



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF
SHEFFIELD
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

February 2000

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

CONTENTS

PARAGRAPHS

INTRODUCTION

1 - 3

COMMENTARY

4 - 11

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context	12 - 14
Performance	15 - 18
Funding	19 - 25
Council Structure	26 - 27
The Education Development Plan	28 - 35
The Allocation of Resources to Priorities	36 - 43
Recommendations	

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions	44 - 46
Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention	47 - 53
Collection and Analysis of Data	54 - 57
Support for Literacy	58 - 60
Support for Numeracy	61 - 63
Support for ICT	64 - 66
Support for Schools Causing Concern	67 - 71
Support for Governors	72
Support for School Management	73 - 76
Recommendations	

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate Planning	77 - 90
Management Services	91 - 96
Recommendations	

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Strategy	97 - 105
Statutory Obligations	106
Improvement and Value for Money	107 - 109
Recommendations	

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The Supply of School Places	110 - 112
Admissions	113 - 115
Property Management	116 - 124
Provision of Education Otherwise Than At School	125 - 130
Attendance	131 - 135
Behaviour Support	136 - 138
Health, Safety, Welfare, Child Protection	139 - 140
Looked After Children	141 - 143
Ethnic Minority Children	144 - 145
Social Exclusion	146 - 147
Recommendations	

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities*, which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the Education Department and in other council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 105 schools. The response rate was 86%.
3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to one nursery, 13 primary, nine secondary, four special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4. The City of Sheffield continues to suffer from the demise of the steel, coal and engineering industries in the 1980s when a quarter of its jobs were lost. Economic recovery is very slow and Sheffield's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is currently 87 per cent of the United Kingdom average. The City includes some of the poorest housing estates nationally.

5. Overall standards are lower than national averages at every Key Stage and vary greatly between schools. The rate of improvement is slow. The number of schools causing significant concern is high, school attendance is lower than national averages, and the percentage of pupils who stay on in education after the age of 16 is disturbingly low. However, in 1999 results in National Curriculum assessments in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 and 3 improved faster than the national rate.

6. As recently as two or three years ago, the local authority was in disarray. Financial difficulties and poor budget planning regularly led to the unpredictable and sudden need to freeze or cut expenditure. Crisis management curtailed effective medium and long term planning. This, when combined with a reluctance to tackle the difficult issues, led to inertia. The effects of this are, for example, in evidence in the unacceptably poor state of the City's school buildings. Inevitably these conditions induced frustration and demoralisation and led to tensions in relationships between the LEA and schools.

7. There has been improvement. A concerted effort is being made to regenerate the City and raising standards of attainment is widely regarded as the paramount requirement in this strategy. Sound foundations for the LEA's work have been developed. The LEA knows the schools better and schools have more confidence in the leadership of the Education Department. Budget planning is better and the council's success in attracting new sources of funding is beginning to benefit the schools. A start has been made on tackling the problem of school buildings.

8. However, much still remains to be done. The authority's work in a few key areas is outstanding – but so are the weaknesses. The fact that the weaknesses bear especially heavily on provision for the most vulnerable children indicates a continuing need for urgent and fundamental change in the aspects of special education needs and social inclusion.

9. The LEA discharges the following functions very well; support for:

- admissions to school and the supply of school places;
- literacy;
- numeracy;
- the early years partnership;
- personnel;
- finance.

10. However, the following functions are inadequately discharged:

- drafting of Education Development Plan;
- support of attendance;
- provision for looked-after children;
- the formulation of an appropriate Behaviour Support Plan;
- support for minority ethnic children;
- strategy and some aspects of provision for special educational needs;
- developing systems to support the use of Information and Communication Technology in management and the curriculum;
- maintenance of school buildings.

11. In several of the above areas, as elsewhere, there has been some improvement, but it is not sufficient. This report sets the authority a formidable agenda for rapid implementation. We believe the LEA and the council have the capacity to tackle that agenda, but we do not believe that time is on their side. The national agenda presses as hard in Sheffield as elsewhere. We therefore look for urgent action to address the recommendations contained in this report, and we will take steps to evaluate the extent of the changes next year.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

12. The City of Sheffield's population is rising and stands at just over half a million. Six per cent of the adult population (9.5 per cent of the school population) are of minority ethnic origin with the largest groups being of Pakistani and Caribbean heritage. Sheffield's unemployment rate is currently 2 per cent above the national average. The percentage of primary and secondary aged children, 26.6 per cent and 25.6 per cent respectively, who are eligible for free school meals is higher than the national figures.

13. Sheffield LEA maintains 195 schools of which five are nursery schools, 148 primary schools, 27 secondary schools, 14 special schools and one pupil referral unit. Only 59 per cent of pupils stay on into post-16 provision, which is almost 10 per cent below the national figure. Sheffield has the second lowest percentage of 17 year-olds in education and training in England.

14. There are sufficient places for every four year old whose parents or carers have requested a pre-school place and approximately 87 per cent who take up a place attend maintained provision. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs and attending special schools is in line with national averages.

Performance

15. The LEA's baseline assessment data shows that the distribution of children's attainment on entry to school is broadly in line with the national picture. However, in 1999, standards of attainment at each Key Stage are below national averages although not significantly so in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in core subjects at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 2 in 1999, 64.1 and 65.9 per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or above in English and mathematics respectively compared with 70.4 and 69.0 per cent nationally. At GCSE 38 and 87.2 per cent of pupils attained five A*-C and five A*-G grades respectively, compared with 46.3 and 90.7 per cent nationally. The attainment of the small proportion of students taking GCE A level in school sixth forms is significantly higher than national averages.

16. In 1999, attainment at Key Stages 2 and 3 has improved at a faster rate than nationally. Between 1997 and 1999, however, there has been a marginal deterioration in the percentage of pupils obtaining 5A*-C grades from 39 per cent to 38 per cent, whereas the percentage of pupils obtaining 5A*-G grades has improved from 84.5 per cent to 87.2 per cent.

17. Findings from OFSTED inspection of all schools in the first inspection cycle show that 42 per cent of primary schools and 44 per cent of secondary schools require some or significant improvement overall, compared with 28 per cent and 29 per cent nationally.

18. Rates of attendance are lower than the national averages with about double the national rate of unauthorised absence in both primary and secondary schools. In primary schools the incidence of permanent exclusions is high, but in secondary schools broadly in line with national rates. Fixed term exclusions are high.

Funding

19. Revenue spending has had to be reduced steadily as a result of the application of government capping limits. During this period the external auditor has repeatedly raised concerns about the low level of balances and the ability of the council to meet unplanned expenditure needs. Past investments have exacerbated that position. The council has argued its case for higher funding with the Government over a number of years. It achieved some success in 1994/5 in a raising of the original capping limit. Apart from this, however, its efforts have been unsuccessful. Its education standard spending assessment (SSA) for the current year is below the average for English metropolitan districts for both the primary and secondary SSA blocks (98.3 per cent in both cases).

20. As far as specific grant is concerned, Sheffield already fares comparatively well and further significant sums will be forthcoming in the years to come. Major grant funded initiatives include an Education Action Zone, the Early Excellence Centres, the Excellence in Cities Programme, and a grant for South Yorkshire from Objective 1 of the European Economic Community's Structural Fund. The council has recently taken steps to strengthen its arrangements for incoming services of bidding opportunities, supporting the bidding process, and coordinating submissions.

21. The council's current spending is some seven per cent above its total SSA. Within this total, spending on education is at the level of SSA, spending on social services is four per cent above, spending on highways 32 per cent below, and spending on other services (which includes the bulk of expenditure on past investments) 28 per cent above.

22. The council has passed on recent increases in education SSA in full to the Education Service and spending on education has remained close to the level of SSA over the last three years. The council now plans its expenditure on a three year basis and it is committed to spending at least at this level on education for the next two years.

23. Establishing a proper level of corporate balances is of critical importance to the management of the Education Service. Since adequate provision had not been made for budgetary reserves, recurrent mid year crises have had to be managed by spending freezes. This has clearly had a major disruptive effect on service delivery, but has also had effects in terms of confidence to plan and on relationships with schools. The dependence on such freezes has declined in the last two years and the intention is that there be none in the year to come.

24. Overall spending on schools is lower than the averages for comparable authorities. Care needs to be taken with the interpretation of the secondary figures below, as Sheffield has relatively few post-16 pupils in its schools and will tend to

have a lower funding average. Whilst overall spending is lower, differences are not as great as perceived by schools.

