advisers and consultants where it is most needed and it does not monitor or evaluate their work systematically. This has impeded progress. The work of consultants, especially in mathematics, has been effective in raising standards in some individual schools. However, its overall impact in schools has been inconsistent and so has failed to produce sustained improvement.

59. Since September 2003, advisers, in consultation with headteachers, have developed a clear strategy for raising attainment and developing the primary curriculum. This strategy does not yet include an effective operational plan with clear success criteria but it does provide a firm basis for establishing priorities. There is developing collaboration between consultants, link advisers, the small Education Action Zones and the EiC initiative. Overall, this indicates some capacity to improve provision.

Recommendations

- Improve support for primary schools by carrying out a thorough analysis of the reasons for underachievement.
- Deploy and monitor the work of advisers and consultants more effectively.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

60. The support for information and communication technology is satisfactory. The provision of fast broadband connections and networked computers in the borough has led to good access to ICT facilities in schools, libraries and other community locations. The ratio of computers to pupils is high and above the national average in primary and secondary schools and the pupil referral units (PRUs). A recently formed ICT school strategy group has produced a strategy for e-learning in Barnsley's schools that seeks to build on the good work that has already taken place. Training for teachers through the New Opportunities Fund has developed the use of ICT in teaching and learning.

61. There are effective ICT curriculum projects in the schools. However, because of difficulties in recruiting ICT teachers, non-specialists have had to deliver the subject at Key Stage 3 in some schools. Attainment in Key Stage 3 is weak, with the proportion of pupils obtaining Level 5 being below the national average.

Support for the national initiative at Key Stage 3

62. The support provided for the strategy is satisfactory. Standards are slowly beginning to rise in English and mathematics but remain below national levels and those of statistical neighbours.

63. A team of consultants works effectively in schools. Their work, together with the training provided centrally, is beginning to improve teaching. Particular strengths of provision are the collaboration between consultants and the increasing degree of co-operation with the EiC initiative.

64. Consultants work imaginatively to ensure effective transition for pupils from Key Stage 2 to 3, through a series of pilot initiatives that draw on the expertise of leading teachers. These initiatives and the use of departments to support central training are the basis for an effective strategy to disseminate good practice.

65. A group has been established to manage the implementation of the strategy, but instability in its composition has been a barrier to progress. There is no detailed operational plan to ensure that resources are being targeted effectively. Although the LEA is developing procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of consultants, these lack the rigour to ensure that the most effective strategies are identified and used.

Recommendation

- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of work to support the raising of standards at Key Stage 3, in order to deploy support more effectively.

Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy and Traveller children

66. Support for raising the achievement of ethnic minority and Traveller children is unsatisfactory. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is too low to make the setting of group targets meaningful. Nevertheless, officers' analysis shows that the standards

of attainment of pupils from minority ethnic groups are generally higher than the national average for all pupils. Overall, attendance of Traveller children is low. Actions to improve this situation, which include arranging temporary accommodation on Travellers' sites, day-trips and out-of school-hours clubs, have not had any impact on improving their attendance.

67. The number of asylum seeker pupils is increasing. The proportion in Barnsley increased by 40% from February to September 2003. The cultural diversity service (CDS) provides support for all pupils with English as an additional language. Officers from the CDS collaborate with social services staff to produce resource packs for asylum seeker pupils, but their work is not fully integrated into the action plans of the school improvement service and other agencies, such as the EiC and Education Action Zones projects. This leads to incoherence and duplication of support for the children concerned.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the strategies for engaging Gypsy and Traveller children in education.
- Co-ordinate the work of the Cultural Diversity Service with that of other projects.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

68. Support for gifted and talented children is unsatisfactory. A recently appointed co-ordinator for secondary schools provides direction and impetus to this work but it is too early to see any impact on pupils' attainment. Although the proportion of pupils obtaining GCSE A* or A grades rose from 1.3% in 2002 to 4.8% in 2003, it remains well below the national average. A small proportion of pupils achieve high levels at Key Stages 1 to 3. The number of pupils taking GCSE examinations early has increased from 25 in 2002 to 204 in 2003. There is no system to evaluate the effect of work with gifted and talented pupils as distinct groups. Although some work has recently started on measuring the value added performance of these pupils, it is still at a very early stage of development.

