

Inspection report
BROMLEY
Local Education Authority

Date of inspection: May 2003

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Basic information

Name of LEA:	Bromley Local Education Authority
Address of LEA:	Civic Centre Stockwell Close Bromley BR1 3UH
Lead inspector:	Jillian Munday HMI
Date of inspection:	May 2003

Introduction

1. This inspection of Bromley local education authority (LEA) 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 (December 2001)*. The inspection focused on the effectiveness of the LEA's work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.

2. The inspection was based on a range of material, which included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, and data, some of which was provided by the LEA. That material also included school inspection information; HMI monitoring reports; audit reports; documentation from, and discussions with, LEA officers and members; focus groups of headteachers and governors; staff in other departments at that local authority; and diocesan representatives. Other agencies and LEA partners submitted written evidence of participation and joint working and participated in focus groups. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier Ofsted/Audit Commission report on this LEA (published in June 1999). A questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the work of the LEA, was circulated to all schools, and its results were considered by the inspection team. The response rate to the questionnaire was 65 per cent.

3. For each inspected function of the LEA, an inspection team makes a judgement which is converted into a numerical grade. An inspection team may make up to 52 key inspection judgements. An inspection judgement is made against criteria for each inspected function of the LEA. These criteria, (and the guidance notes on functions of an LEA that may be inspected by Ofsted), can be found on the Ofsted website. The numerical grades awarded for the judgements made in this inspection are appended to this report, along with short explanations of what each numeric grade represents. Judgements on inspected functions of an LEA are made during the inspection of the LEA and indicate the effectiveness of the LEA's performance of individual functions at the time of the inspection. The numeric grades awarded by the inspection team complement the areas of the report which comment on the individual functions scrutinised on this inspection, and, as such, must be considered in the light of those comments.

4. Some of the grades are used in the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) profile for the education service. It is intended that the CPA for education will be updated regularly such that grades from this inspection will contribute to the next assessment.

5. The CPA for the education service takes account of the performance of all aspects of the local service, including pre-school and adult education. The CPA for education is composed of a number of inspection judgements, as well as other performance indicators, such as improvement trends at Key Stage 3. The assessment, published in December 2002, gives star ratings for each local authority for a range of local services, for example social services, benefits, environment etc., whereas this report focuses on the local authority's work to support school improvement.

Commentary

6. Bromley LEA is satisfactory. It is an affluent borough with very low unemployment and a high proportion of householders with higher education qualifications. Bromley is also a borough of contrasts and in two wards there is significant social deprivation. People from minority ethnic heritages make up 7.5 per cent of the population compared with 12.9 per cent nationally. At the time of the previous inspection Bromley was a competent LEA, but scope for considerable improvement was evident in tackling the under-performance of schools, supporting pupils with special educational needs, integrating grant maintained schools and providing sufficient school places.

7. Since the previous inspection the LEA has focused appropriately and successfully on establishing more rigorous school improvement procedures. Many of its responsibilities in this area are now performed to a highly satisfactory level, and some are good. It knows its schools better and has improved the effectiveness of its intervention and support, significant concerns at the time of the previous inspection. Under-performing schools are now more rigorously challenged and there have been improvements in standards and in the quality of teaching in many of these schools. However, to a certain extent, progress has been impeded by the inappropriate expectations and attitudes of some schools. A high percentage (more than 25 per cent) of pupils move into the borough when transferring to secondary school. This mobility puts considerable pressure on the provision of school places, and the LEA works hard with its schools and does well to accommodate all these 11 year-olds.

8. Concerns about levels of funding are widespread in the authority. Senior officers have worked unstintingly to deliver an education service within the available budget. Many functions have been performed effectively, and some very well. However, in a number of specific areas related to the promotion of social inclusion, budget constraints have hampered the LEA's progress in recent years. These constraints are partly due to the council's overall budget allocation for education which is significantly lower than the average for outer London boroughs, but also arise from the way in which the LEA apportions and spends its special educational needs and access funds. Reductions in staffing, particularly within the education psychological service, the education welfare service and teams working with more vulnerable groups of children, have meant that action has frequently been limited to addressing statutory duties and preventative work has not been possible. Unacceptably, the council is unable to demonstrate how it will secure its legal responsibilities in relation to increasing disabled access to school premises. This example demonstrates clearly the critical effect which funding decisions can have on the delivery of key responsibilities. None of this has helped officers to build the positive working partnership with schools that was recommended in the previous inspection report.

9. Since 1999 there has been insufficient targeted support with respect to challenge in special schools and an inadequate focus on improving provision for those at risk of social exclusion. The extent of these shortcomings has not always been fully recognised by officers, and the analysis of performance and identification of potential risks has not been sufficiently robust to convince the council of the need to review fundamental budget decisions. Weaknesses, therefore, partly result from service cuts made on top of already limited management resources, and have been exacerbated by recruitment difficulties. This is

an unsatisfactory situation. Decisive action by officers and elected members is required if standards are to rise and if strategic plans for the development of inclusive practice across the borough are to be implemented effectively.

There are strengths in:

- support for gifted and talented pupils;
- assuring the supply and quality of teachers;
- the strategy for school improvement, including the Education Development Plan (EDP);
- support for literacy;
- support for numeracy;
- support to school governors;
- the strategic planning of services to support school improvement;
- value for money of services to support school improvement;
- support for health and safety in schools;
- the provision of school places;
- early years work; and
- partnerships with external agencies.

The following weaknesses remain:

- the extent to which the LEA targets its resources to priorities;
- the strategy for SEN, the effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN function to support school improvement and value for money in SEN provision;
- provision for children who have no school place;
- school attendance;
- behaviour at school;
- support for looked after children;
- combating racism; and
- the leadership provided by elected members.

10. Although the LEA has made satisfactory progress in responding to the recommendations of the previous inspection, improvements in the way the council demonstrates its leadership in education are crucial if Bromley LEA is to improve further. Despite corporate plans which highlight improving services for children and young people as a key aim, the council's emphasis on low costs has engendered in schools a negative and entrenched view of elected members' commitment to education and this has impacted poorly on relationships. Much of the planning and procedural working of the council has improved since the previous inspection. It remains a competent authority, but has not achieved the good or excellent status it desires. Without improved strategies and re-directed resources, to

enable more secure forward planning, particularly with regard to more vulnerable groups of children and young people, the LEA's capacity for improvement is no more than satisfactory. This judgement is reflected in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, published in December 2002, which gave the education service in Bromley two stars for its current performance and for its capacity to improve.

Section 1: The LEA's strategy for school improvement

Context

11. The profile of Bromley has changed little since the previous inspection. It remains a largely affluent borough with low unemployment. Although Bromley ranks 292 on the national indices of deprivation (with one being the most deprived and 354 the least deprived) it has sharply contrasting areas with some significant pockets of disadvantage that affect schools in particular wards. Overall, 14.1 per cent of primary children and 13.4 per cent of secondary pupils are eligible for free school meals, compared with 18.5 per cent and 16.9 per cent nationally. However, in 12 primary and two secondary schools the percentages are well above the national average.

12. Out of an overall population of 295,535 the number of pupils attending Bromley schools has risen by approximately eight per cent since the last inspection to a total of 46,967. Eight per cent of the total population is from minority ethnic backgrounds compared with nine per cent nationally. For the school population, the Bromley figure is 8.4 per cent. However, percentages vary considerably between schools, with some having up to 50 per cent of their pupils from minority ethnic groups. Bromley also has a very large resident Traveller community, the largest in Britain, which is concentrated in two wards. There is substantial cross-boundary movement of pupils and in secondary schools one in four pupils is resident outside Bromley. In primary schools the figure is one in fourteen.

13. There are 78 primary schools in the borough, 20 of which have specialist provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), and five of which are foundation schools. All 17 secondary schools have post-16 provision, three have specialist SEN provision and 14 are foundation schools. There are five special schools and one pupil referral unit. Approximately 10 per cent of children aged between three and five are educated in nursery classes attached to primary schools.

Performance

14. A detailed analysis of the performance of schools is supplied to the LEA annually in the form of a statistical profile compiled by Ofsted. Key features of schools' performance in 2002, and changes since the previous inspection, are outlined below. Where comparisons are made, these are set against performance nationally and performance of the LEA's statistical neighbours.¹ Generally, performance in schools has improved or has been sustained in line with national trends and remains above national averages in a pattern similar to that reported in 1999.

15. Data from Ofsted inspections of schools indicate that the number of schools in Bromley where pupils' performance on entry is average or above average continues to exceed both national and statistical neighbour figures. Variations remain between schools. The

¹ Bromley's statistical neighbours are Bexley, Bury, Croydon, Kingston-upon-Thames, Sefton, Solihull, Southend-on-Sea, Stockport, Sutton and Trafford.

LEA's own baseline scores indicate a drop in prior attainment on entry to school since the previous inspection, especially in speaking and listening, shape, space and measures, and attitude to learning.

16. At Key Stage 1 the percentage of pupils attaining Level 2 in reading and science was above national averages and in line with those of statistical neighbours. In writing and in mathematics, Level 2 performance was in line with both national and statistical neighbour averages. As at the time of the previous inspection, the percentage of pupils attaining standards higher than the national expectation remained above or well above national averages in all these subjects, and above statistical neighbour averages in science and writing. The rate of improvement over three years is below the national trend in English, well below the national trend in mathematics and in line with the national trend in science. However, these low rates of improvement are understandable given the higher than average attainment on entry to school across all Bromley schools.

17. At Key Stage 2 the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 was above national averages in English and mathematics, and in line with the national figure in science. Performance at this level was in line with that of statistical neighbours in all three subjects. Performance at Level 5 was well above national average and above the average for statistical neighbours in English. In mathematics and science, Level 5 attainment was above the national average and in line with the average for statistical neighbours. This pattern is similar to that seen in 1999. The rate of improvement over three years is below the national trend. This again is understandable given the above average standards at the end of Key Stage 1. The progress made by pupils between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with that seen nationally.

18. At Key Stage 3 the proportions of pupils attaining Levels 5 and 6 were above national averages in all subjects, and in line with those of statistical neighbours except in English where they were above average. The rate of improvement is below the national trend but the progress pupils make between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 is in line with the national average.

19. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 A*-C passes at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) was well above national average and above the average for statistical neighbours. There were no schools which achieved less than the government's floor target of 25 per cent 5A*-C grades. Proportions achieving 5 A*-G and 1A*-G passes were above the national averages and in line with statistical neighbour averages. However, these figures mask under-performance in some schools. The rate of improvement is in line with the national trend for pupils achieving 5A*-C grades and 5A*-G grades, but below the national trend 1A*-G achievement. Over three years from 2000-2002 the progress made by pupils between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 was above average.

20. In 2001 attainment at age 17/18 was above national averages, but below the average for statistical neighbours. In advanced level General Certificate of Education (GCE) courses post-16 students in Bromley schools reached standards that were above the national average. In its own analysis, the LEA recognises that although GCSE and A level results are well above the national average, improvement has not been rapid enough and focused work is needed if it is to meet its targets for 2004. Unvalidated data for 2002 indicates an

improvement in the average point score for mainstream schools with an improvement in attainment in eleven of the fifteen most popular subjects, including English Literature, mathematics and the sciences.

21. Attendance in 2001 was above the national figure for primary schools and in line with the national figure for secondary schools. However, since that time, there has been a sharp increase in unauthorised absence in secondary schools at a rate greater than that of statistical neighbours. Permanent exclusions were in line with the national figure for primary and secondary schools. However, at both phases, this overall comparison masks the significant increase in the number of pupils excluded since the previous inspection. In particular, fixed term exclusions in secondary schools are now above the national and statistical neighbour averages.

22. Ofsted school inspection data shows that the proportion of primary schools in Bromley judged to be good or very good in their last inspection is in line with national and statistical neighbour averages. The percentage of secondary schools in these categories is above the national average and in line with the statistical neighbour average. One school has recently been judged by Ofsted to be in need of special measures, and a further three schools have serious weaknesses.

Council structure

23. There have been significant changes in the structure of Bromley council and in the organisation of services since the previous inspection in 1999. At that time political control was held by a joint Liberal Democrat and Labour council. The Conservatives regained control in 2001. From May 2002 an executive structure has been adopted, with nine members, seven of whom have portfolio responsibilities. A further two are representatives of the minority parties. Seven policy, development and review committees carry out scrutiny functions, with an eighth committee having an overarching role. Local views are sought and information is discussed through local consultation meetings on specific issues. The council's chief executive heads a chief officers' executive group which is responsible for strategic decision making, policy implementation and review.