	Primary LSB / pupil	Secondary LSB / pupil
Sheffield	£2074	£2790
Statistical neighbours	£2137	£2838
English metropolitan districts	£2134	£2892
All English LEAs	£2235	£3006

25. In terms of capital spending, the council has supplemented its borrowing and grant income by the sale of assets. The opportunities to raise further funds from such sales are now limited. This has put further onus on the submission of New Deal for Schools (NDS) bids and the development of Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) schemes as a means of providing much needed building improvements. The council has been relatively successful in its NDS bidding, and has also obtained approval for a PFI scheme of over £40 million which involves the rebuilding of six schools and for which work on site is scheduled to begin in April 2000. A further set of proposals worth £100 million in total is currently on a Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) reserve list.

Council Structure

26. In May 1999 political control of the council changed to the Liberal Democrat Party after several decades of leadership by the Labour Party. The council has five Policy Committees:

- the Corporate Strategy Committee
- the Education Policy Committee
- the Housing and Direct Services Policy Committee
- the Development, Environment and the Leisure Policy Committee
- the Social Services Policy Committee

27. In addition, the Performance Review Sub-Committee maintains and overview of corporate priorities. It also reviews the performance of all services and the council's arrangements to secure Best Value. The authority has a corporate management structure of a chief executive and four executive directors, including the executive director of education.

The Education Development Plan

28. The LEA began the process of devising a strategy for school improvement in advance of the national requirements when, in 1997, *"The City Achievement Strategy"* was agreed by the schools. This established raising achievement as the local authority's first priority. Challenging targets were set to reach standards which are comparable with the national average by the year 2002. Good progress has been made towards meeting those targets at Key Stage 2 but at GCSE progress is too slow. An early start was made with new approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy which are compatible with the current national strategies.

29. The Educational Development Plan (EDP) built on *The City Achievement Strategy* and in doing so accommodated the new national requirements. Consultation with schools on the Education Development Plan was satisfactory. The challenging targets which were set for *The City Achievement Strategy* have been retained. The LEA's audit of the performance of schools is accurate, but does not reflect a precise identification of what needs to be done to raise attainment. In practice, the issues which have to be tackled are much more clearly understood by the LEA than the audit illustrates.

30. The ten priorities of the EDP, therefore, reflect national requirements but not the local context. For example, the wide variation in secondary school attainment, the underachievement of minority ethnic groups, challenging complacent schools, and unsatisfactory school attendance do not have a sufficiently high priority. The priorities are:

- the literacy and numeracy programme;
- the development of a school improvement framework;
- a programme of additional support for schools in four categories;
- a teacher quality improvement programme;
- a leadership and management improvement programme;
- a 14-19 framework;
- study support;
- early years;
- pupil support;
- innovation and an Education Action Zone.

31. The plan as a whole is inadequate. The priorities are too numerous and overlap. As well as the ten priorities, the plan identifies 71 activities. The individual activity plans are uneven in quality. Links between different activities are not established, and as a result the plan lacks coherence. Activities are not set in a sensible sequence over three years. Implementation is not sufficiently phased to be manageable by schools or to provide a clear sense of direction. The plan, therefore is a menu of activities rather than a clear strategy for improvement. With the exception of literacy and numeracy and additional support, the outcome of each activity, and its precise relationship to the targets, and measurable success criteria are not always clear.

32. Schools support the priorities but headteachers have found it difficult to find a route through the plan. The LEA conducted a relatively limited consultation on the EDP for entirely sensible reasons, but this has resulted in some of the schools which were visited for this inspection not knowing the contents of the plan. Some schools visited perceive the plan as the LEA's rather than also having relevance to schools.

33. These difficulties have been reinforced by the early implementation of the plan. The LEA has already initiated most of the 71 activities. Schools did not fully understand the new arrangements for applying for the training provided through the EDP. The mechanism was cumbersome and the timing unhelpful to schools. As a result, schools have found that they were offered more opportunities than they could

realistically afford to take up and also felt that they might have missed other valuable opportunities which they had not selected.

34. The LEA acknowledges that the EDP is not a helpful document. Nevertheless, at least half the priorities: literacy and numeracy, the school improvement framework, additional support, teaching and management, have been judged by this inspection to be at least satisfactory. The LEA has already taken steps to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the EDP and has produced the first termly report. Each activity is monitored separately and the report provides, in the main, a useful check on what activities have taken place, although responses for the priority for pupil support are too general to be helpful.

35. Plans for **Excellence in Cities** usefully complement the EDP. These are effective strategic plans and they have been devised with the participation of schools and headteachers. Audits of, for instance, the needs of the gifted and talented, identify a clear pattern of strengths and weaknesses, making good use of local knowledge and data. Resource allocation is clear. The LEA is a major partner and is taking an active role in developing an **Education Action Zone** which involves 21 schools. The zone has developed nine standards which are compatible with the priorities of the EDP. The LEA is well aware of the need to develop greater coherence by integrating these initiatives into a clearer single strategic approach which is readily understandable to schools. In order to do this effectively, the LEA is aware it will need to revise its EDP.

The Allocation of Resources to Priorities

36. The LEA delegates a slightly lower proportion of spending (80.0 per cent of the Local Schools Budget (LSB)) on schools than the average for both metropolitan districts and all LEAs nationally (80.2 per cent and 80.8 per cent). Spending on a number of centrally controlled Special Education Needs (SEN) items is comparatively high, although the devolution of funding for support for statemented pupils give schools some control over how money is used. If this money had been delegated rather than devolved, however, the proportion of spending delegated would have been higher than the average for both metropolitan districts and all LEAs nationally. Centrally controlled spending on LEA core administration and on school improvement is well below the group averages (71 per cent and 65 per cent of the metropolitan district average respectively).

37. In the area of delegated funding, as with the LSB, the funding of Sheffield schools is lower than the averages for comparable authorities, although the same caveat applies to the secondary comparisons as indicated in paragraph 24.

	Primary ISB / pupil	Secondary ISB / pupil
Sheffield	£1557	£2223
Statistical neighbours	£1581	£2290
English metropolitan districts	£1583	£2334
All English LEAs	£1691	£2449

38. Distinctive features of the age weightings within Sheffield's funding formula are the relatively large increase from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and the relatively small increase from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Another feature is the relatively low proportion of total delegated funding accounted for by the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU). This suggests that the range of funding per pupil in schools is likely to be greater than elsewhere.

39. The LEA has worked with headteacher representatives over the last few years on a detailed "activity led analysis" of schools' spending requirements. This analysis has been thorough and of good quality and the LEA has concluded that there are a number of areas (including funding at Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4, and post-16) where the existing Local Management of Schools (LMS) formula requires adjustment.

40. The LEA has taken the view that such adjustments should wait for additional funding to become available since the schools which are low-funded are almost invariably those which are attaining standards at national averages or above. However, the decision not to act upon the good quality analytical work undertaken has led to frustration amongst schools. A further round of consultation on possible changes to the LMS formula is currently under way. The LEA has already concluded, however, that two of the secondary schools which were visited for this inspection and are already in deficit have no further areas in which they can reasonably reduce expenditure. Either this analysis is wrong or the LEA must take steps to address this situation.

41. The LEA took the decision to delegate the great majority of the additional sums required by the Fair Funding legislation from April 1999 and in advance of the legal requirement. This put inevitable pressure on the development of detailed proposals and on the time available for consultation with schools. Schools are generally content with the final decisions on which services to delegate and how the funding should be delegated. The remaining reservations concern the amounts of money delegated in each case. The LEA is only now providing the detailed breakdowns of service provision and cost which will allow schools to assess whether appropriate sums are being delegated.

42. Spending on SEN provision does not occupy an unduly large proportion of the LEA's education budget. However, there have been budgetary control difficulties in recent years and the budget for statemented support has grown significantly. This has been particularly problematic for a council with a declining overall budget and very limited reserves. The LEA is pursuing a number of developments aimed at providing a more coherent framework for the funding of SEN provisions and bringing the increases in spending under control. These are discussed in more detail in Section 4 of this report.

43. The council has taken a number of appropriate steps to ensure that it obtains value for money. There are clear signs in recent years of a shift towards a more pragmatic approach with a focus on the service quality and cost, using whatever delivery mechanism best meet service needs. The "Best Managed Council" initiative provides a comprehensive framework for service development and review, and includes a requirement that every service has a development plan which includes a range of performance measures. Plans are reviewed and updated on a regular

basis. The council has commissioned a number of major service reviews in recent years, not least as part of its programme to manage necessary expenditure reductions. However, the use of questionnaire surveys and other methods of gauging client satisfaction are not yet widespread features of service management and review. Major areas of central service provision, for instance information and communications technology (ICT) have been out-sourced and significant savings made, however the effectiveness of this strategy is discussed in paragraphs 64-66.

Recommendations

In order to improve the strategy for school improvement:

- Re-draft the Education Development Plan in consultation with schools to devise a strategy which reflects local needs; and take into account Excellence in Cities, the Education Action Zone and the behaviour support plan and the current rate of progress in meeting the 2002 targets;
- Take steps as a matter of urgency to resolve the position of schools with increasing budget deficits, either by amending the LMS formula or by indicating where sufficient spending reductions can be made.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions

44. Management services, particularly personnel services and the management of admissions and school places, contribute positively to school improvement.

