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IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF  
LEWISHAM  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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## **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 (July 1999)* which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA Members, focus groups of headteachers and governors, staff in the Education Department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 90 schools. The response rate was 67 per cent.
3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 9 primary, 4 secondary, 3 special schools and a Pupil Referral Unit. A further eight schools were visited as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy monitoring. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money.

## COMMENTARY

4. Lewisham is an inner London Borough, serving a predominantly disadvantaged and ethnically diverse community. It has more than its share of inner urban problems, not least relatively low educational attainment and aspirations.

5. However, the Borough has benefited from stability in political leadership and reasonable consistency in funding. Elected Members provide a strong sense of direction. They have moved quickly to modernise the Council, and their plans have a strong rationale. Those which have been implemented to date are beginning to bear fruit in swifter, better informed decision making. The Council sees the raising of educational standards throughout the community, not just in schools, as central to its ambitions for the people of Lewisham. Those ambitions are, rightly, extensive.

6. The education department is impressively organised and effectively linked with the other elements in the corporate structure. "Partnership" is not a bolt-on, but a critical aspect of its strategy. The LEA plans well, implements plans with energy, checks its progress and consults well with its schools. The leadership provided by the Executive Director and her senior officers is accessible, principled, well-informed and purposeful.

7. Financial arrangements reflect the LEA's clarity, purpose and transparency. The clear financial strategy is flexible and hence effective in allocating resources to new policy priorities. Regular consultative review and adjustment of the needs led school formula funding has ensured that schools understand and support the basis of their funding.

8. As an organisation, then, the LEA has few obvious defects and many virtues: it is responsive, ambitious, reflective and energetic. The evidence of its effectiveness in increasing standards is however, modest at this stage. Standards are generally above average for Inner London, but below the national average. They are rising, but not markedly faster than in similar LEAs, or across LEAs nationally. In the schools visited, the inspection team found considerable evidence of the impact of the LEA. However, this does not yet amount to a convincing demonstration that the LEA is leading an overall rise in standards.

9. The LEA is involved in a number of initiatives. In some respects it is trying to do too much. It needs to be more selective, pursuing only those initiatives which clearly match schools' own priorities and strategies for improvement. In a few schools, particularly in the primary sector, vestiges of a dependency culture remain. The LEA needs to dispel this more quickly than it is at present doing. That will entail supporting school self-review so that it is consistently effective in all schools as well as, over time, reducing school improvement officer support to the most successful. In that, the appointment of an effective Chief Inspector is crucial.

10. The LEA does most of the right things, and does them well. It has many strengths and few weaknesses. It performs the great majority of its functions at least adequately, and most of them well. In the following areas, it is performing well:-

- corporate planning and review;
- the allocation of resources to priorities;

- the involvement of schools in the review of formula funding;
- recruitment for, and support of' governors;
- support for literacy and numeracy;
- Curriculum ICT;
- support for ethnic minority children;
- action to promote social inclusion including improvements in attendance, reduction in exclusions and re-integration of excluded children;
- support for looked-after children;
- personnel support and advice;
- provision for Early Years;
- behaviour Support;
- support for school improvement through the work of the school improvement officers;
- the provision of data to schools;
- support to schools causing concern;
- support to NQTs;

11. The following areas are weak:-

- strategic co-ordination of 6<sup>th</sup> form provision;
- support for IT in administration;
- property care SLA which has not delivered as promised;
- there are no published criteria for referrals and applications for statementing.

12. What is needed, then, is a sharpening and focusing of effort. Nevertheless, this is a well-run LEA working hard to make an impact in far from easy circumstances. Leadership in Lewisham is strong at both corporate and directorate level. Consultation is effective, leading to changed outcomes. This is an LEA that is able to acknowledge its mistakes and learn from them. In consequence, it has the confidence of its schools who believe both in its good intentions and in its capacity to deliver them. The inspection team share that belief.

## SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### Context

13. Lewisham is the third largest London Borough and one of the most diverse. It is home to a vibrant mix of communities. In schools, 50% of the population is black or from another minority ethnic group and 121 different languages are spoken. Between January 1998 and January 1999, 583 pupils new to English were admitted to Lewisham schools as casual admissions. Most of these were refugees. Though thus culturally rich it is economically poor, the 14<sup>th</sup> most deprived district in England according to the Department of the Environment, Transport, and the Regions index. 32.7% of its primary pupils and 39.1% of its secondary pupils are entitled to free school meals, there is a high proportion of lone parent families, youth unemployment is high, 30% of young people past school leaving age have no experience of work, and there is a high level of youth crime. Levels of literacy and numeracy amongst many of the adult population are low.

14. Lewisham maintains 92 schools, 62 of which are primary, and 13 secondary. The remainder are nursery, junior and infant, special schools and units, including two Pupil Referral Units. The Early Years Service which works in strong partnership with the private and voluntary sector, manages nine early years centres, one work place nursery, a portage service and 17 after school clubs for 3-11 year olds. There is full provision for all four-year-olds in the Borough. 2.29% of pupils have statements of special educational needs.

### Performance

- Evidence from OFSTED inspection reports indicates that pupils' attainment on entry to education is well below that found nationally.
- Results in national tests at key stages 1-3 in GCSE and in advanced post-16 courses are generally slightly above those of statistical neighbours but below national figures. For example, in 1999, test results in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 were approximately seven percentage points below national figures; in 1998 the proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C was approximately 11 percentage points below the national average.
- The rate of improvement in tests and at GCSE over the period 1996-1998 has fluctuated but has generally been above that of statistical neighbours and slightly above the national rate. The improvement in Key Stage 2 results between 1998 and 1999 was one percentage point below the national rate in English and one percentage point above it in mathematics.
- Fifty one percent of primary schools in the first cycle of inspections were considered to be providing a good or very good quality of education, compared to 46 percent in statistical neighbours and 60 percent nationally. Fifty percent of secondary schools were providing a good or very good quality of education, compared to 45 percent in statistical neighbours and 67 percent nationally. The most recent inspection evidence shows an improvement in the proportion of

schools judged to be good or very good and a decrease in the proportion in need of substantial improvement.

- Attendance in primary schools has shown a small improvement over the past four years and is 0.5 percent below the national figure. Attendance in secondary schools has remained 1.3 percent below the national average.
- The rate of permanent exclusions in both primary and secondary schools, taken over the past three years, has fallen marginally, is in line with the national rate and lower than that of similar authorities.

## **Funding**

15. Although Lewisham's spending in education has been below Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) in the past, increases in the Education budget since 1998/99 have taken expenditure to SSA level. In 1999/00 spending against the 5 SSA sub-blocks indicated slightly higher spending against the under-5 sub-block and slightly lower spending under post-16 and the "other" blocks.

16. In 1999/00 Lewisham has local and delegated schools budgets which are above the average for London and well above those for English LEAs. However, although Lewisham's spending on primary and secondary pupils is in line with inner London averages, the gross delegated sum per pupil for special schools is 36% lower than the average for the inner London Boroughs and only slightly above the England average.

17. Capital allocations in Lewisham have increased steadily from 1996/97 to 1999/00. The LEA also generates considerable income from external sources including the Standards Fund. However, the LEA is experiencing increasing problems in finding matched funding for external initiatives targeted at specific purposes without compromising other services and its strategic priorities. In future it is rightly proposing to focus bidding and matched funding only at those externally-funded initiatives which correspond to its own priorities.

18. In 1999/00 the LEA delegates a higher proportion of its Local Schools Budget (83.6%) to schools compared to other London LEAs (81.5%) and England as a whole (82.4%). There has been a large increase in delegation since 1998/99 when Lewisham's levels were close to the London average and below the England average. Much of the increase (£3.2m) was due to the delegation of meal costs to schools as part of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI)-funded school meals contract.

