



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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

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INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities', which focuses on the effectiveness of LEA work to support school improvement.
2. The inspection was conducted in two stages. An initial review in October 1998 established a picture of the Local Education Authority's (LEA's) context, the performance of its schools, its strategy for school improvement and the management of its services. The initial review was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, school inspection information, audit reports and a scrutiny of the draft Education Development Plan submitted to the DfEE in December 1998. Discussions were held with elected members, staff in the Education and other Council departments, and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to 102 schools, seeking their views on aspects of the LEA's work. The response rate was 83 per cent.
3. The second stage of the inspection carried out in February 1999 involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 27 primary, secondary and special schools. In addition, short visits were made to three other schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support 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.
4. This report draws on material from the initial review, the school survey, from an Audit Commission cost survey, together with evidence drawn from recent HMI visits to Buckinghamshire schools.

'LEA support for School Improvement: A framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities', London, OFSTED, 1997

REVIEW OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEA

COMMENTARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Buckinghamshire is well above average socially and economically, although there are pockets of relative disadvantage. The proportion of three and four year olds attending maintained schools is higher than nationally as is the proportion of sixteen year olds remaining in full time education. Fewer children than nationally are entitled to free school meals; unemployment is by and the proportion of adults with higher education qualifications is high. Children in schools in the County attain high levels of achievement at all stages of education up to the age of 18. Many schools are very successful, and 15 have been commended in HMCI's annual reports for their successes. Secondary education is fully selective, and around 30 per cent of secondary age pupils attend grammar schools. The County is consistently high in national league tables of pupil performance.

6. Although there are some considerable strengths in the LEA's support for school improvement, there are a number of weaknesses, some of which arise from the consequences of local government re-organisation, some from policy decisions, and others from arrangements made for the management and delivery of services. Overall, the LEA's contribution to school improvement in the last two years has been less effective than it should have been. Through the production of the Education Development Plan (EDP), the LEA has been able to re-focus its priorities more sharply on providing better support for school improvement in the future.

7. Historically, Buckinghamshire schools have felt well supported by, and supportive of, the LEA. However, since 1997, when local government re-organisation removed Milton Keynes from the County, the simultaneous reduction in the Education budget and consequent changes in the organisation and personnel of the Education Department, combined with other factors, unsettled schools and resulted in some loss of confidence and trust in the LEA on the part of schools. There is also a feeling that the quality of services and support, including the responsiveness of the LEA, have deteriorated. This is combined with widespread concern in schools at the relatively low levels of funding per pupil, which headteachers feel imposes constraints on their ability to maintain and improve standards of attainment. These views were also reflected in responses to the survey of over 100 schools carried out as part of the inspection.

8. There has also been a major re-organisation of schools over the last two years. The County began the process of changing the ages of transfer to secondary schools from 12 to 11 and from first to middle schools from eight to seven in 1996-7. This process, which will be completed by September 1999, has created uncertainty and confusion in some schools and anxiety for some parents. This has contributed to schools' negative feelings about the LEA. It has been expensive in terms of the capital programme, in providing additional accommodation for Year 7 pupils in secondary schools, has increased the number and costs of premature retirements. and has increased the volume of admissions appeals.

9. The ability of the Advisory Service to advise, support, monitor and evaluate all schools systematically in terms of standards, quality of teaching, development planning and management has been seriously affected by the policy decision to delegate their budget to secondary and special schools and to devolve it to some primary schools, without retaining any for these purposes. In particular, the service did not retain any budget to monitor any schools in the authority.

10. The LEA has clearly identified and defined its strategies and priorities for school improvement, though it is only in the recent EDP that it has begun to define a clear strategy for monitoring the quality and impact of its services to schools. The limited review of the quality of services, which has taken place in the past, does not secure improvement in those services which are underperforming. Schools are not aware of the full cost of services.

11. Despite the difficulties created by the changes described above, the LEA has a number of strengths and many of its services to schools are effective, for example: the statistical data analysis embodied in annual school profiles for all primary and secondary schools; the support provided by schools' attached advisers; support for governors of schools; the ICT support provided by the Buckinghamshire Education Management Information and Support Team (BEMIST); the contribution of the Education Welfare Service to child protection issues; and work involving liaison with a range of other agencies. Overall, the LEA provides satisfactory management services for financial support, personnel and property services.

12. However, there remain some significant weaknesses. Some aspects of support to schools are less than effective, including, in particular: special educational needs and statutory assessment of pupils with special educational needs (although there have been some recent significant improvements in the processing of statements); the quality of support for improvement in teaching and curriculum development; the monitoring of the quality of teaching where attainment is low; identifying and supporting schools causing concern; the central purchasing and IT units; and premises maintenance. Support for newly appointed headteachers is unacceptably variable, and headteacher appraisal is not taking place. There are health and safety issues needing attention in some schools. A number of members of the public criticised the LEA for the speed and quality of its response to complaints and correspondence.

13. The Education Department is working hard to make up the ground lost following local government re-organisation and is seeking to improve its relationships with, and services to, schools through developing more effective means of consulting them, involving headteachers more in contributing to the development of strategy and services, and improving communications. Although there is still much to be done if the intended partnership between schools and the Authority is to become a reality, the LEA is aware of what needs to be done to ensure greater support for continued improvement in the attainment of Buckinghamshire's children. Much of this agenda is set out in the Education Development Plan. In particular, attention needs to be given to the recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A *Improve the quality and effectiveness of support to schools, and the accountability of service providers, by:*

- i. involving all schools in regular review of the quality of the services they receive, sharing the results with schools;
- ii. ensuring that where the quality of services falls below the required standard, remedial action is taken and followed through, and that schools are informed of the actions taken; publishing the full cost of individual services, calculated on a per-pupil basis, so that
- iii. schools can judge value for money;
- iv. ensuring that newly appointed headteachers receive appropriate and adequate support;
- v. implementing the planned arrangements for the provision and role of attached advisers to all schools;
- vi. establishing arrangements for LEA advisers to observe and monitor teaching and learning in schools where performance data reveals low standards of attainment or low expectations; and intensifying support to raising standards in numeracy in underperforming schools;
- vii. evaluating the value for money of central recharges, and examining Service Strategy and Regulations costs to ensure that resources are deployed to best effect;
- viii. improving communications with schools on financial matters, including early information on budget options, and on the pressure on other Council services;
- ix. clarifying the roles of the area offices, other services in the Education Department, and the corporate centre in supporting schools; and
- x. developing a clear and comprehensive administrative ICT strategy in consultation with schools.

B. *Improve the quality of support for special educational needs, by:*

- i. ensuring that schools are clear about the basis and purpose of the SEN review, aware of the contents of the District Audit report, and involved fully in working with the LEA to address, as a matter of urgency, the issues raised on special needs policy, provisions and resources:
- ii. ensuring that SEN statements are produced within the deadlines of the SEN Code of Practice, improving the quality of statements of special educational need and ensuring that schools follow guidance given on the preparation of individual education plans; and

- iii. reducing substantially the size of the SEN contingency and reallocating resources to develop in-County provision based on accurate forecasts of need.

C. *Improve the support provided to schools causing concern, by:*

- i. agreeing with schools criteria for the identification of schools causing concern, and establishing clear criteria for intervention and support; and
- ii. following through weaknesses identified in Section 10 reports until there is measurable improvement, and monitoring more consistently schools' implementation of their post-inspection action plans.

D. *Improve the discharge of the LEA 's statutory responsibilities, by:*

- i. re-establishing a programme of appraisal for headteachers and supporting them in developing a comprehensive programme for appraising staff; and
- ii. addressing health and safety issues identified in individual schools.

E. *Improve further the value of its data analysis and school profiles, by:*

- i. collecting and analysing data about the achievements of pupils from each minority ethnic group; and
- ii. extending profiles to include special schools, as planned.

F. *Reduce levels of dissatisfaction with the LEA 's responsiveness, by:*

- i. improving the rate of response to communications and complaints from the public; and
- ii. improving mediation arrangements in order to reduce the number of appeals against the LEA's decisions on school placements.

SECTION 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

The County

14. Buckinghamshire is a county with an increasing population now totalling 475,000 people, despite the loss of some 30 per cent of the former population with the creation of Milton Keynes as a new Unitary Authority in April 1997. There are areas of considerable affluence; unemployment is well below national average and the proportion of adults with higher education qualifications is well above the national average. There are also some pockets of social disadvantage.

15. The challenge for the LEA is to continue to meet the high expectations of parents and to improve relationships with schools that have deteriorated somewhat following local government reorganisation and other recent changes in budgets and the pattern of school organisation.

Pupils and schools

16. A total of 65,682 (FTE) pupils is currently educated in 239 schools maintained by the LEA, including four nursery schools, 192 primary schools, 15 special schools, 28 secondary schools, of which 11 are grammar schools and 17 are upper schools, and six Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). In addition, there are nine primary and six secondary grant maintained schools, two of which are grammar schools. There are four specialist schools in the LEA: two technology colleges, one language college and one sports college. Almost one third of primary schools and a fifth of secondary schools are voluntary aided or controlled. Currently 72 pupils are being educated otherwise than in a school: receiving home tuition; being educated by parents; or living as Travellers.

17. The percentage of pupils taking free school meals is below the national average, particularly for primary pupils. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to that found nationally; the largest minority ethnic group is of Pakistani origin. The percentage of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need is about the national average for primary-aged pupils and slightly below for secondary-aged pupils. The percentage of primary and secondary-aged pupils in special schools is above the national average, with the highest proportion in the Wycombe area. The proportion of three- and four-year olds attending maintained schools is higher than nationally, as is the proportion of students' aged 16 staying on into the sixth forms of maintained schools.

18. Pupils are selected for grammar school places by reference to ability through selection tests, currently operating at 11+ and 12+; around 30 per cent of secondary pupils are in maintained grammar schools. Until recently, the age of transfer to secondary schools was 12. This is being changed progressively to 11, and the corresponding age of transfer for Key Stage 2 pupils is changing from eight to seven. This process will be completed by September 1999. Eight voluntary primary schools have decided to retain transfer at nine.