24. Council changes are reflected in changes of management structure at departmental and officer level. An emphasis has continued to be placed on procurement, with significant externalisation of service provision. Through the children and young people's portfolio and the children and young people's strategic partnership, new arrangements are aimed at securing more effective working between education, social services and health, as well as with other stakeholders. Many support services are now managed and provided centrally for all council customers, and those responsible for the delivery of these functions to schools are accountable to the director of education. Within the education department, services are grouped to ensure clear management and focus on school improvement.

Funding

25. The level of education funding available to Bromley has been average for an English LEA. In 2002-2003, Bromley's education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) was close to the national average for both the primary and secondary sectors. From 2000-2003,

Bromley's SSA increased at a very similar rate to the national average. However, under new arrangements, the increase in Bromley's 2003-2004 Formula Spending Share was below the national average.

26. Since 1998/9, however, in terms of revenue expenditure the council has chosen to spend significantly below the SSA on education and to prioritise other areas. These include limiting increases in council tax and providing additional support to priority service areas such as social services. By 2002/3, the education budget was almost six per cent lower than the SSA. Nevertheless, over this period, schools have benefited from considerable capital expenditure.

27. This spending pattern is reflected in the size of the individual schools budget (ISB), particularly for the primary sector. In 2002/3, Bromley's primary ISB per pupil was seven per cent below the national average, and the secondary ISB was two per cent below. Compared with 19 similar authorities in its generic group, Bromley had the second lowest ISB per pupil in both sectors.

	Bromley £ per pupil	Statistical neighbours £ per pupil	Outer London boroughs £ per pupil	England £ per pupil
Primary individual schools budget (ISB)	2078	2155	2395	2223
Secondary ISB	2871	2857	3183	2940

Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002-2003.

28. Bromley's spending on centrally held elements in the local schools budget (LSB) shows a different pattern from that of similar authorities. Spending on strategic management and school improvement were 32 per cent and 44 per cent lower than average. In contrast, funds retained centrally for access and SEN were well above average, largely because the LEA had not delegated major areas such as funding for pupils with statements and because of retained money for school meals.

	Bromley £ per pupil	Statistical neighbours £ per pupil	Outer London boroughs £ per pupil	England £ per pupil
Strategic management	68	87	99	101
School improvement	21	29	37	31
Access	140	105	125	131
SEN	224	199	196	160
Totals (rounded)	452	419	457	423

Data source: CIPFA Section 52 data 2002-2003.

29. Bromley is a debt free authority which has an effect on the amount of additional funding it can access. There are advantages to this status. For some years, the education service has benefited from capital receipts, allowing total capital investment of £68m over ten years. In particular, it has created extra capacity for rising rolls. There are also some disadvantages. Being debt free means that the LEA cannot access supplementary credit approval. Neither has it identified additional funding to enable systematic planning of projects to improve the suitability of school premises and access for the disabled.

30. Where Bromley is not disallowed from accessing external grant income because of its debt free status, it has adopted a proactive approach and achieved considerable success. It has included £2.75m for education and training in the Crystal Palace area from the Single Regeneration Budget, £1m capital plus £70,000 per annum revenue from Sure Start for Penge, and £1.9m for physical education and sports from the New Opportunities Fund.

The LEA's strategy for school improvement

31. The LEA's strategy for school improvement is good and its implementation of these plans is highly satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection, planning and implementation were sound. Since then, considerable improvements have been made in consultation procedures, the provision of data for schools and its use in identifying needs, and the reporting of schools' performance to elected members.

32. School improvement activities, as outlined in the Education Development Plan (EDP), are aligned to national priorities and are based securely on a detailed audit of local strengths and weaknesses. There is good synergy with other council and departmental plans, and officers and members are fully committed to the achievement of EDP objectives. Clear action is being implemented to ensure the challenging national attainment and local public service agreements (LPSA) targets can be met. Although targets for Key Stage 2 English and for Key Stage 4 GCSE attainment require significant increases in performance, the current highly focused activity is likely to make them achievable. Separate plans to address disparities in the performance between similar schools rightly place an emphasis on school self-management and accountability. There are no EDP priorities which specifically focus on improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) or on support for vulnerable children and young people, although references to work with these groups are threaded through many EDP activities.

33. The recommendations arising from the Best Value review of the EDP have been addressed with some successful outcomes, for example, those relating to recruitment and retention of staff, costings and evaluation. EDP activities for the current year are costed in sufficient detail to enable a value for money analysis of the impact of separate activities to be carried out. Additionally, there are good performance management arrangements which secure the accountability of officers and advisers, and enable progress to be carefully monitored and recorded. Success criteria are very clear and progress against them is reported annually to council members, schools and other partners. Evaluations are used well as the impetus for future action. Planning for school improvement is coherent and there are good links between the EDP and other activities, especially the Bromley children's project and the South East England Virtual Education Action Zone. Schools support the priorities and their own improvement plans are increasingly being aligned to EDP activities.

34. With some exceptions, mainly due to staffing problems or financial difficulties, action to implement EDP priorities is in line with plans and there are clear examples of progress. For example, the wide range of training and development activities targeted at the implementation of the Foundation Stage curriculum in early years settings and schools is proving largely successful and improvements have already been evident in the outcomes of Ofsted inspections. In spite of the negative initial reaction from some schools, the Key Stage 3 strategy is being successfully implemented in all secondary schools. Although targets were not met, there is evidence of improvement in pupils' progress and in the quality of teaching. At all key stages, increasing numbers of pupils are achieving at the higher levels.

The allocation of resources to priorities

35. This area is unsatisfactory. The 1999 report noted the relatively low level of revenue funding available to schools, the high spending on SEN provision, and recommended that the authority should review the funding formula taking account of the needs of schools. Progress has been made in some of these areas, but not all. The total amount spent on SEN, including that held centrally and that distributed to schools, has reduced by some 3 per cent a year over the last two years and is now in line with similar authorities. Schools are still funded at a relatively low level. Schools have been consulted regularly about the funding formula but they have little confidence in the outcome, largely because total resources are regarded as inadequate. Monitoring of schools' budgets is weak.

36. Although the council has identified children and young people as a high corporate priority, this commitment is not fully reflected in the level of funding available to schools. It leaves limited scope for reallocating funds to priorities such as vulnerable children. A high proportion of the funding formula is allocated on the basis of pupil numbers, with little allowance for social factors. The LEA has been able to redress this only to a modest extent by using additional funds. For example, part of the additional budget support grant is being distributed to schools to promote social inclusion. More success has been achieved in funding major cross-cutting projects for vulnerable children through Sure Start, the Children's Fund and the European Social Fund.

37. Budget decisions have been made in a transparent way and schools have been involved, yet many of them remain dissatisfied. In the schools' survey, the majority of respondents rated the LEA's consultation on the planning and review of the education budget as poor or very poor. Schools are unconvinced by the council's budget strategy and believe it is holding back resources corporately which should be allocated to schools. In 2002/3, Bromley delegated 86.1 per cent of its LSB to schools against a government target of 87 per cent. For 2003/4, the DfES has calculated that Bromley has passported 100.1 per cent of available funds to schools, which they consider satisfactory.

38. Budget making is generally accurate. The provisional end of year position for the 2002/3 education budget suggests a net overspend of some £0.5m against a budget of £130m. The main reason is the under-estimate of the number and cost of out-borough placements for pupils with special educational needs.

39. Monitoring of school budgets is weak. Primary school budget surpluses are at an exceptionally high level in Bromley. In 2002/3, more than 70 per cent had surpluses of more

than five per cent. This is unusual in an authority with a low ISB. Largely because of a lack of capacity in the finance team, limited efforts have been made to establish whether these surpluses are justifiable. Some schools report that they are holding on to resources in case 'things get worse in the future'. At the time of this inspection, three schools, all of which were secondary, had budget deficits. Delegation has been withdrawn from one school which is in exceptional circumstances. The LEA is working with the other two to implement a recovery plan.

Recommendations

In order to improve the use of resources:

- the council should reconsider the level of priority given to education in the budget making process; and
- officers should work with primary schools to minimize unjustifiable budget surpluses.

Strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value

40. This area is satisfactory with highly satisfactory capacity to improve, which reflects the two-star ratings awarded to the council in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It was not assessed at the time of the previous inspection. The Corporate Assessment in 2002 acknowledged the council's technical and professional capacity and its commitment to continuous improvement. It also identified some weaknesses in performance management systems and recognised that greater investment was needed in communication and change management initiatives. Best Value principles are increasingly being used to assess performance outside the formal review programme. A comprehensive performance management system is being put in place.

41. The council's Best Value Performance Plan was considered satisfactory by the external auditor. The LEA has learned from its early approach to Best Value and has now targeted high risk areas such as SEN and management services to schools. A mechanism, which includes a scrutiny function for elected members, is currently being developed to ensure that improvement plans are implemented. Education areas outside the Best Value review programme, such as information and communications technology (ICT), are being subjected to review using Best Value principles. Most of the formal and informal reviews are still at a relatively early stage and their effect cannot be fully assessed. However, there have already been some positive outcomes such as the clustering of management services to schools at the corporate centre, giving economies of scale and access to greater expertise.

42. The education service has a clear view of the progress it has made since the previous inspection in its strategy and support for school improvement. It is aware of the areas still requiring further development and is generally accurate in its assessment of current performance. However, the service has a less accurate perspective on its performance in special educational needs and social inclusion. Its own evaluation of progress and effectiveness lacks rigorous risk assessment and an analysis of the effect policy decisions

might have on schools, pupils and families. As a result, its self-assessments in many of these areas are too high.

43. The council has identified its corporate priorities which are set out in its community plan and Best Value Performance Plan. Until recently, there has been no comprehensive corporate system for ensuring that these objectives are delivered. From April 2003, a new performance management system is being implemented which translates corporate targets into chief officer targets and then cascades them on to all staff. The education department is well placed to introduce this system as it already holds Investors in People accreditation and has a detailed appraisal system in place.

Section 2: Support for school improvement

Summary

44. Following the previous inspection, the LEA's focus on developing its school improvement functions has been largely successful and in the majority of areas, its performance has improved. In spite of a low level of resourcing for these central services, there are no unsatisfactory areas. In particular, the work of the standards and effectiveness services has been targeted suitably at supporting, challenging and improving the performance of under-performing schools and those with other identified weaknesses. The collection and use of performance data is now well developed, national strategies are being implemented well and some very good work is being achieved in supporting schools' provision for gifted and talented pupils. The contract services provided by the LEA are responsive to schools' needs and are generally well managed.

45. Within this improved picture, however, some areas for further development remain, most particularly in raising standards attained by minority ethnic groups including Travellers, and also in the support provided for information and communications technology (ICT) in the curriculum. Communication, consultation and relationships within the services are very good but those with schools, although improving, are less productive. The LEA has made significant attempts to engage previously designated grant maintained schools. Nonetheless, the process of building the partnership has been slow and to some extent impeded by some schools' inappropriate expectations of a modern LEA. Overall, however, the school improvement strategy has continued to have a positive impact and there is currently only one school designated by Ofsted as being in need of special measures. Given this positive developing picture, further improvement is likely although, if not overcome, resource and staffing difficulties are likely to slow the rate of progress.

The effectiveness of services to support school improvement

46. The effectiveness of the LEA's services to support school improvement is highly satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection, there were separate inspection and advisory services that were generally soundly managed. Since then, the two services have been brought together successfully to form the standards and effectiveness services, which carry the major responsibility for supporting schools in their efforts to improve.

47. The standards and effectiveness services are well led, with a clear focus on school improvement. Service planning is good and is linked effectively to the Education Development Plan and to Ofsted's inspection criteria. The plans are clear, detailed, costed and time-limited. Their success criteria are specific and there are good procedures for monitoring and evaluation. A rigorous analysis of the services' performance is published in an annual report.

48. The induction procedures for staff of the standards and effectiveness services are satisfactory. Their individual performance targets are linked well to service plans and the EDP, and the arrangements for performance management are highly satisfactory. The provision for continuing professional development is targeted and effective. The staff of the

services are deployed sensibly, according to their specialisms and expertise and to the identified needs of schools. However, this is not always clear to schools because of regular changes in personnel, as officers leave for promotion or level transfers on higher salaries in other LEAs. The staff are well qualified, with appropriate expertise and up-to-date knowledge. Their experience is well matched to the needs of the primary and secondary phases and recent appointments have strengthened their senior management expertise. A teacher adviser for special educational needs works within pupil and student services to support individual students. However, the standards and effectiveness services lack experience and skills in special educational needs and in issues related to pupils' access to education. Until recently, little has been done to fill this void. Suitable arrangements have been made to compensate for other gaps in expertise, such as in modern foreign languages, and greater use is being made of experienced headteachers and other external sources of support, including the creation of a list of quality-assured consultants.