19. Lewisham's central spending is above the national average on strategic management, on non-devolved specific grants and on special education, although the latter is below the average for London LEAs. The LEA is aware of its relatively high spending on strategic management and is addressing high expenditure areas such as the recharges for corporate Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and insurance through Best Value reviews. Lewisham spends below the national and London averages on access, due to the delegation of school meals funding, and on home to school transport.



20. The LEA has shown good practice by regularly reviewing the Local Management of Schools (LMS) and Local Management of Special Schools formulae in consultation with schools, using information on school spending during the previous year to base funding on needs. The aim is to promote high standards, equal opportunities, equity between schools and value for money. As a result, schools are very clear about their funding and fully understand and support the basis of the formula. The process involves the LMS and budget monitoring group (with school representatives) drawing up proposals followed by separate consultation meetings with primary, secondary and special school headteachers and governors.

### **Council structure**

21. Lewisham is an ambitious Council in which Members give a strong lead. A "select committee" of Members of the Council considered the political governance of the Council, and took evidence during 1998. It made a series of recommendations on modernising the Council which were agreed at a special meeting on 28 January 1999.

22. Since June 1999, an Assembly and a 10-Member cabinet, which is in effect the executive committee of the Council, has run Lewisham. Each majority party Councillor on the executive committee, apart from the mayor, takes a lead for a particular theme. There is also an education sub-committee of the Executive Committee, consisting of the cabinet plus representatives from the diocesan bodies.

23. As soon as the necessary legislation is in place, the Council proposes to move to a new structure with a directly elected mayor, elected by the supplementary vote system, a cabinet of eight Members with executive responsibility and an assembly, with powers of scrutiny, deliberation and initiation of policy. The division between the exercise of authority and scrutiny is therefore not exact, but the overall rationale is that this revised Council should serve the people better through decision making, which is better informed (because collective), swift, public and open to challenge.

24. This reformed structure is not yet fully in place, and it is too soon to evaluate its effects. However, it is possible to say that the rationale for it is strong, clear to officers and Members, who expound it persuasively, and worked out in considerable detail. For example, a clear framework governs the relationship between cabinet Members and officers. The intended relationship between executive action and scrutiny is reflective, rather than adversarial, but it is nevertheless an attempt, clearly justified, to create rigorous debate in a Council, which is virtually without a viable opposition. As such, it is reinforced by a determination to consult the electorate through enhanced engagement of the community.

25. These new arrangements are not without potential pitfalls. Public perceptions of them are varied and there are those who fear less rather than more openness and democratic involvement. In particular, school governors currently lack official channels for communication with cabinet Members. Rapid implementation of the plans for new consultation arrangements is now required.

26. Decisions taken to date have already necessitated corporate restructuring from seven to four directorates:-

Education and Culture  
Social Care and Health  
Regeneration  
Resources

27. The seven cabinet portfolios have a thematic connection to all Directorates and links between Directorates are also clearly established. At the same time, the executive Directors have not only a corporate responsibility for strategy, but clear functional and performance management responsibilities. The structure is well considered.

### **The Education Development Plan (EDP)**

28. The main planning vehicle for school improvement, as in other LEAs, is the EDP, which has been approved by the Secretary of State, without specific conditions, for the full three-year term. It has many strengths, not least its intelligent use of detailed management information, intellectual coherence, successful adaptation of national priorities to local conditions and clear costings. It is both a useful working document, and a clear statement of how the LEA proposes to comply with its statutory duty to discharge its functions with a view to raising standards in schools.

29. The six priorities set out in the plan, supported by a detailed and convincing audit, are:

1. Supporting schools causing concern.
2. Improving teaching and learning.
3. Improving school leadership, management and governance.
4. Narrowing the Differentials in Pupil Attainment.
5. Raising the Aspirations and Motivation of pupils.
6. Developing a Learning Community.

30. The priorities show an appropriate awareness of the diversity, not least in levels of attainment, of Lewisham and pay due attention to the Council's stress on raising educational standards, not only in schools but also across the community. National priorities, such as raising standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT are interwoven (as "key areas") with Lewisham's six local priorities. For example, priority 2 is largely, and rightly, focused on literacy, numeracy and ICT, and on curriculum planning. That narrow focus is a strength, concentrating as it does the resources available and directing them to achievable objectives.

31. The plan spells out clear objectives and, usually but not always, clear targets, and the actions to be taken in pursuit of them. The match between the three is good. In that sense, the plan is coherent and feasible: the actions taken are, for the most part, likely to lead to the desired result. Costings are also clearly specified and reasonable, and the LEA defines acceptable means of checking the progress of implementation.

32. There are also a few weaknesses. For example, there is some overlap between priorities 4 and 5, and the LEA's detailed knowledge of its schools does not always induce it to plan in a sufficiently differentiated way. For example, too many of

the activities under priority 3 are aimed at all schools. It is, of course, conceded that all schools can improve, but the issue is whether the LEA can realistically set itself to assist all to do so. In the context of Lewisham, a more targeted approach is called for.

33. However, the strengths of the plan greatly outweigh its weaknesses. Consultation over the plan was detailed and informative. Schools are familiar with it and endorse it. The actions planned are very numerous, and the LEA would benefit from asking itself whether it needs to do all that it intends. That caveat aside, the EDP is a good basis for improvement.

### **Developing a Learning Community**

34. Central to Lewisham's vision and corporate objectives is the commitment to **lifelong learning** and the conviction that education is more than schools. "Developing a Learning Community " is an EDP priority, which is seen as supporting improved achievement in schools. The vision is a clear and well focused one, encompassing the four broad themes of improving standards in the early years, preparing young people for adult life, parent support and home school links and inter-agency work to support increased attainment. It is well aligned to the newly created directorate of education and culture, which includes key players such as the libraries, arts and sport.

35. The lifelong learning commitment also provides a focus for externally funded initiatives of which the LEA has many. Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) projects, the Education Action Zone (EAZ) and Excellence in Cities (EiC), *inter alia*, are meshed in to the drive to improve attainment, reduce social exclusion and create a culture that values learning. Working through effective consultative mechanisms, the LEA has been mindful of the need to ensure that externally funded programmes, such as EiC, support schools in delivering their individual school priorities as well as contributing to the achievement of corporate targets. Hence the schools are fully signed up to this agenda.

36. Concerns about **post-16 education** in the Borough are identified in the EDP and a review of sixth form provision is currently being undertaken. At present there are sixth form consortia in the North (including Lewisham College), and in the South of the Borough. Elsewhere there are three schools with sixth forms, two of which work in cooperation. Other post 16 providers are Lewisham College, Christ the King Sixth Form College, Askes (a CTC) and two independent schools. Inevitably, there is competition between this plethora of providers. Some small sixth forms are running small "A" level groups. This is expensive and in April 1998, the LEA moved to rationalise sixth form funding, introducing ring fencing and a formula that rewards recruitment, retention and completion. By rewarding success, this change helped schools to focus more clearly on outcomes,

37. There has been some successful development of the work-related curriculum in and out of schools with GNVQ, the New Start programme and Modern Apprenticeships for example. External funding has already been secured for more development in the field of the creative industries. What is currently lacking is an informed overview of what is on offer across the board and flowing from that, a clear

view of potential progression routes for students. This would facilitate strategic planning.