19. Further details of pupils and schools are given in Appendix 1

Education funding

20. In 1998/99 Buckinghamshire's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) per pupil for primary, secondary under 16s and post 16 education was above the average of statistical neighbours and that for all English authorities. Spending by the County Council in the three-year period before the creation of Milton Keynes LEA was above the SSA. Over the last two years Education spending has not kept up with the increase in the SSA, which rose by 12.6 per cent, while the increase in expenditure on Education was 9.2 per cent.

	SSA for Education	Net Expenditure on Education	Expenditure compared to SSA
	£ million	£ million	%
1996/97	252.6	255.0	+1.0
1997/98	172.0	176.4	+2.5
1998/99	183.8	183.4	-0.2
1999/2000	193.6	192.7	-0.5

Source: LEA

The Council, the LEA and the Education Department

21. The Council is made up of 38 Conservative, 10 Liberal Democrat, one Independent and five Labour councillors. The Education Committee is one of four strategic committees of the Council and meets four times a year. The other strategic committees are Policy and Resources, Social Services and Environmental Services.

22. The Education Committee's responsibilities include schools, libraries, museums and archives, adult and continuing education, early years' education and childcare and the Youth and Community Service. These are discharged through a range of sub committees, panels and a joint advisory and consultative group. For example, the Policy Performance and Finance Panel has a key role in monitoring and reviewing the performance of the Education Department.

23. The Education Department was recently restructured, to provide a more strategic focus. The Directorate now comprises the Director, two Assistant Directors and the Chief Adviser augmented by the Head of Planning and Information and the Head of Resources. Thirteen service areas cover the Department's work. Heads of service are represented on the Education Management Team, and the Senior Staff Group also meets to discuss issues relating to the Department's work. The Advisory Service is managed by the Chief Adviser and works in close liaison with the three Area Teams. The Education Department achieved Investors in People status in 1997.

SECTION 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS²

24. A County baseline assessment scheme was introduced in Buckinghamshire primary and nursery schools in September 1998. Judgements from OFSTED inspection of schools suggest that the attainment of pupils on entry to the LEA's primary schools is well above the average found nationally.

25. Attainment is high in all the stages of compulsory education and is in many instances well above national averages. For example,

- In 1998, Buckinghamshire schools ranked 10 out of 150 LEAs for the performance of its pupils in the Key Stage 2 English tests and 23 in the mathematics tests;
- In 1998, Buckinghamshire ranked second out of 149 LEAs for the performance of its schools in GCSE at the 5+A*~C indicator.

26. Attainment in post-16 examinations is also high. For example, in 1998, Buckinghamshire ranked 9 out of 150 LEAs for the performance of students at Advanced level.

27. There are significant differences between the attainments of boys and girls in English at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, but not in mathematics or science. Girls' achievements are much higher than boys at GCSE (65 per cent of girls gained 5 + A*~C in 1997 compared to 57.1 per cent of boys). At Advanced level boys and girls achieve equally well. The LEA does not collect data on achievements by pupils of individual minority ethnic groups.

28. There is a wide range in the overall attainments of pupils in different types of schools in the LEA. This is inevitable at secondary level as a result of selection. However, a wide range also exists within the grammar schools' sector and within the upper schools' sector at both GCSE and Advanced level. At Key Stages 1 and 2, there is also a wide range in the performance of schools in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Achievement at Key Stage 1 and at Key Stage 2 is higher in the combined schools than in first and middle schools.

2~ Details of the educational performance of schools in Buckinghamshire are given in Appendix 2. The data used in this section are illustrative, not comprehensive.

29. Attendance rates in primary and secondary schools are above the national averages. Unauthorised absences are below national averages. The number of pupils permanently excluded from primary schools is broadly in line with the national average although, between 1996 and 1997, they increased at a faster rate than nationally. Permanent exclusions from secondary schools are lower than the national average and the rate of increase is slower.

30. OFSTED's inspection data confirm that attainment is well above national norms. For example:

- standards of attainment in 65 per cent of Buckinghamshire's primary schools are good or very good compared to 52 per cent nationally; and
- standards of attainment in 70 per cent of secondary schools are good or very good compared to 60 per cent nationally.

31. OFSTED's inspection data shows that the proportion of teaching in primary and secondary schools judged to be good or better is similar to that found nationally. Since 1993-4, eight secondary schools, five primary schools and two special schools have been commended in HMCI's Annual Reports. One grammar school and one upper school are Beacon Schools.

32. Two primary schools have been identified as requiring special measures to remedy problems identified in their inspections; one has since been removed from special measures and subsequently involved in reorganisation. Since September 1997, nine primary schools and one secondary school have been identified as having serious weaknesses.

SECTION 3: LEA STRATEGY

33.

- *The LEA has clearly identified and defined its strategies and priorities for school improvement and has consulted widely. These are included in the authority's Education Development Plan. The priorities appropriately reflect national initiatives and the local context;*
- *The LEA does not yet have a clear strategy for monitoring the effectiveness of its services to schools and schools are not aware of the full cost of LEA services;*
- *The LEA takes reasonable steps to discharge the majority of its statutory responsibilities. However, the appraisal of headteachers is not currently undertaken, and the LEA is not meeting the statutory target for the completion of draft Statements of Special Educational Needs within 18 weeks, although the percentage of statements produced within the timescale has improved markedly since January 1999.*
- *Buckinghamshire's PSB and GSB per pupil in 1998-9 were both below the average for Shire counties, with the PSB per pupil significantly less than the average. There were large areas of expenditure outside of the ASB that were high compared to the average for Shire counties and English authorities;*
- *Strategic planning for SEN was criticised in a recent report by District Audit. The LEA has made progress on addressing these criticisms, but there is much still to be done. The centrally retained budget for SEN is high;*
- *The LEA has produced and consulted on a plan for behaviour support, as required by legislation. Exclusions of pupils from school are below national averages, but, within this, the proportions of excluded black and looked-after children are higher than national averages. Support for pupils requiring home tuition is limited; for example, some pupils are out of school for a year or more. This is recognised as an issue by the LEA, and the Behaviour Support Plan contains proposals for improving both the tracking of pupils who are out of school and the provision for them.*
- *There are extensive arrangements for co-operative working with Higher Education, Health Authorities and Trusts, the Diocesan authorities, the Police, Thames Valley Enterprise and with Social Services. In general, these links work well and contribute to meeting a wide range of need.*

The role of Education within the County Council

34. Since local government re-organisation in 1997, the County Council has been developing a new approach to strategic planning. The "Council Plan 1997-2000", the first strategic plan produced by elected members as a new authority, identified eight aims, including one specific to Education:

"to drive up standards and to raise achievement throughout the Education Service, especially in all schools and for all pupils, thus preserving the reputation and integrity of the service, including the selective system, in order to create a learning community in Buckinghamshire".

35. Eleven supporting policies are outlined in the Council Plan. The County Council has consulted widely as part of the 1999-2000 budget process and the February 1999 report to the Policy and Resources Committee stated that "Education was the highest priority for most people".

The LEA's roles and priorities

36. Since the local government reorganisation in 1997, the LEA has been, appropriately, moving from a culture in which its role was seen as offering support to schools, often on a contractual basis, towards a culture of partnership that places school improvement at the centre of its activity. There is still some way to go on achieving this.

37. The LEA consulted widely with schools and other stakeholders on drafts of its Education Development Plan (EDP). The seven priorities for school improvement, identified in the final EDP, are to:

- develop key skills in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT);
- improve the quality of teaching;
- develop a strategy for supported school self evaluation;
- improve attendance and reduce exclusions;
- improve the quality of leadership and management;
- support individual achievement and personal development; and support underachieving schools in raising standards.

An eighth priority, seen as a linking theme, is to recognise and disseminate best practice. These priorities appropriately reflect national priorities.

38. In establishing its priorities for school improvement, the LEA analysed a range of sources of information and data, which cover significant identified weaknesses. The Education Development Plan (EDP) identifies overall targets for 2002, with intermediate targets for each intervening year. The plan includes appropriate action plans for each activity, most, but not all, of which have clearly defined and measurable success criteria. The targets for 2002, with 1997 achievement in brackets, are:

- KS2 English test level 4+: 86 per cent (74 per cent)
- KS2 mathematics test level 4+: 79 percent (69.9 per cent)
- 5+ A*~C GCSE or equivalent: 64 per cent (61.7 percent)
- 1+A*~G GCSE or equivalent: 97.5 per cent (96.2 per cent)
- Average 16+ points score per pupil: 45.5 (44.1)
- Permanent exclusions and unauthorised absence to be reduced by one third by 2001

39. There are several weaknesses in the EDP which need to be addressed. The criteria for identifying schools causing concern need to be more explicit, and the levels of support for the three different categories of underperforming schools need to be spelled out. The schools' aggregated targets are approximately six per cent below the LEA's targets for Key Stage 2

English. This indicates that the process of setting targets between the school and the LEA needs to be improved.

40.

- The EDP has been approved by the Secretary of State for the full three-year period, subject to a number of specific conditions to address identified concerns, summarise below, and to the general conditions of approval relating to annual review, updating and evaluation and that a target is set for reducing the level of fixed term exclusions
The specific conditions are that:
 - the LEA has supported its schools to set realistic and challenging targets; and
 - there is an improved strategy, including support processes, that addresses schools causing concern and in particular differentiates between the different categories and sets out clear action plans, timescales and resources in each case.

41. In general, the LEA has the resources and capability to implement the EDP.

42. All schools visited, with one exception, were aware of the LEA's priorities, as described in the EDP. The majority, 18 of the 26 schools visited, approved or strongly approved of them. The LEA's priorities had had a positive influence on schools' own planning.

The LEA's evaluation of its own effectiveness

43. The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel monitors overall policy and financial management; the Children's Services (SEN) Panel, Services to Schools and other Service Panels, together with the quarterly reports which the Director of Education provides for the Chairman of the County Council enable some monitoring of the Department's work. In addition, the Directorate meets weekly with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Education Committee and regularly with other elected members. The EDP includes appropriate proposals for monitoring and evaluating progress towards the LEA's targets, and for reporting arrangements. The Council is now developing the use of performance indicators produced by the Audit Commission and the use of other sources such as complaints, Ombudsman cases and District Audit reports to help to assess the quality of its services.

44. Under the Council's Best Value arrangements, "root and branch reviews" of 25per cent of the Council's services in Education (by value) each year (excluding schools' direct budgets) are planned. Areas to be included in this exercise include home-to-school transport, school organisation, local management review and other Countywide services affecting education including Human Resources and Architects.

