



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF
WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

October 2001

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

CONTENTS

PARAGRAPHS

INTRODUCTION 1 - 3

COMMENTARY 4 - 11

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context 12 - 14

Performance 15 - 21

Funding 22 - 24

Council structure 25 - 30

The Education Development Plan 31 - 39

The allocation of resources to priorities 40 - 42

Best Value 43 - 44

Recommendations

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions 45 - 49

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention 50 - 56

Collection and analysis of data 57 - 61

Support for literacy 62 - 69

Support for numeracy 70 - 74

Support for information and communication technology 75 - 78

Support for schools causing concern 79 - 81

Support and training for governors 82 - 84

Support for school management 85 - 87

Early years 88 - 90

Recommendations

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning 91 - 100

Management services 101 - 107

Summary

Evaluation

Recommendations

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Strategy 108 - 113

Statutory obligations 114 - 115

School improvement 116 - 119

Value for money 120

Recommendations

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The supply of school places	121 - 123
Admissions	124 - 126
Asset management	127
Provision of education otherwise than at school	128 - 131
Support for gifted and talented pupils	132 - 133
Attendance	134 - 136
Behaviour support	137 - 141
Support for children in public care	142
Health, safety, welfare and child protection	143 - 145
Minority ethnic children	146 - 150
Social exclusion	151 - 154
Recommendations	

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act, 1997. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to the work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities* which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.

2. The inspection was based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, focus groups of headteachers, special educational needs co-ordinators and governors, staff in the education department and in other council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 64 schools. The response rate was 86 per cent.

3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to one nursery, one special school, eight primary schools, two middle schools, five secondary schools and two pupil referral units. A further six schools were visited as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy monitoring. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school and provides value for money.

COMMENTARY

4. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is a small and overwhelmingly prosperous authority. Located in attractive countryside, yet close to London and Heathrow airport and therefore a prime location for business, it enjoys a booming labour market and has high property prices. Windsor Castle, Ascot racecourse and Legoland make it a magnet for tourists. Two garrisons are based in Windsor and there are small and concentrated areas of minority ethnic population of Pakistani and Indian origin.

5. A high proportion of the schools are church schools and over 90 per cent of all schools are judged to have good or very good climates for learning. They are popular and draw in many pupils from neighbouring authorities. Achievement is above national averages and broadly in line with similar authorities, though there are dips at Key Stage 2 and post-16. Windsor has a three-tier system of schools and there is some underachievement in middle schools.

6. After becoming a unitary authority, the LEA was quick to initiate overdue action on a number of fronts, including a consultation on school re-organisation in Windsor. The proposals were opposed by many parents and the authority withdrew them, but did close one under subscribed upper school. Some of the inherited buildings were in poor condition and the new authority also embarked on a thorough and transparent asset management planning process, as well as replacing the worst of the old buildings. It launched a concentrated programme of promoting school autonomy and improvement through school self-evaluation, and it developed good arrangements for the support of minority ethnic children and for combating racism.

7. The LEA has a clear direction, knows what it needs to do and has made a good start on doing much of it. Strengths far outweigh weaknesses. It performs most of its functions satisfactorily and some well, in particular:

- leadership by the director and officers;
- the special educational needs strategy;
- the allocation of resources to priorities;
- support for literacy;
- support for numeracy;
- support for schools causing concern;
- support for school management;
- support for governors;
- corporate planning;
- partnership;
- provision for early years;
- support for minority ethnic children;
- behaviour support;
- asset management planning;
- measures for combating racial harassment;
- Information and communication technology in school administration (ICT); and
- support for early years.

The following functions are unsatisfactory:

- support for curriculum information and communication technology;
- support for attendance;
- education other than at school (EOTAS);
- supply and analysis of data.

8. Where things are not being done well enough, in almost all instances it is because the authority has either lost able staff or been unable to recruit the particular expertise it needs. For instance, there was little inherited data. This, coupled with a lack of reliable, comprehensive education management information, has limited the effectiveness of what the LEA has done, or is doing, in relation to post-16 education. This has prevented the authority from having a clear view of the extent to which the dip at Key Stage 2 is, or is not, related to the three tier organisation prevailing in part of the borough. In the absence of reliable and comprehensive data, the very good support for minority ethnic children cannot be targeted sharply enough at specific underachievement.