38. The **Early Years Service** and Schools Improvement and Governors Services (SIGS) work seamlessly together to make good provision for young children, whether in schools or other settings. They work also in close and effective partnership with health and social services and a large number of other interested bodies in the public and private sectors with the LEA exercising strong leadership. The Early Years and Childcare Partnership Plan is based on a very thorough analysis of needs and diverse resources in the public and private sectors, and indicates a high level of organisation to implement development and improvement. Specific targets, such as the extension of provision for three-year-olds and raising the number and competence of childminders, are appropriate to needs in the community. The Early Years team makes a substantial contribution towards identifying and meeting SEN as early as possible. The schools visited spoke highly of the advice and training they receive, and the LEA's early years curriculum guidance, Learning for Life, is well respected. The LEA's baseline assessment, which embraces skills at the pre-school stage, as well as on entry to reception, is beginning to demonstrate its usefulness.

#### **Allocation of resources to priorities and Best Value**

39. The LEA is very effective at targeting resources on priorities. Its budget planning is based on the Best Value performance plan, and its system of priority redirection is seen by the authority as an essential basis for change. Priority redirection involves the generation of funds through additional savings. These are ring-fenced for funding strategic priorities, such as raising achievement. The use of such funding is separately monitored and evaluated annually for inclusion in core funding. The priority redirection system has been of great benefit to Education. There are many examples of funds being used effectively to make up deficiencies or inequities in resources, particularly from external initiatives: for example in smoothing out variations in Ethnic Minority Achievement Strategy (EMAS) allocations between sectors; in funding IT training for teachers to coincide with the installation of equipment under National Grid for Learning (NGfL); or in a mixed-funding approach to the building of a new special school which was turned down for PFI credits.

40. Lewisham is a Best Value (BV) pilot authority and therefore already has structures for achieving BV in place. It has a BV performance plan which is linked to other plans and to resourcing. Areas for review are selected according to a number of criteria, such as public concern, poor performance and authority priorities for new investment. The reviews are becoming increasingly cost-cutting. A recent independent evaluation by the University of North London emphasised Lewisham's enviable reputation for consulting the public, but raised issues of the quality of benchmarking data as well as variable progress on the introduction of the Business Excellence Model as a tool for operational improvement. Officers are beginning to do further work to identify and co-ordinate performance indicators across the authority to obtain better quality monitoring data.

41. One model for such reviews is that of backbench Member-led select committees, taking evidence publicly from a wide range of stakeholders, including the public. An education "select committee" into raising GCSE attainment reported in February 1999. At that time, some Members of the select committee were

perceived by heads and governors to be antagonistic to schools and insufficiently clear about their role and powers. The move to the new model of political governance is a learning process and elected Members will need to be both vigilant in ensuring adherence to the Code of Practice for LEA/School Relations, and sensitive towards maintaining the principle of partnership working. The reviews have clearly contributed to elected Members' knowledge of the services concerned and they have already had an impact in leading to the out-sourcing of the catering contract and the reorganisation of the transport service. The school visits suggested that transport had improved, but that there was so far little change in the meals service.

### **Recommendations**

- Move rapidly to co-opt governors on to suitable consultative groups within the modernised structure.
- Utilise the findings of the sixth form review as the basis for strategic planning and creation of progression pathways for 16-19 education.
- When the EDP is reviewed, resolve the overlap between priorities and ensure actions are targeted precisely.

## **SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Implications of other functions**

42. The EDP is the key document setting out the strategy for school improvement. Its strengths and weaknesses are analysed in section 1. However, there are important aspects of the LEA's support for school improvement which are outside the scope of the EDP but nonetheless contribute to school improvement. These aspects, together with a more detailed analysis of the effectiveness of support for the EDP priorities, are developed in the rest of this section and elsewhere in the report.

43. There are considerable strengths in the LEA's support for school improvement. The inspection judged the overall effectiveness of support to be at least satisfactory in all the schools visited and good in five of them. Good support is provided by:- school improvement officers (formerly link advisers); governor services; personnel; the targeting of resources to priorities; EMAS; a variety of actions and projects to promote social inclusion; the Early Years service; Behaviour Support.

44. Staffing difficulties have slowed the pace with which the programme for school improvement is being implemented. Many headteachers and governors during the inspection expressed concerns about this situation. In particular, headteachers wanted more guidance on the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking up the many initiatives in which the LEA is involved. Other areas of relative weakness include administrative support for IT, the property care Service Level Agreement (SLA) and the lack of published criteria for referrals for statementing.

### **Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention**

45. The LEA's school improvement team is charged with monitoring, challenging, supporting and intervening in schools to raise standards and it does this effectively. The eight school improvement officers (formerly link advisers) form the core Membership of this team. Each school improvement officer has responsibility for a group of schools which varies in number according to the demands on the officer's time. The service is a relatively slim one and the LEA supplements the work of the core team by employing consultants on short term contracts according to need.

46. There has been disruption around the post of chief inspector for the past 18 months. The person appointed to the post resigned, following a long period of sickness. At the time of the inspection, the LEA was actively seeking a replacement. The post of chief inspector has been covered by senior officers who already have a very heavy workload. The considerable number of changes of personnel in the school improvement team has added to their difficulties. Despite the best efforts of senior officers, the lack of a chief inspector has meant the drive to improve standards has in some respects been slower and less effective than it might otherwise have been. Nevertheless, the LEA has clear structures in place to support school improvement and evidence from the school visits and elsewhere indicates that the LEA is making a positive contribution in most schools. The LEA is well aware that the appointment of a chief inspector (head of school effectiveness) is key to driving forward the good planning and important initiatives already in place to support school improvement.

47. The LEA has a useful partnership document which pre-dates the Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations and was in the process of being revised at the time of the inspection. This and other documents set out the key role of school improvement officers in monitoring, challenging and intervening in schools. The LEA has recently developed a more rational way of deciding on the extent of intervention and support in schools. This involves an analysis of a series of key quantitative and qualitative measures, referred to as 'thresholds' which indicate the LEA's expectations of how a school should be performing. The thresholds trigger a set of actions and provide an indication of the level of support required. The LEA has liaised effectively with schools in developing these thresholds. All schools receive a minimum of three days of support each year with about half of this being spent in schools. Schools causing concern receive varying levels of additional support according to the needs defined by the threshold analysis. This is evaluated in paragraphs 64-69.

48. A key part of the LEA's monitoring strategy is the school achievement review. This involves a written statement on the current performance of the school. It details progress on the school's priorities using the available data and an audit of an agreed area of the school's work. The audit often involves joint observation of teaching by the school improvement officer and the headteacher or other senior managers. Most of the schools visited find the school achievement process useful in judging progress and setting actions plans but a minority of the higher achieving schools felt that it told them little new about performance. The quality of the achievement reviews is generally good but some are insufficiently rigorous in their evaluation of progress.

49. Other aspects of the school improvement officer's work include the setting and monitoring of targets and monitoring the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies. These roles are generally carried out effectively, although a few schools are unclear as to how targets published in the EDP are arrived at or why targets have been challenged.

50. Overall, the inspection found that the work of the school improvement officers was well received and generally effective. A few of the schools in the past suffered from a lack of continuity caused by frequent changes of link adviser or long periods when they were not visited by their adviser. These problems appear to have been resolved in the schools visited and there is now regular contact with school improvement officers.

### **Collection and analysis of data**

51. The LEA has collected comprehensive performance data for a number of years and makes good use of it for strategic planning. It is able to carry out a sophisticated analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils on the basis of gender, ethnicity, free school meals and special educational needs. Good data on individual cohorts of pupils is currently enabling the LEA to work with schools on developing systems to track the performance of individual pupils over time. It is intended that these individual data bases will feed into an LEA data base.