49. The staffing of the standards and effectiveness services is lean but the quality is high. The capacity for improvement is good, providing the LEA is able to retain its staff or continue to replace them with others of equal experience and expertise. The costs of the standards and effectiveness services are very low, in comparison to other LEAs. The services provide good value for money.

Monitoring, challenge and intervention

50. The LEA's definition of monitoring, challenge and intervention is satisfactory. Bromley's approach is in line with the Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations and is explained in detail in its policy entitled 'priority schools'. Schools were consulted about the policy, although they were not fully involved in its formulation. The document is revised regularly and contains all the essential elements of an effective policy and strategy for monitoring, challenge and intervention but in its present form it is too dense to ensure schools' understanding. Rightly, the standards and effectiveness services intend to produce, in cooperation with schools, a clearer statement of the policy and strategy for monitoring, challenge and intervention.

51. There is a clear emphasis on developing self-managing schools and the tariff of intervention and support is suitably differentiated. The LEA knows its schools well and the support and challenge to schools is based on effective and extensive use of data. There are clear and robust procedures for school self-evaluation and the setting of targets. Where schools are identified for additional support or intervention, the action taken is decisive and appropriately matched to the identified needs.

The focusing of LEA support on areas of greatest need

52. The extent to which the LEA's support is focused on areas of greatest need is highly satisfactory. An appropriate distinction is made between support to which schools are entitled and that which they may purchase. School improvement funds are delegated fully to schools and the LEA provides a costed package of training and support from which they may select according to their needs. The schools understand this, but some in the primary phase would prefer to have less autonomy. Conversely, the secondary schools, all but one of which

previously had grant maintained status, are accustomed to managing their own affairs and make comparatively little use of what the LEA offers.

53. The standards and effectiveness services use performance data well to target their work with schools. The support they provide is deployed according to appropriate criteria and is increasingly closely focused on particular needs and weaknesses in individual schools. This approach is rightly based on the principle of intervention in inverse proportion to success and reflects the LEA's commitment to the development of self-managing schools. However, although schools are fully aware of the criteria, a significant number of them do not agree with the differentiated allocation of support and the LEA still has some way to go in gaining their ownership of this process.

The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring and challenging schools

54. The effectiveness of the LEA's monitoring and challenge is highly satisfactory. Good use is made of performance data. At the time of the previous inspection, the monitoring system was sound but not consistently rigorous, and written reporting to schools was inadequate. The LEA had only recently started to provide schools with a set of performance data, which was used inconsistently. Since then, good progress has been made.

55. Monitoring is conducted through a suitably differentiated and planned programme, although it has been impeded from time to time by shortages of link school improvement advisers and changes in their allocation to schools. Link school improvement advisers are competent and well informed. The link role is crucial to the LEA's effectiveness in supporting school improvement and most schools are rigorously monitored and challenged, particularly in the primary phase, although some variability remains across secondary schools. Schools are rigorously challenged chiefly through the process of annual review and target setting. However, there are still high-performing schools that could do even better and others that are stuck at a low level of achievement, and the standards and effectiveness services are rightly giving these schools high priority. In most cases, as recommended by the previous inspection report, the annual self-evaluation review visits carried out by link advisers are effective. This is not true, however, of visits to the special schools as the standards and effectiveness services lack the necessary expertise. At the time of the previous inspection, written records of visits to schools were inadequate but schools now receive clear, evaluative reports that provide useful information to aid their improvement.

56. Monitoring is informed by an increasingly wide range of data, compiled for consideration at the monthly meetings of a cross-departmental group, the priority schools action group. This group targets school improvement resources effectively but is often viewed with suspicion by schools, which are not sufficiently involved in its deliberations.

57. The previous inspection report recommended that the LEA should develop better pupil and school level performance data to identify under-achievement and should help schools to make more effective use of the data to set challenging targets and identify strengths and weaknesses. The schools are now provided with a comprehensive range of data that is of high quality. It complements the national provision and is sent to schools in profiles that include the local performance of individual pupils and of groups, such as those identified by ethnicity or gender. Data that link attendance and exclusion rates with pupils' progress are

planned for inclusion in the profiles within the next two years. Rightly, the LEA is also working with the special schools to enable them to benefit from the quality of data that is now provided for primary and secondary schools. Effective guidance and training in the use of the data have been provided for headteachers, assessment co-ordinators and governors. Link school improvement advisers have also been trained to help schools to use the data to set robust, challenging but realistic targets. This is a process made easier by the fact that advisers now have similar data to schools on individual pupils.

58. Electronic communication is well developed in the LEA and in 2002, for the first time, the schools received their profiles electronically, so improving their ability to use the data analytically and strategically. The transfer of data from primary to secondary schools has improved and has the potential to aid pupils' transition between the phases considerably. For example, teacher assessment data from Year 6 are now made available to the secondary schools in June, to aid the formation of pupil groups in Year 7. Year 6 national curriculum test results from Bromley and other contributory LEAs are provided in early September for the start of the new school year. However, the LEA has had only limited success so far in helping the secondary schools to place greater trust in the performance data from the primary phase.

The effectiveness of the LEA's work with under-performing schools

59. This aspect of the LEA's provision is highly satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection, there were three schools requiring special measures and two with serious weaknesses. The LEA had a clear strategy for supporting schools in difficulties. Schools requiring special measures received generally effective support, although that for schools with serious weaknesses or other difficulties varied in its effectiveness. Since then, satisfactory progress has been made but there is room for further improvement.

60. The proportion of Bromley's schools that have been found by Ofsted inspections to require some or much improvement is below the national average, although it is above the corresponding figure for its statistical neighbours. The LEA's policy and procedures for identifying, monitoring and supporting schools causing concern are sound. The monitoring of schools has been largely effective and, until recently, there were no schools requiring special measures. However, the monitoring of the pupil referral unit was not sufficiently rigorous to prevent it falling into special measures in March 2003. In addition, one primary school, previously in special measures, was judged to have serious weaknesses in 2002. Two other schools are also in the serious weaknesses category. Clear exit strategies are now in place to help schools emerge from special measures and serious weaknesses categories successfully.

61. The LEA uses its own categories of concern to focus its support where it is most needed. The previous inspection report recommended that it should intervene earlier in all schools with weaknesses and its development of good performance data is now enabling it to do this. Most schools causing concern receive planned, co-ordinated support according to their needs. Rightly, the LEA gives a high priority to the development of effective senior managers who are supported to implement and sustain school improvement. Increasingly, consultant headteachers and deputy heads are used in this process. In most schools, difficulties are tackled promptly and incisively. However, the LEA has experienced some

resistance from about half of the locally-identified schools causing concern in helping them to make the required improvements within the specified period of a year. Sensibly, it is now considering more rigorous intervention, including the issuing of formal warning notices.

62. The LEA has not hesitated to use other intervention powers when necessary. It has withdrawn budgets, replaced staff and made additions to governing bodies. One school in special measures was closed and very successfully given a fresh start, re-opening with a new name. The progress of schools causing concern is monitored regularly by senior officers and useful reports are provided for councillors. Progress reports to the head and governing body of schools are helpful in moving the school forward.

Support for literacy and numeracy

63. The LEA's support for raising standards in literacy and numeracy is good. The previous report noted early indications of effectiveness and good progress has been made since 1999. An important strength of the LEA's approach is that the literacy and numeracy teams work very closely together. Very good links have also been established with other strategies, initiatives and curricular areas.

64. The LEA has approached the strategies with commitment and enthusiasm and both are well planned. The teams plan together and a joint steering group is to be established before the end of the current school year. Action plans are effective and link well to the EDP and the work of other teams, such as the learning support service and the team supporting more able pupils. The teams are well managed, knowledgeable, approachable and responsive. Both literacy and numeracy teams are stretched by regular vacancies as staff move to promoted posts elsewhere. Both teams had vacancies at the time of the inspection. The literacy team is particularly under pressure as it is only funded from national grants for 1.5 consultants, in comparison to 2.0 in numeracy.

65. There are some good examples of joint action with other services that are securing improvements in attainment and attitudes to learning. The literacy team has worked closely with the learning support service to give additional early literacy support to targeted pupils in 11 schools. The outcomes of the first phase of the project are very positive with 20 out of 21 pupils making significant progress. Joint English and ICT courses are innovative and highly regarded by teachers, and interesting projects have been developed around Year 6-7 transition. The literacy team has also been involved in an initiative targeted at raising the attainment of African-Caribbean pupils, and the numeracy team liaises closely with the Traveller support service in providing additional support for identified pupils.

66. The availability of improved performance data has enabled the support for literacy and numeracy to be more precisely targeted, both at school and individual pupil level. This is necessary as there have been difficulties in raising the performance of schools that seem unable to improve on low levels and those that are 'coasting' at higher levels. Recent focused initiatives in individual schools are showing evidence of improvements. However, raising attainment in these two groups of schools, and in those that need support for both literacy and numeracy, remains a major challenge for the LEA. Although achievable, the 2004 targets are very challenging and the LEA acknowledges that it will need to concentrate on these groups of schools and to continue to improve the precision with which it deploys its

support if the targets are to be reached. Appropriately, it emphasises the important roles of co-ordinators and headteachers in bringing about improvement.

67. The schools know what level of support to expect and those not identified as needing focused attention are able to purchase training and consultancy according to their needs. The training, provided both centrally and in individual schools, is of high quality and includes provision for learning support assistants and parent helpers. In-school support is equally effective in raising the quality of essential aspects of practice, such as planning, assessment and lesson observation. Leading teachers provide strong support in both strategies.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

68. The LEA's support for curricular ICT was the subject of a light inspection in order to explore the reasons behind the low rating given to work in this area in the school survey. It was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and the director of education's evaluation is that this continues to be the case. No evidence was found to invalidate this judgement.

69. Rigorous targets have been set for ICT at Key Stage 3 and the implications of this, including the possibility of targets for Key Stages 1 and 2, are being discussed with primary schools. Training on assessing the quality of pupils' work has been provided for primary co-ordinators but systems for assessment in ICT are not well developed and neither the schools nor the LEA are in a strong position to evaluate accurately what pupils know, understand and can do in this curricular area. The LEA has some knowledge of schools' progress. It analyses the judgements about ICT in Ofsted school inspection reports but, with the advent of short inspections, this is a diminishing source of evaluative information. Schools are also encouraged to participate in on-line audits but, while these provide useful information about curriculum and resources, they are unreliable in relation to the accurate assessment of standards.

Recommendation

In order to improve the support for curriculum ICT:

- devise, with schools, a secure system that will enable them to assess pupils' attainment and progress in ICT and will help the LEA to have an overview of standards in the subject.

70. Support for curricular ICT is available for schools to purchase but its impact has been mixed. While some schools report that it has been of great benefit, others are critical. The LEA's arrangements for enabling schools to take up New Opportunities Fund training were appropriate and all but one have done so.

71. National Grid for Learning (NGfL) funding has enabled progress towards the national targets for pupil:computer ratios in schools. While these have been exceeded for special schools, they have not yet been reached in the primary and secondary schools. The funding for NGfL was devolved equally to schools on the basis of the number of pupils on roll and the LEA now accepts that there was insufficient targeting of resources according to individual schools' needs. A majority of schools purchase technical support brokered by the

LEA, which has taken steps recently to address their dissatisfaction with aspects of the service.

Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3

72. This aspect of the LEA's provision is highly satisfactory. It was not included in the previous inspection. However, the inspection report recommended that the LEA should develop an effective partnership with the secondary schools, and its approach to the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy is a successful example of its continuing efforts to do so. It went to great lengths to match the implementation of the strategy to the schools' needs and views, and a co-operative approach has emerged. All the secondary schools have appointed senior managers as Key Stage 3 strategy co-ordinators.

73. The LEA's strategy is comprehensive and well planned, and provides for good continuity from Key Stage 2. In spite of difficulties in retention, a well-managed, expert and responsive strategy team is in place and implementation of the strategy is progressing well. Support and training of high quality are provided in English, mathematics and the foundation subjects. The schools have found the science strand less effective so far, chiefly because of LEA staffing shortages, and the ICT strand has been slow to start. The LEA chose not to appoint a consultant for ICT, preferring to use its existing ICT advisory team, but this has meant that the subject has not been represented as effectively in the strategy team as the other four curricular strands. The modern foreign languages element of the strategy is provided by a neighbouring LEA. Sensibly, this was negotiated by Bromley, which does not have the required expertise. Similar arrangements have not yet been made to compensate for the school effectiveness services' lack of expertise in special educational needs. Two of the five special schools have not appointed Key Stage 3 strategy managers. The LEA is involved in a national pilot design and technology strategy for Key Stage 3.