45. Evaluation of the quality of services for schools is underdeveloped. A questionnaire has been sent approximately once a year to schools with devolved or delegated support service budgets (73 in 1997/98) to ask them to grade the quality of LEA and central services. In 1997, only 38 schools responded; an unrepresentative sample of the LEA's schools. The results were considered by the Services to Schools Panel. Results of the analysis are fed back to heads of service for action, although there is only limited evidence of this leading to improvements in services, particularly where schools were critical of the

service they received. A number of services carry out reviews with client schools. The lack of consistency is an issue that the LEA needs to address.

46. Schools are prevented from becoming more discerning clients by the lack of transparency over the true cost of services; the lack of systematic arrangements for involving schools in evaluating the quality of the services they receive; the lack of feedback to schools of the findings; and the lack of clear arrangements for evaluation to be used to improve services. The recently established Headteachers' Management Board is advising on arrangements for reviewing service standards and has begun detailed discussion of services with heads of service. This is a helpful development.

SEN Strategy

47. A District Audit Report (November 1998) on SEN was critical of many aspects of the management of SEN provision by the LEA, in terms of:

- the lack of a clear policy on SEN, supported by an action plan to turn this into reality;
- delays in statutory assessment and the issuing of Statements of SEN;
- inappropriate referrals by schools for assessment, resulting in statements or notes in lieu not being issued after assessment has been completed;
- review of pupil placements, including annual reviews, promotion of inclusion/integration links between special and mainstream schools and discontinuation of Statements;
- heavy reliance on "out-County" placements; and
- lack of management information on SEN.

48. The District Audit Report included an action plan, agreed with the LEA. The LEA has begun to take appropriate steps to address the issues raised. Some of these changes had occurred prior to the District Audit Report, but it will take some time before all the weaknesses are rectified. Management responsibilities and the organisation of support for SEN changed in September 1998.

49. Schools generally knew of the review of special educational needs but were not clear about the basis for, and principles of, the review. A recent letter to schools, together with a planned invitation workshop, seeks to rectify this.

50. The LEA has recently appointed an officer with responsibility for behaviour issues (including exclusions) across the County. The LEA has consulted widely on its Behaviour Support Plan for 1999-2002 in response to the requirements of the Education Act 1997. Part of the plan involves setting up a co-ordinating group for behaviour, attendance and exclusions (BAEG) under the umbrella of the SEN strategy group, which co-ordinates the work of Health, Social Services and Education. Implementation is now underway. A satisfactory strategy for implementing the Behaviour Support Plan is contained in the EDP.

51. Permanent exclusion rates are comparable with the national averages for primary schools and below the average for secondary schools. There are, however, wide variations in fixed-term and permanent exclusions across secondary schools. Fixed term exclusions

increased 24 per cent between 1995/96 and 1996/97 especially in the Aylesbury Vale area, but decreased in the High Wycombe area. There was a higher than national average exclusion rate of black pupils. Nineteen per cent of looked after children have been permanently excluded - significantly above national averages. Aylesbury Vale area is the main area where exclusion rates of looked after children are the highest.

52. The EDP target is to reduce permanent exclusions by one-third by 2001; the general conditions of approval of the EDP now require the LEA to set a target for reducing fixed term exclusions. A range of proposals to achieve the target for permanent exclusions has been identified. The LEA is also devising guidance on ways of preventing bullying (expected to be completed by April 1999) and a programme for tracking bullying.

53. Seventy-two pupils are currently not being educated in school. The LEA knows where all these pupils are being educated. However, some pupils are out of school for a year or more. This is recognised as an important matter by the LEA, which is short of home tutors. Pupils in their last year of compulsory education frequently miss out on this provision. The Behaviour Support Plan contains proposals for improving the tracking of pupils who are out of school and for improving the provision for them.

Consultation and communication

54. The LEA has developed comprehensive and detailed arrangements for consultation, intended to give schools an important part in contributing to the LEA's strategy. These arrangements work reasonably well, but there is more to be done; this is recognised by the LEA. Almost three-quarters of the schools visited had noticed an improvement over the past two years in the LEA's consultation arrangements. A third commented that improvements had been significant. Another third felt that their responses to consultation were not given full consideration, because, they believed, decisions had already been made. Schools commented on the willingness of senior officers to engage in discussion and to seek the views of headteachers and governors through various working groups and the Liaison groups run by the Area Teams. Other headteachers were not always aware of the terms of reference of these groups, nor were they aware of arrangements for wider consultation with, or feedback to, headteachers who are not members of the groups.

Statutory responsibilities

55. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet the majority of its statutory responsibilities. However, the appraisal of headteachers is not currently undertaken, and the LEA is not meeting the statutory target for the completion of draft Statements of Special Educational Needs within 18 weeks. In 1997-8, only 30 per cent were completed within this time frame. However, since January 1999, the completion rate for draft Statements has improved to 77 per cent.

56. Visits to schools identified issues that the LEA needs to address. These include the provision of specialist accommodation in a special school, deficient science laboratories in one secondary school and physical education and technology facilities in another: these schools are severely constrained in their ability to deliver some of the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is a lack of clarity about the responsibility for providing home

tuition to pupils excluded from school. In some cases, statutory issues relating to collective worship and religious education identified in Section 10 reports have not been addressed by schools and need to be followed up again by the LEA.

57. A recent Health and Safety Executive report (December 1998) was critical of a number of aspects of the management of health and safety in educational establishments. Health and safety issues were identified during school visits, including separating vehicles from pupils, provision of escorts for SEN pupils, dangerous windows, and inadequate shower and changing arrangements.

Resource Allocation

The Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB)

58. The LEA allocated 81.67 per cent of its ASB on the basis of pupil numbers, which exceeded the statutory minimum in 1998/99. Evidence from school visits and from the Audit Commission survey shows that there is a wide consensus among schools that they have been under-funded since the start of the re-shaped County Council in April 1997. Not only was the increase in the SSA not passed to school budgets that year, but schools also experienced a cut in real terms with an almost standstill ASB. The County Council maintains that there were significant pressures on other services and this together with the impact of local government reorganisation and the age of transfer programme has limited options available to it to protect school budgets. As a consequence, the ASB has fallen in comparison with other Shire counties.

59. In 1998/99, the ASB per pupil for primary schools was 11.3 per cent below the average for Shire counties, a difference of £161 per pupil. The corresponding figure for pupils in secondary schools was 10.9 per cent (a difference of £217 per pupil) and 15.9 per cent for pupils in special schools (a difference of £1212 per pupil).

60. Many schools are experiencing significant hardship because of the time spent on budget management and on ensuring that the curriculum adequately meets the needs of pupils. Thirty-seven schools, nine of them secondary, recorded deficits at the end of the 1997/98. These deficits ranged from 0.21 per cent to 16.33 per cent of the ASB. It is also true that 124 schools, six of them secondary, carried forward surpluses of more than 5 per cent into 1998/99. Headteachers feel strongly that surpluses have been necessary to combat the unpredictable nature of school budgets in recent years. They also believe they are a response to the gloomy annual predictions about school budgets and the need to plan accordingly.

61. An overall increase of £9.736 million is planned for school budgets in 1999/2000. However, taking into account adjustments for the change in the age of transfer and additional funding for new responsibilities, the increase will be 5.1 per cent for the primary sector and 5 per cent for secondary and special schools. This is unlikely to eliminate the disparity in funding pupils compared to the average for Shire counties and for all English authorities

The Potential Schools Budget (PSB)

62. Although the County's PSB is also low compared to other Shire authorities, there are examples of comparatively high expenditure. In 1998/99, Buckinghamshire's primary, secondary and special PSBs expressed on a per pupil basis, were all more than 10 per cent below the average of Shire counties: the PSB was reduced by £1.5 million in that year. The LEA delegated 92.64 per cent of the PSB to schools. This is high for Shire counties. As the PSB contains a block of discretionary exceptions that could have been delegated to schools, the size of the PSB is also an area of concern to schools.

63. The cost of budgeted SEN provision within discretionary exceptions is average compared to the Shire authorities. However a large contingency of £2.24 million is held back for SEN. This is allocated for new Statements for children attending a mainstream school, in-County special schools or out-County provision. The LEA should consider whether retaining such a large contingency is appropriate and reflects a sufficiently strategic view of SEN. A substantial proportion of the contingency funding could be reinvested in planned provision in mainstream and special schools, based on accurate forecasting and facilitated by the appropriate use of threshold criteria. Such investment could support schools to develop more inclusive approaches to children with special educational needs.

64. An appropriate aim of the Education Development Plan is to move expenditure from Stage 5 of the SEN Code of Practice to Stages 1-3 to target resources on early identification and intervention for pupils in mainstream schools. Not all schools have a clear understanding about this aim. The combined central budget for SEN including contingency funding and £7.895 million for services and provision, was £10.135 million in 1998/99, which is higher than the average for Shire counties.

65. Expenditure on the Music Service was also high compared to the average of other Shire authorities, reflecting the priority given to it by the LEA.

The General Schools Budget (GSB)

66. Buckinghamshire's primary and special GSB expenditures per pupil in 1998/99 were below the average for Shire counties and for all English authorities, while the secondary GSB per pupil was similar. This reflects the high levels of capital expenditure associated with changes in the ages of transfer.

67. Within the GSB, expenditure per pupil on home-to-school transport was very high compared to statistical neighbours and to Shire authorities. It was also the fourth highest in the Audit Commission sample of 32 LEAs. The County Council is reviewing aspects of its home-to-school transport policy to reduce expenditure. However, a reduction of £2.3 million would be required to bring it into line with the average for other counties.

68. The cost of the LEA's capital programme was £13.307 million in 1998/99. Such high expenditure reflects the cost of implementing the changes in the ages of transfer, which also resulted in a high spend on premature retirement of £2.183 million. These will

Reduce in 1999/2000.

Service Strategy and Regulation (SSR)

69. Buckinghamshire's spending on SSR was significantly higher than the average for all English authorities in 1996/97. The cost per pupil was 1.4 per cent of its total education costs compared to an average of 0.76 per cent for all English authorities. Similar costs have been reported for 1998/99. There is a case for reviewing these costs in the light of Fair Funding and the ongoing pressure on school budgets. Services provided under central re-charges should be subject to more rigorous performance review and value for money judgements should be arrived at with the involvement of schools.