9. The staff it does have are of high calibre, hard working and effective. They are responsive, accessible and enjoy good relationships with their schools. But modernisation, coupled with the recent change of political control in the authority and the ensuing reductions in central spending, have increased the workload of the lean central team, and half the schools visited during the inspection voiced well-founded concerns about officers being over stretched.

10. Members of both the previous and the present administration have a strong and informed commitment to education, which is reflected in both the allocation of resources to schools and the priority given to education in corporate planning. The chief executive leads on the strong partnership ethos of the council, and this has benefited schools, particularly, though not exclusively, in relation to disadvantaged pupils.

11. Though creative thinking and radical solutions may be needed to solve the recruitment problems, given its good professional and political leadership, its clear direction and its ability to take decisions, the authority's capacity to improve and to implement the recommendations of this report is not in doubt.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

12. Windsor and Maidenhead took over responsibility for education in 1998. It is a small, affluent, unitary authority, with a few pockets of deprivation. Employment is high and so are property prices. Labour shortages are acute in some sectors. The royal borough houses Windsor Castle and Ascot racecourse, as well as two garrisons, one of which is an army rapid reaction force, and this results in a considerable degree of mobility in some of the borough's schools. A few of the schools recruit largely from other authorities, notably Slough, and some neighbouring authorities are selective, which also adds to the turbulence. A further complicating factor is the retention of middle schools in Windsor.

13. The school age population is 23,757. Thirteen per cent of pupils are of minority ethnic origin. Of these, the largest groups are of Pakistani (five per cent) and Indian heritage (three per cent). There are also Traveller communities within the borough. One point three per cent of primary aged pupils and 2.7 per cent of secondary aged pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN), making an average figure of 1.9 per cent. This is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is also well below the national average at seven per cent. The royal borough has a large number of church schools, 28 out of the 64, and 30 per cent of pupils are educated in these voluntary aided or voluntary controlled schools. Seventy-two per cent of four-year-olds and 34 per cent of three-year-olds are on the roll of primary or nursery schools. Fifty-three per cent of pupils pursue post compulsory education in borough sixth forms.

14. The authority maintains 64 schools, three of which have achieved Beacon status since 1998. There are four nurseries, and 46 primary schools. Of the nine secondary schools, eight are community and one is controlled. In addition, there are four middle schools, deemed secondary. There is one special school and three pupil referral units.

Performance

15. Standards of attainment on entry to primary schools as measured by the LEA's baseline assessment scheme are well above the national average and above that of similar LEAs¹. Attainment in Key Stage 1 in English and mathematics is above the national average and in line with that of comparable authorities.

16. In 2000, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 and above in Key Stage 2 English was above the national average, but below that of similar authorities. In mathematics at Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 or more is broadly in line with the national average, but below that of similar authorities. In science the percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 or more is well above the national average and broadly in line with the average in similar authorities.

¹ *The borough's closest statistical neighbours are: Solihull, Surrey, Bucks, Bath and NE Somerset, Bromley, Kingston-upon-Thames, Bedfordshire, Richmond-upon-Thames and Trafford.

17. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is well above the national average and that of similar authorities in English and science, and above in mathematics. The number of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C is broadly in line with that of similar authorities, and well above the national average. The average GCSE points score is well above the national average, and broadly in line with similar authorities. However, the 'A' level points score for those achieving two or more 'A' levels is below the national average and below the mean of comparable authorities.

18. Standards at Key Stage 2 have not improved in line with the national rate in English and mathematics. In science, improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. The rate of improvement in English at Key Stage 3 is above the national trend, in line, in science, but well below in mathematics. The rate of improvement in the number of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE is broadly in line with the national trend.

19. Overall the percentage of primary schools judged in OFSTED inspections to be very good is broadly in line with the national average, but below that of similar authorities. The percentage of secondary schools judged to be very good is in line with the national average and that of similar authorities.

20. However, 14 primary and five secondary schools in Windsor & Maidenhead have undergone two inspections. The number of primary and secondary schools judged to be very good or good has improved markedly since the first inspection. Correspondingly the number of schools requiring some improvement has fallen. OFSTED inspections of both primary and secondary schools show the quality of schools' climates for learning has improved since the first inspection at a faster rate than nationally. The number of schools judged to have a good or very good ethos, over 90 per cent, is above the national average and in line with similar authorities. There are currently no schools in special measures.