52. The LEA provides schools with a detailed set of data which complements that available from other sources. A few schools in the survey raised concerns about the accuracy of some of the data. The LEA is aware of this and has introduced more

stringent checks on the quality of the data it provides. Nearly all of the schools visited find the data useful but there is considerable variation in their effectiveness in using it to analyse performance and target support. Some schools are overwhelmed by the quantity of data while others want even more detailed information. The data would benefit from being more structured to allow schools to access it according to the level of sophistication they need. The LEA has recently appointed two management information officers to complement the work of school improvement officers, where needed, to help schools interpret and use data. There is early evidence of the effectiveness of this support. There are also examples in some of the schools of good practice in the use of data which are worthy of sharing more widely.

53. The LEA has provided training and guidance on target setting and this is followed up by support from school improvement officers. Nearly all of the schools visited made reasonable use of the available data to help set targets. The LEA is able to produce evidence to show that schools are getting better at setting targets which are both realistic and challenging. However, several of the schools visited remain unclear about how targets differ from forecasts and lack a sound methodology for deriving them. The LEA has rightly challenged a number of targets set by schools as being insufficiently challenging.

### **Support for Literacy**

54. The LEA has a coherent and effective strategy for supporting literacy. Improving literacy has long been a priority in the LEA and its support pre-dates the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). The strategy also encompasses a range of initiatives such as family literacy, work in the early years and targeted support at Key Stage 3.

55. Standards in English at key stages one and two are below national averages by about seven percentage points. Results have improved faster than in similar authorities and at about the same rate as the national average over the period 1996-1999. The LEA is making sound overall progress towards achieving its Key Stage 2 target for 2002 but there is considerable variation in the performance of individual schools. The LEA is well aware of this unevenness and is increasing its support to weaker schools in an attempt to narrow the differentials. This inevitably involves reducing support to schools which are performing well.

56. The school survey shows that support for literacy is well received in primary, secondary and special schools. Visits to schools confirmed this view and found evidence of the support's effectiveness in improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. Training and intensive support for specific schools are of good quality. Schools particularly praised the support given to individual teachers and classroom assistants as well as the guidance on learning resources. There is not a close correlation between those schools receiving intensive support and performance at Key Stage 2 but the LEA is able to produce evidence of improved teaching and greater consistency in test scores. The secondary schools visited derive considerable benefit from training on the NLS, the Key Stage 3 initiative and from working closely with primary schools.



## **Support for Numeracy**

57. The LEA's strategy for supporting numeracy is clear and effective. The strategy includes a number of initiatives, some of which pre-date the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). The NNS was introduced in Lewisham schools in January 1997 and there has been a carefully phased development of the strategy since then. Other initiatives include family numeracy, support for particular groups of pupils at Key Stage 3 and targeted support in the early years.

58. Test results show that performance in mathematics is below the national average by about four percentage points at Key Stage 1 and by about six at Key Stage 2. Standards are above those of similar authorities. Progress towards achieving the LEA's Key Stage 2 target for 2002 is good. The rate of improvement, taken over the period 1997-1999, has been better than that in similar authorities and in line with that found nationally.

59. Evidence from the school survey shows that support for numeracy is well received. Secondary schools rated the support more highly than any other authority in the sample. The findings of the school survey were confirmed by visits to schools and training sessions. The quality of training and other support is good and there is evidence of it making a substantial contribution to improvement in schools. Schools which have received more intensive help, and those which have been involved in the numeracy initiatives over several years, make good progress. Support to numeracy consultants, demonstration lessons by leading mathematics teachers, help with curriculum planning and guidance on resources are particularly effective. Wider aspects of the support including: training for teaching assistants; work in early years education; family numeracy; summer schools and targeted work in Key Stage 3 are all well received. The LEA carefully monitors these initiatives and is able to provide evidence of their effectiveness.

## **Support for ICT**

60. The LEA has a clear and coherent strategy for developing learning through ICT. The audit for the EDP identified ICT as a relative weakness and it is a key part of the actions supporting the priority to improve teaching and learning. One of the strengths of the ICT strategy is the way it is related to literacy and numeracy and to other priorities within the EDP. Support for ICT is a key element in the Downham Pride SRB funded initiative and an important part of the EiC and EAZ strategies.

61. An important part of the LEA's ICT strategy is developing the National Grid for Learning (NGfL). The LEA has secured £450K of Standards Fund finance (of which £225K is matched funding) to support the NGfL. Other funding for ICT comes through the EiC and EAZ initiatives. There has been good consultation with schools over the NGfL and its introduction has proceeded smoothly with a considerable number of schools benefiting from improved computing facilities and access to the Internet.

62. The LEA has provided support to schools in preparing ICT development plans, a range of in-service training, written guidance on developing ICT and advice on purchasing hardware and software. The LEA has also made good use of private consultancy in supporting ICT in schools. Schools in the survey rated the support for

ICT in the curriculum as satisfactory or better and this view was confirmed by visits to schools. In most schools it was too early to find evidence of the impact of the NGfL on standards but there was evidence of increased teacher confidence in applying information technology. There was also evidence of schools adopting better planning for ICT. The assessment of ICT and the development of ICT across the curriculum to enhance teaching and learning are weaknesses in a considerable number of schools. The LEA is aware of these shortcomings and is providing additional support in these areas. It has also made sure that it has rigorous systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the various initiatives in raising standards.

63. The LEA rightly sees ICT as making an important contribution to its EDP priority of narrowing the differentials in pupil attainment. An example of this is the development of a community ICT centre based in an area of severe social deprivation. This is available for use by schools during the day and pupils have access to computers and the Internet in the evenings and at weekends. Several OFSTED inspection reports have commented favourably on the impact of this centre on pupils' learning.

### **Support for schools causing concern**

64. Since 1993, three secondary schools, one special school and four primary schools have required special measures. At the time of the inspection, one secondary school and two primary schools remain in special measures. In addition, six schools have been identified as having serious weaknesses, including two of the schools previously subject to special measures. One of the secondary schools subject to special measures has been closed and replaced by a 'fresh start' school.

65. There were weaknesses in the LEA's strategy for supporting the first group of schools requiring special measures. This resulted in some schools in a lack of coordination of support and a failure to resource specific needs. Several changes of personnel also led to a lack of continuity and slowed progress. Three schools remained in special measures for more than three years and one of these remains in special measures after four years. The LEA has taken steps to strengthen its support for schools causing concern as a result of these early experiences. It has set out a clear and coherent strategy in the EDP for identifying and supporting schools with difficulties. Recent evidence from HMI monitoring visits and from this inspection show the LEA's strategy is now proving more effective and most of the schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses are making reasonable progress.

66. In addition to schools in special measures and with serious weaknesses, the LEA provides additional support to about 20 other schools which it terms 'priority schools'. These schools are identified through the system of thresholds and triggers described earlier. The category includes schools which have previously been subject to special measures or had serious weaknesses. The level of support is carefully differentiated according to the level of need. Despite this, a small minority of the schools visited were not clear why they were regarded as priority schools.

67. Visits were made to six schools causing concern or in the LEA's category of priority schools. There was evidence of the LEA currently providing effective support in all these schools. Headteachers and governors were able to identify how the

quality of support has improved over time. Aspects of support which have been particularly effective include:- the appointment of additional experienced governors; support from the school improvement officer; help from advisory headteachers and headteachers acting as mentors; support from personnel on capability and competency proceedings. The schools also consider the support is well coordinated by school improvement officers and through cross-service meetings. The LEA has been instrumental in supporting governors in replacing a number of headteachers of schools making inadequate progress. The LEA now has better systems in place to provide more rapid support once a school is identified as being a cause for concern.

68. Progress by schools causing concern is regularly monitored by the school improvement officer and by the Executive Director and other Members of the senior management team through School Recovery Board Meetings. The LEA does not draw on the experience of headteachers and governors experienced in taking schools out of special measures to review the strengths and weaknesses of the support provided.