69. The LEA's co-ordinators organise meetings and other activities to share good practice but few primary schools participate regularly. Staff within school make effective use of a wide range of individual performance data to identify gifted and talented pupils. Pupils identified as talented in music and drama are provided with additional tuition and a number have achieved merits or distinctions in grade examinations.

Recommendation

- Improve the data on the attainment of gifted and talented pupils and encourage all schools to participate in relevant development activities.

Support for school governors

70. At the time of the last inspection, support for school governors was highly satisfactory. It is now satisfactory. A weakness in the collection of detailed information about governing bodies is the central factor in this decline.

71. There is a broad understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of governance across the LEA but there are gaps in detailed knowledge. For example, the governor support service was not aware of two unsatisfactory judgements on governance in inspections of secondary schools. The service has no formal links with school advisers to share information and does not analyse inspection reports systematically.

72. Governing bodies are well informed of local and national initiatives but some briefing notes provided for them lack clarity. However, there is an effective telephone support system that enables governors to raise issues directly with the support service. There is a comprehensive training programme for governors that is well attended and valued by them.

Recommendation

- Monitor school inspection reports to identify weaknesses in governance and improve communication between link advisers and the governors' support team.

The planning and provision of services to support school management

73. The LEA's work in this area is very good. The last inspection report recommended that the LEA should improve the quality of service level agreements covering services purchased from the authority. Improvement has gone beyond this. There is now an innovative brokerage system that enables schools to choose from a range of quality-assured service providers, including the council itself. The system is making schools more effective purchasers of services as well as putting pressure on the services to improve. The schools have all the information on price and quality they need to make informed choices and the suppliers are required to produce improvement plans. At present, the brokerage service is funded centrally as part of the LEA's strategy of improving school leadership and management.

74. The quality of **financial services** has improved from satisfactory to highly satisfactory. Schools are able to buy financial advice and payroll services from the council or from a range of other providers through the brokerage system. They report that the quality of the services they receive is better than satisfactory, although there is some variability in the quality of the advice they receive from the council. The education department has developed good systems to help schools with budget setting and to enable them to compare their spending with schools nationally. Though in need of replacement, the council's financial information system provides those schools without bank accounts with on-line access to their records.

75. **Human resources services** are satisfactory. These services also form part of the brokerage, enabling schools to choose from among several quality-assured providers. The school survey shows that, on the whole, schools are satisfied with the service they buy. Once again, however, they report significant variability in the quality of service received from the council. The council has a good track record in issuing employment contracts to new employees, but is slower in processing variations to contracts.

76. School effectiveness officers have too little detailed knowledge of the quality of financial and personnel management in schools to enable them to target support where it is most needed.

Recommendation

- Ensure that school effectiveness officers give due regard to the quality of resource management in schools.

The effectiveness and value for money of services to support school management

77. This aspect of the LEA's work is good. Services that support school management are of at least satisfactory quality and there are already signs of significant improvement against the performance indicators developed as part of the brokerage. The education department consults schools regularly to make sure that services meet their needs, and also to gather feedback about service providers. These processes contribute well in challenging service providers to deliver increasingly effective services.

78. All service providers set out their prices clearly in the brokerage booklet. The LEA has arranged the details helpfully to enable schools to compare like with like. The competition between providers taking part in the brokerage ensures that prices set by council services are realistic while still covering the costs of provision.

The planning and provision of services to support school improvement

79. These aspects have declined considerably since the last inspection and are now unsatisfactory. The management of the school effectiveness team does not deploy advisers to the highest priorities. This reflects inadequate knowledge of the schools' weaknesses, which is related to the refusal of many schools to purchase LEA advisory support because of its cost and lack of credibility.