21. Attendance in 1999/2000 was above the national figures for both primary and secondary schools. Unauthorised absence rates are in line with the national figures for both primary and secondary schools. The rate of permanent exclusions is below the national figure in both primary and secondary schools.

Funding

22. The high council priority on education is reflected in annual increases in funding to just above Standard Spending Assessment in 2000/2001. Increases in education Standard Spending Assessment have been fully passed on to schools, who also benefited from an additional in-year reallocation of £810 thousand to schools from other council budgets made by the new administration in 2000, part way into the financial year. However, this contrasts with the rest of the council where cuts have been made this year to reverse a pattern of overspending and drawing on reserves which was unsustainable and damaging to the council's financial health. The council has set a large 11 per cent increase in council tax and established firmer budget controls and tight monitoring. The reserves are being built up to prudent levels and there are some projections for longer term financial planning. Schools have largely been insulated from these cuts, but the central education department has become leaner, with fewer staff to manage work and respond to schools.

23. The total local schools budget (LSB) per pupil in 2000/2001 was £2,770 per pupil, just above the average for similar authorities, and further above the national average, as was the individual schools budget (ISB) per pupil of £2,386 per pupil. In 2000/2001 funding retained for central administration was amongst the highest nationally, £63 per pupil, but this was partly due to misclassification of expenditure and has reduced in 2001/2002 to £46 per pupil, which is well within the £60 limit set by the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE).

24. Capital spending has increased each year but the council does not borrow, as it has been able to recycle capital receipts. The closure of a Windsor upper school will release an estimated £4 million capital receipt for local schools. Because of the relative affluence of the area, the council is not eligible for some initiatives and grants, but maximises those it can obtain. To date, the council has not developed innovative funding schemes, such as the Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

Council structure

25. From its inception up until May 2000, the authority had a Liberal Democrat administration. After the May 2000 council elections, the Conservatives, supported by three Independents, took control with a very slender majority. There are 29 Conservative members, 21 Liberal Democrats, seven Independents and one Labour member.

26. Since May 2000, the council has been operating pilot council, cabinet and scrutiny arrangements. Consultation on the final shape of arrangements took place during March 2001 and the authority is now finalising its new constitution for submission in July, with full implementation scheduled for October 2001.

27. The current cabinet, which meets weekly, in private, consists of ten members with portfolios, including one for education. Minutes of the proceedings are published once they have been approved. The cabinet makes recommendations to full council for approval. Lead members are empowered to set up user forums and a number of these operate in the field of education.

28. There are five scrutiny panels which meet quarterly in public. All are chaired by members of the majority party. Scrutiny panels make recommendations to the cabinet and present reports to the full council for information. The education scrutiny panel consists of 16 members, 11 of whom, including the seven members, the two diocesan representatives and the two parent governor representatives, have voting rights. In line with statutory requirements, the remaining five, namely, the primary and secondary headteacher representatives and the one governor representative, do not.

29. The education scrutiny panel, as presently conceived, has an unusually high profile policy role; it is able to make recommendations on the budget as well as on Best Value reviews. However, it can only call in decisions under certain prescribed circumstances. Although debate has been well-informed and detailed on the reports which scrutinise progress against the aims of the education strategy and the borough's key plans given the annual advance scheduling of the four scrutiny

meetings, there has been insufficient opportunity to participate in real debate on all aspects of education. This applies to both the scrutiny and the executive processes. Yet the opposition is particularly well informed about education, given its recent experience of running the authority. In consequence, there is a degree of scepticism within the education community about both the transparency of the new arrangement for cabinet, council and scrutiny and the extent to which those who are not part of the inner circle are, and will be, able to participate in decision-making. The absence of cross-party agreements and the presence of a vocal opposition have led to some stormy scrutiny meetings. Full council meetings have also tended to be contentious and protracted.

Recommendation

In order to improve public confidence and specifically that of education stakeholders in the operation of the modernised political system:

- incorporate within the revised arrangements for education scrutiny adequate opportunities for open and informed debate on all key issues.

30. The director heads a small three strong senior management team consisting of the head of quality assurance, the head of pupil and student services and the head of strategy and resources. Together with the other six directors, he is part of the chief executive's management team.