School Places and Admissions

70. A report by external auditors in 1997 indicated a number of strengths in the LEA's approach to admissions, including excellent forecasting systems and very clear information on the reserved area admissions system. The report also suggested areas for improvement that the LEA has since acted upon. Evidence from school visits indicates that more work is needed on early and efficient information exchange with schools on pupil numbers and on achieving a reduction in the number of appeals.

71. The LEA provides a clear and comprehensive guide for parents on secondary school allocation processes and criteria for selection. Guidance for schools on transfer documentation and specimen record sheets have been provided, but there is wide variation in their use by schools. Allocation to particular schools is based on parental preferences and admissions criteria. Ninety-eight per cent of first preferences for grammar schools were met in 1997.

72. The LEA's decision to change the ages of transfer of pupils from 12 and 8 to 11 and 7, followed changes in a neighbouring authority which affected admissions to some Buckinghamshire schools, changes in an in-County grant maintained school's admission arrangements, and a detailed consultation exercise. The implementation of these changes has created difficulties for primary and secondary schools. The emotion and arguments that such a change inevitably generates, together with these difficulties, has influenced schools' views about the LEA's priorities and its approach and response to consultation and has contributed to a general deterioration in schools' views about the quality of LEA planning and administration. The ill-feeling created is likely to influence relationships within the LEA for some time. While these problems have affected schools differently, headteachers and governors in the schools visited took the view that elected members and officers did not consider fully all the implications before embarking on the change and did not provide sufficient support throughout the process.

73. The estimated net cost of admissions, including selection, in 1998-99 is £740k. This represents a spend per pupil four times that of the average for County Councils.

74. In 1997, there were 7.3 per cent surplus school places in primary schools and 8.7 per cent in secondary schools. These are below the national figures of 10 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. There are 53 primary and six secondary schools with more than a ten

per cent surplus of school places. At the same time, 89 primary schools and 10 secondary schools have numbers on roll which exceed their capacity.

75. At September 1998, the LEA had 1215 planned places in 15 special schools, with 1137 pupils on roll in, leaving a total of 78 vacant places. The planned reduction in the number of places for September 1999 will still leave 63 vacant places, some of which are required to allow for the changes in the ages of transfer. The LEA makes significant use of placements in special schools other than those maintained by the LEA. In January 1999, 248 pupils were placed in such provision. Of these, 140 are placed in neighbouring Authorities where the travel to school time is lower than it would be for an equivalent placement in Buckinghamshire. Thirty-eight pupils continue to be educated in Milton Keynes (these now appear as out county placements). The level of out-county provision is expensive, particularly when there are unfilled places in the LEA's own special schools. The cost of out-County placements is well above the average in comparison with the 34 other LEA's surveyed by the Audit Commission.

76. The LEA has given priority to the expansion of the secondary sector in order to accommodate the changes in the ages of transfer.

Support for Parents and Pupils

77. During the inspection, HMI received unsolicited written complaints from several parents, containing details of extensive correspondence with the LEA. Individual cases were not followed up by HMI, but some important general points arise from these cases. The parents concerned report that: they have been dealt with badly by the LEA; the LEA procrastinated in making decisions; they had trouble getting a response, particularly a written response, to their concerns; and financial considerations were given more prominence than what was in the best interests of the children. Whilst it is not possible for HMI to follow these up, the levels of concern expressed in this correspondence indicate that the LEA needs to review its procedure for responding to complaints.

Liaison with other services and agencies

78. In recent years, multi-agency work has been fostered and strengthened. The EDP provides examples of collaborative work and co-operation between agencies within the County Council and those outside that contribute to education. Joint work with the Health Authority and Social Services on early years and child care arrangements is reflected in the Children's Services Plan. The Buckinghamshire Targets Task Force, comprising representatives of business, further and higher education, the Careers Service, diocesan authorities and Thames Valley Enterprise. contributes to the authority's thinking on lifelong learning and school improvement. A range of joint activities make significant contributions to drugs and health education, child protection, disaffection, exclusion and attendance issues and others contribute to citizenship, business understanding and work experience.

SECTION 4: THE MANAGEMENT OF LEA SERVICES

79. The response to the school survey was very mixed. To 54 (69 per cent) of the questions in the survey, the schools' response was below the average of all LEAs surveyed; for 4 of them, the responses were the least favourable in all these LEAs. Appendix 3 shows the results on all questions in the survey.

80. Of the services actually used by schools, in 27 per cent of the primary schools visited their effectiveness was less than satisfactory. Support for a secondary and special school was, however, far less effective: in 60 per cent of them, the effectiveness of the services used was less than satisfactory.

81. Generally, the quality of support is felt by schools to have deteriorated over the past two years, as a result of: local government reorganisation and the consequent loss of valued staff; budget reductions; and complications brought about by the focus on changing the ages of transfer. Schools with attached advisers are well supported. Support from area offices was less positively regarded where there had been recent changes in organisation and personnel.

82. The least effective services were: the Central Purchasing unit; the IT unit; SEN and support for statementing; specialist advisory support for curriculum development; support for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching; support for newly appointed headteachers; premises maintenance; and the quality and speed of the LEA's response to correspondence and complaints.

83. Services judged to be most effective were the Buckinghamshire Education Management Information Support Team (BEMIST); support from attached advisers; school profile data; support for governors; child protection (although schools expressed concern about the responsiveness of Social Services); and management support for personnel, finance and property.

The Advisory Service

84. The Advisory Service has a key part to play in the delivery of the priorities in the EDP. Attached advisers are highly regarded by most schools, and support provided is satisfactory or better in many areas of work. However, their more widespread effectiveness has been constrained by the budget for attached advisers having been delegated to secondary and special schools, which do not always buy in their support. Other schools have also been free to determine how attached advisers' time is used and whether to buy in specialist adviser time. It was clear from visits to schools that, where teaching has many weaknesses and standards are low, these schools have suffered as a result of this policy. The policy will change with the implementation of the EDP.

85. The Chief Adviser manages the Advisory Service. In addition to direct advisory work with schools, the Service is also responsible for the Music Service, careers education and business activities in three centres – an environmental studies centre, a literacy and numeracy curriculum centre, and an information and communications technology (ICT)

and continuing professional development (CPD) centre. The Service will have a key role in delivering all the priorities in the EDP apart from those relating to attendance and exclusions. The service works in close liaison with the Area Teams (see below). The Advisory Service budget is delegated to all secondary and special schools and devolved to 18 (pilot) primary schools, and the Service has a target for income generation in excess of the delegated budget.

86. Up to April 1999, when the EDP comes into force, the Advisory Service has worked to a detailed and comprehensive three-year Business Plan, in which the purpose of the Service was stated to be to support the improvement of standards and quality of education, especially through general and specialist: advice, the provision of support for CPD, and advice to the Director of Education. Each adviser also had a detailed individual business plan, which was closely linked to the Service Business Plan.

87. Annual objectives, targets and performance measures are listed in the Business Plan. The objectives of the Service are:

- to monitor and evaluate the performance of schools in order to identify strengths and weaknesses;
- to support improvement in all schools;
- to strengthen the quality of support for the management and leadership of schools;
- to improve the performance of individual schools giving concern;
- to draft the EDP after consultation with others, and
- to review the systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Advisory Service.

The EDP has to all intents and purposes, superseded these.

88. The business plans had the potential for the Service to function effectively in improving all schools. In this respect, the Service is well managed, as is much of the work done by the Service, for example: the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy; initial training on the National Numeracy Strategy; early years work; performance data; and the recent round of target setting with schools. The Service, though, has not been able to manage support, advice and intervention in schools in a sufficiently planned and systematic way because of the policy which allowed schools with delegated advisory service budgets to choose not to buy in support and left others free to determine the nature of support. This should no longer be the case as is now made clear in the EDP.

89. The ability to manage the support to improve schools has also been adversely affected by the loss of, and changes in, personnel; restructuring; and the reduction in budget as a result of local government re-organisation.

90. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of the Service that are unsatisfactory which are not the result of issues relating to local government reorganisation or delegation. There is too much variability in the way different advisers go about their job, particularly in their role as attached advisers. There is no systematic approach to working with schools which is followed with reasonable consistency by different advisers and is well-understood and agreed with. Too much is left to individual arrangements. Some schools receive a lot of support; others do not. There is also wide variation over the way that

feedback to headteachers or governing bodies is carried out; schools do not know what they have a right to expect. This important programme of visits to schools needs to be more rigorously and systematically managed, not only to ensure that the LEA knows its schools better, but also to ensure that all schools receive the support, challenge and intervention commensurate with their needs.

91. The Advisory Service is responsible for the (CPD) programme. The programme is well constructed and broad. It is assembled through a number of inputs, in particular, an analysis of school development plans; through the work of the Management Development Group; and through termly meetings of CPD co-ordinators. There is inevitably a wide range of opinion as to the value and quality of courses. Although many are felt to have been effective, there are a number of deficiencies in the delivery, evaluation and feedback on this provision. Planned courses do not always take place owing to low take up, and some are cancelled at short notice; some courses do not match their expectations of what the course will cover; sometimes venues change at short notice; some courses do not meet schools' needs. Other weaknesses, which undermine the effectiveness of the training programme and how it is viewed by schools, are that teachers complete forms to evaluate courses, but the results are not fed back, and there is no systematic approach to monitoring or evaluating the impact of the training in schools. The LEA is reviewing the effectiveness of the CPD programme.

92. The effectiveness of advisers is monitored mainly through informal feedback arrangements; analysis of course evaluation forms; occasional questionnaires; discussion in headteacher management groups; and analysis of advisers' school visit forms.

Other Services To Promote Access And Achievement

The Schools Library and Museum Services

93. The Schools Library Service operates its service to secondary schools as a business unit with budgets devolved to schools. Take up and satisfaction rates for this area of service are high. The Service to the primary and special schools was effectively closed at the end of the last financial year, with the withdrawal of the loans service to schools. The Service is working with the English adviser and literary consultants to support the National Literacy Strategy. In addition, the public library service has organised a number of activities to support the National Year of Reading for children of school age, in addition to its normal activities in support of children and students.