45. There are weaknesses in the way in which the LEA performs its functions which reduce the effectiveness of its approach to school improvement. Schools feel dissatisfaction about four major issues. Firstly, they are dissatisfied with their levels of funding, although the extent of the disparity in overall terms may not be as great as perceived. Schools accept that the LEA has made genuine efforts to delegate and to devolve funding to schools. Some schools, particularly the seven secondary schools with sixth form provision are also concerned about the way in which funding is distributed. The current distribution by the formula broadly benefits the schools in the most disadvantaged areas, which are the schools attaining the lowest standards (paragraphs 36-43).

46. Secondly, school buildings are in very poor condition. The extent of the maintenance required compared with the size of the budget is a source of considerable concern (paragraphs 116-124). Thirdly, hardware to support the development of Information Communication Technology is deficient and there is an unsatisfactory approach to improving this (64-66). Finally, the uncertainties of the new developments in funding for special educational needs and the future development of policies for inclusion also cause concern (97-109). There is no effective LEA strategy to improve poor attendance at school (131-135).

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention

47. The LEA is moving towards the role envisaged in the Schools Standards and Framework Act and the Code of Practice on LEA-school relations. This is leading to an improved, more consistent and clearer relationship between the LEA and its schools which is more pronounced in primary and special schools than in secondary schools. The latter have traditionally been more autonomous. In particular, schools which have caused concern and either require special measures, or have serious weaknesses, have accepted the value of the LEA's new and more rigorous approach. The schools which were visited for this inspection have accepted, at least in principle, the LEA's role in monitoring, challenge, intervention and support. Monitoring and support are well developed; schools now welcome a higher level of challenge. Up to now the LEA's history of intervention, where appropriate, in schools is mixed. The LEA has been too slow to intervene in some schools where there were known problems.

48. The annual performance review is regarded by the LEA as crucial to its ability to monitor, support, challenge and intervene in schools. A key element of the annual performance review is the evaluation of past pupils' performance and a review of future targets. The process has been piloted in all schools and has been carried out for the second time in some primary schools. It is structured, thought-out, well regulated and understood by schools. As a result of the full programme the LEA drafts an annual report which summarises the issues which have emerged from the

schools. In the pilot year of the annual performance review, 11 schools were identified where progress was unsatisfactory. Six of these schools had already been identified and are on the LEA's list of schools requiring additional support. The five additional schools were added to the list following discussion with the headteachers and governors.

49. The annual performance review was discussed in 16 schools visited. In general, schools value the process and it led to a useful discussion with the headteacher. Clear and mostly accurate written reports which identified strengths and weaknesses are shared with governors. However, the extent to which the link adviser challenges the schools' performance is at least satisfactory in only half of the schools. The LEA does not need to carry out the process in all schools without differentiation. Much more could be achieved by better use of data collected from all relevant sources.

50. The Advice and Inspection Service provides support, monitoring, challenge and intervention in schools. Management and financial systems within the service are clear and appropriate. Service planning complies with the local authority's systems and has identified appropriate priorities for service management. Performance data and progress on plans are regularly reviewed.

51. Staffing and deployment have good features. The Advice and Inspection team consists of both schools' link advisers and curriculum advisers, and is led by the Chief Adviser. Link advisers work exclusively within their phase specialism. The primary team is particularly effective; all but one of its members have been primary headteachers. Curriculum coverage is good and includes expertise on all subjects. However, design and technology and information and communications technology are the responsibility of one adviser who is over-stretched. Effective use has been made of associate headteachers and deputy heads to aid schools in difficulties, especially in the primary phase. The deployment and timetables of advisers are carefully monitored and their time has been allocated to the relevant priorities of the Education Development Plan.

52. Budgets for curriculum support have appropriately been delegated to schools and the service has been set a high income target of £418,000. A very high percentage of 97 and 84 per cent of primary and secondary schools purchase the basic package. The support which is provided by curriculum advisers is uneven across subjects, but is satisfactory in most subjects.

53. The service has in place suitable systems of induction for advisers and has devised a system of performance management. The work of link advisers, especially the annual performance review, is closely monitored. Quality assurance procedures for curriculum support are not sufficiently formalised and schools do not always receive feedback when they raise concerns. Although appraisal has not been developed, advisers' work is reviewed in terms of targets and to identify training needs.

Collection and Analysis of Data

54. The LEA provides satisfactory and improving support for the use of performance data. It circulates data which schools find useful. This compares performance with that of similar schools and with LEA and national targets. The text includes issues and questions for schools to consider about their performance. The LEA plans to make further improvements through the development of a robust central pupil database to store the data which exists both within LEA Divisions and at school level systematically.

55. Effective support is available through training in the use of data for and the approach for target setting. Schools are advised to conduct a thorough analysis of pupils' current performance to predict their future attainment. Schools are expected to add to this aggregated prediction an increased element which reflects the overall LEA and national improvement trends, but also the aspiration set by the school about its own improvement. Appropriately, the LEA has not set indicative ranges but maintains that it is the schools' responsibility to establish the target on the basis of their own analyses. The process of setting targets is well understood by schools visited. The use of data to forecast pupil attainment is very well established. However, with one or two exceptions, the use of data to identify the weaknesses in the school's overall performance and to estimate the extent of improvements which can be made across the school, is less well developed.

56. The LEA has a shortfall between the aggregated schools target and the LEA's targets at Key Stage 2 English and at five or more subjects at grade A*-C at GCSE. The LEA has taken reasonable steps to ensure that this gap is closed. It has identified schools with low targets and link advisers have written to the schools or visited them to discuss their calculations. As a result, 20 schools changed their targets, including two schools visited for this inspection. The targets set in nine primary schools visited had largely been met because of the unpredictably high increases locally and nationally in the 1999 test results.

57. Appropriate discussion about the school's progress in meeting targets in conjunction with a review of pupils' attainment and progress takes place in the school's annual performance review. Link advisers have appropriately reviewed the school's target setting process in the schools visited which have set unambitious targets. However, a clear judgement on whether the targets set are appropriate has not been made in every school.

Support for Literacy

58. Support for literacy is very good. The LEA established a target of pupils attaining Level 4 in the English test at Key Stage 2 in 1999. This target has been met and exceeded by 4.1 per cent. A rise of a further 15.9 per cent is required to meet the 2002 target. The literacy team is well organised and effectively managed. A wide range of activities to complement and supplement the National Literacy Strategy, such as family literacy programmes, reading recovery, summer literacy schools and a Key Stage 3 literacy programme, are being managed in a coherent and effective manner.

59. The first year of implementation of the National Literacy Strategy was well organised. The literacy team provided training which was at least good and often very good. As well as using national materials skilfully, the consultants provided additional good quality support materials. Support for the 'intensive' schools has been particularly good; advice has been well focused and much appreciated. The impact overall has been to improve the quality of teaching. For instance, in the five schools visited which received intensive support, standards have risen by an average of 13.9 per cent, compared with 8.8 per cent over all schools.

60. All secondary schools are involved in a phased Key Stage 3 literacy project. The schools visited, in the first cohort, have received well focused and expert advice. They have developed practical strategies which are increasingly being used across the curriculum. One school is teaching an adapted literacy hour once a week in Year 7. The second cohort school visited has also received good support. Support for all the schools includes termly meetings for coordinators and a summer conference where good practice was shared. The first year of the project was evaluated externally. This was useful but lacked sufficient quantitative evaluation of improvement.

Support for Numeracy

61. The LEA has already exceeded its target for the year 2000 of 63 per cent of pupils attaining Level 4 or above in the mathematics test at Key Stage 2. Attainment has to rise by a further ten per cent to meet the target for 2002. Support for numeracy is very good, particularly in primary and special schools. The numeracy team has a good level of expertise and is highly regarded by schools. The overall strategy is well thought out and builds on work in previous years. The LEA has, for several years, promoted the development of mental and number skills; this is a particular strength. The National Numeracy Strategy was piloted in 24 schools prior to being introduced across the LEA in 1999.

62. Training for the National Numeracy Strategy was very good. Follow-up work in schools is targeted according to need and the level of expertise already available in the school. Demonstration lessons given by the numeracy consultant or the school's own coordinator have been very useful. Other support given includes termly meetings for numeracy coordinators, useful curriculum publications and an equipment loan service. Identifying and training leading mathematics teachers is well organised, with tight follow-up procedures after each visit. The numeracy hour is becoming well established in primary schools. Mental and oral aspects are already well developed, and lesson objectives tighter.