69. Several of the schools causing concern have surplus places and have to cope with a substantial influx of casual admissions. A considerable number of these pupils are refugee children or children of asylum seekers who often have English as an additional language or have suffered the traumas of war. The casual admissions also include pupils who have moved schools because of the threat of exclusion. Schools with surplus places are legally bound to accept additional pupils. In many cases they cope well with the difficulties this creates, but it does place a considerable extra burden on schools which are often struggling to try and raise performance. In at least one school the number of casual admissions has substantially slowed its progress towards being removed from special measures. At the same time, the LEA is also under pressure to fulfil its legal obligation to the pupils and is only able to offer limited extra resources to meet the very considerable demands being placed on these schools.

### **Support for governors**

70. School governors are supported exceptionally well. The high regard in which the Governor Support Service is held is evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of schools choose to buy into all or most of its services. Every effort is made to ease the burden of keeping up to date by issuing to governors termly information packs which are relevant and concise. There is a comprehensive programme of induction and continuing training which governors say is generally of good quality. Nearly every governing body employs an LEA Clerk, trained by the Service, not just to manage meetings, but to be an authority on LEA procedures, national requirements and current issues. The Clerks command great respect. The Service gives useful help in the recruitment of parent and other governors. Its innovative approach to the recruitment of LEA governors, so often a problem elsewhere, provides a model worthy of emulation. The Council, as part of its modernising agenda, has adopted a scheme whereby LEA nominations can be made from the community, partner organisations and Council staff, as well as the political parties. The effect has been to fill vacancies promptly with people whose commitment is primarily to education and who are more representative of the whole community, including its various ethnic groups. Schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses have found

the contribution of the Service to be a key factor in recovery, especially in retraining and the appointment of additional governors of experience and ability.

71. Officers facilitate and support the governors' consultative groups, while leaving the agendas in the hands of the governors themselves. The LEA is responsive to governors' views and the Executive Director and senior officers are considered by governors to be readily approachable. Governors serve on a number of bodies within the LEA but have lost their formal representation at the highest level of decision making with the passing of the old Education Committee. There is some disquiet at this, although most governors favour the Council's reorganisation in the interests of greater democratisation. The Council is currently considering how the representation can be restored by means of co-options.

### **Support for school management**

72. Support for school management is satisfactory. There is a well designed induction programme for new headteachers, an important part of which is mentoring by an experienced headteacher. This generally works well, although there are isolated examples of partnerships which were not effective or which lapsed. There is no central monitoring of the mentoring once it has been set up. Headteachers are encouraged to participate in continuing training through the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers and other courses offered. The annual conferences for headteachers and deputy heads are considered relevant and useful. Also regarded as helpful to senior and middle managers are the training weekends which operate for individual schools.

73. In addition, school improvement officers support schools in developing self-review, through joint observations of teaching and through assisting schools in drawing up management plans which include aspects of self-review. The inspection evaluated this support in eleven of the schools visited and found it to be good in four schools and satisfactory in the rest. The schools vary considerably in their ability to carry out self-review and the LEA is aware that it is an area requiring more work. School achievement reviews and other notes of visit are not currently automatically addressed to the governing body.

74. Crisis management in the LEA is very good. There were a number of unsolicited testimonials to this from headteachers who had been extremely well supported through difficult situations. Senior LEA managers gave effective professional and personal support well beyond the call of duty.

### **Newly Qualified Teachers**

75. There is good published guidance to newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and their mentors, as well as centrally organised courses for those in either category. A good choice of workshops helps NQTs to match subject matters to their interests and concerns. Most schools speak well of the provision in past years, and the new requirements which have just come into force are built into the revised arrangements. It is too soon to evaluate the new system, but several schools mentioned the difficulty of arranging the necessary non-contact time for NQTs,

despite the additional funding. For two secondary schools with a considerable number of NQTs, the LEA has helped to organise a special, flexible, twilight programme. The link School Improvement Officers are to monitor outcomes in each school as part of the Achievement Reviews.

### **Developing a Learning Community**

76. Schools endorse this EDP priority which they see as supporting and underpinning their own mission to raise achievement. They report changes in the attitudes and understandings of parents, who become better equipped to support their children's learning as a result of participating in such initiatives as Family Literacy or computing classes. Support for work experience and the development of the work related curriculum through the Education Business Partnership is seen to contribute to improving and raising achievement in the secondary sector. So too are inputs by the Youth Service and the voluntary sector to school based and other projects designed to reduce exclusions, improve attendance and promote social inclusion. There is a strong conviction in schools that the less easily measured impact of these initiatives can already be felt and that the long term, measurable impact on achievement will be considerable.

77. In the meanwhile, all the strands of this work have targets and proxy indicators, and the Community Services division is currently engaged in work to develop effective ways of evaluating more accurately the impact of what is being done.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that school achievement reviews provide a consistently rigorous evaluation of progress and in the light of that evaluation, eventually reduce the level of centrally funded support to schools judged to be fully effective.
- Structure the data provided to schools so that it can be accessed at different levels of sophistication, and make clear to schools the basis on which targets are being challenged and set.
- Draw on the experience of headteachers and governors of schools which have been in special measures or have serious weaknesses to evaluate the effectiveness of the support provided to these schools.
- Address school achievement reviews and other notes of visit to governors as well as headteachers.

## **SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

### **Corporate planning**

78. Early in 1999, Lewisham adopted an ambitious new vision - "together we will make Lewisham the best place in London to live, work and learn". First of its seven priorities for action is "to improve the education achievement of young people and create access to lifelong learning for all". The seven priorities structure the information and objectives in the Council's Performance Plan and inform the service plans of the four directorates. All these corporate plans are clear, coherent, consistent and feasible. As a result there is a shared ethos, shared values and agreement about what needs to be done within education between schools, officers and Members.

79. Lewisham's financial strategy reflects the Council's vision and allocates money accordingly. Since 1999/00 the Council has adopted a medium term financial strategy with 3-year cash limits, which provides a more stable basis for planning. The passing on of the Education SSA in full and the protection of school budgets are integral parts of this strategy. The budget-making process is transparent and incorporates consultation with the public about strategic priorities through the citizen's panel and focus groups.

80. The modernising agenda has clearly shaped the way in which the Council plans and reviews performance. Member and officer roles are clearly demarcated: Members make policy and executive directors ensure its execution. Consultation informs both the corporate strategy and the corporate overview of performance. The uncluttered senior management structure ensures rapid and clear corporate communication. Decision making is speedy, transparent and clearly aligned with agreed priorities and objectives. Review mechanisms are robust, rigorous and focused in a way that facilitates the identification of productivity savings. Arrangements to divert these savings into a priority re-direction reserve have ensured that the Council has the ability to move money out of traditional allocations into new strategic priority directions. This guarantees a capacity for responsive action.

81. Leadership is strong at both corporate and directorate level. Senior management within the directorate is principled, approachable and listens well. A multiplicity of mechanisms for meshing schools in to the decision making process ensure that partnership working is a reality. Consultation is effective, leading to changed outcomes.

82. As a conscious policy, strongly led by elected Members, the LEA is seeking to set about its work in an integrated way in order to achieve co-ordinated action across all relevant agencies, particularly in relation to the most intractable problems. That stress on liaison is apparent, both in the authority's planning and in its corporate and political structures. The authority's desire to achieve a high degree of co-ordination is not a new development, but it has been given fresh impetus by the modernisation of the Council, which is intended to achieve, inter alia, a reduction in departmentalism, allied to an enhanced willingness to seek effective partnership.