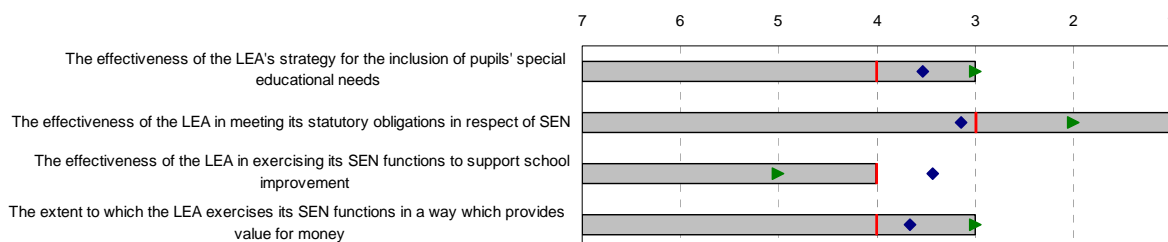
80. Change has begun, but has not had time to become established. The director, in consultation with schools, has established an agreed list of priorities for the LEA. This potentially provides a set of aims for the new school effectiveness service. The interim leadership team, provided by external consultants, is working hard to develop an effective operational plan. However, current support to schools is provided by a mixture of permanent staff, part-time consultants and seconded staff. The long-term success of the team will require recruitment of permanent staff of the appropriate calibre and expertise and the establishment of an effective professional development strategy.

Effectiveness and value for money of services to support school improvement

81. The rate of improvement in the attainment of pupils is insufficient and some services to schools are ineffective. Overall, the LEA's provision to support school improvement does not provide value for money.

Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

The strategy for SEN

82. This aspect of the LEA's work has improved and is now highly satisfactory. The LEA has taken effective action in response to two of the recommendations in the last inspection report. Shortcomings remain in the monitoring of the progress and achievement of pupils with SEN, highlighted as a weakness at that time.

83. The strategy for SEN demonstrates a full commitment to inclusion, in both planning and practice, and reflects the government and corporate priorities. It complies fully with statutory requirements and is supported effectively by a development plan and a comprehensive handbook of guidance. The implementation plan contains a well-judged range of activities but it does not set deadlines for their completion. Although the overall targets set are suitably challenging, many of the success criteria are not worded in ways that help the LEA to evaluate progress.

84. Nevertheless, good progress has been made. The proportion of pupils with SEN who are educated other than in mainstream schools is among the lowest in the country and the use of out-of-authority places has been substantially reduced. The wide consultation on the SEN strategy demonstrated a very large measure of support for inclusion from a wide range of schools, parents and other partners.

85. The strategy is supported by effective work with other services and agencies. Service level agreements operate with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, the medical services and the speech and language therapy service. Partnership work with schools has played a valuable role in the LEA's review of its SEN policy, strategy and funding, and work with a number of parents' support groups, including those for autism and hearing impairment, is given high priority. The LEA is a very active member of the SEN Regional Partnership, on which some of the authority's officers hold key positions.

86. Most SEN monitoring continues to be concerned with evaluating progress made in implementing plans and with the quality of provision. This is done thoroughly and the close involvement of schools ensures that there is a strong element of self-evaluation in all monitoring processes. The authority is piloting a framework for review and self-evaluation

of inclusive practice and has developed a categorisation scheme to help with the allocation of support in line with the need of individual schools. However, systems to monitor pupils' attainment and progress have seen little improvement since the last inspection, although some measures to improve the situation have been introduced in recent months. A monitoring instrument, used by other LEAs to measure the achievement and added value of low-attaining pupils, has been introduced by the majority of schools. The LEA is working closely with the schools in this and intends to use the system to remedy the lack of systematic monitoring of progress and attainment at authority level.

87. The SEN budget is well managed and the funding arrangements show a commitment to early intervention and to school autonomy. Approximately two-thirds of the total budget is delegated to schools and pooled funding arrangements with other agencies ensure that the needs of some pupils with SEN are better met. Following a thorough audit of accessibility in schools, the LEA has produced a comprehensive and detailed Disability Access Plan. Access Initiative funding arrangements are closely aligned with this.