63. A good range of support is provided in secondary schools. Particular support is given to schools causing concern and to under achieving departments. Twenty four of the twenty seven secondary schools have taken part for ten weeks in a pilot initiative to improve mental and oral mathematics. Pupils in the pilot schools made demonstrable progress, and as a result of the initiative mental and oral numeracy sessions are now established in Years 7 and 8 in all secondary schools. Schools have access to curriculum materials, which are well regarded. The numeracy team is actively seeking new approaches, for example a development group for Key Stage 4 and a bridging unit, designed to raise expectations in Year 7, in response to the

improvement in pupils' attainment in Year 6, has been piloted in one school. The LEA is now extending this to more schools.

Support for Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

64. The LEA's support for development in the use of ICT is poor. The LEA has rightly identified ICT as a key activity for development in the Education Development Plan. Progress in ICT was unsatisfactory in about one third of Sheffield schools in their most recent inspection. At Key Stage 2 over half of the lessons were unsatisfactory, which compares unfavourably with national averages. The LEA, therefore, starts from a low base. However, it is involved in a range of initiatives which are based on ICT. These include the National Grid for Learning, Excellence in Cities and the proposed creation of a Virtual Learning City with European Economic Community Objective 1 funding.

65. Planning is insufficiently detailed to ensure that there are working ICT systems that teachers can use with confidence in the classroom. Implementation of plans to date has been poor. The contractor responsible for ICT provision has been overwhelmed by problems raised by schools, and, although the situation is improving, the quality of service has been very poor. LEA monitoring has been weak and has rarely resulted in improvements in the service. Many schools are unclear whether it is the contractor or the LEA who is now responsible for support for ICT. Problems with hardware, software and ISDN links has resulted in extensive disruption for schools and long delays in establishing reliable systems. Planning for the next phases of the National Grid for Learning is more secure, but schools, with some justification, still have extensive concerns about the contractor's ability to deliver.

66. Advisory support has been effective in some schools, but is insufficient in view of the low base of school standards and awareness in the use of ICT. The subject adviser is overstretched.

Support for Schools Causing Concern

67. Schools receive good support once they have been identified by OFSTED as requiring special measures. Too many schools cause concern, roughly 10 per cent of its primary schools and 15 per cent of its secondary and special schools. There are currently nine¹ schools requiring special measures and eleven have serious weaknesses, including two that were so designated before this became an official category in 1997. Previously, a further five schools no longer require special measures although one special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties has since returned to that category. Three schools in special measures have been closed and one has been given a fresh start with a new name and substantial budgetary support. There are currently fifteen schools on the LEA's own list of schools causing concern.

¹ As the inspection of the LEA concluded, three of these schools were visited by HMI and special measures were no longer required, but a further school was identified which required special measures.

68. The LEA's policy for schools causing concern has strengths; in particular the detailed way in which the provision, coordination and monitoring of support are arranged once a school is identified as requiring special measures. However, procedures for identifying schools causing concern are not sufficiently clear and the support provided in the early stages of a school's difficulties has not always proved effective. There is an absence of clear criteria, other than the OFSTED inspection, to identify schools causing concern or likely to do so. The policy does not develop a continuum of support from early identification of the schools with weaknesses through various stages of mounting seriousness to supporting schools requiring special measures.

69. The LEA has set a target of having no schools identified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures by the end of 2001. In the past year it has been unable to prevent four schools slipping from serious weaknesses into special measures and one school returning to the latter category. In the case of four of the schools, the difficulties were well known to the LEA. Support had been provided, but the action taken by the LEA in line with the recommendations of the OFSTED report had not been effective.

70. Schools, when identified by OFSTED as requiring special measures, receive good support which is invariably sufficient to result in timely improvement. Schools are allocated a steering group which identifies the strategy for improvement and a support group which ensures that the support which a school receives from many services is effective and well coordinated. Schools causing concern also receive additional support and can purchase support from their targeted school improvement grant.

71. Recently, the LEA has not hesitated to replace headteachers where necessary and to use associate heads and deputies to strengthen school management as required. Additional governors with relevant expertise and experience have also been appointed and delegated budgets have been removed in two schools. The personnel department has advised effectively on teacher competency procedures and the finance department has worked well with schools on strategic financial planning. Heads of schools in all three categories of concern reported that the support they now receive is sufficient and effective.

Support for Governors

72. LEA support for governors is effective. The governor support service was rated very highly in the LEA's 1998/99 Fair Funding survey. It contributes very effectively to the EDP's priority on leadership and management through a relevant programme of information, training and support. Governors are consulted regularly by officers on a range of educational matters and are represented on a variety of LEA committees. They, like headteachers, are involved in the appointment of advisers. The Sheffield Association of School Governing Bodies is actively encouraged by the LEA. Governing bodies are able to purchase very efficient administration and clerking services from the LEA. Where necessary, strong support is also given to the governing bodies of schools in special measures through training and by the appointment of additional governors with appropriate experience.

Support for School Management

73. The LEA's strategy for training school managers is sound. It has adapted well to changes in funding arrangements and national training provision. Effective use is made of a range of providers including universities, neighbouring LEAs, consultants, local networks of heads and deputies, business and commerce, and the regional leadership centre. Regular conferences for heads and deputies receive positive evaluations from participants. The LEA is strongly committed to the national standards for headship and has successfully encouraged good numbers of senior managers to be involved in training for the National Professional Qualification for Headship and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers. However, advice on and monitoring of the national Headlamp programme for new headteachers are under-developed. A course for middle managers, based on the national standards for subject leaders, has commenced in one cluster of schools only. However, the LEA intends to provide this training more widely.

74. In-school support for management is provided mainly through link advisers and, where necessary, associate headteachers. The annual performance review is the main way in which the link adviser works with the school. Visits which have followed up on this process have focused on helping schools to develop effective monitoring and self-evaluation procedures, such as headteachers and advisers engaging in joint lesson observation and moderating judgements. However, the development of school self review and evaluation in schools is still quite patchy and as yet this is not a sufficiently regular or systematic procedure. New headteachers benefit from additional link adviser time and most choose to be supported by an experienced, LEA-trained headteacher mentor.

75. The LEA's programme of induction for newly qualified teachers was generally valued. Schools have received good support for dealing with cases of incompetency. There are clear procedures and the support from personnel helps schools to take a humane but sufficiently firm approach. The LEA has also set up improvement projects, mainly in primary numeracy and literacy, but now extended to a small number of secondary teachers, to help improve classroom practice. Despite this, in the schools visited, headteachers still often identified the need to further improve the quality of teaching.

76. Teacher appraisal is not taking place following the loss of funding and in anticipation of a change of Government policy. However, many schools hold annual development reviews for teachers, which look at training needs. Thirty headteachers are involved in a pilot headteacher appraisal programme that meets new national requirements and has received a largely positive response from participants.

Recommendations

In order to improve support, monitoring, challenge and intervention:

Review the arrangements for the annual performance review to:

- ensure that the analysis of performance data and the review of progress in meeting targets is used to challenge schools at a consistent level;

- provide greater differentiation in the process to reflect the needs of schools;
- maximise the use of all evidence available to the LEA;
- continue to support schools to develop self-evaluation procedures so that it is more consistently in operation in all schools;
- extend the use of associate headteachers, particularly in the support of secondary schools.

In order to improve the collection and analysis of data:

- ensure the speedy development of a central pupil database which takes account of the needs of both schools and divisions within the LEA.

In order to provide support for ICT:

- develop detailed strategic plans for the implementation of ICT policies which take account of schools' views and which incorporate small steps, straightforward success targets and effective monitoring systems;
- provide additional advisory support to coordinate the diverse range of ICT activities within the Education Development Plan;
- place more emphasis on support for the use of ICT in the curriculum in schools;
- reconsider the current provision of technical support for ICT in the light of schools' needs.

In order to provide support for schools causing concern, or likely to do so:

- develop a stepped approach to the identification of schools causing concern which starts with the early notification of difficulties in schools to heads and governors through the annual performance review and leads eventually to LEA intervention, and agree this procedure with all schools;
- improve advisers' skills in identifying problems at an early stage in schools.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate Planning

The clarity, coherence, consistency and feasibility of corporate plans

77. Simplicity and clarity are key strengths in the council's own corporate plan "Making a Difference". The local authority has a vision and objectives which have raising educational standards at their heart.

78. The chief executive's department provides good leadership and has developed a very clear framework to stimulate improvements in services, including planning, appraisal and evaluation which are common to all directorates and services. The mechanisms for planning and review have clarity and realism which are greatly supported by the simplicity of design. The systems are feasible to implement effectively and are well designed to promote greater accountability, good management and the improvement in quality of the local authority's services.

79. This planning cycle is in its second year of implementation. It works with variable degrees of success and has not yet been effective in developing a consistent quality of services. Not every division and service has operated a rigorous or sufficiently self-critical approach. Progress in areas where there are weaknesses has not been monitored sufficiently. Despite the simplicity of the system which should enable staff to manage workloads in line with priorities, in reality, all too often some services lose the clear focus and become enmeshed in meeting day to day requirements or in the detail of the more complicated improvement plans.