74. The consultants are working with considerable skill, effort and enthusiasm to develop positive attitudes towards the strategy in the schools. To date, the greatest cross-curricular impact has been in literacy and the most effective cross-phase co-operation has been in the provision for gifted and talented pupils. There have been several suitable initiatives, such as lesson observations in Years 6 and 7 and joint primary/secondary co-ordinators' meetings, to strengthen knowledge, understanding and trust between the primary and secondary phases. The LEA has also invested strongly in bridging and transition units of work, with mixed responses from schools.

75. The schools now have the benefit of good data to support transition and the consultants also use performance data effectively to identify schools, and groups of pupils within them, for particular support. In addition, schools are able to request support for needs that they have identified through self-evaluation. A strong feature of the work in schools is that it is provided according to written contracts that specify the contributions of the LEA and the school. It is too early to evaluate the effect of the strategy on attainment but consultants report generally good progress in Years 7 to 9, with positive changes in the practice of teachers and in pupils' attitudes.

Support for minority ethnic groups, including Travellers

76. Support to schools in raising standards of minority ethnic and Traveller children remains satisfactory, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Budget cuts, resulting in staffing reductions, to both the ethnic minority achievement service and Traveller support service (TSS) have had an adverse effect on the level of LEA support to schools and families. The school survey indicated a considerable level of concern over cuts to staffing. Nevertheless, some improvements have been made since the last inspection. Both teams have been integrated into a more coherent pupil support service and have had opportunities for joint training. Clearer line management systems are in place. The allocation of grant funding is more transparent and schools are positive about the work of individual team members. The work of the TSS is highly focused and greatly valued by the Traveller community. Additional grant funding has been allocated to provide support to asylum seekers and refugees. Opportunities within the local authority for celebrating cultural diversity are too limited.

77. Analysis of attainment data to identify the progress of different groups was undertaken for the first time in 2002. It shows that minority ethnic pupils as a whole are underachieving in comparison to all Bromley pupils in every aspect except mathematics at Key Stage 2. The attainment gap between both African-Caribbean pupils and Traveller pupils and their peers widens as they progress through school. Service plans set insufficient targets related to improvements in pupil attainment. The LEA has begun to collect and analyse data on the attainment and rates of exclusion of minority ethnic groups, which is a targeted action in the EDP. Data on their attendance, mobility and special educational needs are not yet available. However, officers have recognised the need for such data and new systems are being put in place to enable the production of appropriate monitoring reports on which to base future action.

78. There have been some useful initiatives to improve performance; for example, the one term deployment of a part-time reading recovery trained teacher within the Traveller service to work on early intervention, and the employment of an additional teacher for two terms to work with a small number of schools and link with numeracy and literacy advisers. While these projects have been welcomed by schools there is concern at the short term funding and the ability of such initiatives to demonstrate sustainable results in such a limited time. Parents of Traveller pupils indicate real concern at the impact of cuts to the TSS, amounting to around 20 per cent over the last year. With reductions in staffing within both branches of the pupil support service, capacity for further improvement is poor.

79. A range of training opportunities is available to schools. An appropriate focus this year has been on training schools to independently carry out language assessments for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). This was crucial where, although a small number of schools (16) have significant numbers of black and minority ethnic pupils, many have small numbers or isolated pupils with significant needs. Written guidance to schools, which includes a policy on bilingualism, is sound. The work of the EAL and of the Traveller support services are not yet closely enough aligned with that of school link advisers within the standards and effectiveness services. Action has been taken to improve the monitoring of budgets devolved to schools following the recommendations from an LEA commissioned external audit in 2002.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

80. Although resources of time and money are limited, the LEA's support for gifted and talented pupils is very good. This aspect was not included in the previous inspection but it is a strong, long-established feature of Bromley's planning and provision, which is available to all schools that choose to purchase it.

81. The comprehensive programme of training, support and consultancy for senior managers, teachers, teaching assistants and governors benefits from experienced and expert management and enables schools to keep in touch with national developments. Two Bromley headteachers are delegates to the termly Department for Education and Skills (DfES) standing conference on gifted and talented pupils. Over 80 per cent of the schools have developed policies and appointed co-ordinators for their work with gifted and talented pupils. Schools are provided with guidance on policy and practice, and teachers, including newly qualified teachers (NQTs), have been trained in the identification of gifted and talented pupils. Co-ordinators meet regularly with the manager of the support, who has co-operated with a university to establish an advanced professional certificate course in developing the role of co-ordinators of support for gifted and talented pupils. Popular summer schools, held in two secondary schools, were monitored by the LEA and received very positive evaluations from pupils, teachers and parents. The LEA operates an advice line for parents.

82. Beacon schools play an important role in the provision of extension and enrichment activities as well as in the dissemination of good practice. A primary advanced skills teacher, specialising in work with gifted and talented pupils, also works closely with the LEA, supporting teachers in schools and disseminating good practice. In order to share good practice more widely, the LEA has recently, in co-operation with one university, begun to establish a partnership between state and independent schools. With another university, it has obtained a government grant for a research project on gifted sixth formers mentoring gifted children in Key Stage 1. A further partnership, with a charitable trust, has enabled the LEA to run master classes in science for gifted secondary pupils. A strong programme for young people who are talented in music, sport or the arts includes pupils in special schools. Bromley schools have gained more Sportsmark and Activemark awards than any other London borough and use the programmes to identify talent in sport.

Support for governors

83. The support for governors was good at the time of the previous inspection. The school survey indicates a significant difference between the responses of primary and secondary schools. Primary schools rate support as better than satisfactory, but secondary schools rate it as below satisfactory. No fieldwork was carried out in the current inspection but the evidence from the LEA's self-evaluation and from governors confirms that the good quality of provision has been maintained.

Support for school management

84. The LEA's support to school leadership and management is highly satisfactory and has some strengths. It is particularly well focused on schools where development needs in these areas have been specifically identified, through good analysis of data and information

including school Ofsted inspection reports. Good progress has been made since the time of the previous inspection when there were weaknesses in the support for strategic planning and self-reviews. There is now a clear, well-presented strategy for the development of leadership and management.

85. The range of provision for school management includes development of the role of middle managers, support for deputy heads, preparation for headship, support for heads in their first three years in post, and continuing headship development. The support for new senior managers was good at the time of the previous inspection and it has now improved to a very good standard. The LEA is a registered provider of training and support for new headteachers. In addition to induction and training, those new to headship are mentored by an experienced colleague and receive additional time from their link school improvement adviser. Similar provision is allocated to headteachers in difficulty. Participation in the National Professional Qualification for Headship and the Leadership Programme for serving headteachers is encouraged.

86. Link school improvement advisers have an important role in management development, particularly through the evaluation and challenge involved in the annual self-review visits. The previous report recommended that these should be more rigorously evaluative and the LEA has moved positively to implement this, by improving its performance data and by strengthening, through recent appointments, the senior management experience and expertise of the link school improvement advisers. Several advisers have national qualifications to advise and assess schools in relation to performance management. However, the secondary headteachers are, in the main, unconvinced of the LEA's ability to strengthen the quality of their schools' leadership and management.

87. The previous report recommended that the LEA should provide more written evaluation to headteachers and governing body chairs on progress in schools. The outcomes of link school improvement advisers' visits to schools are always communicated to headteachers in a written record. However, since the introduction of the electronic education management system, governing body chairs do not receive a copy directly but have to rely on the headteacher providing it. This is a retrograde step that does little to develop governors' active involvement in the running of schools.

Recommendation

In order to strengthen the role of governors in the management and efficiency of schools:

- restore the practice of copying written records of visits directly to chairs of governing bodies.

88. The LEA's system for self-evaluation was sound and consistent at the time of the previous inspection and this remains the case. All the primary schools and five secondary schools have been involved in self-evaluation training provided by the LEA, while others in the secondary phase have trained elsewhere. The LEA is now providing a course for middle managers. School self-evaluation is established and all the schools have systems. However, the impact is mixed in the primary phase, where officers are aware that some schools are reluctant to move from over-reliance on the LEA to self-management.

The effectiveness of services to support school management

89. The overall effectiveness of services to support school management is satisfactory with a good capacity to improve. They were not inspected in 1999. Services are generally responsive and well-managed but the way in which they are offered is inconsistent. Some schools are receiving insufficient help to enable them to become confident purchasers.

90. The LEA offers a range of provision to support schools. Services are free standing and purchasing one service does not have implications for the purchase of others. All the services inspected in 2003 offer a genuinely flexible 'pick and mix' approach so schools can choose the elements they think they need, and not just a single level of service. The complete range of LEA provision is set out clearly, although the degree of detail varies considerably between services with some providing insufficient information. Work has begun on improving the consistency of the information including a standardized charging policy, one-stop invoicing arrangements, common performance targets and shared specification frameworks. School representatives are involved in this process. At present, there are no set notice periods and schools can terminate contracts at virtually no notice, which can make forward planning difficult for the LEA. This position is hard to sustain and has been identified for review. The LEA's contract monitoring processes are sound and generally differentiated according to the level of risk.

91. Schools have a genuine choice about whether or not they buy through the LEA. Most secondary schools prefer to make independent arrangements as much as possible, often perceiving the LEA as unresponsive or offering poor value for money. These perceptions are not always based on up-to-date information. The LEA does not discourage schools from making these choices. In contrast, many primary schools are cautious purchasers and expect a high level of support. The LEA has provided some brokerage workshops but some schools are not yet confident, informed purchasers.

92. Schools which have chosen not to buy services from the LEA can still access appropriate advice, especially in complex technical areas. Often there is no charge. However, many secondary schools, especially those which were formerly grant maintained, are reluctant to access this help, because they consider they already have greater expertise.

93. **Finance, personnel and administrative ICT services** were well regarded by schools at the time of the last inspection. The LEA's own assessment is that they remain satisfactory. Although no detailed fieldwork was undertaken in these areas in 2003, evidence indicates the accuracy of the LEA's evaluations and the judgements therefore stay the same.

94. **Property services** are satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection some weaknesses were evident. There were particular concerns about the council's supervision of building projects, and the fragmentation of advice to schools, which was delivered partly by the corporate property division and partly by the education department. Appropriate action has been taken on both of these issues. Most schools now rate management of building projects as satisfactory, although some are dissatisfied with individual cases. Following a Best Value review, property services have been reconfigured in order to improve consistency. From January 2003, the separate elements sensibly have been brought together into a single corporate property and asset management division. However, there is no comprehensive property manual.

95. Sixty two per cent of schools buy in to the service level agreement (SLA), most of which are primary. All schools, including those without any service level agreement, can access technical and emergency advice, out of hours cover for major incidents, and support and guidance on managing projects they are funding themselves. In responding to the school survey the majority of schools judged the quality of building maintenance services as satisfactory, although there were exceptions particularly in the primary sector. Views were mixed about the value for money of building works managed by the LEA. Secondary schools were generally most critical, especially those which had chosen not to buy the LEA's services because of perceptions of high cost.

96. **Grounds maintenance services and catering services** are highly satisfactory. **Cleaning and caretaking services** are satisfactory. These three services were not inspected in 1999. Schools also rated these services as broadly satisfactory in their survey. All of them are delivered through external providers brokered by the LEA. There is no in-house provider.

97. Most primary and special schools buy in to the LEA's **cleaning and caretaking** contract while most secondary schools make their own arrangements. Technical advice is available to schools, including those without an SLA. There is a standard minimum level of monitoring supplemented appropriately by additional visits in the event of complaints.

98. **Grounds maintenance** is highly satisfactory. Fifty seven per cent of schools currently buy in to the LEA's contract management service. Most of these are primary. Many secondary schools do not buy in because they perceive this service as expensive and less reliable. However, this view is not necessarily based on up-to-date pricing information. Nevertheless, technical advice is readily available, including to schools not buying into the SLA. Monitoring arrangements are in place and intervention is prompt in case of problems.

99. **Catering services** are bought from the LEA by most primary and specials schools but by few secondary schools, many of whom consider it is more cost effective to broker their own providers. The catering service has developed good links with the council's environmental health department and now undertakes joint monitoring. This is based on a standard number of visits supplemented by extra input in the event of complaints. Technical advice can be accessed by all schools, not just those in the SLA. Compliance with statutory responsibilities is secured through monitoring visits. Adherence to nutritional standards is checked by supervisors. Checks are made that all schools comply with the LEA's free school meals policy. If take-up of free school meals falls below ten per cent of eligible pupils at any individual school, a special visit is made.

The LEA's work in assuring the supply and quality of teachers

100. The work of the LEA in assuring the supply and quality of teachers is very good though there are significant difficulties in filling posts and retaining staff. Vacancy rates are collected termly and exit data forms for teachers leaving Bromley are available on line to facilitate completion and ensure the strategy remains responsive to need. Between January 2001 and January 2002 a 22 per cent reduction in vacancies was evident. The LEA has a good reputation with colleges for support to newly qualified teachers and officers are proactive in contacting Bromley students at university and even young people in sixth forms with a view to future recruitment.