Statutory obligations

88. This aspect of the LEA's work has improved and is very good. Clearly-written protocols and close working relationships with other services and agencies ensure the early identification of pupils with SEN. Assessments follow clearly-stated criteria, and the proportion of these completed within the specified time limits has increased significantly in the past year. The LEA's review officers, who were formerly school special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), write all statements and attend reviews. The quality of statement writing is high and this helps teachers to prepare sound individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils. Nearly all key transition reviews are attended by LEA officers. Reviews explore in depth the match between provision and statement and the progress made by the pupil. Parents and, in most cases, pupils are involved in the process. Following the introduction of the early intervention strategy, about 20% of statements have ceased in the past year. The reasons for this strategy have been fully discussed with parents and, from the 217 terminated statements, no appeals were made to the SEN Tribunal.

89. The provision of guidance and information to parents and carers of pupils with SEN is of a very high standard. The Parent Partnership service is well managed and is respected and valued by parents. Currently, almost forty trained independent parental supporters are available.

SEN functions to support school improvement

90. This aspect of the LEA's work is satisfactory. Although some important improvements have been made, arrangements to monitor the progress and attainment of SEN pupils are poorly developed and schools are not being challenged sufficiently to improve this aspect of their work. Key steps have now been taken to improve this situation, notably the bringing together of all officers and advisers concerned with SEN within the inclusion division. Educational psychologists and SEN specialist teachers play an important role in supporting teachers, classroom assistants, pupils and their parents. This is much valued by schools. Good quality training programmes, many of them leading to qualifications, are provided for SENCOs, other teachers and for classroom assistants. The Code of Practice is

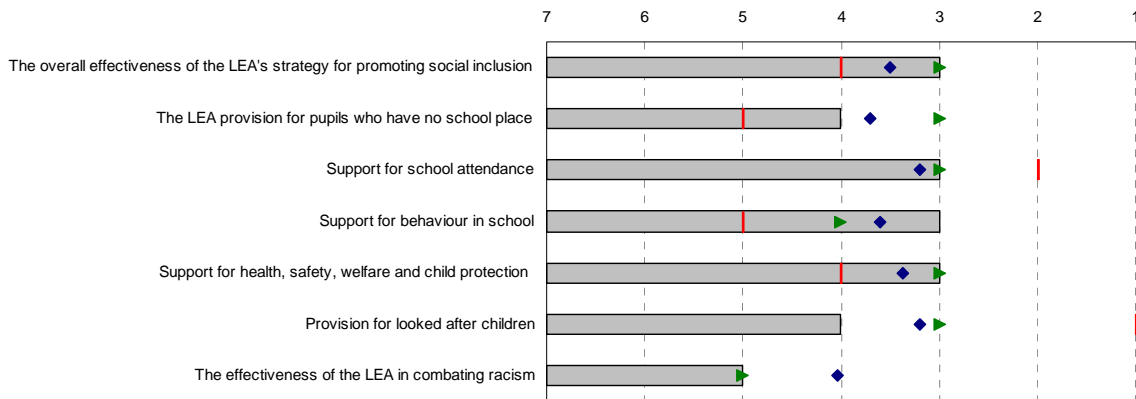
consistently implemented and the IEPs, prepared with guidance from educational psychologists and specialist support teachers, are clearly written and well related to pupils' needs.

Value for money

91. Value for money is highly satisfactory. Costs overall are close to those of similar LEAs. Just over two-thirds of the SEN budget is delegated to schools. The budget is well managed and monitored, with regular reports to senior officers and elected members. The formulae for allocations to schools have been fully discussed with headteachers, governors and teachers and the criteria on which they are based are an accurate reflection of levels of need. Criteria for identifying pupils with SEN have been agreed in consultation with schools and other partners. They are clearly set out in the SEN handbook and are consistent with national policy. A thorough system for auditing the use of delegated funds has been introduced, again following detailed consultation. This includes a significant element of school self-evaluation, although the LEA is not yet able to show how the delegated funding is affecting pupils' progress.