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

80. A new and more open approach has been taken to consultation in the last two and a half years. Schools appreciate this and recognise that the LEA has no intention of obfuscating the issues. However, reservations were raised on the apparent absence of feedback of the findings of the consultation, the amount of time allowed for the submission of views, and the information provided to the schools. The latter varies between insufficient detail to enable the reader to come to an informed view, to documents which contain so much detail that it defeats all but the most determined reader. Briefings by the executive director of education and other senior officers are appreciated and there is a genuine feeling that schools' views are listened to and that there is an opportunity for dialogue. Nevertheless, the quality of consultation does vary. Consultation on PFI bids and Excellence in Cities, both of which involved headteachers and governors in developing the proposals, are singled out by the schools for particular praise, whereas consultation on SEN is not effective.

81. Consultation with schools on the council's budget is an area generally where the LEA has earned the trust of schools. However, it has tended to be confined to school-related issues, with less information and opportunity to comment on other education spending and on the council's overall deployment of funds. This reflects a general tendency to compartmentalise issues and not to embark on discussions

which might result in a redistribution within the current overall spending on the area concerned. Sheffield is currently much better at this task at the level of detail within spending areas than it is when considering the need for more fundamental change between those areas.

The Quality of Leadership Given by Elected Members and Senior Officers

82. The elected members of the ruling party are new to their responsibilities. There is a considerable consensus between the parties about the developments which are required in education. The new administration has accepted and continued the policies and developments which had been started two years ago by its predecessors. This has ensured much needed stability and continuity for the education service. Even at this early stage members have already taken some difficult decisions. There are, nevertheless, difficult questions still to be addressed which will require members to maintain a strong strategic direction. For instance schools feel that the council currently lacks the strength of will to address fundamental restructuring needs, particularly within its budget. Members are well advised by officers and both ruling and opposition parties have ease of access to officers and regular briefings.

83. Schools have generally responded well to the new leadership of the education department, even though not all dissatisfaction has been dissipated. In the main, the senior management team is new and demonstrates a high level of technical competence. Long standing difficulties have begun to be tackled effectively, although not all of this has always been immediately recognised by schools.

Partnership

84. The council plays a successful and leading role in a number of *partnerships for regeneration* particular to Sheffield, such as Sheffield First, but also in the sub-region of South Yorkshire, such as South Yorkshire Forum. Appropriately, regeneration has the highest priority and education is seen to be the major pre-requisite for regeneration. Schools have not been significantly involved in the partnership discussions. They recognise and understand the high priority which is given to education but have not, as yet, felt much practical benefit, although the recent success in obtaining European Structural Fund grant of £740 million for South Yorkshire is a key opportunity.

85. Strategic planning with the *Training and Enterprise Council* has improved in the last two years although cooperation does not always take place at a sufficiently early stage. Some effective joint projects have been developed, but the outcomes of these have not been sufficiently widely disseminated across the city. There are clear signs of improvement and progress in work with the *Careers Service* and there is a greater willingness to engage on a shared agenda.

86. Sheffield Children First is the active and *successful early years development and child care partnership*. The partnership is well supported by and has a productive dialogue with young children's services. The Early Years Development Plan has been approved with revisions. The plan develops the vision of involving and consulting parents through the local area planning process. This has also

formed the imaginative thrust for the development of three early excellence centres. The partnership will meet the demanding target of offering provision for 87 per cent of three year olds.

87. One imaginative development, which illustrates the strength of cooperative and coordinated working arrangements between young children's services and the partnership, is "*The Sheffield Kitemark*" which represents the agreements on quality standards which can be operated across all early years settings. This is based on good principles and has developed materials of high quality which are user-friendly, clear and comprehensive. It represents a very good tool for staff and curricular development.

88. There are regular liaison meetings between police officers and senior education officers, although the impact in terms of developing a clear understanding of a strategic approach to common issues, such as the links between truancy and youth crime, is not always possible to detect. There are some notable exceptions to this, such as productive liaison over the work of the youth offending team.

89. Strategic liaison between the education department and the health authority is reported to work effectively. There is an appropriate level of participation in plans and developments which have mutual importance. However, the time limits for receiving advice from health on the multi-disciplinary assessment of pupils with special educational needs still requires improvement.

90. At a strategic level, liaison and joint working between the education and social services departments is improving. The children and young people's joint commissioning group has responsibility for drafting the multi-disciplinary children's services plan. An agenda for joint work which includes a common set of shared objectives to promote social inclusion still has to be clearly articulated.

Management Services

91. The development of effective **management information systems** in the LEA has been hindered by inadequate investment, a lack of detailed planning and difficulties in monitoring the contracted out elements in **Information and Communications Technology**. Until recently, nearly all schools have used a limited but effective management information systems developed and supported within the LEA. This year, after pressure from schools, the LEA has started to install the full SIMS management system. The installation of SIMS, which has been contracted out, has caused difficulties for many schools. Planning of the programme has taken insufficient account of the demands which have been placed on school staff and of specific problems, for example split sites.

92. Schools receive very good support from the **personnel services** and the great majority of schools buy the full package of services offered. The service is proactive in providing briefings on topical issues and in producing model policies and procedures for schools' consideration. The response to school queries is prompt and the support given is considered to be reliable and effective. The service makes a major contribution to the LEA's school improvement strategy, particularly in the areas of teaching capability and competence procedures and the recruitment of staff.

Individual casework is particularly strong, with a proper balance being struck between concern for the individual and the need for prompt and firm action in the interests of school effectiveness.

93. Support for **financial management** is generally well regarded by schools, particularly in terms of the advice and support given by financial services staff. The great majority of schools buy into the full package of services offered. A detailed budget planning discussion takes place with the head and chair of governors of every school each March which most find very useful. The LEA keeps in close contact with schools with financial difficulties, both to monitor expenditure and to offer advice and support. Very few schools have current deficits which give significant cause for concern, although the LEA has identified a few where the problems could become serious unless remedial action is taken.

94. The LEA has recently brought forward the date of notifying delegated budgets and this has been welcomed by schools. Accounting arrangements work satisfactorily although schools experience some difficulties in tracking additional, mid year funding allocations. Payroll services are well regarded. Work on financial benchmarking data is at pilot stage only.

95. Opinion about the quality of services available from the council's **direct services organisation** (DSO) is mixed. There are concerns about the standards of cleaning and particularly management supervision within the cleaning service. Schools report that school meals provide a variable quality of service. However, there is good communication with service managers, a responsive attitude to schools' organisational needs and pupil preferences, and reasonable steps are taken to promote healthy eating.

96. The **SEN home to school transport** budget is held by SEN managers so that placement and transport costs are considered together. A Best Value Review has led to cost reductions and 20 per cent of the DSO's overall transport service activity will be subject to market testing in 2000/2001.

Recommendations

In order to improve strategic management:

- consolidate the service planning cycle and ensure that progress in drafting, implementing and reviewing service plans is effectively monitored to ensure improvements in the consistency of service quality;
- ensure that consultation documents are accessible and identify key points at issue for busy school staff and governors;
- ensure that, where the issues are of shared interest to the police, the health authority and social services, planning to promote social inclusion reflects a multi-disciplinary approach;
- tighten the arrangements for informing schools of funding allocations in addition to their delegated budgets, and for transferring the money to them.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Strategy

97. The LEA's strategy for SEN is unsatisfactory. A new strategic plan was completed in April 1999 and circulated to relevant stakeholders for consultation. However, the plan is weak. It reviews the present position and identifies broad objectives but it does not state clearly enough the desired future position or how and when this is to be achieved. One broad aim is to develop increasingly inclusive education, but there is no shared view about what inclusion means in the context of Sheffield.

98. The LEA's strategic planning is insufficiently clear. The likely problems which might occur in implementing change or the necessary systematic checks and balances which might be required are not always foreseen. Initiatives are designed when difficulties are encountered which should have been foreseen in the early stages of planning. The *ad hoc* approach to planning extends the timescales for development unduly. Developments, therefore, are often rightly perceived by schools as fragmented.

99. Planning for the promotion of inclusion is vague and contains significant omissions. For instance, there is no effective guide for the future role of special schools. There is a major proposal to establish up to four campuses housing nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. Despite the centrality of this, the initiative is not documented within the LEA's strategies. In consequence the schools visited were unclear about what was envisaged and therefore lacked the confidence that it could be achieved.

100. As a result of weak management of SEN provision over a long period, the LEA has an array of historical anomalies and mismatches in funding and practice. Problems include a mounting escalation of the budget because of the continuously increasing demand for statements; the schools' lack of accountability for SEN expenditure; a poor match between the allocation of funding and the extent of special needs which leads to undue variation in the numbers of statements between schools; late production of statements with too many examples of dilatory administration and a sluggish response to schools' and parents' requests.