83. Liaison with Social Care and Health is much more effective than usual, particularly in relation to children most in need. The authority is in a better position than most to discharge its duties as corporate parent of the children it looks after. Their care and educational planning are effectively combined through data transfer and joint planning. The LEA tracks progress in their attainment well, and is able to set realistic targets for individual children in the light of clear information about both their current attainment and their current care status. Partnership with the police is well established and has given rise not only to a truancy watch but also to a rich Schools Involvement Programme, which focuses on issues of crime and its consequences, personal safety, drugs and anti-racism. The police reported some success, facilitated by liaison with the LEA, in reducing school-related crime, such as street robbery of school pupils.

84. A feature of joint planning with other agencies is the extent to which it involves setting measurable targets. Partnership with the Health Authority, for example, in relation to schoolgirl pregnancies, works to achieve a specific reduction. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Steering Group has overseen a planned shift in the balance of services, away from over emphasis on intervention by professionals to equipping others with the skills to cope, for example, with difficult behaviour. That said, the needs of the most severely disturbed young people still have to be met, and the strategy here was less clearly defined.

85. Partnership with the Anglican Diocese and the Roman Catholic Commission is highly effective. In relation to admissions, the planning of school places and buildings maintenance, the VA sector rightly feels itself well supported. A particular outcome of the partnership is quite outstanding provision for RE and collective worship, to which the LEA attaches especial weight because of its commitment to cultural diversity and to moral and spiritual education. Advisory support, the balance struck in the approved syllabus between Christianity and other faiths, the provision of INSET and the quality of the resource centre are all models of their kind.

### **Management services**

86. Under Fair Funding the LEA is focusing on its statutory, strategic (EDP-related) and intervention roles rather than selling services to schools. To reinforce this position it has carefully analysed its activities and proposes to delegate all remaining advice and support funding to schools from April 2000, including some areas, such as insurance and maternity cover which could be retained centrally. It has made informed judgements about the traded services that it will offer to schools on the basis of cost-effectiveness, availability of alternative provision and impact on core LEA activities. Schools are consulted about the format of any SLAs and most take the form of a flexible menu of services. Schools about which the LEA has serious concerns receive an individually tailored package of services free under the EDP priority.

87. Within the area of management support services the LEA continues to offer a range of personnel services; financial advice and training; support for financial software in schools; property care (provided by Corporate Technical Services); and support for IT in administration. Schools valued the personnel service highly, had variable views of the financial advice and were more negative about both the property care and IT support. Take up rates reflect these responses with almost all

schools buying the personnel service, while take-up for both the finance and the IT support at the lowest level comprises less than 50% of schools. Take-up for the property care service, which was offered for the first time in September 1999, was high at 75%, but the school visits suggested that the support offered has not met the needs of schools and many will not continue to buy in.

**Personnel** - all the schools visited reported that the personnel service was good and responsive, providing consistent and reliable advice and good documentation on procedures. Support for casework was particularly effective and the service was felt to provide good value for money. The service spends 15% of its time on EDP activities, especially support for schools causing concern. The payroll team, which was until recently part of Education personnel, received variable reports with some schools concerned about the level of errors.

### **Education Finance: school financial support and monitoring**

88. The LEA intends to delegate the remaining funding for financial advice to schools in April 2000, although advice remains free for schools causing concern. The finance service has offered a menu of SLAs for 5 years but does not prioritise the selling of financial administration services to schools since there are alternative local providers, notably a number of ex-LEA bursars. The Education Directorate gives schools lists of external bursars on request. The quality of advice from individual LEA finance officers is variable but the senior management of the resources division is particularly accessible and offers effective support.

89. A priority for the finance team is to train schools to manage their own finances independently and only to intervene where necessary. Schools receive useful indicative budgets and final budget information in mid-March. This is late for effective school planning but is constrained, as in most authorities, by the process for approving the Council budget. From 1999 schools have been encouraged to plan over a 3 year period and the budget documents are accompanied by ready reckoners allowing them to project budgets and rolls forward. However, no school visited had yet fully utilised the forward planning framework and further encouragement from the LEA is necessary. Most schools effectively linked their school development plans to their budgets.

90. Schools and other budget managers receive a monthly budget monitoring report through the central finance system which, it is recognised by the LEA, arrives too late. This was a reason for negative views in the school survey. However, the timeliness of such information has been improved since September 1999 as has the format of the monitoring report. Expenditure information is collected from schools annually and fed back as comparative benchmarks. Most schools found this information useful but some needed further training.

91. The LEA has a clearly-defined strategy for monitoring schools' finances. Intervention is triggered through the monitoring process - for example, evidence of planned deficits, lack of provision for new delegation, overspending, and late reconciliation; and by audit concerns in relation to pupil numbers and SEN. The effectiveness of LEA monitoring is evidenced by the low number of schools with significant deficit budgets in Lewisham, while the visits confirmed that most schools



with surpluses were saving for particular items, most notably repairs and maintenance.

92. **IT in administration** - the support for IT in administration is unsatisfactory. It was not valued by schools. They were however positive about the cost-effectiveness of alternative support provided by a local company or by an ex-LEA employee. The IT team was aware of the inadequacy of the service provided but had found that when it tried to withdraw the traded service two years ago, some schools protested since they regarded the LEA service as an insurance policy. The imminent centralisation of the IT provider function and support/advice for schools on technical issues offers an opportunity for reassessing schools' needs, reconsidering the LEA service offered and developing a long-term strategy.

93. **Premises support** - the schools, particularly in the primary sector, did not welcome the delegation of additional repairs and maintenance responsibilities and were alarmed about the Health and Safety implications. There was a backlog of repairs as a result of past lack of investment. Generally most school buildings visited were in reasonable condition. Advice from the Estates Management and Contracts Unit was generally felt by schools to be good. But most schools were disappointed with the property care SLA offered by Lewisham Property Services, which promised a lot but has delivered very little so far. Many schools will not continue to buy in next year.

94. Although training on repairs and maintenance planning has been offered to schools, LEA monitoring suggests that schools are not spending sufficiently on repairs. The LEA rightly plans to introduce an annual monitoring visit as a core entitlement from April 2000 and is reviewing its support for schools' premises management with the idea of offering a facilities management SLA to schools.

## **Recommendations**

- Canvass schools' views of the IT support services currently on offer, reassess whether to continue offering these as traded services, and develop a long-term strategy for electronic communication with schools.
- Review the operation of the property care SLA with schools, and plan to offer additional or alternative support on facilities management if required.

## **SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION**

### **Strategy**

95. There is a good strategy for meeting special education needs through a comprehensive range of services and a suitable range of special school provision. The organisation of the service as a whole is thorough and there is a clear vision at the most senior level of the direction it should take. Regular self-review and rationalisation has been a feature of the system and there is one independent review currently in progress, alongside an officer led review of buildings and premises. Weaknesses are generally recognised and addressed promptly. There is sufficient published guidance of good quality for schools and parents for most purposes, particularly regarding procedural matters. The policies and priorities are appropriate and are fully in line with the EDP and with national priorities, such as those set out in the DfEE's Green Paper, *Excellence for all Children*. Good progress is being made towards meeting the LEA's policies for inclusion through a variety of imaginative initiatives which exemplify the common sense of purpose shared by the PRUs, special schools and a number of mainstream schools.

### **Statutory obligations**

96. The LEA meets its statutory obligations well. It supports pupils and teachers very effectively in the early stages of the Code of Practice. The contributions of educational psychologists, the specific learning difficulties team and the behaviour support teams are highly regarded by schools. Needs are generally identified promptly, from the early years onwards. Secondary schools have noted improvements in that more pupils have received appropriate attention at the primary stage. Great strides have been made to speed up the statementing process, with 96% of statements being produced within the recommended target period of eighteen weeks.