Section 5: Support for social inclusion

Summary table of judgements



The bar represents the grade awarded to the LEA, the triangle represents the LEA's self-evaluation grade, the vertical line represents the LEA's previous grade and the diamond represents the average grade of all LEAs inspected in the last year. 1 = Very Good, 2 = Good, 3 = Highly Satisfactory, 4 = Satisfactory, 5 = Unsatisfactory, 6 = Poor, 7 = Very Poor.

The LEA's strategy for social inclusion

92. The LEA's strategy for social inclusion has improved and a new, broader and more co-ordinated approach has been developed. Support is now highly satisfactory but has yet to make an impact on the attainment of vulnerable groups.

93. The improvements since the last inspection are built on the high priority accorded to social inclusion by the council. This priority is managed corporately, and to good effect, by the social inclusion strategy group of officers and councillors. The most important organisational development within the education department has been the creation of its inclusion division. This brings together support for SEN with other support for inclusion, and with the school admission service. It has enabled better deployment of the constituent parts of the division. Thus, as the burden of statutory assessment on the educational psychologists has declined, the division has been able to deploy the released time to consultancy on behaviour support in the schools. Collaboration between services is stronger, as is demonstrated by the provider forum, which incorporates behaviour support services, the education welfare service and educational psychologists. This gives schools rapid access to specialist support from a single point of referral.

94. Responses to the school survey gave a very negative view of the LEA's work on social inclusion. However, because of recent improvements in provision, the headteachers interviewed during the inspection were far more positive.

95. There is strong collaboration with services outside the education department, notably social services. The work of the children and young people's board, established three years ago, led to the council achieving the status of a Pathfinder Children's Trust. Education is already benefiting from the new arrangements. For example, pooled budget arrangements with the Trust have strengthened the 'life-chances team', which provides multi-agency support for looked after children.

96. There has been clear progress in supporting social inclusion since the last inspection. The behaviour support service has cut exclusions; attendance has improved in secondary schools; and there is now better provision in the PRUs. However, the attainment of vulnerable children continues to be very poor. There are also weaknesses in access to the data necessary to pinpoint the precise areas needing improvement. Nevertheless, the progress made to date, together with the quality of the self-evaluation in this area, indicates a sound capacity for further improvement.

Provision for pupils educated other than at school

97. The LEA's provision in this area continues to be satisfactory.

98. There are fewer pupils than nationally without school places and the LEA is successful in getting excluded pupils back into school. Last year, 56% of excluded pupils were reintegrated into mainstream schools, compared with 15% nationally. Since the last inspection, all excluded pupils have been provided with access to full-time education. Provision in PRUs, which was previously available only for secondary-aged pupils, has now been extended to the full school age range, and all of the PRU provision is now registered.

99. All pupils educated other than at school receive the full statutory number of hours of tuition. Year 11 pupils who are unlikely to return to school are all now provided with personal advisers and receive career advice from the Connexions service. These improvements only began this school year and have yet to have an effect on attainment. Until recently, the curriculum for these pupils was weak and they still do not all have a broad and balanced curriculum. Last year, for the first time, Year 11 pupils at the PRUs were entered for GCSE examinations. Results were poor. The curriculum for excluded pupils has now been extended to include vocational courses.

Recommendation

- Improve the attainment of pupils who have no school place and the curriculum provided for them.

Support for attendance

100. At the time of the last inspection, this aspect was good. It is now highly satisfactory. Attendance has improved in secondary schools, albeit slowly. Last year, it was 90.5%, just over the EDP target of 90.3%. The figure is below the average in similar authorities, as well as nationally. Attendance in primary schools is also below average. Despite some minor fluctuations, it has changed little over the last three years. For 2005 the target, including the addition for the public service agreement (PSA), is 95.2%. Without substantial and effective action neither the EDP nor PSA targets will be met.