101. A number of sound practical steps have been taken very recently to address some of these weaknesses. The LEA has improved the timeliness with which it issues statements, and has greatly improved its practice in re-drafting statements when needs or provision have changed. The quality of statements issued recently is satisfactory and their pen-pictures of pupils' strengths and weaknesses are often clear and informative. However, many of those in use in schools are still too vague. There has been an attempt to overcome administrative problems and work has begun to make administration more responsive. The schools have noted a recent improvement, but it is not yet consistent.

102. Ambitious changes have been made in an attempt to tackle the escalating budgetary problems. These developments are also intended to reduce the costs and bureaucracy of issuing high numbers of statements and to match resources more

precisely to needs. Sound criteria have been developed to identify needs. Funding is now devolved to secondary schools on the basis of the numbers of pupils in schools who meet these criteria. There are intentions to devolve money in a similar way to primary schools, although plans are still very vague. In order to ensure this system works well, a better audit of the school's SEN has recently been conducted and improvements have been made to develop a consistent approach to annual reviews across the authority. The completion of annual reviews is now monitored by educational psychologists so that the LEA can receive better advice on the changes to provision which are necessary.

103. These initiatives are still at various stages of implementation. Not all the changes are well planned, or included in the strategic plan. However, they hold promise for improvements in the key areas of present weakness. The audit of special needs in schools and the draft format for the annual review have already begun to make schools more accountable. Planning, however, did not encompass the development of stronger moderation procedures. As a result, the way forward is being planned after the findings have begun to emerge. Not all schools have been convinced by the new system and have raised concerns about the extent of the administrative requirements, the uncertainties about the reliability of the audit and how far funding will be redistributed, which is still unknown.

104. Schools report a history of continuous review of SEN provision with few observable results. A high rate of turnover of officers and advisers in the SEN division has hampered continuity in planning and development. It has resulted too often in abandoning initiatives and seeking new directions. Schools' confidence in the permanence of any new developments has been dented and high staff turnover, a factor in this instability, continues.

105. Developments which encourage a stronger voice for parents are beginning to evolve. The number of parental appeals and tribunals is low but not all parents have had a positive experience of the system. Parents of children with hearing impairment and of young autistic children feel well informed by contact with staff of the support services. Other parents have experienced more difficulties and in particular have not known who to approach to find out about progress when there have been delays. The LEA has recognised the need for improvement in this area. It has recently convened a parent forum and appointed an advice and conciliation officer. It intends to appoint a parent-partnership officer.

Statutory Obligations

106. The LEA meets its statutory obligations. However, 40 per cent of statements were delayed because of the lateness of medical advice. Appropriate steps have been made to encourage a quicker response but with little effect.

Improvement

107. The LEA strategy and support for SEN were inspected in 15 schools and in 11 they were unsatisfactory. This is invariably because of the uncertainties of the strategy, the unpredictable effects of any redistribution of funding in secondary schools and the longstanding inefficiencies in special needs administration. The

work of support services is generally satisfactory. The support, teaching and educational psychology service (STEPS) provides a comprehensive range of support to pupils with SEN. Schools report some variability in the effectiveness of staff and some schools have faced too many changes in staffing to provide the necessary continuity. Nevertheless hearing and visually impaired support services provide consistently effective support, and the work of educational psychologists is almost always satisfactory or good.

108. School staff are offered a good range of training including externally accredited courses. SEN coordinators benefit from regular cluster meetings. Nevertheless individual education plans are weak in too many schools and clear measurable targets are not rigorously set. Planning to improve this weakness is at an early stage.

Value for money

109. Funding is not distributed consistently in relation to needs and the budget is regularly exceeded. Systems to ensure value for money are weak although improving. Value for money is unsatisfactory.

Recommendations

In order to improve the strategy and support for SEN:

- develop a shared understanding of what is meant by inclusion in the context of Sheffield;
- assess and document the likely effects of the combined campuses on special school provision, brief members and seek their support at an early stage;
- work with special schools to develop a clear understanding of their future role;
- make representations, at the highest level, to the health authority to improve the timeliness by which they submit medical advice for statements;
- improve strategic planning to ensure outcomes are clearly stated and plan all the necessary components within the initiatives at the outset in order to shorten the timescale for their implementation;
- continue to develop more responsiveness to parents and schools and eradicate administrative errors in special needs administration;
- assess the implications of new initiatives for the workload and approach of the STEPS service and build this into their work and training programme;
- continue to develop schools' accountability and the consistency with which the new criteria are used by developing systematic moderation procedures;
- work with schools to improve the drafting and use of individual education plans.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The Supply of School Places

110. The LEA performs its function to supply school places well. Appropriate action has been taken over a number of years to keep the proportion of surplus school places at acceptable levels. The percentage of unfilled places in the primary sector was reduced from 11.6 per cent in 1994/95 to 9.3 per cent in 1997/98. The equivalent secondary figures were 10.0 per cent and 9.0 per cent. For both sectors the 1997/98 figures were below the averages for metropolitan districts and all English LEAs.

111. The LEA has a good record of predicting the future need for school places and has recently improved its arrangements for dialogue with schools on those projections. Pupil numbers in schools are monitored closely and the capacity of school buildings is kept under regular review. Liaison with the diocesan authorities is very good.

112. Appropriate consultation took place on the draft school organisation plan which was subsequently approved by the school organisation committee in September. The school organisation plan is an effective plan which identifies schools with a high proportion of unfilled places and includes targets for the removal of places in the primary sector.

Admissions

113. The LEA performs its functions for school admissions very well. Agreements with other admissions authorities on proposed "relevant areas" were reached without difficulty. The local admissions forum is operating smoothly.

114. The LEA's information booklet for parents on admissions for 1999/2000 meets both the minimum requirements of the new Admissions Code of Practice and the recommended practice in most respects. The distribution of information and advice to parents works effectively.

115. The administration of admissions processes is efficiently conducted. However, the timing of the main programme of admissions appeals in the Summer term is late and some children do not know sufficiently well in advance of the end of term which schools they will be joining.

Property Management

116. The overall condition of school buildings in Sheffield is poor. Nearly all schools have parts of their buildings whose condition is very poor. Schools have major concerns about whether the LEA's responsibilities and of their own responsibilities for structural repairs and maintenance following further delegation this year are fulfilled. The LEA's practice has, however, improved; appropriate steps have been taken to assess the situation systematically. Property has been surveyed, which have provided a detailed assessment of work which has to take place.

117. Over a number of years there has been a history of under-investment amounting to neglect. As far back as 1985, HMI highlighted the condition of school buildings as a matter of particular concern. Since that time, however, expenditure in real terms on building maintenance has not increased. LEA funding in recent years has focused mainly on reactive work to deal with immediate health and safety concerns and to keep schools open, not always with success. The proportion of the budget spent on planned rather than reactive work is well below recommended levels.

118. Prior to the development of its asset management plan, the LEA did not carry out regular surveys of building condition. It is not well placed to assess in detail, therefore, the extent to which the backlog of work is increasing. It estimates, however, that the condition of buildings have steadily declined (at least since the mid-1990s) and that this process has been progressively accelerating because the investment in preventive work has been so low.

119. Sheffield has piloted asset management planning and is hence well advanced in its own work. A programme of full condition surveys covering all schools was carried out in 1998/99 and a draft asset management plan has recently been circulated to schools for comment. The plan provides a good overview of both needs and funding opportunities.

120. The existing asset management plan does not quantify the cost of each item of work. To add this assessment would clearly require choices to be made amongst the options available. Without some realistic assessments, members will not be properly informed of the extent of maintenance and replacement needs and be in a position to consider these when budgets are set.

121. The LEA estimates a global figure of £188m for all its replacement and repair needs, including all its PFI building proposals. It is difficult to compare such estimates with the position in other LEAs, but some 18 per cent of all the items listed in the asset management plan are in the two worst condition categories which specify that the work is urgent or essential within two years. If the cost of repairs is estimated on a *pro rata* basis, it amounts to £34m, compared with the 1999/2000 budget of £13.4m and a total of £2.9m delegated to schools. These figures suggest that existing budgets will, at best, only prevent the further escalation of problems, despite the level of capital spending now exceeding the average for comparable authorities.

122. This is an unacceptable situation. The LEA has been proactive and has taken every advantage of the new opportunities which are available. However, the point has been reached with a number of school buildings where replacement or full scale refurbishment is the only sensible way forward. Recent bids for New Deal for Schools grant and proposals for PFI projects have reflected this assessment and the PFI scheme to start next April will replace four secondary and two primary schools. The LEA's second PFI proposal, which has not yet been agreed, is even bigger and would, if successful, involve the rebuilding or refurbishment of a further 14 schools.