101. Effective liaison with the housing department has resulted in a shared data base of teachers seeking housing assistance and opportunities to rent or buy. Thirteen Bromley teachers have claimed the DfES *'Welcome back'* payments and a further 46 claimed payments under the DfES *'Golden Hello'* initiative. The LEA has developed a joint recruitment strategy with other London boroughs, has attended recruitment fairs and holds an open day. Officers have worked successfully to increase the number of teachers on the supply register. Eighty nine per cent of supply requests were covered last year.

102. Support and training for newly qualified teachers is highly valued and of excellent quality. Strategies include the use of Beacon schools and leading literacy and numeracy teachers to support school-based aspects of the programme. Careful and sensitive consideration is given to the pastoral and social needs of those new to Bromley so that new colleagues do not feel isolated. The strategy and programmes for continuing professional development are coherent, understood by schools and based on a good understanding and thorough audit of the needs of schools. External consultants and alternative providers are brokered increasingly well on behalf of schools. Effective arrangements for quality assurance are in place for LEA-provided and externally secured training. The LEA actively encourages and promotes teachers' involvement in national training programmes.

Section 3: Special educational needs

Summary

103. The previous inspection found the LEA's support for children with special educational needs (SEN) to be unsatisfactory overall. A great deal of work has been undertaken since then, much of it driven by a Best Value review (BVR) of the service. Improvements have been made, particularly in the development of a multi-agency approach to identification and assessment and provision for children in the early years. A draft policy and strategy are in place. There remain, however, significant weaknesses in some aspects of the LEA's strategy, its support with respect to challenge for school improvement and in demonstrating value for money. Progress in some areas has been impeded by budget cuts, which have resulted in staffing reductions within the education department whilst protecting schools' budgets.

Strategy

104. The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for SEN is unsatisfactory, although there has been some progress in this area of work since the previous inspection. The principles of making more inclusive provision for children with SEN are appropriate and well set out in the draft policy, which builds on a BVR undertaken in 2002. Schools and headteacher representatives were involved throughout the BVR and strategic planning processes. However, the final consultation period was short, given the importance of establishing widespread support for these important developments. Schools' engagement was disappointingly limited, there was too little involvement of parents, and the number of responses was extremely small. The implementation strategy sets out a wide range of suitable actions which the LEA intends to take. However, headteachers and some other agencies remain unsure as to the impact of more inclusive local provision on schools and services and how it will be funded.

Recommendation

In order to improve strategic planning for special educational needs:

- ensure that the views of parents, schools and pupils are taken into account and that they are more fully engaged in the planning process.

105. Bromley LEA places a high proportion of children and young people with statements outside the borough. The strategic plan sets out a commitment to reductions in out-of-borough placements and to making more comprehensive, quality local provision. There has been a very significant rise in the number of pre-school children who have severe or profound learning difficulties. Although the 2003-2004 SEN budget has been increased, the strategy does not adequately forecast the long-term impact that increased numbers of children with complex needs being placed in local provision will have on LEA special schools and mainstream schools with specialist units. Cuts to the educational psychology service (two posts in the last two years) have been financially rather than strategically driven. 17.4 per cent of all statements refer to emotional and behavioural difficulties, which is

significantly higher than in similar authorities or nationally. As yet, the SEN strategy is insufficiently linked to the strategy on supporting schools to improve behaviour.

106. The strategy focuses appropriately on working to reduce the number of requests for statutory assessment and improving the forecasting of future need. It identifies the need to improve the transparency of decision making, to allocate sufficient funding to avoid the need for a statement and to win the confidence of schools and parents. New criteria have been published for identifying special educational needs at school action and school action plus and a multi-agency panel which includes representatives from schools has done much to ensure that decision making is more transparent and seen to be fair. However, there is insufficient focus within the strategy on raising standards of attainment.

107. The LEA was required to have an Accessibility Strategy from 1 April 2003 setting out how it will work to ensure its schools are increasingly accessible to children and young people with a wide range of disabilities. A draft strategy has been drawn up. It sets out a general commitment to the strategic development of more inclusive mainstream schools. The draft contains an estimate that it will be two years before the LEA will have the required data from schools which will identify work required. Progress in implementing the plan has been impeded by the council's debt free status, which has prevented it from accessing the necessary capital funding. As a result, no priorities have been identified or suitable criteria published for releasing funds for adaptations to schools. This is unsatisfactory.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for children with special educational needs:

- identify priorities for increasing the accessibility of schools and agree a strategy as required.

108. Significant turnover in senior SEN officers during the last four years, due to promotion elsewhere, has contributed to a feeling in schools of uncertainty and changes in emphasis. A working group of elected members and LEA officers, which reports to the council's executive, has been established to monitor and evaluate progress, and to ensure implementation is consistent with the SEN strategy. Officers and members are aware of the need to ensure that there is more consultation on the detailed implementation plans as they are developed and put forward if they are to ensure support from parents, schools and other agencies.

Statutory obligations

109. The work of the LEA in meeting its statutory obligations with respect to children and young people with special educational needs is highly satisfactory.

110. The timeliness of the assessment and administration of statements is very good. Nearly 100 per cent excluding allowable exceptions, and 80.0 per cent with exceptions, are currently completed within 18 weeks. Statements are of satisfactory quality although learning objectives, even in some of the most recently issued statements, lack specificity. The LEA has increased the number of statements ceased each year but has published no criteria for this. Annual reviews are properly monitored and transition reviews targeted for

attendance by officers. Requests for statutory assessment are considered by a multi-agency panel which includes school special needs co-ordinators. Decisions are generally more open and consistent than previously. An objective set within the LEA strategic plan is a reduction by 50 per cent in the number of requests for statutory assessment by 2006. Management information is not yet sufficiently sophisticated for officers to be confident in predicting that this ambitious target will be met. There has been a 12 per cent rise in the number of pupils attending special schools between 1997 and 2002.

111. The number of tribunal cases has risen since 2001 and at over 30 this year takes a significant amount of the limited officer time available. The increase is a consequence of officers trying to demonstrate to parents that a range of needs can be met in mainstream schools without recourse to a statement. The LEA has developed a service level agreement with a national charitable organisation to provide a parent partnership service. All parents or carers of children undergoing statutory assessment are informed of the service. Schools report that they are less clear about how it operates. Evidence from interviews with particularly vulnerable groups, for example foster carers of looked after children and parents of Traveller children with special educational needs but who do not have a statement, demonstrates that these representatives were not aware of the service or the support it could offer.

SEN functions to support school improvement

112. Support for school improvement lacked co-ordination in the previous inspection. This function remains unsatisfactory, largely because target setting and challenge to the six special schools are inadequate. The school self-evaluation process does not sufficiently include performance indicators around the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. Although the LEA has modified the DfES 'Index for Inclusion' to support schools in assessing their practice, disappointingly only three schools have used it to date.

Recommendation

In order to improve provision and raise the attainment of children with special educational needs:

- secure more rigorous procedures for target setting and challenge in special schools.

113. Service plans are focused on process rather than attainment outcomes. The average rate of improvement in pupils gaining one A*-G grade at GCSE is below that of statistical neighbours and the national trend. The LEA does not ask schools to account for funds nor to demonstrate the outcomes for pupils of funds devolved for SEN. Nor does it monitor the annual reports of governing bodies to parents to ensure they are complying with statutory reporting requirements.

114. The education psychology service has clarified both the allocation of time and the range of activities they can offer to schools. This is good. However, it comes after months of providing an extremely limited service to some schools, arising from cuts to the service, recruitment and retention difficulties and resultant increasing demands made on team

members. In order to find sufficient time to provide a service to all schools the LEA has not been able to continue the part time secondment of an educational psychologist to the child and adolescent mental health service which was highly valued by schools.

115. Schools are positive about the work of individuals within LEA support services for children with behaviour, sensory and mild to moderate learning difficulties. Forums for special educational needs coordinators in schools are supported by the LEA and are well attended. They provide useful opportunities to share good practice. Where funds have been devolved to schools, they buy back into these services. There is developing linkage between support services and the work they do to extend good practice in the teaching of children with special educational needs, and the agenda of the standards and effectiveness services which focuses on attainment.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for children with special educational needs:

- improve liaison and joint working between pupil services and the standards and effectiveness services.

116. The LEA's work, alongside other key agencies, in the development and investment in early years provision at its specialist centre is excellent. The centre has received national attention for aspects of its work. Multi-agency approaches to tackling early speech and language difficulties are demonstrating real success. The commitment to early intervention and joint working demonstrates good capacity for overall improvement in working with children who have a wide range of special educational needs.

Value for money

117. The LEA's support for children with special educational needs provides unsatisfactory value for money. This aspect of the LEA's work was also criticized at the time of the previous inspection. The special educational needs budget was projected to be overspent by £1.47 million in 2002-3. This was the result of poor forecasting of pupil numbers as well as significant price rises by independent special schools. The LEA has invested in a new data system and within a term will be able to provide the detailed monitoring and forecasting reports required. While the capacity for improvement is now good, the LEA is currently unable to demonstrate that it is providing satisfactory value for money with regard to SEN spending.

118. Officers have followed the previous inspection's recommendation to devolve more funding to schools. A transparent matrix system is in place in secondary schools and is due to be implemented in primary schools next year. However, there are no agreed mechanisms for demonstrating the impact of devolved funding on the quality of teaching and learning and the attainment of pupils with special educational needs.

Recommendation**In order to demonstrate value for money in supporting children with special educational needs:**

- develop performance indicators based on improvements in pupils' attainment.

119. Officers are working hard to ensure that capacity within resourced mainstream and special schools is properly utilised. They have recognised that there is an urgent need to conduct an annual planning exercise with headteachers of these schools and with headteachers of special schools to ensure the number and type of places available fits the needs of the pupil population.

Section 4: Promoting social inclusion

Summary

120. A corporate approach to social inclusion is developing but has lacked sufficient urgency, and it is too early for the effect of this more joined-up approach to be measured. In many cases, funding cuts and difficulties in recruitment and retention have hampered progress. There are examples of good innovative projects across the borough and there are some strong advocates amongst council members. Overall the council's strategy is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the link between the regeneration agenda and the achievement of the council's and schools' targets is not comprehensively understood by all. The recently published community plan makes this connection clearer.

121. The supply of school places is managed well. The LEA has relatively few surplus places and planning has been generally effective. Admissions procedures are mainly satisfactory, as is asset management planning. Good advice is given to schools regarding matters of health and safety, and child protection procedures are sound. Too little progress has been made in the provision for children who are out of school, and support for behaviour and attendance are unsatisfactory. Looked after children have not been well supported in recent years, but significant developments are now underway to secure greatly improved provision for this vulnerable group. The council's measures to combat racism are poorly developed and too little has been done to raise awareness in schools or across the council's departments.

The strategy to promote social inclusion

122. The overall effectiveness of the LEA's strategy to promote social inclusion is satisfactory. The LEA has strengthened its planning for social inclusion through the establishment of a working group with governor, headteacher and officer representation to implement some specific policy changes in school self review and data analysis. This will ensure the needs of the most vulnerable pupils are given a higher priority than they have been hitherto. In addition, the newly formed children and young person's strategic partnership, chaired by the director of education, also has the potential to drive change. Its aim is to ensure greater coherence and consistency across the working of individual services, promote joint working and reduce duplication. Work on auditing gaps in current provision is underway. The pace of change is starting to accelerate following this phase of development.

123. Appropriately, the council has embraced a number of national initiatives and has accessed additional grant funding to facilitate specific projects in certain areas of the borough. It has also made a significant commitment in the last six years to the Bromley children project, which supports over 700 families in its most disadvantaged areas. It is not universally understood how these initiatives fit together to form an overarching corporate strategy. However, a clear strategic framework is developing. A partnership and modernisation board has been established as a forum to harness and oversee the wide range of work targeted at reducing exclusion. The role and work of this board is not yet adequately publicised or communicated to partners and stakeholders, neither are the positive outcomes of individual projects sufficiently celebrated or disseminated. Additionally, many project

workers are concerned about the longer term sustainability of such activities and this requires resolution by the council. The reorganised portfolio structure which drives the council's work, has begun to strengthen cross-agency and inter-departmental working, and the establishment of a community renewal team is bringing some further coherence to aspects of regeneration and preventative work.