94. The Museum Service contributes to school improvement through support for, and access to, the Roald Dahl Gallery. This focuses on 7-11 year olds and provides resources and the teaching of sessions; 10500 children visited exhibitions in the Gallery last year

Support to pupils with special educational needs

95. Currently, 2006 pupils (3.9 per cent of the pupil population aged 5-15) are the subject of a Statement of SEN maintained by the LEA. This represents an increase over the past three years and is above the national average. In 1998.99, 50.4 per cent of the

pupils with Statements were placed in special schools and in special departments and 49.6 per cent were placed in mainstream schools compared to 46 per cent and 54 per cent respectively in each of the two previous years. The proportion of pupils in special schools has increased from 1.7 per cent to 2.0 per cent over the past three years.

96. The main forms of provision are in special schools, resourced departments in mainstream schools and “out-County” provision. Although primary and secondary schools rated the LEA’s support for the assessment of special educational needs and the provision and review of statements as broadly satisfactory, and close to the average for the 10 LEAs surveyed, the LEA’s management of the process of issuing Statements has been poor. In 1997-8, only 30.18 per cent of draft Statements were prepared within the 18 weeks laid down in the Code of Practice, though there has been a marked improvement since January 1999: in the first three months of 1999, the rate improved to 77 per cent. During school visits, HMI looked at recent Statements issued by the LEA; in general, they were of poor quality and lacked specificity or detailed analysis of needs and provision.

97. Although written the LEA has issued guidance on the preparation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), there is a variety of approaches in the schools visited. Some SEN pupils in two schools visited do not have IEPs; this is unacceptable.

98. Currently the LEA funds 42 mainstream schools to provide approximately 281 planned places in departments attached to primary schools and approximately 228 planned places in departments attached to secondary schools. These departments include designated provision for hearing-impaired, communication difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties, language difficulties and physical difficulties.

99. In mainstream primary and in grant maintained schools, the degree of support relative to needs provided by the LEA was satisfactory and its effectiveness was satisfactory in two thirds of the schools visited. In secondary schools, where the budget to support non-statemented SEN has been delegated, the degree of support was less than satisfactory and effectiveness was poor. However, support for SEN in mainstream schools is better than in special schools, partly because of the input of the Learning Support Service (LSS). There are a number of concerns: mixed perceptions in schools about the advice provided by the LEA on the writing of Individual Education Plans; a general lack of understanding of the LEA’s statutory assessment criteria; and the variable level of support from educational psychologists. This reflects, in part, pressure on psychologists’ time, seen in some schools as a consequence of recent re-organisation and changes in personnel.

Support for attendance and behaviour

100. Attendance rates are above the national averages and in line with those of similar LEAs. For the majority of schools, attendance is good. In ten per cent of schools, the level of unauthorised absence is higher than the national average. The LEA has set an improvement target to reduce levels of unauthorised absence by a third by 2001, and is developing an attendance policy that focuses on the need for early intervention and promotes a “first-day response”. The LEA does not set attendance targets with individual schools. Doing so would contribute to achieving the County’s target.

101. The LEA has used the Standards Fund to support a joint project between the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and the Educational Psychology Service to promote good practice in relation to school attendance and good behaviour based at a secondary school. This successful project is being extended to other schools with poor attendance.

102. Despite problems of recruitment, there is now a full complement of education welfare officers. The service is based in Area Offices and links with a range of other professional bodies and council services in its work. Schools have mixed views about the quality of the support they receive; changes in personnel have affected schools' judgements on this, as on other services.

Management Support Services

103. Overall, the LEA is providing satisfactory central support services to schools. There is, however, further scope for involving schools in the monitoring and development of LEA services. There is insufficient information in schools about measures of service performance and the role schools could play in shaping services to match more closely current and future priorities for school improvement. The net cost of central support services is below the average for Shire authorities and low compared to the 34 authorities in the Audit Commission 's sample. The full costs of services are not shared with the schools. As a consequence, schools are unable to make sound judgements about value for money.

Area Offices

104. The three Area Office Teams are located in two area offices. They have an important role in supporting headteachers, governors and other senior managers in schools. They also co-ordinate the support provided by other agencies, both within, and external to, the Education Department. They have close working relationships with the Advisory Service, who contribute to, and are an integrated part of the work of the Area Teams. Their main functions are to provide headteachers and governing bodies with: a range of services such as support for personnel issues; clerking of governing bodies; supply cover; contracts; budget support; and management support/advice on a range of curriculum, human resources and governors' service issues. In addition, they have wider roles in developing local initiatives and monitoring local groups and forums; liaising with County Council, District Council and Diocesan authorities; providing information/statistical returns; assisting in public relations; dealing with queries and complaints; and disseminating, interpreting, clarifying and cascading LEA and government policy, legislation and initiatives.

105. Their contribution to school improvement includes:

- collating, monitoring and evaluating different forms of intelligence/information provided by all parts of the Education Service which come into contact with schools;
- recommending to the Assistant Director (Standards and Effectiveness) specific action required for individual schools, which might include the need to redirect resources,

and disseminating good practice

- supporting local initiatives and involvement in specific projects such as Anti-bullying and Minimising Bureaucracy.

106. The Area Offices are funded through £992k from the central budget and about £200k from buy-back by secondary and special schools, and primary schools with devolved budgets who have the option of buying full cover or selecting from nearly 40 different optional services. Primary schools without devolved budgets have entitlement to the full package of core services, enhanced at times of increased need.

107. The area office structure and management have also been adversely affected by local government reorganisation. The change resulted in the loss of two area offices and many personnel. These were accompanied by many changes to the officers and advisers who had been linked to individual schools for some time. Long standing and valuable working relationships and support to schools were disrupted. As a consequence, some schools detect some deterioration in the quality of the support provided, although much of the work is still held in high regard. The Area Teams evaluate their work against the level of buy-back and informal feedback. More needs to be done. There is a lack of clarity in some schools about the respective roles of the area offices, the Education Department and the corporate centre in supporting schools.

Financial Support services

108. Financial support services are satisfactory or better. This is also reflected in the responses to the schools survey and in evidence from school visits. The financial systems provided are adequate for accounting purposes, but the use of management information for school development planning and financial benchmarking varies greatly from school to school. The Financial Services Team provides good support to schools operating local bank accounts and to schools with delegated or devolved budgets on the efficient and effective use of their budgets. The cost of the service is low compared to other authorities in the Audit Commission's sample.

109. Schools with deficits are given regular and intensive support, but tighter monitoring and involvement are needed with schools that are close to moving into deficit. Work has been undertaken through a headteachers' group to evaluate alternatives to the existing LMS scheme and a "needs-led" approach agreed in principle; this work, involving a working group of five headteachers, is planned to develop a set of proposals for consultation in Autumn 1999. The LEA has not involved schools sufficiently with the planning of the Education budget in past years. However, for the 1999-2000 budget setting process, teachers' representatives have welcomed the more open approach adopted by elected members.

Personnel Services

110. The quality of personnel advice is satisfactory or better: although the change in the age of transfer has made heavy demands on the service, it has responded well, as the responses to the school survey and evidence from school visits show. However,

expenditure on personnel services is higher than the average for county councils and the highest in the Audit Commission's sample.

111. The County Council was unable to provide precise details of the full costs of the service to schools. Evidence from school visits suggests that not all schools were aware of a recent review of Personnel services. Information on staffing, on teacher sickness and on turnover was not readily available.

Property Services

112. The service provided by the School Organisation Team is satisfactory. Expenditure on building maintenance is high compared to other authorities in the Audit Commission's sample, and higher than the average for Shire authorities. The "New Deal for Schools" allocation in 1998-9 was £1.079 million, allowing a significant number of repairs to be undertaken.

113. The LEA has only a few school buildings requiring serious repair, although there are schools with longstanding deficiencies in specialist areas, which inhibit the teaching of aspects of the National Curriculum. Evidence from school visits and the responses to the school survey shows that schools, overall, view the condition of school buildings as satisfactory, although ground maintenance is less well regarded. A small number of schools visited were in dire need of external decoration. Although condition surveys have been completed, more work is needed to establish databases for the assessment of sufficiency and suitability.

114. The LEA is beginning to give asset management planning a higher priority, through its bid to be a pilot authority to trial the sufficiency and suitability elements of asset management planning. This has the potential to help schools to understand the basis for individual decisions about the prioritisation of future work.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Services

115. Schools are generally very satisfied with the support from BEMIST, both on software support and on dedicated training, but are considerably less satisfied with support for hardware from the central IT unit. While the cost of ICT support is low compared to other Shire authorities, there is no co-ordination or monitoring of ICT initiatives by the LEA. Some schools make use of the Intranet established by the LEA, but there is insufficient guidance on the best use of electronic communication to reduce the burden of bureaucracy.

116. The LEA lacks a clear and comprehensive strategy for ICT administration. The LEA has not formally assessed the ICT competency of school staff in order to match future support to needs in the schools. Some schools are making good use of ICT to improve school administration, to benchmark school and pupil performance and to develop teaching, learning and target setting; others have a long way to go.

SECTION 5: SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING STANDARDS.

Improvements in schools visited

117. Standards of achievement in most schools visited had improved since their last inspection; however, the LEA's overall contribution to that improvement was variable. Support for improving literacy and numeracy is broadly satisfactory. School profiles produced by the LEA are very helpful to schools in reviewing their progress and setting targets, and support from the assessment team is highly regarded. Support for schools in special measures is satisfactory but mechanisms for identifying schools causing concern at an early stage, and for supporting schools with weaknesses, need to be developed further. Support for senior managers and governors is satisfactory or better, but support for newly appointed headteachers and for middle managers needs is not consistent.

118. The inspection team made judgements about improvements in 16 primary, six secondary, three special schools, and a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Seventeen schools had made sound or better progress since their Section 10 inspection, six had made only limited progress and two had deteriorated in terms of pupils' achievements. Inspectors also made judgements about improvements in schools in the quality of teaching, school management, governance, the use of performance data and target setting, and improvements, generally, in numeracy and literacy. These are reported separately, and in more detail, in the remainder of this section. Generally, there have been wide ranging improvements and in aspects of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. Improvements in the quality of teaching; school management and in literacy and numeracy in secondary schools are patchy.

119. The LEA's overall contribution to schools both in relation to their needs and in its effectiveness in securing improvements was also patchy. It was, overall, unsatisfactory in fifteen of the schools visited. It is a matter of concern that seven schools, identified in Section 10 reports as having issues that should have triggered significant intervention or support by the LEA have not received effective support. Even in the schools visited where LEA support has been effective, this was sometimes a reaction to requests for support rather than proactive intervention by the LEA. In part, this is a consequence of the LEA's policy decision described earlier.