The Education Development Plan

31. The LEA's education development plan (EDP) is good. The implementation of the EDP is satisfactory.

32. The EDP for 1999 -2002 was approved without qualification by the Secretary of State for Education. It provides a clear strategy for school improvement. Its seven priorities are:

- raising standards of literacy in all key stages;
- raising standards of numeracy in all key stages;
- improving pupils' performance in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum in all key stages;
- increasing performance at GCSE;
- raising attainment across a broad range of post-16 provision;
- reducing under-achievement by improving the quality of teaching; and
- enabling all pupils to achieve their full potential by working towards more inclusive approaches to education.

33. The LEA established its strengths and weaknesses through a thorough audit of the performance of schools and of OFSTED Section 10 reports. It also conducted a detailed analysis of the demographic characteristics of the school population. The resulting EDP priorities reflect this, take account of both the national agenda and local needs, and fit well with other plans.

34. Consultation on the Education Development Plan (EDP) has been wide-ranging and detailed, and has led to modifications and refinements, but has retained the focus on raising of standards. Responses in the school survey show that headteachers judge both the EDP and the consultation process to be better than satisfactory. This was borne out by visits to schools where only one headteacher expressed some dissatisfaction with the priorities. Several schools felt that the EDP had given a clear direction to their own development plans.

35. The Education Development Plan is clearly presented and the action plans are generally coherent. priority six is rather broad and overlaps with other areas of the EDP. The LEA has used it partly as a means of ensuring that early years and lifelong learning feature within the EDP and to prevent recent developments, such as newly qualified teacher (NQT) training and support being omitted from the EDP. The action plans in this priority area have, therefore, less internal coherence than in the rest of the EDP.

36. Activities are costed realistically and resources are linked to priorities. Most success criteria are precise, quantified and closely related to the intended outcomes of the activities.

37. The EDP describes the information and processes used to support the setting of statutory targets. The LEA recognises that there were weaknesses in the original target-setting process, but these have since been addressed. The targets for 2002 are very challenging, particularly those at Key Stage 2, where the rate of improvement in the last two years has been disappointing.

38. The LEA monitors its EDP very well. A six monthly review leads to the production of a detailed analytical report which is presented to elected members. This report includes well presented quantitative data and an incisive qualitative commentary on the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the plan. Appropriate modifications are made to the action plans in the light of this detailed analysis.

39. Overall, progress in implementing the EDP is satisfactory. Initial progress towards the achievement of the LEA's statutory targets was good but has become more erratic recently. Sensible revisions in the action plans for literacy and numeracy address areas of under-performance appropriately. Support for inclusion has been effective in terms of behaviour support and support for pupils with learning difficulties. However, more needs to be done to reduce the rate of exclusions at Key Stage 4 and to reduce the level of unauthorised absences.

The allocation of resources to priorities

40. The allocation of resources to priorities is good. The education budget is well targeted at priorities. Schools have benefited from bigger increases than central education budgets. New funding has supported the post-16 curriculum and ICT. Consultation with all schools and a headteachers' reference group on the budget is good and the information is well presented. Schools value the commitment to transparency and openness.

41. The council aims to achieve optimum delegation to schools, accompanied by support for schools' own resource management capacity. Schools are happy with the level of delegation; 83 per cent in 2000 was in line with other authorities and has risen to 85.3 per cent in 2001. Following consultation with schools, the council decided not to increase special educational needs delegation, though a high proportion of earmarked SEN funding is passed to schools. The inherited funding formula has been well rationalised and amended to target social disadvantage, change the 'garrison factor' to wider mobility, support the introduction of the new sixth form curriculum, utilise the building condition information and provide appropriate support for small schools. Work is beginning on activity-led modelling which will aim to look at the curriculum subjects, staffing ratios and other costs. This will inform wider debate on targeting resources to needs across the phases.

42. School deficits and surpluses are modest and monitored. The few overspends are not excessive and are linked to changes in the special educational needs of individual pupils and home-to school transport. Both areas are under close scrutiny and were amongst the first Best Value reviews. Improvements are already in place, although the reviews are not yet completed.

Best Value

43. The council has satisfactory structures in place for promoting Best Value, and this was confirmed by the auditor's opinion of the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) in June 2000. The corporate performance management system links key corporate and service objectives with individual appraisal.