124. Too little progress overall has been made in working with vulnerable groups of pupils to reduce social exclusion through closing the attainment gap. Joint working between the standards and effectiveness services and pupil services teams within the LEA has been accepted by senior officers as a key area for improvement. Nevertheless, there are some notable exceptions such as in the excellent development of multi-agency working in the area of early years, through Sure Start and the Mottingham Community Learning shops. The latter demonstrates effective joint management and financing between the LEA and range of partners which has resulted in excellent parental involvement and the provision of a computer suite and counselling facilities.

125. There are good examples of cross-service initiatives which are of benefit to schools. Within social services there has been a recent focus on increasing the participation of minority ethnic groups and the police are training staff in schools on the implementation of restorative justice techniques. The LEA actively seeks to obtain additional funding for initiatives to support social inclusion and has been successful for example, with the one term appointment of a reading recovery tutor for Traveller children. Some initiatives however, have been too short term to yield sustainable results and have not been sufficiently evaluated to demonstrate impact.

126. The LEA's communication with and involvement of minority ethnic community and faith groups has not been effective, and these groups feel that their views have not been fully sought. The reduction in LEA capacity, partly due to funding cuts and the difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff, combined with senior officers' determination to protect school budgets at all costs, has adversely affected the LEA's ability to take a sustained leadership role in this area. These factors have impeded the rate of improvement.

Recommendation

In order to improve the effectiveness of work undertaken to promote social inclusion:

- give higher priority to targets for raising the achievement of children and young people at risk of social exclusion and identify the funding needed to support improvements.

The supply of school places

127. This area was judged satisfactory in the previous inspection and is now good. There are few surplus school places in Bromley. In 2002, only 2.5 per cent of primary and 1.2 per cent of secondary places were unfilled. Although some secondary schools remain undersubscribed, the majority admit more than their published numbers. The primary picture is more mixed, with geographical pockets of over- and under-subscription. In 2000/01, the

number of secondary appeals was in the top quartile for outer London, although the success rate was not especially high. There were relatively few primary appeals.

128. Three-year forecasting has been fairly accurate; within 1 per cent for the primary and 2 per cent for the secondary sector. School rolls have been generally rising for some years and the LEA has been proactive in creating extra places. An additional three and a half forms of entry have been created in primary schools since 1999. A new secondary school will admit its first intake into temporary premises in September 2003. At the same time, where there have been pockets of unfilled places, the LEA has not hesitated to take necessary, decisive action and propose closure or amalgamation. Appropriate consultation has taken place although some stakeholders have been dissatisfied with the outcome.

129. The school organisation plan complies with statutory requirements. There are clear links with other plans such as the EDP to promote school improvement. The school organisation committee is now well established. Although chaired by a Bromley councillor, it is perceived by headteachers and partners as being independent. Difficult issues such as closures and amalgamations have been addressed. Stakeholders and partners such as the diocesan boards are actively involved. Good links exist with neighbouring LEAs, which is important as 25 per cent of pupils in Bromley secondary schools live outside the borough.

Asset management

130. Asset management is satisfactory. This area was not inspected in 1999. The DfES approved the LEA's asset management plan, rating it as reaching the 'pass' standard. The plan sets out the LEA's priorities and strategic links are made with school improvement. There is a clear arrangement for dividing building costs between the LEA and schools, developed following consultation. Primary and special schools are responsible for work under £5,000 and secondary schools under £25,000. Monitoring of school property works is undertaken by property managers. However, the process is not well linked to school improvement at an individual school level as there is limited contact with link advisers.

131. A full survey of the condition of buildings was undertaken at each school in 2000/1. Surveys are now taking place again at 20 per cent of schools each year as part of a rolling programme. Priorities are reassessed at two levels annually. The LEA's stated aim is to undertake all high priority ('Priority 1') work and 50 per cent of 'Priority 2' work in any one year. This was largely achieved in 2001-3 when £3.3m was allocated to planned maintenance. Although the LEA has made its priorities clear to schools, some still felt the process was not transparent. Some school representatives have been involved with the LEA in high level asset management planning but contact is generally at individual school level when there is a local issue to discuss.

132. An assessment of the suitability of premises has been made of each school. However, the LEA has been unable to fund comprehensive suitability or access programmes. Nevertheless, individual projects have taken place at some schools as part of major capital programmes or from other funding streams. More positively, because of its access to capital receipts and other external funding sources, the LEA has committed significant expenditure to building programmes and has had considerable success in implementing major projects, including new primary and secondary schools.

Admissions

133. This area is satisfactory as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Admissions in Bromley are currently managed by individual schools. At present, the LEA's role is restricted to monitoring and overseeing the process of admissions to primary schools. Preparations are now underway for legislative change in 2005. The LEA is adopting a proactive approach although the changes are not welcomed by a significant minority of schools.

134. Information booklets for parents contain the right information but are not written in plain enough English. Because parents can apply to more than one school, it is not possible to count the number of successful first preferences. However, in 2002, 100 per cent of primary applicants and 97 per cent of secondary applicants obtained places at one of the schools they chose. There were relatively few primary appeals, all of which were concluded by mid-June last year. The number of successful secondary appeals was in line with the national average. An agreement among secondary schools to hear all appeals by the end of June was adhered to by all but three of the 17 schools concerned. For 2003, all schools have restated their commitment to the late June deadline.

135. The Admissions Forum has been active and has discussed a number of contentious issues. This has included Bromley's decision to refer some schools' admissions criteria to the Adjudicator. The outcome was that the Adjudicator supported the LEA and ruled against giving priority to children with siblings who had previously attended the school and the children of teachers. Most schools now give priority to current siblings and those children who live closest to the school. This is clear and objective. Policies on home to school transport policies align with the admission policies.

Provision of education for pupils who have no school place

136. Provision for pupils educated other than at school is poor. Permanently excluded pupils are provided for by the LEA in the pupil referral unit (PRU). This was judged by Ofsted to be in need of special measures in February 2003 because it was not providing a satisfactory education or satisfactory value for money. Further, the LEA's current practice does not guarantee that all pupils (other than those whose parents choose to educate at home) are registered on the roll of a school or PRU, and inhibits its ability to ensure that its statutory duties with regard to the provision of education are being met. While the LEA has effective links with other local authorities and statutory agencies for identifying pupils who move into the area, the system for ensuring they find a school place is insecure. At the time of the inspection the LEA was unable to give precise numbers of pupils affected. Liaison between the admissions team and the education welfare service has been inadequate in this area of responsibility.

Recommendations**In order to improve support for children who have no school place:**

- ensure that all pupils, other than those educated at home, are properly registered either on the roll of a school or the pupil referral unit; and
- ensure that pupils moving into the borough are able to access a school place and report the numbers affected and the time taken to find a place to elected members on a regular basis.

137. The recent Ofsted inspection of the PRU noted that the LEA's monitoring of the pupil referral service had failed to identify weaknesses in leadership and management at all levels allowing underachievement by too many pupils. Problems of teacher recruitment within the PRU were exacerbated for several months by a moratorium on the appointment of LEA teaching staff resulting from financial cuts. There are no agreed staff:pupil ratios for pupils requiring PRU provision and accommodation is poor. Attendance of pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools is poor. Statemented pupils have been placed inappropriately in the PRU for too long a period. The LEA's financial reductions to support services, compounded by the recruitment difficulties, have meant that PRU staff and pupils have received insufficient support. Officers are involved in drawing up an action plan to address these issues alongside the plan being produced by the PRU in response to their inspection report.

138. Officers have had some success in working with mainstream schools to increase the rate of reintegration of permanently excluded pupils. The rate of exclusion, however, has escalated over the last two years so that the PRU has had to respond reactively rather than proactively, cutting back on effective three week 'respite' periods for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. This is the result of the requirement to make 25 hours of provision for each pupil and the slow rate of reintegration. The costs of providing for excluded pupils are not clearly set out for schools, which make minimal contribution to the education of those they exclude.

139. Nonetheless there are some positive elements to the LEA's work in this area. Pupils benefit from attending flexi-schooling at Bromley College where they are able to access a wide range of vocational courses. The LEA takes seriously its role in monitoring the provision of those whose parents choose to educate at home. Provision for pregnant and school aged mothers has been extended to 15 hours a week and includes access to further education and nationally accredited examinations including GCSE. Provision is made for those out of school because of illness but the LEA is not able to provide as much education as some might be able to benefit from, the maximum being ten hours a week.

Attendance

140. The LEA's support for attendance is unsatisfactory. It was judged satisfactory in the previous inspection. A lack of resources has impeded progress. Overall attendance in primary schools is above the national average and that of statistical neighbours. In secondary schools attendance has fallen, although it is still broadly in line with the national average and

similar authorities. However, unauthorised absence has risen at a faster rate than the national rate or that of similar authorities. Although there has been an improvement in schools receiving targeted support, LEA improvement targets for primary and secondary schools in 2001/2 were not achieved.

141. The education welfare service has benefited from strong and dedicated leadership. However, as a result of budget cuts across the education department, the service has suffered from reductions in resources in addition to recruitment difficulties. The projected cost for the service in 2002/3 was some 25 per cent below that of similar authorities. Preventative work has been curtailed as a result of these cuts and vacancies, which at their worst represented a one third reduction on the level of support provided at the time of the previous inspection. While recognising the efforts of individual team members, it is unsurprising that schools are highly critical about the level of support. One third of schools that responded to the school survey judged the service to be poor or very poor. Recent appointments to the three long-term vacancies are expected to begin to improve the service and the capacity for improvement is sound.

142. The role of schools and the education welfare service are set out in sound guidance issued in 1999. Clear advice has been issued to schools about taking pupils off roll and ensuring that pupils do not go 'missing'.

143. Truancy sweeps, which took place weekly, were significantly reduced in 2001-2002 and are far fewer than in similar authorities and well below the national average. Links with the standards and effectiveness services are developing. The attendance of specific vulnerable groups, for example minority ethnic groups, is not yet effectively monitored. The new education management data system will provide opportunities for more sophisticated tracking, analysis and targeting within the next six months.

Behaviour support

144. Support for behaviour is unsatisfactory. Exclusions in schools are rising and the behaviour support plan provides insufficient indications of the ways in which provision will be strengthened. The previous inspection judged support for behaviour to be satisfactory and recommended that the LEA implement, as a matter of urgency, agreed arrangements for the education of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). The special school for pupils with EBD was removed from serious weaknesses in 2001.

145. The proportion of permanent and fixed term exclusions in the primary phase is broadly in line with the national average and the rate in similar authorities. In the secondary phase, permanent exclusions have risen from below 30 in 1999/2000 to 85 in 2001/2. Arrangements are in place for the reintegration of excluded pupils, in which all secondary schools share responsibility. Seventeen pupils have been successfully placed this year, far fewer than the number excluded. The percentage of secondary aged pupils in Bromley losing five or more days to fixed term exclusions is significantly higher than in similar authorities. More positively, significant improvements in the collection and analysis of data and in liaison with headteachers in secondary schools have led to some reductions in exclusions this year.

146. Senior officers have set up a working party to review the behaviour support plan, recognising that it needs to be strengthened as a tool for strategic planning. The current plan fails to set out the full costs to the LEA of making provision for children and young people with EBD and for excluded pupils and insufficiently informs the debate with headteachers and elected members as to future provision required and the costs involved.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for behaviour:

- ensure that the full costs of providing support to pupils and schools is clearly set out in the revised behaviour support plan.

147. The behaviour strategy is insufficiently co-ordinated and prioritised within the overall SEN strategy. This is a significant omission given that the number of pupils with a statement for EBD and educated in special schools both within and outside the borough is considerably higher than the national average and the average in similar authorities. The Bromley children project, set up in 1997 by education, housing and social services departments has provided targeted support to over 700 families. This early support, which can prevent behavioural problems arising or escalating, is good. However, there is no quantitative data to demonstrate the impact of this project on behaviour in school.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for behaviour:

- align the strategy for supporting schools to improve behaviour more closely with the LEA strategy for special educational needs.

148. Schools value the work of members of the behaviour support team who provide or broker a range of training opportunities, work directly with pupils in schools and attend pastoral support plan meetings for those at risk of exclusion. However, time allocated is not targeted according to need. While acknowledging that in some special schools there has been a rise in the number of pupils exhibiting difficult behaviour, the team has insufficient capacity to respond. The LEA has consulted on and set an earnings target for the behaviour support service for 2003/4. However, within the team there remains some limited understanding about the reasons for having this income target, concern about this way of working, and a lack of clarity about whether any additional income earned will be used to increase capacity. Budget cuts and recruitment difficulties at senior officer level have meant that the manager of the behaviour support team has had to take on an additional role as manager of the learning and sensory support teams. This lack of management capacity has had a clear effect on the strategic way in which the service has been able to respond to schools' needs.

Recommendation**In order to improve support for behaviour:**

- prioritise management time to develop and extend the work of the behaviour support team.