120. The responses to the school survey indicate that schools regard LEA support for curriculum planning, teaching methods and classroom management as unsatisfactory; support for the teaching of literacy, numeracy, ICT and religious education as satisfactory or better. Support for the teaching of other subjects was judged to be broadly satisfactory. Support to improve the quality of early years provision was judged to be better than average.

Support for improving standards in literacy

121. Standards in literacy in Buckinghamshire schools are close to national averages in Key Stage 1. For English at Key Stages Two and Three they are well above national

averages. Targets set for Key Stage Two for 2002 are realistic and challenging, given current levels of attainment. In GCSE examinations in 1998, 68.2 per cent of pupils achieved Grades A-C, compared with 40 per cent nationally. Girls achieve higher standards than boys do, and the gap in performance is widening. The LEA has targeted improvements in boys' attainment in all key stages in its Literacy Action Plan.

122. The Literacy Plan is ambitious and comprehensive. Its key areas are reflected in the EDP. The priorities have been identified from an analysis of standards in Buckinghamshire schools in relation to other relevant sources and national data. The approach to the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) is practical. The plan covers all key stages and promotes the inclusion of a wider range of strategies than the NLS, such as family literacy, early literacy, language development and the use of ICT to raise standards. However, some of the success criteria in the Literacy Action Plan use indicators that are insufficiently clear for evaluation.

123. In addition to the English adviser, the LEA has two consultants for the implementation of the NLS. The LEA has made a reasonable start to the NLS and the process, including training, is well managed. Training is clearly focused and helps schools to develop good practices. Attached advisers have worked systematically and thoroughly with schools on target setting and the process is now complete. All advisers have had training in the NLS and they are now ready for monitoring schools to which they are attached. In addition, the LEA has sought to appoint 12 county teachers to work for half a term each in schools where standards of literacy are particularly low. Five are now in post.

124. The Schools' Library Service is leading on the National Year of Reading initiative and has been providing advice on reading resources to support NLS. Literacy summer schools did not operate in the LEA in 1998, but a bid has been made for three in each area for summer 1999.

125. Literacy and English have improved in four of the seven schools where literacy was a focus for the visit. These improvements included: better literacy policies; revised schemes of work and assessment schemes; well-organised literacy hours in the primary sector; higher attainment, particularly in the use of a range of reading cues; increased understanding of the sound and spelling systems; and accurate use of grammar and punctuation. These have all contributed to the achievement of higher standards. Teaching in these schools linked together the key skills of oracy and literacy effectively and there was evidence of good planning to deliver the dedicated time for literacy in order to make best use of whole-class and group activity.

126. The effectiveness of the LEA's support for literacy was satisfactory in four out of five primary schools, where training and other guidance had led to improvements. A good example of effective LEA support was the impact of the initial intensive support by a literacy consultant who, in one school requiring considerable help, had spent three half days observing literacy teaching, with feedback to teachers and supporting work in the classroom on shared and guided reading. In the same school, the attached adviser had worked with the headteacher on target setting and on preparing a post-OFSTED plan for literacy, and was also monitoring its implementation. In the other schools, the benefits were limited more to training that increased teachers' understanding of the literacy strategy and how it could be used most effectively in the context of individual schools.

127. LEA support and guidance for raising standards in literacy in secondary schools is at an early stage, as it is nationally. This was evident from school visits. Although help had been given in writing various management documents and revising the schemes of work, insufficient attention had been given to improving classroom practice or monitoring the implementation of plans.

128. Overall, the LEA strategy and support plans for literacy are well conceived, but the schools are not yet benefiting from a consistently high quality of service, which is appropriately matched to each school's needs.

Support for improving standards in numeracy

129. Standards in numeracy in Buckinghamshire schools are above national averages at the end of Key Stages One and Two. At Key Stage Three they are well above national figures. For several years, standards in mathematics at GCSE have been above national averages.

130. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls in mathematics at the end of Key Stages One, Two or Three. However, girls perform better than boys at the end of Key Stage Four. Attainments are rising year-on-year at Key Stages One, Two and Three, but there is considerable variation in the performance of pupils and schools across all phases.

131. The LEA has drawn up a numeracy plan in response to the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). The plan is based on County-wide consultation with schools and also reflects the priorities of the EDP. Despite not being a pilot authority, the LEA is well advanced in its plans to implement the NNS at Key Stage 2 and has already appointed one co-ordinator to plan training for the summer term. Another 1.5 fte staff joins the LEA in April. The training strategy is well conceived and schools in the first phase are appropriately targeted. The LEA uses a Key Stage 2 database, trend lines and three-year rolling averages when selecting schools for the first phase of initial training and implementation. Schools visited considered the quality of initial training for NNS and advice to be good.

132. Numeracy was a specific theme in visits to four primary and three secondary schools. In five schools - two primary and three secondary - some improvements have taken place: better understanding of number bonds and tables; use of a wider range of calculation strategies; the development of reasoning; and strategies for checking and estimating answers. Teaching was better planned and there was an effective blend of whole class, group, individual and plenary work. In the other schools, weaknesses have been identified, but strategies to deal with them lacked sufficient focus and the schools' approach to planning, management and delivery of numeracy need to improve.

133. The LEA has provided effective support in three of the primary schools visited. This consisted of guidance for post-OFSTED action planning in numeracy, subject management, curriculum structure and teaching approaches, all of which were identified as weak areas. In addition, in two secondary schools, where standards of mathematics are already good, effective guidance has been given on developments in the use of IT, staff appointments and

general management issues on a consultancy basis for which the schools have paid. These schools only needed light-touch guidance, and the support provided was appropriate.

134. The LEA does not monitor the management and delivery of mathematics in secondary schools unless the mathematics adviser is brought in by the schools for specific tasks. Purposeful intervention in secondary schools where problems emerged has therefore been difficult for the LEA, since the schools had no attached adviser and could choose whether or not to buy-in support time. Heads of mathematics are well supported in their knowledge and understanding of subject developments through conferences each year in the LEA.

135. In two schools where standards of numeracy are poor and strategies to deal with problems are unsatisfactory, the level of support from the LEA has not been sufficient to secure improvements. In one school, initial support and guidance had been provided, but this was not followed up and a number of problems persist.

136. The effectiveness of LEA advisory support in mathematics has been variable between schools. In secondary schools where support is purchased from the authority in relation to a clear specification for development, the quality has been good and has resulted in a number of improvements. However, it is more variable where the LEA has identified schools requiring support because of low standards of attainment. A weakness in the LEA's intervention strategy is that monitoring subsequent developments does not follow up initial support; consequently weak departments are not continuously challenged to improve.

Support to schools on the use of performance data and target setting.

137. The LEA provides a comprehensive range of performance data to support schools in target setting and improving standards. The LEA has a Planning and Information Unit that is responsible for the collection and analysis of performance data, and for providing guidance on their use to schools. Advisers have a role in discussing performance data with schools and in agreeing targets for the EDP.

138. In the school survey of Buckinghamshire, schools rated the provision of pupil performance data and guidance on their use higher than the average for other LEAs in the sample.

139. Support on the use of performance data and for target setting was a focus in 24 schools visited. Twenty-two schools were judged to be at least effective in these respects compared to fourteen at the time of their most recent OFSTED inspection: eleven schools had shown signs of improvement and no school had become less effective. In seventeen schools, the degree of support provided by the LEA was at least satisfactory in relation to their needs. In eighteen schools, the effectiveness of the LEA's support was also at least satisfactory. Overall, LEA support is effective and appropriate.

140. Since 1994, schools, with the exception of special schools, have been issued with their own School Profile. The document contains an analysis of the information contained on DLEE Form 7 and this part of the profile is issued in June each year. A second part,

management tool, but not all schools make, or are able to make, best use of it. Many schools need more guidance or training on how they could use the information more productively: this is more of an issue for primary schools than secondary schools. The potential value of the profile is, therefore, not fully exploited by the LEA or its schools.

141. The LEA provides an accredited baseline assessment scheme and all schools in Buckinghamshire with the relevant age group used the scheme in 1998. The results are analysed by the LEA and returned to schools, who find this analysis useful. Some are using this data to help with better grouping of pupils by ability, to plan future teaching more effectively or to track more precisely the progress of individual pupils throughout the year. The LEA is taking appropriate steps to improve the scheme; in particular, it will be made more accessible to all pupils, irrespective of their particular special needs

142. The setting of targets for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 as part of the EDP process has been completed. The large majority of schools have found the procedures, guidance, advice and training well managed, helpful and generally useful, although, for a few schools, it was confirming, and giving them confidence in, their own well-developed procedures rather than moving them forward significantly in their development. For some the experience was very positive with high quality, professional and challenging discussions from well-prepared and informed attached advisers. The LEA has gone further than the government in requesting schools to set targets. First and combined schools have been asked to set voluntarily targets for Key Stage 1; many have done so.

143. The advice, guidance and training from the LEA's assessment team received frequent praise from schools. Courses for teachers, network groups for assessment coordinators and an assessment conference for headteachers were all singled out for their good quality.

144. The LEA is currently piloting a commercial software package in about 50 schools in order to improve schools' analyses of data, target setting and the exchange of information between schools and the LEA. All types of schools in the pilot have found the training and support to be effective and the package itself useful, although follow-up to requests for further assistance has sometimes been slow.

145. The LEA has developed pupil transfer records to be passed between schools. Whilst potentially useful, their value is being undermined through their inconsistent use by schools. This applies in the transfer from some first schools to middle schools and from combined and middle schools to upper and high schools, where as much as half the records transferred might be missing national test results for pupils.

Support for schools causing concern

146. Two primary schools have been identified in OFSTED reports as requiring special measures to remedy problems identified in their inspections; one has since been removed from special measures and subsequently involved in reorganisation. Since September 1997, nine primary schools and one secondary school have been identified as having serious weaknesses.

147. Apart from monitoring OFSTED reports on individual schools and information derived from financial monitoring, the LEA has not had a clear mechanism for identifying schools that are at risk of being identified as having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures. It is a matter of concern that seven schools, identified in Section 10 reports as having issues that should have triggered significant intervention or support by the LEA have not received effective support. This has been a particular problem in schools that did not have an attached adviser. Once schools requiring special measures are identified, support is more effective.