101. Support is improving, both in guidance provided for schools and in the direct support of education welfare officers (EWOs). More concerted efforts are now being made to tackle absenteeism through such methods as truancy sweeps. During the last year, 32 primary schools received additional support from attendance support assistants. Attendance improved in half of the schools and, from next year, the education department plans to assign

two new EWOs to primary schools, using the extra money available from the PSA. All schools have nominated governors responsible for attendance, and the governors receive training. There are also reward systems for good attendance in most schools and EWOs write personal letters of congratulation to the parents of pupils who attend well.

102. The planning of improvements for support in the primary phase is good, except that it is not yet based on a thorough and reliable analysis of patterns of absence. A new computer system, to be provided by a private contractor, has been much delayed and is not now expected until Easter.

Support for behaviour

103. Support for behaviour, which was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, has improved and is now highly satisfactory. Exclusions fell by 60% between 2001/02 and 2002/03. Preliminary figures show that only one similar authority now has a better record. Headteachers are very positive about the improvements made and ascribe the fall in exclusions to the effectiveness of the LEA's early intervention programmes.

104. The present behaviour support plan is weak but is about to be replaced by a much improved plan that reflects the coherent approach now being developed as a result of the joint management of the behaviour support service and the PRUs. The involvement of SEN services in the work has also led to improved guidance for schools on dealing with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The weakness of the new plan is its lack of emphasis on the effect of improved behaviour support on pupils' attainment.

Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection

105. The LEA's support in these areas has improved and is now highly satisfactory.

106. Procedures for child protection are sound and are based on a system devised by a regional grouping of area child protection committees (ACPC). The education department maintains an up-to-date record of designated teachers and governors. Training needs have been audited recently and a new training strategy is awaiting approval from the ACPC. Arrangements for multi-agency training are good, as are relationships with social services, both at departmental and school level.

107. Health and safety support is also satisfactory. There are strong, recently revised procedures for assessing risk when schools are planning educational visits. Officers have improved the conduct of health and safety audits by organising them on a rolling programme.

Provision for looked after children

108. The LEA's provision in this area is satisfactory. Looked after children in the authority perform poorly at school. In 2002, none of them achieved the expected grade in English and only 8.3% did so in mathematics. This performance put the LEA in the bottom 10% nationally. Only 4.8% of the pupils gained five or more A*-C passes at GCSE. There has, however, been some improvement in attendance. The proportion of looked after children

missing more than 25 days school declined from 18% in 2001/02 to 6% in 2002/03 and none were excluded from school last year.

109. In some respects, support has improved recently and has considerable strengths. Last year, the number of children with personal education plans rose from 26% to 85%. Carers find discussions with schools, when the plans are set up or reviewed, a valuable way of influencing the education of the children for whom they are responsible.

110. A corporate parenting panel deals with major policy issues, and there are separate, regular meetings of a group of officers concerned with the education of looked after children. This enables co-ordinated work between the different sections of the social inclusion division and the involvement of social services. The group also oversees the work of the newly-established 'life-chances team', which enables schools to have quick access to multi-disciplinary support from a single source. However, the various fora for discussing the care and education of looked after children have yet to develop a coherent plan for improving attainment.

Promoting racial equality

111. The LEA's support for promoting racial equality is unsatisfactory. There are no adequate procedures for recording and analysing racist incidents in schools. A new reporting system is being developed, but officers are not yet in a position to make comprehensive reports to councillors on the extent of racial harassment or on its prevention.

112. The LEA's officers work well with key external agencies to promote awareness of racism among pupils. There is strong collaboration, through the multi-agency panel project, with the health service, social services and the police. There are extra-curricular events, designed to raise pupils' awareness of racism and related issues. However, a significant minority of schools have not participated recently in these activities.

Recommendation

- Ensure that all incidents of racial harassment are recorded and followed up and encourage all schools to participate in activities designed to combat racism.