149. The LEA has not adequately audited the extent of bullying across LEA schools. Recent appointments to vacancies within the education welfare service provide the opportunity for improved working in this area.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

150. The LEA's overall work in relation to health, safety, welfare and child protection is satisfactory. The previous inspection judged that the LEA took appropriate steps to meet statutory obligations to protect children from significant harm and this remains the case.

151. The LEA has comprehensive policies for health and safety and schools receive sound guidance on the management of emergencies in schools, security and on general health and safety issues. It has established good procedures for monitoring and dealing with areas of significant risk.

152. Senior LEA officers attend the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC). There is a designated named teacher for child protection in every school and sound guidance to ensure child protection is circulated to all schools. Although the authority has now taken steps to address the issue, for the past 18 months insufficient priority has been paid to ensuring all designated teachers have completed the two day specialist training programme or have attended refresher courses. This has been due to a lack of funding. More positively, less detailed 'awareness training' has reached a wide range of professionals including early years providers and governors. Child protection training is not, however a key component of the induction of newly qualified teachers.

Recommendation**In order to improve support for child protection:**

- ensure a rolling programme of child protection training, including refresher courses for those trained more than three years ago, is maintained for the designated teacher in every LEA school.

153. Procedures for monitoring children on the child protection register and taking necessary action are clear. The interface between the education and social service departments at the strategic level is improving under the aegis of the children and young person's strategic partnership. Working relationships between teachers and social workers are variable with little feedback to schools following referrals to the social work duty team.

Looked after children

154. The extent to which the LEA meets its responsibilities with respect to looked after children is unsatisfactory, but rapidly improving. Between the previous inspection and 2002, there were insufficient dedicated staff to take forward this important area of responsibility, and this inhibited progress. However, in the past year, significant plans have been put in place to bring about improvement, and a new team has been established to support looked after children. The team includes dedicated educational psychology and education welfare time. A looked after children strategy action group has been established, chaired by the director of education and includes senior officers from both the education and social services departments. Initiatives are too recent to be able to demonstrate their effect against key indicators on attainment, attendance and exclusions but the LEA's capacity for improvement has significantly improved as a result of these recent developments.

155. Other positive developments include much improved working relationships with social services. Government funding for improving data exchange between key agencies is being used to develop new systems. Regional working with neighbouring LEAs is intended to ensure consistency of practice and a change to the LEA admissions policy for 2004 will prioritise the needs of looked after children.

156. The LEA's policy on looked after children is in draft form. Officers are working to ensure that they have established links with designated staff in all schools attended by looked after children, including those attending schools out of borough. Disappointingly, meetings arranged with head teachers and designated teachers in Bromley schools have not, so far, been well attended. Seventy eight per cent of looked after children have personal education plans, although the LEA has recognized that many require updating and has put in place effective processes to secure improvement.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for looked after children and comply with national guidance:

- ensure all looked after young people have an up-to-date, relevant personal education plan.

157. The number of looked after children permanently excluded from school is very low. However, there has been a rise in the number of days lost to fixed term exclusion and unauthorised absence. The percentage of looked after children achieving one A*- G grade at GCSE by the end of Key Stage 4 fell last year. Funding has been made available to focus on raising attainment of pupils in Year 11 this year through additional individual teaching. However officers are forecasting that the target for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, (29 per cent achieving five A*-C at GCSE) is unlikely to be met in 2003.

158. Evidence from foster carers suggests that when children are placed with them information on past education and existing educational needs is not always available, sometimes for months. Foster carers were not aware of who the designated teacher was within their child's school or of the role of the Connexions service in ensuring young people make a successful transition to full time education/training or work. None had received any

written information from the LEA about the support the education department provides for looked after children.

159. The council fulfils its statutory responsibilities and receives reports on achievements and educational outcomes at the end of each key stage. Elected members do not interact with the focus group of looked after children, and there is no annual celebration for effort, attendance and achievement.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for looked after children:

- extend opportunities for elected members to interact with looked after children and monitor a wider range of outcomes for this vulnerable group.

Measures to combat racism

160. LEA measures to combat racism are poor. Work in this area has been given an insufficiently high priority. While the local authority has adopted a race equality policy and set out its strategic aims, these are not underpinned by a clear programme of action, time line or targets against which improvements can be measured. There is little sense of urgency. Evidence from a range of stakeholders indicates real concern at the lack of a robust approach to tackling racism.

161. The LEA has circulated guidance on writing a race equality policy to schools but is not able to say how many schools have a policy in place. Little has been done to encourage members of black and minority ethnic groups to become governors or to engage these communities in making a contribution towards raising standards in education. There is no support for or recognition of the achievement of minority ethnic young people who achieve accreditation in their mother tongue outside school hours.

Recommendation

In order to increase effectiveness in combating racism:

- develop a wider and more effective dialogue with minority ethnic and faith groups.

162. The LEA has introduced procedures for reporting of racist incidents in schools. Officers acknowledge concerns about under reporting of incidents, but there has been no proper analysis of those they do know about or follow up where schools have not responded even by making a nil return. Proposals to provide training for support staff in schools, to whom children and young people will often disclose, did not come to fruition as insufficient funding was available. While faith groups, the police and the Bromley race equality council are aware of and concerned about an increase in racist incidents, this issue has not been adequately taken on board by some council members. Funding was allocated for the training of senior officers following the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. This specific training did not take place although officers have had access to other more widely focused training on diversity.

*Recommendations***In order to increase effectiveness in combating racism:**

- ensure senior officers receive training on combating racism; and
- improve the reporting and analysis of racist incidents.

163. Parents and faith groups are unaware of the guidance issued to schools on religious and cultural issues they may face, for example on religious holidays or dress codes. Initiatives like 'black history month', funded through the community safety partnership and the police, are promoted by the council. The LEA is aware of the need to challenge the reluctance in some schools to prioritise work around improving race relations. Such reluctance has been reflected in past objections to specific monitoring of the progress of vulnerable groups and the attitude that race relations is not an issue where schools have no minority ethnic children or young people.

164. The school survey indicates that schools rate support for combating racism as poor. However, the work of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), through its Agreed Syllabus for religious education and the provision of guidance and resources, provides an appropriate focus on curriculum issues with regard to faith and ethnic diversity. Additional grant funding has been usefully invested to supplement central resources for schools to use. The range of materials can be accessed through a web site and will be in use by the end of June 2003.

165. In January 2000 the council set out its aspiration to achieve Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) accreditation for improvements in this area. It is now working towards the equality standard for local government and has achieved success in some areas. Progress overall has been slow. Reports to members do not routinely demonstrate that the effect of proposed policies on minority ethnic groups has been considered.

Section 5: Corporate issues

Summary

166. The LEA has taken seriously the corporate issues raised in the previous inspection and has made satisfactory progress in addressing the recommendations. Consultation procedures have improved, a vision for the service has been agreed with schools and partners, members are now provided with an annual report on the overall performance of schools, central ICT systems have improved significantly, and the funding formula has been reviewed.

167. However, some critical barriers to further improvement remain, which must be addressed if Bromley is to achieve its ambition for excellence. In spite of robust attempts by officers to develop the partnership with schools, especially with the former grant maintained schools, relationships remain burdened by mistrust and misunderstandings. In particular, schools believe that the council's written commitment to education is belied by its funding decisions, and this perception results in an entrenched and often combative working relationship with the LEA. Coupled with some schools' inappropriate expectations of LEA roles and responsibilities, this view impedes progress and creates unnecessary additional work for officers. Clearer practical demonstrations of the council's commitment to education, underpinned by an unambiguous focus on key priorities and an open debate about how successful projects and services might be sustained, are necessary. Bromley has a wealth of experience and expertise in its officers, senior managers, elected members and stakeholders which, harnessed in a more collaborative and dynamic way, has the potential to secure an engagement in initiatives, make a difference to the culture of the LEA and improve standards.

Corporate planning

168. Corporate planning processes are highly satisfactory. There is more coherence than at the time of the previous inspection. Plans are mainly clear. They are cross-referenced fully, and present a consistent view of the aims and objectives of the council. The council's focus on seven portfolios, targeted at improving the quality of life for all residents of Bromley, has helped to clarify an overall vision. However, unlike the strategic plan for children and young people, the principles and values which drive the council's wider vision are not made explicit.

169. The Best Value Performance Plan sets out appropriate targets for development which are linked into other service and department plans. Where targets and performance indicators have not been met, subsequent action for improvement is identified. There is an identified commitment to community regeneration and social inclusion, and appropriate priority is given to children and young people including the most vulnerable and those with special educational needs. However, links between the ways in which education action and targets contribute to wider community issues such as a reduction in crime are not sufficiently explicit. In contrast, the Community Plan places a stronger emphasis on vulnerable groups and makes direct connections between regeneration priorities and the achievement of specific education targets such as the attainment of looked after children.

170. The team of chief officers accepts joint accountability for implementing plans and monitoring outcomes. Progress is reviewed regularly and accountability for implementation is starting to be embedded systematically into performance management procedures across all departments. An annual planning cycle has been established. It is managed by the head of corporate strategy and is appropriately linked into the budget cycle. This system results in greater alignment of strategy to the allocation of resources. However, the emphasis in the rhetoric of the council on ensuring council tax is kept low, leads to a belief on the part of schools that the council does not hold education as a key priority.

Decision making

171. Decision making procedures are satisfactory. Changes in the council structure resulting from the local government modernisation requirements have meant that processes are now more transparent than at the time of the previous inspection. All meetings are now open to the public and key decisions are debated and scrutinised by the performance, development and review committees.

172. The council has responded in part to the recommendations of the previous inspection report and has extended its consultation procedures. There are some examples of the public and schools being given comprehensive opportunity to comment on proposals and influence decision making. However, procedures are frequently perceived to be remote, for example when undertaken through written consultation, and some groups consider, rightly, that communication could be more collaborative and dynamic.

Recommendation

In order to improve communication with and the involvement of stakeholders, including schools:

- make full use of the ideas and interest of all interested groups by engaging them in collaborative debate and project development.

173. The council and its officers have not shied away from making difficult and unpopular decisions, for example regarding the amalgamation or closure of schools. In cases such as these, procedures have been thorough and appropriate records have been kept of discussions and decisions. However, the reasons behind the decisions are not always conveyed satisfactorily to all interested parties and too frequently this results in a strong residual antagonistic element in relationships. Nevertheless, even where the LEA has worked hard to ensure that schools are fully aware of issues, such as the current financial pressures, some schools demonstrate a misunderstanding of the statutory role of the LEA believing that more protection should be provided for them. The long term frugal financial stance taken by the council has led some stakeholders to a negative and entrenched view of their work and has impeded the improvement work being undertaken by officers.

The leadership provided by officers and elected members

174. The leadership of elected members as articulated through council plans and priorities is targeted appropriately at improving Bromley as a place in which children and young people

grow up. However, there are significant weaknesses in the manner of implementation, which must be addressed and which render council leadership overall as unsatisfactory. Notwithstanding some significant engagement by individuals, too few members work closely with the education service as ‘champions’ of key groups of young people or areas of work such as looked after children or early years, representing their views to the wider council and promoting their interests. There are insufficient structures in place to ensure that the full range of work undertaken by officers with schools is debated and analysed.

175. The council’s scrutiny function, through performance, development and review committees, is at an early stage of development having only been in place for twelve months. There have been good debates around key aspects of LEA work such as special educational needs, but at present the impact of the children and young people’s performance, development and review committee is too varied and working practices require further development to secure it as a driver of improvement. For example, on occasions personal or political differences within the majority party have inappropriately impeded the progress of meetings. In addition, on a number of issues, such as challenging reserves in schools, and procedures for child protection and looked after children, there is a belief that action is being taken forward but elected members have little real knowledge of the current position. In the case of the performance, development and review committee for children and young people, the brief is extremely wide. Although being debated, structures have not yet been put in place to enable responses to be made to the range of work being undertaken. Arrangements for setting the programme and agendas of this committee are being clarified in recognition of the fact that they have not always been aligned well to that of the executive and the portfolio group.

Recommendations

In order to improve the scrutiny role of the council:

- clarify and articulate the specific role of the children and young people’s PDR committee; and
- ensure political and personal differences between elected members do not impede debates.

176. Senior officers within the education service provide their teams with highly satisfactory leadership and are focused purposefully on improving the quality of educational provision. The processes whereby changes are implemented and managed are becoming more robust. However, due to the immediacy of resource pressures, responses to problems are sometimes too reactive or are based on inadequate risk assessments. Plans are sometimes taken forward before being subject to sufficient internal scrutiny and questioning regarding the effect on schools, parents and children. Funding for the strategic leadership and management of the education service is low and officers manage well a wide range of responsibilities. Moreover, staffing cuts within services have inevitably placed additional responsibilities on already stretched senior managers. With few recent exceptions, targeted work with schools has been effective in helping them to address their weaknesses. There are some good examples of high quality provision, for example in the support provided for schools in their work with gifted and talented pupils. The positive working relationships around school improvement activity are, however, too often sidelined by schools’ perceptions

of the council's leadership of education which itself is fashioned from views about expenditure. On an individual level, officers and advisers are well respected by schools; as part of the LEA, they are held in lower esteem.