97. Once made subject to a statement of special educational needs, pupils' needs are generally met effectively, whether in their own schools or through placements in special schools. The quality of the statements is good. The LEA takes responsibility for ensuring that annual reviews and transitional reviews are carried out promptly, along with transition plans and any necessary amendments to statements. Most special school placements are appropriate, although there is a shortage of provision in certain areas, notably for emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). The LEA is well aware of this and meeting the shortfall is one of the objectives of the reviews. The Behaviour Support Plan does not set precise targets based closely on needs analysis and is currently being revised with this in mind. Even so, it describes comprehensive and realistic procedures which encompass the good practice found in providing for pupils with EBD. The PRUs and their partner schools, especially, formulate very careful and effective individual programmes for pupils. This work, at the leading edge of the movement towards more inclusion, is well integrated with the LEA's approach to exclusion, considered later in this report.

### **Improvement and Value for Money**

98. Much resourcing for SEN is delegated to schools through the funding formula according to a clear strategy based on a matrix of SEN. The funding formula and

banding of pupils for special schools have recently been reviewed to reflect the greater and more complex needs of such pupils and to provide additional funding to support inclusion. Although per pupil funding in special schools in 1999/00 is relatively low for an Inner London Borough, there was no evidence of insufficient funding in the special schools visited. According to the 1998/9 CIPFA statistics, spending on placements outside the LEA is twice the England average but the LEA is beginning to address this through the School Organisation Plan. The LEA is currently carrying out a review of SEN provision aimed at examining the cost, quality and appropriateness of provision.

99. Good value for money is obtained through a fine balance between restraint and development in the deployment of resources for SEN. The common tendency for the costs of meeting special needs to escalate is properly controlled. The funding formulae for delegated SEN budgets and statemented pupils are acknowledged by schools to be fair and realistic. They are designed so that there is no financial incentive for schools to boost SEN registers. The time of educational psychologists is allocated according to the extent of need in each school. Applications for statementing are only approved when all reasonable steps have been taken in school under the earlier stages of the Code of Practice. The school improvement officer for SEN monitors practice in a sample of schools to ensure consistency. The quality of placements outside the Borough are monitored carefully; reports are checked, LEA staff visit new placements and attend annual reviews.

100. Schools visited value highly the contributions of most of the personnel from the SEN and Support services, and fully appreciate the need for rigour in administering the system. Yet there is some dissatisfaction, particularly in primaries, arising from a relatively small number of important issues related to the statementing process. The allocation of educational psychologist time was usually seen as fair but insufficient. It was often misinterpreted as a means of rationing the number of assessment referrals allowed, with the result that some assessments of lower priority, could not be made for a long time. The sense of frustration at times extends to parents as well as staff, especially when pupils are repeatedly moved down the priority list to make way for incoming pupils with more serious needs. This is not infrequent because of the shifting population in the Borough. Similarly, the rejection of applications for statementing is often perceived by schools to be on technical, rather than educational grounds, with the sole object of curtailing the number of statements. It sometimes takes more than one attempt to statement a pupil whose needs the school considers clearly demonstrable from the outset and valuable time is lost. To summarise, the LEA is seen as controlling the situation by purely administrative means.

101. This perception has arisen in the absence of published criteria which would form a secure educational basis for referrals or applications and provide a means of comparing practice objectively between schools. The size and representativeness of the SEN Panel, responsible for determining applications for statements, has had to be reduced for the time being for staffing and other reasons. This limits the channels for effective communication and adds to a sense of arbitrariness from the schools perspective.

102. Among a number of reservations expressed by a minority of schools, the most significant concerned the availability of training for Learning Support Assistants

(LSAs) for SEN in schools. In fact there are a number of useful courses offered on various specialised areas but there is no general induction for new LSAs.

### **Recommendations**

- Draw up sets of educational criteria for schools to meet in i) making referrals for assessments by educational psychologists and ii) making applications for statementing. Introduce systematic monitoring on the application of the above criteria to ensure budgetary and educational factors are co-ordinated fairly.
- Reconstitute the SEN Panel to include wider representation.
- Provide an induction programme for LSAs.

## **SECTION 5: ACCESS**

### **School Places and Admissions**

103. The LEA meets its statutory requirements with regard to the provision of school places and admissions to school. The admissions and appeals processes are handled effectively, particularly in responding to a high volume of casual admissions of refugee pupils.

104. Lewisham's School Organisation Plan (SOP) is based on sound principles and has appropriate links with the Class Size Plan in relation to the proportion of denominational school places and increased provision in oversubscribed schools with high standards. The LEA has established a School Organisation Committee with appropriate representation, which has approved the SOP.

105. The Class Size Plan should be fully implemented by 2000, as a result of reduction in demand for primary places. The LEA has reacted to the shortage of places for 3 year olds by drawing up plans for additional capacity for submission to the DfEE.

106. In 1997/98 there were above average numbers of surplus places in secondary schools (19.9% compared with 11.5% nationally) and below average numbers in primary schools (7.2% compared with 9.5%). However, the level of surplus places has dropped following an increase in the number of secondary-aged pupils in Lewisham and the prospects for reducing surplus places in secondary schools are good. The LEA is taking appropriate action to improve predictions of the need for secondary places in collaboration with neighbouring authorities and a review is planned for 2000 to take account of a predicted drop in primary school rolls.

107. Admissions to secondary schools are based on places for pupils in five ability bands (derived from tests in primary school) with sibling and distance criteria being applied within each band. The aim is to ensure a comprehensive intake. It is hoped that the newly-created Admissions Fora, which include representatives of neighbouring authorities, will facilitate discussion of cross-border issues.

108. There are a high number of casual admissions to schools both of mobile pupils from within the UK and of pupils arriving from abroad, many as refugees. In 1999 there was a significant increase in the latter group which has led to difficulties in finding secondary places without unduly over-burdening a school in special measures which has most of the surplus places. The pupils come from a wide range of different countries and most have little or no English. The LEA has reinforced support to schools with transient pupils through the LMS formula and has developed an imaginative offer of Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) funded intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) support to refugees arriving in Year 11. This is coordinated by the PRU. It also sets aside EMAG money to support refugee pupils in schools.

109. The high numbers of admissions appeals were generally effectively managed but there are some areas where there is a shortage of places. Just over half the appeals in 1999/00 were for places in the Voluntary Aided schools which include many small primaries which are unwilling to expand. The LEA recognises a problem

of late appeals and is planning to bring forward the appeals timetable next. Schools visited were positive about the LEA's management of the admissions and appeals process.

### **Asset management planning**

110. The LEA complies with the requirements and timetable for Asset Management Planning which is well coordinated with other plans such as the Directorate service plan and corporate objectives.

### **Attendance**

111. Attendance is carefully monitored and the LEA responds promptly when changes in the pattern of attendance cause concern. To improve the targeting of resources, data is now collected for each school, as well as for individual pupils, and the Educational Social Workers' (ESWs) time is distributed fairly according to need. The schools visited generally praise the efforts of ESWs in checking attendance records and following-up appropriately when necessary. When a particular problem emerges in a school, extra time is allocated and a joint project is set up with the teachers and Youth Service to tackle it. The statistics show that this approach has been successful. The relationship with the Police in Lewisham is especially strong, and the ESWs and Police make periodic truancy patrols together. Overall, the attendance rate in the Borough is slightly below the national rate but compares well with similar LEAs at both primary and secondary stages.