Appendix A: Record of Judgement Recording Statements

Name of LEA :	Barnsley Local Education Authority
LEA number:	370
Reporting Inspector:	Aelwyn Pugh HMI
Date of Inspection:	January 2004

No	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	Fieldwork*
	Context of the LEA		
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	6	
	Overall judgements		
0.1	The progress made by the LEA overall	6	
0.2	Overall effectiveness of the LEA	5	
0.3	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	5	
	Section 1: Corporate strategy and LEA leadership		
1.1	The effectiveness of corporate planning for the education of children and young people	5	
1.2	The implementation of corporate planning for education	5	
1.3	The effectiveness of LEA decision-making	4	NF
1.4	The extent to which the LEA targets resources on priorities	3	
1.5	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value	5	
1.6	The leadership provided by elected members (including quality of advice)	5	
1.7	The quality of leadership provided by senior officers	5	
1.8	The effectiveness of partnerships and collaboration between agencies in support of priorities	4	

1.9	Support for Early Years' education	3	NF
1.10	Support for 14 – 19 education	5	
1.11	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	4	
Section 2: Strategy for education and its implementation			
2.1	The LEA's strategy for school improvement	6	
2.2	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement	5	
2.3	The performance of schools	6	
2.4	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge and intervention	6	
2.5	The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	5	
2.6	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	6	
2.7	The effectiveness of the LEA's identification of and intervention in under-performing schools	5	
2.8	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	5	
2.9	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	2	
2.10	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	2	
Section 3: Support to school leadership and management, including schools' efforts to support continuous improvement			
3.1	Support to school leadership and management, including support for schools' approaches to continuous improvement	5	
3.2	Support for national initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy at KS 1 and 2	5	
3.3	Support for information and communication technology	4	

3.4	Support for the national initiative to raise standards at KS3	4	
3.5	Support for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, including Gypsy/ Traveller children	5	
3.6	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	5	
3.7	Support for school governors	4	
3.8	The planning and provision of services to support school management	1	
3.8a	The planning and provision of financial services in supporting school management	3	
3.8b	The planning and provision of HR services in supporting school management	4	
3.8c	The planning and provision of property services in supporting school management	3	NF
3.8d	The planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management	4	NF
3.9	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school management	2	
3.10	The planning and provision of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	5	
3.11	The effectiveness and value for money of services supporting school improvement, particularly inspection and advisory and/or school effectiveness services	5	
Section 4: Support for special educational needs (SEN)			
4.1	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs (SEN)	3	
4.2	The effectiveness of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	1	
4.3	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	4	
4.4	The extent to which the LEA exercises its SEN functions in a way which provides value for money	3	

Section 5: Support for social inclusion			
5.1	The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for promoting social inclusion	3	
5.2	The LEA provision for pupils who have no school place	4	
5.3	Support for school attendance	3	
5.4	Support for behaviour in school	3	
5.5	Support for health, safety, welfare and child protection	3	
5.6	Provision for looked after children	4	
5.7	The effectiveness of the LEA in promoting racial equality	5	

**NF' under fieldwork means that no fieldwork was conducted on this function during this inspection.*

JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 7-point scale:

Grade 1: Very good; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Highly satisfactory; Grade 4: Satisfactory;

Grade 5: Unsatisfactory; Grade 6: Poor; Grade 7: Very poor

Appendix B

Context of the inspection

This inspection of Barnsley LEA was carried out by Ofsted in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997.

This report provides a commentary on the inspection findings, including:

- the progress the LEA has made since the time of its last inspection in July 2000;
- the overall effectiveness of the LEA and its capacity to improve further;
- the LEA's performance in major aspects of its work;
- recommendations on areas for improvement.

The summary is followed by more detailed judgements on the LEA's performance of its individual functions, which sets the recommendations for improvement into context.

All functions of the LEA have been inspected and judgements reached on how effectively they are performed. Not all functions were subject to detailed fieldwork, but in all cases inspectors reached their judgements through an evaluation of a range of material. This included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, data (some of which were provided by the LEA), school inspection information, monitoring reports by Her Majesty's Inspectors, and audit reports. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA and a questionnaire seeking the views of all schools on aspects of the work of the LEA. In those areas subject to fieldwork, discussions were held with LEA officers and members, headteachers and governors, staff in other departments of the local authority, diocesan representatives, and other agencies and LEA partners.