177. The advice given to elected members is highly satisfactory. Documentation is generally thorough, but sometimes contains too much detail for members to review in the time available, or insufficiently signals for them the effects of implementation and the processes that need to be followed in managing change. The portfolio holder for children and young people is kept fully informed on a weekly basis of the issues facing the education service, and information for the PDR committees includes audits and identification of need as well as recommendations for future action.

Partnership

178. Partnership working with external agencies is good. Effective collaborative activities identified in the previous inspection have been built on and enhanced over the intervening years. There is now a wide range of effective partnership groups within Bromley and a good structure exists for their oversight. The community plan sets out the vision and aspirations of key partners. It places an appropriate emphasis on the importance of bringing together different parts of the public sector, the private business community and voluntary sectors in Bromley to work together for the benefit of residents. LEA support for SACRE is good. Advice and support for religious education have been purchased from the Diocese and its curriculum expertise is integrated well into the work of the LEA's standards and effectiveness services.

179. The children and young person's portfolio is supported by an inter-departmental and inter-agency officer team that includes headteachers and health service representatives. It is intended that this forum, which brings together key partners, is combined with the newly formed children and young persons' strategic partnership to provide a single forum in which all matters relating to the universal services provided to children and young people can be considered. There is commitment to encouraging and developing effective collaborative working on a range of projects. Partners are equally enthusiastic about these developments. With such a wide agenda there is a danger of confusion around agendas, and leadership and co-ordination is being undertaken largely through the partnership and modernisation board.

180. Relationships are effective at the strategic level and there are some good examples of successful projects such as the cross-borough Crystal Palace partnership which focuses on community renewal. Work with higher education institutions is well developed and used to strengthen the LEA's own work in areas such as support for gifted and talented pupils and recruitment and retention. There are strong links with the education business partnership, particularly in relation to curriculum developments for 14-19 year olds.

181. Effective partnerships have been established with neighbouring LEAs, especially those which comprise the south London learning and skills council area. Useful links have been developed with LEAs to the north and west, particularly with regards to school admissions.

Early Years

182. The LEA works effectively with its partners to develop, improve and promote early years' education and childcare. There is a fully constituted Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, fully supported by the LEA since its inception. Strategic and operational plans are comprehensive and clear, and are well referenced in other documentation including the EDP and the council's portfolio plan for children and young people. However, there is no link councillor responsible for engaging in and championing early years' work across the borough. Early years' workers fully understand and acknowledge the contribution which their work makes to the delivery of the council's social inclusion policies and quality of life priorities. However, they remain concerned about Bromley council's commitment to sustaining these developments in the long-term and would welcome an open debate of these matters.

183. Actions by the early years development and childcare partnership and the LEA focus well on improving quality and standards, and there are secure links with EDP activities for developing early years provision and for improving standards at Key Stage 1. There is good liaison and effective joint working between the teams managed by the early years and childcare manager, the senior adviser responsible for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the pre-school SEN services and other projects, partners and agencies. The quality of provision is sensitively but rigorously monitored and good joint intervention and support is provided when necessary. There are also close partnerships established with health services, alongside an impressive commitment to multi-agency work which has resulted in significant improvements in early intervention and support.

184. Ninety per cent of all pre-school provision is in the private, voluntary and independent sectors. In some cases settings operate from school premises, an arrangement which has strengthened working practices between the two sectors. Further innovative plans are in place to develop integrated provision on at least two sites which serve areas of disadvantage. Across the LEA, schools and the private, voluntary and independent sectors work together positively and undertake joint training and development activities.

Support for 14-19 education

185. The LEA is working effectively with schools and other partners to promote collaboration in response to government, Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and its own priorities to improve participation, attainment and progression for 14-19 year olds. The main mechanism for achieving this aim is through the Bromley 14-19 learning network, which was jointly established with the LSC. The LEA gives substantial support to the network. The 14-19 adviser, supported by the manager for work-based learning and education business partnerships, offers strong support to network members and currently chairs its strategy group and some other sub-groups. The learning network is successfully increasing co-operation among providers who have a strong history of independence and competition. Key partners actively involved in the network include schools, colleges, training providers, youth services, Connexions and London South LSC. Since its establishment in 2002 the network has involved itself in a range of projects and activities, such as the DfES increased flexibility programme and various projects designed to raise achievement at level 2. It is, however, too

early to demonstrate the effect of these initiatives. A positive feature is the energy and enthusiasm of many network members and their willingness to contribute to the planning even where their institutions are not directly benefiting from the provision. Partners have also gained an increased awareness of the needs of level 2 learners and recognition of the need to promote alternatives to A levels.

186. The LEA has a satisfactory working relationship with the LSC, which supported the network in commissioning an internal 14-19 area review to inform future strategy and planning. There is currently no detailed curriculum mapping for 14-16 or 16-19 provision in Bromley and no clearly articulated strategy for the 14-19 phase. The LEA is attempting to find a compromise that preserves 11-18 status for all schools, while also ensuring a commitment to wider alternative curriculum provision and access.

Recommendation

In order to extend 14-19 developments the LEA should work with partners to:

- establish a single consolidated development plan for 14-19, setting out clearly priorities and targets for the strategic operations of the 14-19 learning network and individual providers.

Appendix 1: Recommendations

The report makes a number of recommendations.

The following recommendations should be acted upon as a matter of urgency:

In order to increase effectiveness in combating racism:

- develop a wider and more effective dialogue with minority ethnic and faith groups;
- ensure senior officers receive training on combating racism; and
- improve the reporting and analysis of racist incidents.

In order to improve support for looked after children and comply with national guidance:

- ensure all looked after young people have an up to date, relevant personal education plan; and
- extend opportunities for elected members to interact with looked after children and monitor a wider range of outcomes for this vulnerable group.

However, the following recommendations are also fundamental in that they affect the LEA's overall capacity for improvement:

In order to improve support for child protection:

- ensure a rolling programme of child protection training, including refresher courses for those trained more than three years ago, is maintained for the designated teacher in every LEA school.

In order to improve the scrutiny role of the council:

- clarify and articulate the specific role of the children and young people's PDR committee; and
- ensure political and personal differences between elected members do not impede debates.

In order to improve the use of resources:

- the council should reconsider the level of priority given to education in the budget making process; and
- officers should work with primary schools to minimise unjustifiable budget surpluses.

In order to improve communication with and the involvement of stakeholders, including schools:

- make full use of the ideas and interest of all interested groups by engaging them in collaborative debate and project development.

In order to improve strategic planning and support for children with special educational needs:

- ensure that the views of parents, schools and pupils are taken into account and that they are more fully engaged in the planning process;
- identify priorities for increasing the accessibility of schools and agree a strategy as required; and
- secure more rigorous procedures for target setting and challenge and in special schools.

In order to extend 14-19 developments the LEA should work with partners to:

- establish a single consolidated development plan for 14-19, setting out clearly priorities and targets for the strategic operations of the 14-19 learning network and individual providers.

We also make the following recommendations:

In order to improve support for children who have no school place:

- ensure that all pupils, other than those educated at home, are properly registered either on the roll of a school or the pupil referral unit; and
- ensure that pupils moving into the borough are able to access a school place and report the numbers affected and the time taken to find a place to elected members on a regular basis.

In order to improve support for children with special educational needs and demonstrate value for money:

- improve liaison and joint working between pupil services and the standards and effectiveness services; and
- develop performance indicators based on improvements in attainment.

In order to improve support for behaviour:

- ensure that the full costs of providing support to pupils and schools is clearly set out in the revised behaviour support plan;
- prioritise management time to develop and extend the work of the behaviour support team; and

-
- align the strategy for supporting schools to improve behaviour more closely with the LEA strategy for special educational needs.

In order to improve the effectiveness of work undertaken to promote social inclusion:

- give higher priority to targets for raising the achievement of children and young people at risk of social exclusion and identify the funding needed to support improvements.

In order to improve support for minority ethnic and Traveller pupils:

- seek additional opportunities for celebrating cultural diversity.

In order to strengthen the role of governors in the management and efficiency of schools:

- restore the practice of copying written records of visits directly to chairs of governing bodies.

In order to improve the support for curriculum ICT:

- devise, with schools, a secure system that will enable them to assess pupils' attainment and progress in ICT and will help the LEA to have an overview of standards in the subject.

APPENDIX 2: RECORD OF JUDGEMENT RECORDING STATEMENTS FOR THE INSPECTION

Name of LEA :	Bromley
LEA number:	
Name of Inspector:	Jillian Munday
Date of Inspection:	May 2003

SECTION 1 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY			
No.	Required Inspection Judgement	Grade	NI
1	The socio-economic context of the LEA	1	
2	The performance of schools	2	
3	Funding, including the co-ordination of external funding	4	
4	The LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	2	
5	The progress on implementing the LEA's strategy for school improvement including the EDP and EiC	3	
6	The extent to which the LEA targets its resources on priorities	5	
7	The extent to which the LEA has in place effective strategies to promote continuous improvement including Best Value	4	
SECTION 2 SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT			
8	The extent to which the LEA has defined monitoring, challenge, and intervention and shared those understandings with schools	4	
9	The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need	3	
10	the effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring schools and challenging them to improve, including the use made of performance data	3	
11	The effectiveness of LEA identification of and intervention in under-performing schools	3	
12	Support to schools for raising standards in Literacy	2	
13	Support to schools for raising standards in Numeracy	2	

14	Support to schools for raising standards in and the curriculum use of information and communications technology	4	
15	Support to schools for raising standards at Key Stage 3	3	
16	Support to schools in raising standards of ethnic minority and Traveller children including the effective deployment of the ethnic minority and Traveller achievement grants	4	
17	Support to schools for gifted and talented pupils	1	
18	Support for school leadership and management including support for schools effort to achieve Best Value	3	
19	Support to school governors	2	NI
20	The effectiveness of its services to support school management	4	
20a	Financial services	3	NI
20b	Human resources	3	NI
20c	Property services	4	NI
20d	Services for ICT in school administration	4	NI
20e	Cleaning and caretaking	4	
20f	Grounds maintenance	3	
20g	Catering	3	
21	The extent to which the LEA is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers	1	
22	The effectiveness of the leadership of services to support school improvement	3	
23	The effectiveness of the deployment of staff to support school improvement	3	
24	The effectiveness of strategic planning of services to support school improvement	2	
25	The effectiveness of the performance management of services to support school improvement	3	
26	The standard of expertise of staff to support school improvement	3	
27	The effectiveness of services to school improvement	3	
28	Value for money of services to support school improvement	2	

SECTION 3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS			
29	The effectiveness of the LEA's strategy for SEN	5	
30	The effectiveness of the LEA in taking steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN	3	
31	The effectiveness of the LEA in exercising its SEN functions to support school improvement	5	
32	The extent to which the LEA has exercised its SEN functions to meet the requirements of value for money	5	
SECTION 4 PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION			
33	The overall effectiveness of the LEA in promoting social inclusion	4	
34	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to the provision of school places	2	
35	The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning	4	
36	The effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools	4	
37	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to provision for pupils who have no school place	6	
38	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to school attendance	5	
39	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to behaviour at school	5	
40	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to health and safety, welfare and child protection	4	
41	The extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to children in public care	5	
42	The effectiveness of the LEA in combating racism	6	
SECTION 5 CORPORATE ISSUES			
43	The clarity, consistency, coherence and feasibility of corporate plans	3	
44	The effectiveness of the procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans	3	
45	The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making (particularly financial decision-making)	4	

46	The quality of leadership provided by elected members	5	
47	The quality of the leadership provided by senior officers	3	
48	The quality of advice given to elected members	3	
49	The effectiveness of the co-ordination of actions in support of priorities involving collaboration between several agencies	2	
OVERALL JUDGEMENTS			
50	The progress made by the LEA overall	4	
51	The LEA's capacity for further improvement and to address the recommendations of the inspection	4	
52	The overall effectiveness of the LEA	4	

JRS numerical judgements are allocated on a 1 to 7 point scale:

- Grade 1 – Very good
- Grade 2 – Good
- Grade 3 – Highly satisfactory
- Grade 4 – Satisfactory
- Grade 5 – Unsatisfactory
- Grade 6 – Poor, significant weaknesses
- Grade 7 – Very poor, fails to provide effective support to schools