### **Behaviour Support**

112. The Behaviour Support Team, working as part of the Educational Psychology and Learning Support Service, is very active in schools and is highly regarded. The team assesses behaviour management problems at the level of individual pupils, classes and schools and gives useful advice to teachers and, at times, training to the staff as a whole. Undoubtedly, its work in early intervention helps the schools to avoid potential exclusions. Lewisham's exclusion rate at the secondary stage is close to the national figure and well below that of similar LEAs, which is a substantial achievement. When excluded pupils are placed in the PRUs, there is a sensitive system returning them gradually to the mainstream at the right moment. Pupils can for a time attend both PRU and mainstream school and, once in school full time, may spend part of the time with PRU outreach teachers. Mainstream teachers in turn visit the PRU, smoothing the transition and sometimes bringing specialist subject expertise to bear in the PRU. The approach gives the schools confidence receiving excluded pupils.

### **Provision of education otherwise than at school**

113. An adjunct to the work of the PRUs is the provision for pupils who are educated other than at mainstream schools for a variety of reasons. Careful track is kept of the pupils and suitable programmes are devised drawing upon home tuition, hospital school placements and the PRUs' own facilities. As in other work by the PRUs, the hallmark is the keen awareness of individual need and an unwavering determination to meet it precisely.

## **Health, Safety, Welfare, Child Protection**

114. Health and safety guidance and training by the LEA are adequate in that the schools visited are clear about their responsibilities and who to go to for advice. All schools carry out risk assessments. However, the lack of monitoring visits to evaluate these systems is a concern which was also noted by the Health and Safety Executive. The LEA has plans to carry out a series of audits followed up by a visit every 4 years but no school visited had yet had an audit. The LEA provides appropriate training and guidance to ensure child protection procedures are effective.

## **Looked-after children**

115. Lewisham's strong commitment to looked-after children is in line with the national policy embodied in Quality Protects, and in some respects pre-dates it. Practice in the LEA offers a good model of how best to ensure that children whose lives are often subject to considerable disruption achieve their best and do not slip through the educational net. There is a detailed computer database profiling every child, whether placed in or out of the Borough. It is updated regularly. A dedicated Outreach Officer, well qualified and well trained, liaises with schools, carers, social workers and others. The officer is persistent in gathering information on attainment and sharing it with the interested parties. Where appropriate, she presents it to SIGS so that the Link SIO can raise it in the agenda discussed with the headteacher. She raises awareness generally through her presentations to colleagues in related services and outside organisations. Her post is jointly funded by the educational and social services. In addition, there is an Improving Attendance Officer for Looked After Children, financed from Standards Funding, who works closely with her. The purpose is to track the attendance patterns of individual pupils, many of whom are moving between placements, and make sure that the carers, social workers and schools work efficiently together in providing continuity in education.

## **Ethnic Minority children**

116. Support for ethnic minority children is good. Its effectiveness is dependent in part upon the shared values and ethos between the LEA and the schools and in part upon the clear and appropriate division of responsibilities between the schools and the LEA. Under previous Section 11 arrangements, the management of specialist staff was devolved to schools from 1995 and headteachers recruited their own S11 staff. The small central specialist team supported heads in monitoring the work but it was owned by the schools. Ethnic minority achievement was thus clearly identified as being the responsibility of the school as a whole. Consensus on this has been built up over the years.

117. The LEA analyses achievement by ethnic group and identifies under achieving groups. In the light of this, and building on past arrangements, the LEA has developed a new strategy for the use of the EMAG expressed in new funding arrangements.. The new grant is divided three ways, with 45% targeted to EAL children, 45% to Afro-Caribbean under achievement and 10% to new arrivals. A new, improved formula has been used to assess levels of English and the grant allocated with all the allocations made public to everyone. Consultation with stakeholders has marked every stage of the process.

118. Some schools lost out through the changes but even these acknowledge the transparency of the transition process. Some extra money was secured from the priority redirection fund to cushion a shortfall and the central team was reduced in order to protect the work in schools. An underspend was recycled to fund urgent work with new arrivals. Former S11 teachers from 10 of the schools are currently receiving Afro Caribbean achievement training to equip them for their changed roles.

119. Current work in schools is an integral and effective part of the literacy strategy. The central Ethnic Minority Achievement Strategy (EMAS) co-ordinator is part of the school improvement team and the work of the project is rigorously monitored. Schools visited paid tribute to the way in which the transition was managed by the LEA, to the value of EMAS staff and of joint working between them and literacy co-ordinators and in two cases to very useful INSET from the EMAS team.

120. The LEA also has a Traveller education project working with about 50 children. Recent arrivals have included a considerable number of European Roma children with very limited mother tongue literacy. EMAS staff have been supporting these children effectively as recent arrivals.

## **Social Inclusion**

121. The LEA supports schools well in combating social exclusion through a wide range of externally funded projects involving a multiplicity of agencies. This work reflects its commitment to lifelong learning. Much of it centres on improving attendance and motivation, preventing exclusion and re-integrating pupils who have been excluded. For instance, ADAPT, a voluntary project works in schools with pupils at risk of disaffection. Elsewhere, an imaginative art based social inclusion project involves the Youth Service, Education Social Work Service, and staff from the Pupil Referral Unit in improving attendance and reducing the risk of exclusion amongst at risk pupils.

122. Family Literacy projects for those whose first language is not English are a lifeline for refugee families, enabling children to feel less alien in an environment that also welcomes in their parents and offers them learning. For the parents, there is the invaluable opportunity to gain understanding of how and what their children are learning in an unfamiliar system. Drug and other health education work in and around schools is effective and valued. Millwall Football Club and various arts organisations work effectively with under-achieving young people who are on the margins.

123. Lewisham's involvement in action against racism has been given added impetus by the Macpherson report. The SRB funded Downham Pride project is involved in anti racist work in schools, as are the police. Jointly with Goldsmiths College, the LEA is working to increase black teacher recruitment. A determined drive to increase the number of black and minority ethnic governors has borne fruit in the recruitment of an additional 34.



## **Recommendations**

- Ensure schools comply with their Health and Safety responsibilities by commencing the planned audits of Health and Safety in schools as a matter of urgency.
- Improve the timing of admissions appeals.

## **APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Strategy for School Improvement**

- Move rapidly to co-opt governors on to suitable consultative groups within the modernised structure.
- Utilise the findings of the sixth form review as the basis for strategic planning and creation of progression pathways for 16-19 education.
- When the EDP is reviewed, resolve the overlap between priorities and ensure actions are targeted precisely.

### **School Improvement**

- Ensure that school achievement reviews provide a consistently rigorous evaluation of progress and in the light of that evaluation, eventually reduce the level of centrally funded support to schools judged to be fully effective.
- Structure the data provided to schools so that it can be accessed at different levels of sophistication, and make clear to schools the basis on which targets are being challenged and set;
- Draw on the experience of headteachers and governors of schools which have been in special measures or have serious weaknesses to evaluate the effectiveness of the support provided to these schools;
- Address school achievement reviews and other notes of visit to governors as well as headteachers.

### **Management Services**

- Canvass schools' views of the IT support services currently on offer, reassess whether to continue offering these as traded services, and develop a long term strategy for electronic communication with schools.
- Review the operation of the property care SLA with schools, and plan to offer additional or alternative support on facilities management if required.

### **Special Educational Needs**

- Draw up sets of educational criteria for schools to meet in i) making referrals for assessments by educational psychologists and ii) making applications for statementing. Introduce systematic monitoring on the application of the above criteria to ensure budgetary and other factors are co-ordinated fairly.
- Reconstitute the SEN Panel to include wider representation.
- Provide an induction programme for LSAs.

## **Health and Safety**

- Ensure schools comply with their Health and Safety responsibilities by commencing the planned audits of Health and Safety in schools as a matter of urgency.

## **Admissions**

- Improve the timing of admissions appeals.

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

**Tel: 0171 421 6800**

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Department of Education and Community Services  
Laurence House  
1 Catford Road  
Catford  
London SE6 4RU