148. The LEA is now addressing this problem, and the EDP contains proposals for identifying and supporting under-achieving schools.

SECTION 6: SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION.

Support to improve the quality of teaching

149. Since April 1996, data from OFSTED inspections indicate that the quality of teaching in Buckinghamshire schools is satisfactory or better in 88 per cent of lessons in both primary and secondary schools: national figures are 88 per cent and 87 per cent respectively; figures for similar authorities are 90 per cent and 89 per cent respectively. A higher proportion of teaching is good or better in the LEA's secondary schools (54 per cent) than in its primary schools (48 per cent). Again, these figures are close to the proportions for schools nationally and in similar authorities.

150. Support for improving the quality of teaching was a focus in twenty-five schools visited. The quality of teaching is improving in only eight of these schools and is deteriorating in two. However, at the time of their most recent OFSTED inspection, the quality of teaching was already good or very good in fifteen of these schools. In sixteen schools, the degree of support provided by the LEA has been at least satisfactory, but unsatisfactory in nine, in relation to their needs. In fourteen schools the effectiveness of the LEA support was also at least satisfactory in improving weaknesses in the teaching. However, in eleven, support was not effective and weaknesses persist. The overall picture then, is very patchy with support neither being sufficiently and consistently related to the needs of schools nor sufficiently and consistently effective.

151. This picture is also reflected in schools' responses to the Audit Commission's survey. LEA support for curriculum planning, teaching methods, classroom management, and teaching of literacy and numeracy in secondary schools were rated, overall, lower than the average for other LEAs in the sample. Support for the teaching of other subjects, religious education, the curriculum uses of ICT, the teaching of numeracy in primary schools and the improvements in the quality of early years provision were, on the other hand, all rated, overall, higher than the average for other LEAs.

152. A key factor in this variability has been the policy that resulted in the budget for advisory and curriculum support being delegated to all secondary and special schools and devolved to some primary schools. Several schools have chosen not to buy in attached advisers, or have not bought support and advice appropriately to focus on weaknesses in teaching. Another key factor, though, has been the different practice across the advisory team and the lack of agreed procedures, shared with and understood by schools, regarding the way advisers, both attached and specialist, will fulfil the role of monitoring teaching and standards in classrooms and feeding back findings. That is not to say that good practice, which is highly effective and highly rated by schools, is not to be found: it is, and it is quite widespread. However, this is the result of individual arrangements between advisers and schools and particular ways of working by individual advisers rather than through any systematic, clearly articulated and well understood approach.

153. In schools visited, effective and valued work has been carried out by attached and

specialist advisers in the observation of teaching, and followed by constructive feedback which has helped the teacher, subject co-ordinator or headteacher to improve policy and practice. In schools where the quality of teaching is good, support has been slight; this is entirely appropriate and those schools respected this approach. In many schools, where it is needed, the monitoring of teaching or standards through classroom observations has been slight, if it occurred at all. This has prevented an external evaluation of strengths and weaknesses to be made, and almost all these schools regret that this did not occur. The LEA has proposed a change in the policy regarding the funding and deployment of attached advisers to address these weaknesses.

154. The above comments relate both to primary schools without a devolved budget for advisory support and to secondary and special schools, which have this budget delegated and are, therefore, free to negotiate and buy in the required support for teaching from either the LEA or elsewhere. Some of these schools are able to secure well-focused, good quality and effective support; others are less able to do so. From April 1999, the EDP shows that all schools are to have three days per year of support from an attached adviser. The Service is planning a more systematic programme of visits and more systematic procedures for monitoring and reporting on the quality of teaching.

155. A programme of courses on a variety of topics runs throughout the year for newly qualified teachers (NQTs). The overall quality is better now than in previous years because the LEA has amended the programme in the light of earlier feedback from NQTs and headteachers. A common criticism from headteachers, NQTs and their mentors is that there is no follow-up to these sessions in schools. Where it is good, NQTs have been observed by the school's attached adviser and given constructive feedback. This happened less in secondary schools; a fact highlighted in the secondary schools' rating of LEA support for the induction of NQTs on the Audit Commission's survey; it was rated the lowest of all LEAS in the sample.

156. The LEA runs a variety of courses that focus on teaching. The LEA is part of a consortium with another LEA and two Institutes of Higher Education. This link has helped schools to access a wider range of courses and has helped in the wider dissemination of good practice, including that from outside the LEA.

157. Dissemination of good practice also occurs by other means, for example: through subject networks, groups and conferences; and through a range of guidance documents. Recent guidance to schools on Year 3 and Year 7 curriculum issues relating to the ages of transfer was found by primary schools to be of good quality and of considerable use, but its usefulness was undermined when some secondary schools did not use it. In general, schools consider that there is insufficient support or guidance for curriculum planning

SECTION 7: SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOLS

Support to improve the management of schools

158. Inspection reports indicate that a higher proportion of primary schools are very good in relation to efficiency than found nationally. The proportion of secondary schools judged good or very good is similar to national figures.

159. The school survey showed that support for headteachers and senior managers is regarded by schools as satisfactory to good and is rated close to the average of other LEAs surveyed. There is a comprehensive range of written guidance and in-service training provision for headteachers and senior managers, based on a detailed analysis of needs. A Management Training Advisory Group was set up in 1997 to co-ordinate this work. Through the Professional Associate Initiative, experienced headteachers contribute to the training programme. Half of the recently appointed headteachers visited felt that they had received good support, in all cases, from the school's attached adviser. However four others had received little or no support, other than the identification of a mentor headteacher.

160. The quality and quantity of support for middle managers is unsatisfactory, in all the schools visited. The quality of support for heads of department or subject co-ordinators is variable and tends to focus on curricular and pedagogical issues rather than general approaches to leadership and management.

161. In the school survey, schools rated LEA support and advice before OFSTED inspections as satisfactory, but below the average of other LEAs. Nearly all the schools visited had received some help and advice before their inspection and all **but** four found this useful. All but two schools have satisfactory or good school development plans or action plans in place. Half the schools visited had received support from the LEA in drawing up their plan. Guidance and formats for school development plans and post-OFSTED action plans are to be evaluated and updated.

162. Provision of support for schools' strategies for improvement has been effective in about half the schools visited, including all the special schools. Five of the primary schools, one secondary and all special schools had received support for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of their action plans. In some cases, the lack of support was because schools did not have attached advisers or did not choose to buy this support. It is evident in some schools that such support is not needed. However there were four schools, in which significant weaknesses should have triggered LEA support and monitoring, which has not been provided. The LEA has identified this as a priority in the EDP for improving the quality of leadership and management in its schools. In general, where schools have attached advisers, the support is effective. Support from the Area Offices is more varied: only five schools felt that this was good; seven commented that previous good support had deteriorated following re-organisation and changes in personnel.

163. Guidance has been produced to assist headteachers in monitoring and evaluating the work of their schools, but in very few cases was there evidence of systematic and effective monitoring and self-evaluation. The EDP appropriately includes proposals for supported self review. There is a considerable amount of work to be done to implement these proposals.

Support for Governors

164. Support, advice and training for governors, whilst delivered both centrally and through Area Offices, are co-ordinated by the Head of Planning and Information. The Governor Development Service's main function is to provide a development/training programme for governors, including annual conferences, but it also provides a governor helpline service, produces briefing documents for governors, a termly newsletter and maintains an up-to-date governor database. In relation to governing bodies, the Area Offices are responsible for arranging the clerking of governing bodies, for managing various briefing meetings and for co-ordinating a range of other LEA services to support school governors.

165. In the school survey, the overall provision of advice and information to governing bodies, and support in terms of their constitutions and appointments of governors were rated as satisfactory to good, and the same as the average for other LEAs sampled. This was the case across both the primary and secondary phases.

166. Support for governing bodies was a focus in 25 schools visited. Twenty-three governing bodies were judged to be making at least a satisfactory contribution to the management of their schools, compared to twenty-two at the time of their most recent OFSTED inspection: nine showed signs of improvement, two showed signs of being less effective. In twenty schools, the degree of support provided by the LEA was at least satisfactorily related to their needs. In twenty-three schools, the effectiveness of the LEA's support was also at least satisfactory. In both schools where the contribution of the governing body had deteriorated, the effectiveness of the LEA was nevertheless judged to be satisfactory. Overall, LEA support is appropriate and adequate with a few exceptions.

167. During 1998/9, about 1000 governing body meetings were clerked by the LEA. About 50 governing bodies received advice and support in their appointments of a new headteacher or a deputy and sometimes a subject co-ordinator /head of department, about 1500 governors were involved in training and development sessions and attendance's by governors at a variety of briefing meetings came to almost 1000. These are impressive figures.

168. Almost 90 per cent of schools use the LEA's clerking service. This service is well regarded by schools and governing bodies, and is considered to be generally effective and expert. A number of governing bodies has had several different clerks in recent years and this has impaired their effectiveness and helpfulness to those schools. At its best, the clerking service is an effective means of communicating with the LEA; is responsive to requests for advice and guidance; and provides reliable advice. Governing Body clerking is bought on an annual basis by all schools wanting the service, and has been since the

introduction of LMS. Details are set out in the Service's brochure. However, governing bodies are not aware of any service specification for clerking or what it actually costs then They are, therefore, unable to gauge whether what they receive provides value for money or not.

169. Over 80 per cent of governing bodies purchase the Governor Development Programme. The courses and annual conferences for governors largely meet the needs of those attending, but not always. In general, training courses for newer governors are well received and better regarded than those for more experienced governors, but views varied widely, sometimes about the same course or conference. The best are well targeted to meet the needs of those attending, are tightly focused on significant current issues and are pragmatic in their approach. The Buckinghamshire Governor Consultative Group is the main forum for steering the development programme and receives regular feedback from meetings of link governors. This group includes representatives of the Buckinghamshire Association of School Governors, which has the role of lobbying on behalf of governors.

170. In addition to courses and conferences, there are termly meetings between officers and chairmen of governing bodies, seminars for leading governors, meetings for governors responsible for special educational needs and link governor meetings. These provide an effective means of keeping governors up-to-date and, for many, are an essential network of communication channels between them and the LEA. Governors regarded these meetings as useful and, for some chairmen, they were regarded as essential to enable them to do their job.