44. The Best Value review process is based on the business excellence model, and the council has reviewed it in the light of the first year's experience to focus on the outcomes, rather than the process of reviews. Members have sensibly decided to abandon some reviews and to combine others to create wider cross-cutting reviews. They also plan to establish a separate Best Value scrutiny committee. The prioritisation of services for review is sensible. Four education reviews are completed but not signed off by members, so were not inspected within this report: home-to-school transport; special education needs; education psychology; and school improvement. Officers are positive about the process and have already identified some improvements in service delivery as well as, improved focus on key issues; better performance and benchmarking information; consultation and evaluation with parents as well as schools; and links with other LEAs.

SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Implications of other functions

45. Although there is great public and political support for school sixth forms in the royal borough, post-16 school results, particularly for those students gaining two or more 'A' levels, are not good enough. The LEA recognises this and has made some moves to try and identify the cause of the under-performance. However in the absence of reliable and comprehensive value-added management information about individual pupils and their movements in and out of borough schools, the LEA is not well placed to make sharp judgements on effectiveness.

46. Given that it has limited strategic planning responsibility and will no longer control the purse strings for post-16 education in schools from next April, the LEA is doing what it can do to try and raise standards. Via the work of a consultant it has identified that much of the 'A' level offer is not cost effective, and has instituted sensible consortium arrangements in Maidenhead and Windsor to rationalise provision. These are at an early stage of development. A 14-19 strategic development group has been set up to co-ordinate work on curriculum development and enhance collaboration. Moves are also underway to further develop the work related curriculum and create a vocational sixth form in one school linked to a further education college.

47. The borough's learning partnership has supported school improvement. The links with adult education at Charters School have led to major improvements in the facilities. A number of primary schools report increased parental involvement in and support for their children's education flowing from participation in 'keeping up with the children' courses. Initiatives with disaffected pupils, including some at the pupil referral units, have impacted favourably on schools.

48. The greatest threat to school improvement stems from difficulties in recruiting teachers, headteachers, LEA officers and non-teaching staff. Practically all the schools visited referred to the difficulties they have with recruitment and retention of teachers, and seven of them stressed the difficulties the LEA itself has in recruiting and retaining officers. Moreover, the slender central staffing means that officers are overstretched and this impacts on retention.

49. The council has appropriate strategies in place for responding to these difficulties, including a recently appointed recruitment strategy manager, key worker housing, excellent support for NQTs and the graduate teacher scheme, and a tailored support programme for returners to teaching. But the scale of the challenge out-strips the grant-aid for such work, and the impact is on all schools, including the very successful.

Monitoring, challenge, support, intervention

50. Overall the LEA exercises these functions well. The LEA's strategy for monitoring, challenging, intervening and supporting schools is in line with the Code of Practice for LEA/School Relations. It focuses clearly on targeting resources in relation to need and on helping schools become self-reviewing, autonomous

institutions. This strategy has been developed through careful consultation with schools. Meetings with headteachers, visits to schools and evidence from the school survey showed a good level of approval and understanding of this approach.

51. The LEA draws on performance data, Section 10 reports and information from link inspector visits to place all its schools into one of five categories. The level of monitoring and support to which a school is entitled is clearly defined for each category and is allocated appropriately in inverse proportion to success. Schools have to pay for any additional support beyond this entitlement. The categorisation of each school is reviewed regularly and the degree of monitoring and support adjusted accordingly. Visits to schools showed that this system was reflected in practice. However, some schools were unclear about their basic entitlement.

52. The recently established database gives a clear record of services given to schools and enables headteachers, senior officers and link inspectors to monitor inputs. The notes of visit produced by link inspectors are clear and concise. Copies are given to the headteacher but not automatically sent to the chairs of governors. This limits their usefulness in enabling governors to challenge their schools appropriately. The performance of schools is reviewed regularly at meetings of the quality assurance service team. Periodically, link inspectors also hold case conferences on their own schools. These conferences draw on relevant information and judgements from across departments and build an overall picture of a school which is shared with the headteacher.

Recommendation

In order to support school improvement:

- copy notes of link inspectors' visits to the chairs of governors so that they are better informed about the performance of their schools.

53. The LEA is clearly committed to challenging complacency and underachievement. This is reflected in the EDP and the persistence with which the quality assurance service has tackled issues related to target-setting. There has been considerable resistance from schools to the setting of ambitious targets. The LEA was slow at first to address this, partly because of the limited data available. These factors have contributed to a slowing down in the rate of improvement across the authority. The LEA has now refined its processes, giving each school an indicative range within which to set its targets. It has also conducted a more sophisticated analysis of the factors detracting from its overall performance and targeted specific schools for further training and support. As a result, the LEA now expects the rate of improvement to increase. Nevertheless, visits to schools and interviews with headteachers and governors indicate that the LEA has only been partially successful in convincing stakeholders of the purpose and principles of effective target-setting. Some headteachers feel that they are challenged rigorously, while others would welcome more challenge. The extent to which inspectors challenge schools varies.