123. Draft building maintenance plans based on the asset management plan survey data were sent to all schools in the summer. Whilst these plans were

generally welcomed, some reservations were expressed by schools about their content and format. These included some disagreements over accuracy and priority ratings but mainly focused on the level of detail included. Schools felt that more information would be needed on the problems identified and the work necessary before the plans could become really useful planning documents.

124. The DSO is used for all centrally funded work up to a value of £20,000. In certain cases the price of this work has been negotiated to reflect tenders received from the private sector in earlier market testing. It is not clear, however, that this is the case for all the work undertaken. Schools reported unfavourably on the DSO in terms of the time taken to submit quotations, the high prices quoted, delays in getting work done (except for emergency situations where response times are good) variable quality of work and difficulties in getting problems rectified.

Provision of Education Otherwise Than At School

125. A high number (558) of pupils do not attend mainstream schools and a significant number (204) have received alternative tuition for longer than one school year. Making satisfactory provision for the high number of pupils who are excluded or who do not attend school is a major difficulty. The problems will not be solved until the high numbers of pupils who are effectively non-attenders are reduced and the number of pupils who are reintegrated into school increased. Too few pupils (79) are reintegrated into school during the year. The strategy is poor and progress to establish a more coherent and coordinated approach has been too slow.

126. The LEA provides education for pupils who have no school place. However, at any one time about 25 pupils receive no education; almost all because they have refused to attend the alternative provision offered. The LEA has established a multi-disciplinary exceptional needs group to discuss appropriate plans to re-engage seriously disaffected young people. The work of this group has a limited impact because of the ill-defined overall strategy combined with the high number of pupils who fall into this category.

127. The social inclusion team has successfully developed databases to track the whereabouts of pupils who require education otherwise than at school although, as these include three databases, the information is somewhat scattered. Nevertheless, the LEA was able to track pupils not attending school when asked to do so by HMI.

128. The pupil referral service was inspected by OFSTED in February 1998. While the report found that "overall, the Sheffield pupil referral service provides a satisfactory education for pupils ... (and) provides satisfactory value for money" it reported that the LEA had yet to fully meet all of its duties and made six recommendations for the LEA including establishing a clear strategic framework for the work of the service. Since this inspection insufficient progress has been made in addressing these recommendations, including some health and safety issues. The service continues to operate much as it did at the time of the inspection although its work has been more closely aligned to ensuring that the LEA's statutory responsibilities are met. A consultation document intending to update and clarify a policy for education otherwise was presented to the committee very recently. It does

not provide an analysis which states the problems clearly enough or make concrete proposals which will be effective.

129. The LEA makes about 40 college placements and places about 365 young people on part-time placements provided by the Training and Enterprise Council and the Single Regeneration Budget funded initiatives. Some progress has been made to develop appropriate regulations for this provision, but the schools' continuing responsibility for monitoring the pupils' progress has not been clarified and therefore is not sufficiently systematically conducted. Many of the pupils are long term non-attenders at school. Their attendance is monitored when they attend the project but pupils are still expected to attend school at other times. In practice, most of them do not. The curriculum of schools and of part-time off-site placements are not sufficiently coordinated.

130. The LEA has suitable and tightly monitored procedures to ensure appropriate curriculum for home-educated pupils.

Attendance

131. The strategy for improving attendance included in the behaviour support plan and EDP is poor. Improving attendance is not given a sufficiently high priority. A recent report to schools service committee illustrates the extent of the problem; in 1998/99 4278 (6.2 per cent of the school population) pupils attended schools for less than 75 per cent of the time. The current intention to increase the early intervention in primary schools and to work in multi-disciplinary teams will not be sufficient to address the problems. Although individual education social workers are well regarded by schools, the lack of a clear strategy and a vigorous and proactive approach considerably reduces the impact of the service. A review of the education social work service was completed in May 1999. The response has lacked urgency and, with the exception of updating the LEA's attendance policy, little has been done to implement the recommendations.

132. The service deploys education social workers to schools using an appropriate formula so that schools with the poorest attendance receive the most help. However, schools are not always aware of their allocation. There is no service level agreement which helps to clarify the respective responsibilities of the schools and the service which, in practice, are not clearly defined.

133. The five-weekly monitoring of attendance, which is conducted by the education social worker, identifies pupils who may have had three broken weeks' attendance or ten half day sessions of absence. This is an appropriate criterion for referral, providing that there is a clear understanding that schools have responsibility beforehand for taking some initial and more immediate action. This is not always the case.

134. The major problems lie with the inconsistencies in the ways in which pupils' absence is followed up. There is no clearly defined, consistent and rigorously applied progressive procedure which tackles poor school attendance. Following the identification of pupils, the education social worker *usually* discusses the future action with the school although this did not *always* occur in every school visited and

may make a home visit although this was not *always* the case. If attendance fails to improve the pupil *may* be referred to the school attendance working party which decides whether it is appropriate to refer the case for prosecution.

135. The service does not make full or effective use of the legal powers available. Fifty-five prosecutions were made in the school year 1998-99 which is low in view of the number of children who are evading full-time education. Applying for parenting orders is under consideration but no use is made of other legal powers. The service collects considerable statistics which are used to determine the deployment of staff but these are not used sufficiently.

Behaviour Support

136. The strategy for improving behaviour and reducing exclusions has weaknesses. The behaviour support plan sets demanding targets to reduce permanent exclusion and identifies an extensive and complex programme. It lacks the clear costing of officer time and other resources which would check whether the intentions are feasible.

137. The twenty objectives and plans for implementation are not based on a detailed analysis of the current situation or the effectiveness of existing provision. The objectives are, therefore, mainly related to improvements in processes rather than outcomes. A recent evaluation illustrates that some progress has been made in implementation, in particular, increasing the amount of behaviour support which is available to schools. Further increases in provision for behaviour support have been well planned as part of the Excellence in Cities initiative.

138. Schools receive support from behaviour support workers on the basis of an allocation or, in those schools with less significant problems, by referral. The criteria for, and priority given to, referral are not clear to schools. Some schools which have made referrals do not always know how long they will have to wait for a response. Support is still too thinly spread and lacks the flexibility to respond quickly. Nevertheless there is clear evidence of effective and helpful work in two out of the six primary schools, a special school and all three secondary schools which are visited.

Health, Safety, Welfare, Child Protection

139. Good support is provided to schools in fulfilling their health and safety responsibilities.

140. On the evidence which is available to the inspection team, the LEA meets its statutory responsibilities. The executive director for social services confirms that the education department plays a full role in the area child protection committee and that the arrangements made by the education service to protect children from significant harm are appropriate. A full-time coordinator provides a thorough training programme and support to schools.

Looked-After Children

141. The LEA has accepted corporate responsibilities for promoting the educational attainment of looked-after children and a strategic working group has been formed. Two reviews have been conducted, including a Best Value Review which have led to helpful recommendations although in the case of the latter more specific for social services than education. These reviews have provided a clear understanding of the areas which require improvement. A small joint-funded project, based with the STEPS service, is working on a practical agenda for improvement.

142. Targets have been set for improvement in attainment but very little tangible progress has been made. The LEA has undertaken a great deal of investigation but this has not led to the necessary action. A major difficulty which is inhibiting progress is the lack of a shared database between education and social services which can provide accurate and up to date information on looked-after children, their care, educational placements and attainment, combined with agreed procedures for mutually informing the other department and schools of the changes. The social services department can not provide basic information on the numbers of children who are excluded, or do not attend school as they do not hold the necessary data. The education department report that every looked-after child has been allocated a school place but they regard their data on the placement of looked-after children as inaccurate.

143. The STEPS service has asked schools to provide data on the attainment of looked-after children in their planning meetings with schools. No school has received advice on the means of improving their attainment. Nevertheless, in one secondary school two looked-after children have been placed on Stage 3 of the SEN register. This is not appropriate as neither young person has special educational needs, but at least it helps to ensure that their progress is carefully monitored.

Ethnic Minority Children

144. The strategy to raise achievement for minority ethnic children is currently unsatisfactory but appropriate steps have been taken which should result in improvement. The LEA does not have complete data on their attainment, although there are plans in place to collect this and as a first step, work is in hand to agree a strategy for ethnic monitoring. Data on baseline assessment is comprehensive. Partial data from 12 primary and ten secondary schools shows serious underachievement of children of Pakistani, African and Caribbean heritage.

145. A recent reorganisation of the support service for minority ethnic pupils is appropriate and seems to be working. The LEA has formed a small central team of four advisers and has sought new appointments for these posts. In the four schools visited where support was inspected, the effectiveness of the new working arrangements varies but in all schools is at least satisfactory. Improvements are already obvious in two schools. In these schools staff have new contracts and appropriate work programmes which are being monitored. All the schools and the staff understand and are clear about the current arrangements. However, guidance to schools on the deployment of staff and monitoring of the new arrangements is urgently required.