171. In about a quarter of the schools visited, the governing bodies had received a significant quantity of valuable support and advice on their appointment of a new headteacher or a new deputy. Vacancies on governing bodies are not high: overall eight per cent of governor posts in the schools were vacant at the end of June 1998; seven per cent of LEA governor posts were vacant.

APPENDIX 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE LEA

Characteristics of the pupil population

Indicator	Date	Source	LEA	National
1. Number of pupils in LEA area of 1997 compulsory school age	1998	DfEE Form 7	64354	
2. Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals				
i. primary	1997	DfEE Form 7	6.0	22.8
ii. secondary	1997	DfEE Form 7	7.3	18.2
3. Percentage of pupils living in households with parents/carers		ONS Census of Population	19.5 47.7	13.5 31.0
(i) with Higher Educational qualifications	1991			
(ii) in Social Class 1 and 2	1991			
4. Ethnic Minorities in population aged 5-15. Percentage of ethnicgroup:	1991	ONS Census of Population		
Asian			0.3	0.5
Bangladesh			0.1	0.8
Black African			0.2	0.6
Black Caribbean			1.0	1.1
Black Other			0.6	0.8
Chinese			0.2	0.4
Indian			0.9	2.7
Other			1.3	1.1
Pakistani			4.2	2.1
White			91.1	89.9
5. Percentage of pupils:				
(i) with a statement of SEN				
primary	1997	DfEE Form 7	2.8	2.6
secondary	1997		4.3	3.9
(ii) attending special school				
primary	1997	DfEE Form 7	1.4	1.1
secondary	1997		2.6	2.0
6. Participation in education:				
(i) % 3- and 4- year-olds on the roll of a maintained school	1997	LEA	66.4	56
(ii) % pupils aged 16 remaining in full time education.	1997	LEA/DfEE	62.4	70(1996)
(iii) % pupils aged 16 staying on in the LEA's maintained school sixth forms	1997	DfEE	52.6	28(1996)

(b) Organisation of schools

1. Number of:	Number	County	GM	VA
Nursery schools	4	4	0	0
Nursery Classes	23	20	0	3
First schools	76	66	0	10
Middle schools	35	30	2	3
Combined schools	88	66	7	15
Secondary upper schools 11-19	21	16	4	1
Secondary grammar schools 11-19	13	11	2	0
Special schools	15	15	0	0
Pupil Referral Units	6	6	0	0

Source: LEA

Pupil/teacher ratio

	Year	LEA	National
All	1998	20.3	18.9
Nursery	1998	23.7	18.6
Primary	1998	24.0	23.7
Secondary	1998	17.2	16.9
Special	1998	7.4	6.2

Source: DfEE & LEA

Class size

Percentage of classes

Size of class	Year	LEA	National
31 or more KS1	1997	39.9	29.0
KS2	1997	48.3	37.9
36 or more KS2	1997	5.6	2.3
32 or more KS2	1997	8.8	3.5

Source: DfEE

Surplus Places

Percentage of surplus places

% surplus places	Year	LEA	National
Primary	1997	7.3	10.0
Secondary	1997	8.7	12.0

c) Finance

Indicator	Source	Year	LEA	National
% expenditure in relation to standard spending assessment	LEA	1997 .98	102.5%	-
Funding per pupil: £ per pupil Primary 0-4 5-6 7-10	CIPFA	1996 .97	951 1098 1066	1279 1180 1149
£ per pupil Secondary 11-13 14-15 16+	CIPFA	1996 .97	1465 1674 2428	1567 1931 2440
Aggregated schools budget: £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1996 .97	1431 2035 7319	1486 2053 7945
General schools budget: £ per pupil Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1996 .97	1980 3090 12483	2022 2694 12595
Potential schools budget: Primary Secondary Special	CIPFA	1996 .97	1636 2228 8129	1665 2233 8819
Capital expenditure: £ per pupil	CIPFA	1996 .97	243	129

APPENDIX 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

PUPILS' ATTAINMENT

Attainment at age 7 (Key Stage I)

	Year	% of pupils achieving Level 2 or above					
		Teacher Assessment			Tasks/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1996	84.2	79.3	+4.9			
	1997	86.1	80.4	+5.6			
	1998	85.3	81.4	+3.9			
English (reading)	1996	83.0	78.6	+4.5	83.1	78.0	+5.1
	1997	85.8	80.1	+5.8	85.9	80.1	+5.8
	1998	84.2	80.8	+3.4	81.5	77.4	+4.0
English (writing)	1996	82.6	76.6	+5.9	85.0	79.7	+5.2
	1997	83.5	77.5	+6.0	86.2	80.4	+5.7
	1998	84.0	78.9	+5.0	85.9	81.4	+4.5
Mathematics	1996	86.0	82.2	+3.8	86.5	82.1	+4.4
	1997	88.9	84.2	+4.7	88.3	83.7	+4.5
	1998	88.3	85.5	+2.9	87.8	84.8	+3.0
Science	1996	87.6	84.1	+3.5			
	1997	88.7	85.5	+3.1			
	1998	88.7	86.5	+2.2			

Source: DfEE

2. Attainment at age 11 (KEY STAGE 2)

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 4 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1995	64.6	56.8	+7.8	63.0	48.5	+14.5
	1996	68.7	60.1	+8.7	70.2	57.1	+13.1
	1997	72.3	63.4	+8.9	74.0	63.2	+10.8
	1998	n/a	n/a	n/a	73.9	64.7	+9.2
Mathematics	1995	61.2	54.5	+6.7	54.5	44.9	+9.6
	1996	67.0	59.9	+7.1	62.3	53.9	+8.4
	1997	71.1	64.1	+7.0	69.9	62.0	+7.9
	1998	n/a	n/a	n/a	64.5	58.5	+6.0
Science	1995	67.6	64.5	+3.2	74.7	70.2	+4.5
	1996	71.3	65.1	+6.2	70.6	62.0	+8.6
	1997	73.6	69.5	+4.2	75.0	68.8	+6.2
	1998	n/a	n/a	n/a	74.0	69.3	+4.7

Source: DfEE

Attainment at age 14 (KEY STAGE 3)

	Year	% Pupils achieving Level 5 or above					
		Teacher assessment			Task/tests		
		LEA	National	Difference	LEA	National	Difference
English	1995	77.4	63.9	+13.6	75.9	55.3	+20.6
	1996	75.4	60.3	+15.1	71.5	55.6	+15.0
	1997	73.5	60.2	+13.3	73.7	55.6	+17.1
	1998	n/a	n/a	n/a	80.6	65.1	+15.5
Mathematics	1995	74.5	62.4	+12.1	73.9	58.0	+15.9
	1996	76.5	61.5	+14.9	75.6	56.7	+18.8
	1997	76.0	64.0	+12.0	75.0	60.7	+14.2
	1998	n/a	n/a	n/a	74.4	59.9	+14.5
Science	1995	72.3	60.6	+11.7	70.5	56.4	+14.1
	1996	72.6	59.7	+12.9	72.3	56.4	+15.9
	1997	72.3	69.2	+10.1	74.9	60.8	+14.1
	1998	n/a	n/a	n/a	72.1	56.5	+15.6

Source: DfEE

Attainment at age 16 GCSE results in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
1 A*-G	1994	96.7	93.7	+3.0
	1995	96.1	93.5	+2.5
	1996	96.2	93.9	+2.3
	1997	96.2	94.0	+2.2
	1998	97.1	95.2	+1.9
5 A*-C	1994	57.9	40.7	+17.2
	1995	57.7	41.2	+16.5
	1996	59.1	42.6	+16.6
	1997	61.7	43.3	+18.5
	1998	61.1	44.4	+16.8
5 A*-G	1994	93.0	87.0	+6.0
	1995	92.8	89.5	+5.3
	1996	93.0	88.1	+4.9
	1997	93.6	85.5	+5.1
	1998	93.5	89.6	+3.9
Average points score per pupil	1994	41.7	33.5	+8.2
	1995	42.3	34.6	+7.7
	1996	42.5	35.0	+7.4
	1997	44.1	35.6	+8.6
	1998	n/a	n/a	n/a

Pupils aged 15 at the beginning of the school year and on the roll in January of that year

Source: DfEE

Attainment at age 18 A level results in maintained schools

Average point score per pupil

Number entered	Year	LEA	National	Difference
2 or more	1994	18.4	15.1	+3.3
	1995	19.0	15.9	+3.1
	1996	20.1	16.8	+3.3
	1997	20.0	17.1	+2.8
	1998	20.8	17.5	+3.3
Less than 2	1994	2.4	2.7	-0.3
	1995	3.2	2.7	+0.5
	1996	2.9	2.7	+0.2
	1997	2.9	2.7	+0.2
	1998	3.1	2.8	+0.2

Source: DfEE

Vocational qualifications of 16 year olds in maintained schools

Level Achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries	1994	93.9	87.9	+6.0
	1995	100.0	85.3	+14.7
	1996	92.5	79.2	+13.3
	1997	41.4	80.1	-38.7
	1998	n/a	n/a	n/a

Vocational qualifications of 16 to 18 year olds in maintained schools

Level achieved	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Pass entries	1994	95.1	84.8	+10.4
	1995	93.5	80.2	+13.3
Pass entries (Advanced)	1996	96.7	92.2	+17.3
	1997	85.0	67.8	+9.6
Pass entries (Intermediate)	1996	86.7	78.9	+17.6
	1997	79.1	77.1	+10.1

The percentage of students who were in the final year of a course leading to approved vocational qualifications who achieved them on the basis of the work done in that year

Source: DfEE

Attendance

Percentage of pupil sessions:	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Attendance in Primary schools	1995	94.7	93.6	+1.1
	1996	94.5	93.4	+1.0
	1997	94.7	93.9	+0.8
Attendance in Secondary schools	1995	92.5	90.6	+1.9
	1996	92.3	90.5	+1.8
	1997	92.9	90.9	+1.8

Source: DfEE

Exclusions

Permanent exclusions

	Year	LEA	National	Difference
Primary schools	1996	0.2	0.3	-0.1
	1997	0.4	0.4	0.0
Secondary schools	1996	1.8	2.9	-1.1
	1997	1.9	3.4	-1.5

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

Tel: 0171 421 6800

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Education Department
Buckinghamshire County Council
County Hall
Aylesbury
Bucks. HP20 1UZ