54. Inspectors provide very good support for schools. Discussions with headteachers and visits to schools showed that link inspectors are generally held in

high regard. They know their schools well. Headteachers also feel that there is good liaison and exchange of information between inspectors and fellow officers. This ensures that the support and advice given to schools is informed and focused and draws on the expertise of relevant personnel.

55. When the LEA was established, it made the sensible decision not to try to maintain the breadth of curriculum support formerly available. There is a relatively small team of inspectors whose areas of specialism cover the core subjects, professional development, SEN and each key stage. The LEA also buys in consultants where needed. Their work is related closely to EDP priorities, as in the case of the recent consultancy work on 16-19 provision. The LEA also provides appropriate information to schools on independent curriculum advisers, whose services they can buy-in for themselves.

56. The quality assurance service is very well led and managed effectively. Strategic planning is good. There is a well-established performance management system and inspectors' individual targets and training programmes are clearly linked to Education Development Plan priorities. The recently introduced electronic monitoring system allows for close monitoring of the use of inspectors' time. There are also sound strategies in place to develop greater consistency in the way that inspectors monitor, support and challenge schools.

Collection and analysis of data

57. The support that the LEA provides to schools for the use of performance data is unsatisfactory. Inherited data was very limited and the LEA made a slow start in this area, mainly because of an inability to recruit key personnel. The education planning and information team has been fully operational for less than a year. During that time, staff have made a considerable effort to compensate for gaps in provision for schools. All schools have now received individual profiles. However, apart from comparisons between local schools, and with statistical neighbours, the content of the profiles at the moment adds little to what can be derived from national data.

58. Most heads in the schools visited reported that they made greater use of national data than of the information from the LEA. The late arrival of the data produced by the LEA had meant that it had been of limited use in the target-setting process. Some headteachers felt that the comparative data provided was of limited worth, since their schools had greater similarities with schools in other neighbouring unitary authorities than with schools in the royal borough. The dearth of information in the past meant that secondary schools in particular had developed their own systems of gathering and analysing data based on a range of standardised tests.

59. The LEA's baseline assessment system has benefited curriculum planning and teaching for pupils in the early years. Baseline information is now being combined with other assessments, conducted as part of the Early Years Development and Childcare Plan, to produce individual pupil profiles. These will become a part of the system of tracking pupils over time and target-setting. It is too early to judge what the impact of this is likely to be.

60. The support provided by the literacy and numeracy teams in primary schools has compensated to some extent for the lack of other data. Schools have been encouraged to analyse test results to identify patterns of performance and targets for improvement of teaching. This has been well received. The school survey showed that 85 per cent of primary headteachers judged guidance from the LEA in the use of data to be satisfactory or better. This was in marked contrast to the responses of secondary headteachers, 45 per cent of whom found the LEA's guidance to be poor or very poor.

61. The LEA has been aware of the limitations in its provision and analysis of data and, through the school improvement data steering group, is now beginning to develop a more coherent strategy to rectify the situation.

Recommendations

In order to support school improvement:

- review good practice in the provision and analysis of key data in other authorities and use this as a basis for improving the quality, range and relevance of data provided; and
- develop further the training provided in the use and analysis of data for target-setting.

Support for literacy

62. Support for literacy is very well led and managed and is now effectively targeting areas of underachievement in the royal borough's schools.

63. At Key Stage 1, pupils achieve standards comparable to similar authorities and well above the national average. The proportion gaining Level 3 in reading and writing is above the national average and in line with similar authorities. The rate of improvement in performance at Key Stage 2 was in line with the national average until 1998, but fell below in 1999 and 2000, when the LEA did not meet its annual targets. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 and above in Key Stage 2 English tests is above the national average, but below that of similar authorities. However, the proportion gaining Level 5 or above is above the national average and in line with similar authorities. There is a significant gap between the performance of boys and girls, particularly in writing. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is well above the national average and in line with that of similar authorities for both Levels 5 and 6. However, the gap between the performance of boys and girls widens. The LEA's own analysis shows that a higher proportion of boys gain the expected levels at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 3, and that boys perform slightly less well at Key Stage 3 than in the LEA's statistical neighbours.