The functions that were not subject to detailed fieldwork in this inspection were:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the effectiveness of LEA decision-making;• support for Early Years' education;• the planning and provision of property services in supporting school management;• the planning and provision of information management services in supporting school management. |
|---|

Inspection judgements are made against criteria that can be found on the Ofsted website. For each inspected function of the LEA an inspection team agrees a numerical grade. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are to be found in Appendix A. These numerical grades must be considered in the light of the full report. Some of the grades are used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment profile for the education service.

Context of the LEA

Barnsley is one of four metropolitan authorities in South Yorkshire. It lies midway between Leeds and Sheffield, straddling the M1 motorway. It is a diverse area, ranging from rural Pennine villages in the west to former mining towns and villages in the east. Its socio-economic context has not changed greatly since the last inspection and almost 40% of the council's population of 218,000 live in wards that rank among the 10% most deprived nationally. Unemployment in the borough remains above the national average. Of the approximately 31,834 pupils on roll in Barnsley schools, the proportion of minority ethnic heritage (2.06%) is well below the national average (17.5%).

In 2002, the proportion of pupils in primary schools eligible for free school meals (25.8%) was in line with the national average. The proportion in secondary schools (22.8%) was above average. Similarly, the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs was in line with the average in primary schools (2.5%) and above average in secondary schools (4.9%).

Education, in a variety of settings, is available for all three- and four-year-olds whose parents seek it. The authority has one nursery school, five infant schools, five junior schools, 75 primary schools, 13 secondary schools for 11 to 16 year olds and one for 11 to 18 year olds. Following restructuring, the number of special schools has been reduced from three to one. There are also two pupil referral units. Three primary schools have Beacon status.

The performance of schools

Pupils' attainment in Barnsley schools is too low generally. Pupils make a good start and baseline assessment shows that they attain in line with national averages on entry to school. However, thereafter attainment is usually below, and often well below, the averages nationally and for statistical neighbours. Overall, progress in primary schools is particularly unsatisfactory. Over a half of the schools do not reach the DfES floor target of 65% achieving Level 4 or higher at age 11. Over the period 1999 to 2003, for the percentage attaining Level 4 or higher, the gap between LEA and national averages has widened for English, mathematics and science. From 1999 to 2002, performance at GCSE was consistently well below the national average and the average for similar authorities. In 2003, the percentage achieving five or more higher grades at GCSE increased by a creditable 4% but was still 12.6% below the national average.

In 2002, the LEA was required to set statutory targets at Key Stage 2, GCSE level, for the percentage of unauthorised absences and for reducing exclusions. The LEA met the targets for attendance and reducing exclusions. However, it missed its targets for Key Stage 2 literacy, Key Stage 2 numeracy, the percentage gaining five or more A* to C and one or more A*-G grades at GCSE level.

Funding data for the LEA

Schools budget	Barnsley	Statistical neighbours average	Metropolitan Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Individual schools budget	2,505	2,597	2,623	2,708
Standards fund delegated	64	51	59	61
Education for under fives	59	48	62	96
Strategic management	21	35	33	29
Special educational needs	119	104	109	120
Grants	76	76	76	53
Access	37	58	53	55
Capital expenditure from revenue	40	24	18	24
TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET	2,920	2,994	3,031	3,145
Schools formula spending share	2,820	2,767	2,812	2,904

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04

LEA budget	Barnsley	Statistical neighbours average	Metropolitan Average	ENGLAND AVERAGE
	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil	£ per pupil
Strategic management	115	112	115	95
Specific Grants	17	16	12	16
Special educational needs	26	28	25	32
School improvement	38	36	34	36
Access	107	93	102	133
Capital expenditure from revenue	0	1	3	2
Youth and Community	69	61	70	74
TOTAL LEA BUDGET	372	348	362	388

Source: DfES Comparative Tables 2003-04

Note: All figures are net