Social Exclusion

146. Expenditure on services which promote social inclusion is significant and yet there are few signs of improvement. Following four separate reviews of different services and an OFSTED inspection of the pupil referral service few developments of consequence have taken place in response to the findings. There is a lack of a strategic overview of the work of the education social work service, the social inclusion team, the pupil referral service and the STEPS service and, in particular, of the impact of unsatisfactory school attendance on the work of other services. In consequence there is no clear analysis of the difficulties and planned practical, coordinated developments to tackle the problems.

147. The city council plans to frame a response to the Macpherson report to which the education department is to contribute. It has been decided that it would be inappropriate for the education department to issue any guidelines before the corporate response is published. Comprehensive guidance for dealing with racial harassment in Sheffield schools was produced and circulated to all schools in 1996. There has been no monitoring of the effectiveness of school policies or the number of racist incidents in schools on a city-wide basis.

Recommendations

To improve the management of property repairs and maintenance:

- add costs to the list of maintenance and replacement needs in the asset management plan to ensure that members are fully informed of spending needs when both central and delegated budgets are set;
- increase budgetary provision for building maintenance and improvement;
- review the charges and responsiveness of the direct services organisation for building work to ensure Best Value.

As a matter of urgency to improve access and entitlement to education:

- revise the behaviour support plan to take into account the likely outcomes of the Excellence in Cities initiatives and the recommendations of the four recent reviews and the inspection of the pupil referral service, and focus clearly on a limited number of outcomes:- reduce exclusion, improve attendance, assist re-integration of pupils into school and improve the attainment of looked-after children and identify the progress which must be made by clearly defined by numerical targets;
- clarify schools' and the education social work service's responsibilities for attendance and incorporate these in a clear service level agreement which details the responsibilities and the time which is allocated to each school; adjust the working practices of the education social work service to reflect these responsibilities and ensure there are appropriate procedures to regularly monitor how successfully the agreement is met;

- support all schools, in the first instance, with under 85% attendance so that they operate effective procedures for early identification and follow up of absence before children meet the criteria for referral to the education social work service;
- devise more consistent procedures to guide the work of education social workers including making full and effective use of legal powers;
- in cooperation with partners undertake a city-wide campaign to raise awareness of the importance of school attendance;
- devise appropriate plans for improving the attendance of pupils who have less than 75% attendance, and, unless there are extenuating circumstances, should these plans fail, move with some urgency to preparing for prosecution;
- clarify schools' responsibility for monitoring the progress of pupils who are on the roll of the school and attend education provision outside school and make the monitoring systems consistent and systematic;
- ensure secondary schools have access to advice on the effective coordination of any part-time off-site education with the curriculum of the school;
- in consultation with secondary headteachers, devise appropriate procedures for reintegrating pupils who have been excluded into schools;
- in consultation with the social services department set up and maintain a database which provides details of looked-after children's care and education placement and their attainment;
- devise procedures whereby schools are updated about changes in placement of looked-after children and that all schools are circulated an analysis of the attainment of the city's looked-after children;
- ensure that schools receive guidance and training on the ways in which the attainment of looked-after children can be improved;
- in consultation with headteachers devise procedures for the deployment and monitoring of staff funded under the ethnic minority achievement grant;
- in consultation with schools put in place procedures which respond to the recommendations of the Macpherson report.

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the strategy for school improvement:

- Re-draft the Education Development Plan in consultation with schools to devise a strategy which reflects local needs; and take into account Excellence in Cities, the Education Action Zone and the behaviour support plan and the current rate of progress in meeting the 2002 targets;
- Take steps as a matter of urgency to resolve the position of schools with increasing budget deficits, either by amending the LMS formula or by indicating where sufficient spending reductions can be made.

In order to improve support, monitoring, challenge and intervention:

Review the arrangements for the annual performance review to:

- ensure that the analysis of performance data and the review of progress in meeting targets is used to challenge schools at a consistent level;
- provide greater differentiation in the process to reflect the needs of schools;
- maximise the use of all evidence available to the LEA;
- continue to support schools to develop self-evaluation procedures so that it is more consistently in operation in all schools;
- extend the use of associate headteachers, particularly in the support of secondary schools.

In order to improve the collection and analysis of data:

- ensure the speedy development of a central pupil database which takes account of the needs of both schools and divisions within the LEA.

In order to provide support for ICT:

- develop detailed strategic plans for the implementation of ICT policies which take account of schools' views and which incorporate small steps, straightforward success targets and effective monitoring systems;
- provide additional advisory support to coordinate the diverse range of ICT activities within the Education Development Plan;
- place more emphasis on support for the use of ICT in the curriculum in schools;
- reconsider the current provision of technical support for ICT in the light of schools' needs.

In order to provide support for schools causing concern, or likely to do so:

- develop a stepped approach to the identification of schools causing concern which starts with the early notification of difficulties in schools to heads and governors through the annual performance review and leads eventually to LEA intervention, and agree this procedure with all schools;
- improve advisers' skills in identifying problems at an early stage in schools.

In order to improve strategic management:

- consolidate the service planning cycle and ensure that progress in drafting, implementing and reviewing service plans is effectively monitored to ensure improvements in the consistency of service quality;
- ensure that consultation documents are accessible and identify key points at issue for busy school staff and governors;
- ensure that, where the issues are of shared interest to the police, the health authority and social services, planning to promote social inclusion reflects a multi-disciplinary approach;
- tighten the arrangements for informing schools of funding allocations in addition to their delegated budgets, and for transferring the money to them.

In order to improve the strategy and support for SEN:

- develop a shared understanding of what is meant by inclusion in the context of Sheffield;
- assess and document the likely effects of the combined campuses on special school provision, brief members and seek their support at an early stage;
- work with special schools to develop a clear understanding of their future role;
- make representations, at the highest level, to the health authority to improve the timeliness by which they submit medical advice for statements;
- improve strategic planning to ensure outcomes are clearly stated and plan all the necessary components within the initiatives at the outset in order to shorten the timescale for their implementation;
- continue to develop more responsiveness to parents and schools and eradicate administrative errors in special needs administration;
- assess the implications of new initiatives for the workload and approach of the STEPS service and build this into their work and training programme;

- continue to develop schools' accountability and the consistency with which the new criteria are used by developing systematic moderation procedures;
- work with schools to improve the drafting and use of individual education plans.

To improve the management of property repairs and maintenance:

- add costs to the list of maintenance and replacement needs in the asset management plan to ensure that members are fully informed of spending needs when both central and delegated budgets are set;
- increase budgetary provision for building maintenance and improvement;
- review the charges and responsiveness of the direct services organisation for building work to ensure Best Value.

As a matter of urgency to improve access and entitlement to education:

- revise the behaviour support plan to take into account the likely outcomes of the Excellence in Cities initiatives and the recommendations of the four recent reviews and the inspection of the pupil referral service, and focus clearly on a limited number of outcomes:- reduce exclusion, improve attendance, assist re-integration of pupils into school, improve the attainment of looked-after children and identify the progress which must be made by clearly defined by numerical targets;
- clarify schools' and the education social work service's responsibilities for attendance and incorporate these in a clear service level agreement which details the responsibilities and the time which is allocated to each school; adjust the working practices of the education social work service to reflect these responsibilities and ensure there are appropriate procedures to regularly monitor how successfully the agreement is met;
- support all schools, in the first instance, with under 85% attendance so that they operate effective procedures for early identification and follow up of absence before children meet the criteria for referral to the education social work service;
- devise more consistent procedures to guide the work of education social workers including making full and effective use of legal powers;
- in cooperation with partners undertake a city-wide campaign to raise awareness of the importance of school attendance;
- devise appropriate plans for improving the attendance of pupils who have less than 75% attendance, and, unless there are extenuating circumstances, should these plans fail, move with some urgency to preparing for prosecution;

- clarify schools' responsibility for monitoring the progress of pupils who are on the roll of the school and attend education provision outside school and make the monitoring systems consistent and systematic;
- ensure secondary schools have access to advice on the effective coordination of any part-time off-site education with the curriculum of the school;
- in consultation with secondary headteachers, devise appropriate procedures for reintegrating pupils who have been excluded into schools;
- in consultation with the social services department set up and maintain a database which provides details of looked-after children's care and education placement and their attainment;
- devise procedures whereby schools are updated about changes in placement of looked-after children and that all schools are circulated an analysis of the attainment of the city's looked-after children;
- ensure that schools receive guidance and training on the ways in which the attainment of looked-after children can be improved;
- in consultation with headteachers devise procedures for the deployment and monitoring of staff funded under the ethnic minority achievement grant;
- in consultation with schools put in place procedures which respond to the recommendations of the Macpherson report.

© Crown copyright 2000

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

Tel: 0171 421 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:

Director of Education
Sheffield City Council
PO Box 67
Leopold Street
Sheffield
S1 1RJ