64. While attainment is at a high level in many respects, the LEA has much to do if it is to reach its challenging target of 87 per cent of pupils attaining Level 4 by 2002. The causes of under-performance in writing are now being addressed vigorously, although these were not fully identified until the LEA's performance in national tests began to fall behind its targets. The LEA literacy advisory team has initiated measures which will improve performance at Key Stages 1 and 2 and enable the

LEA to achieve maximum progress towards its target. The majority of schools now have effective diagnosis of their strengths and weaknesses and of improved teaching strategies for writing; and higher expectations are being established from Key Stage 1.

65. Additional funding for intensive support has enabled the LEA to increase the number of schools receiving high levels of support, and this is targeted at those schools where performance is weakest and where intervention will have the greatest impact. The causes of under-performance in writing have been systematically analysed and traced back, through the LEA's audit of Key Stage 1 and through programmes of monitoring and support at Key Stage 2 to lack of teacher confidence in developing writing at both key stages. Good support and training have been provided for all schools. This has included National Literacy Strategy (NLS) training such as 'Grammar for Writing', and opportunities to observe leading literacy teachers. There has been additional support and training; for example all schools have been provided with a portfolio of assessed work with detailed commentaries and guidance on teaching strategies. Schools can also take part in an audit half-way through Year 2 to monitor progress and identify targets for teaching. Headteachers have been encouraged to attend training, and the LEA is seeking to establish a network of leading headteachers for literacy. Training is provided in school as well as on courses. Guidance has also been provided on teaching strategies to improve boys' achievements.

66. The LEA has recently appointed a consultant for Key Stage 3. Training has been provided on changes in the National Curriculum for English and the NLS at Key Stage 3. This was well received by schools. Other support for English enhances opportunities for pupils to use language creatively, including annual writing competitions festivals and a poet working with local schools.

67. Training for literacy has been well linked to other support in the LEA, for example to early years provision and support for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). Guidance on supporting pupils with EAL was drawn up by the literacy team and the ethnic minority achievement service, (EMAS). Training and advice have been provided for teachers at the special school and the pupil referral units (PRUs).

68. Schools value the support and advice provided by the inspector and the literacy consultants. They are particularly appreciative of the opportunities to observe leading literacy teachers and of school-based training which addresses the specific needs of schools and teachers.

69. The schools library service, which is shared between six neighbouring LEAs, provides valued support for literacy and other curriculum subjects to most schools in the LEA. This includes advice for schools with serious weaknesses. Resources are available to support the literacy hour and summer literacy schools and the service provides advice on maintenance and management of schools' own libraries.

Support for numeracy

70. Support for numeracy is good, based on a clear strategy which is grounded in detailed analysis of the performance of the LEA and individual schools. At Key Stage 1, standards in numeracy have risen steadily from 1995-2000, at a slightly faster rate than the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining Levels 2 and 3 is above the national average and in line with similar authorities. The rate of improvement at Key Stage 2 slowed dramatically in 2000 after a steady improvement over the previous five years. 74 per cent of pupils reached Level 4 or above in national tests. This represents a higher level of performance than the national average but lower than that achieved in similar authorities. A sustained and intensive effort will be required if the LEA is to meet its revised target of 84 per cent by 2002. Standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with similar LEAs and well above the national average at both Levels 5 and 6.

71. The numeracy team is providing effective support for schools in raising standards. Patterns of underachievement are identified through detailed audits and inform training and support. A good level of support is provided for all schools. 'light touch' schools which received additional support had found it very useful. Very good support is provided for schools which are identified as needing intensive support. The LEA has provided extra support to eighteen schools this year, including middle schools, where achievement is variable. Summer schools have also been run in two middle schools as part of the strategy to improve performance. A scheme for master-classes for able Year 4 pupils has been developed with Reading University.

72. Schools were particularly appreciative of the demonstration lessons provided by the consultants and leading mathematics teachers. They valued the advice given to co-ordinators and headteachers, for example, in reviewing and revising schemes of work and joint observations of lessons. The primary consultant provides good models of working with pupils who are not fluent in English. Presentations by the mathematics inspector to parents and governors in schools which requested them were also welcomed.

73. The numeracy consultant for Key Stage 3 has led training introducing the numeracy strategy. Schools found this to be informative and valuable. There are plans to extend the scheme for leading mathematics teachers into Key Stage 3. Patterns of performance at Key Stages 3 and 4 have been analysed to identify possible underachievement in individual schools and this will inform monitoring and training.

74. The numeracy team is well led and effective; with sustained support the LEA is well placed to make good progress towards its challenging targets.

Support for information and communication technology

75. Strategic leadership of ICT is currently weak and is unsatisfactory overall. A good start was made and there are some significant strengths in the picture, but following the death of the inspector and the departure of the consultant, limited progress is being made. There are significant areas in teacher training that need addressing with urgency.

76. The LEA has a sound corporate strategy for ICT. Most schools are well equipped with systems. The number of computers to pupils is now close to national targets in both primary and secondary schools and has resulted in more use of computers, by pupils, across the curriculum.

77. The authority made a good start in responding to the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) grant. Most schools have good systems in place to support both the teaching of ICT in the curriculum and school administration. Information flows between schools and the LEA. ICT has been used to transfer information about schools' budgets. There are good plans for future development, which include the transfer of data across broadband technology replacing conventional telephone lines and resulting in faster transfer of information. Examples of good classroom practice and useful curriculum materials will also be available from the authority's web-site. Some secondary schools are involved in the pilot project to test the new technology. Technical support for schools has been good. The authority responds quickly to requests for help and offers on site visits from technicians. Although the authority has given good support to one school that has experienced difficulties with its network, it has been slow to respond to supporting schools in transferring performance data.

78. The response to training provided by New Opportunity Funding (NOF) has slowed down from a good start and is now unsatisfactory. Initially good advice and consultation was sought from all the possible providers of training. Most schools recognised that the authority gave good initial guidance about providers, but not all have lived up to expectations. Schools were free to make their own choices and plan their start dates for staff training. This take up of training has not been sufficiently monitored by the authority. Some schools have not yet started their training programmes, while others have nearly completed. Where training has been successful, schools are confident that the impact of training will improve pupils' attainment. Where this has not happened, together with the uncertainties over future leadership of ICT in the borough, schools are insecure. In the school survey and visits, over half of the schools spoke of dissatisfaction about the lack of quality courses for teachers and the quality of the provision by some outside providers. At the time of the inspection, interviews for key advisory staff were being held and appointments were due to be made for next term.

Recommendations

- update the strategy for information and communication technology on the basis of a thorough audit of progress being made in schools as a result of recent teacher training provided by New Opportunity Funding .

Support for schools causing concern

79. Support for schools causing concern is good. In the past, OFSTED inspections found that one primary school required special measures and three other schools had serious weaknesses. The school requiring special measures was removed from that category within two years. Of the schools with serious weaknesses, two have

now emerged from that category and the third is waiting for a Section 10 inspection. Since the LEA's school improvement team was fully constituted in January 1999, no school has been put into either of these categories.

80. The LEA has a clearly defined strategy for the early identification of schools causing concern. Additional time and resources are allocated appropriately and in proportion to identified needs. Support across services is well co-ordinated through link inspectors and closely related to clearly defined action plans. Progress in relation to these action plans is regularly and rigorously monitored by senior officers and elected members and schools are moved appropriately between different categories of concern. Effective use has been made of advisory staff and seconded headteachers. The LEA has dealt decisively with ineffective senior managers and weak teachers. Membership of governing bodies has been strengthened and the governor support unit has provided appropriate additional advice and training where necessary.

81. Visits to schools causing concern and to schools formerly in the serious weaknesses and special measures category confirmed that the LEA was providing high quality support. There was consistent praise for link inspectors who challenged the schools while also providing a high level of personal and professional support.

Support and training for governors

82. Support for governors is good. The Education Development Plan clearly identifies the activities for supporting and training governors to fulfil their duties, particularly in relation to school self-review. The governor support unit organises a wide-ranging programme of training that focuses appropriately on relevant local and national issues. It also provides information on courses offered by other providers and is developing alternative methods of training, for example through distance learning. Governors are pleased with the increasing focus on school-based training and the flexibility in the timing and location of centrally organised courses. However, several governors feel that trainers do not take sufficient account of governors' existing knowledge, skills and understanding. Some training focuses too much on imparting information which could be more effectively conveyed in writing or electronically.

83. The LEA has established good lines of communication with governors. Chairs of governing bodies have termly meetings with the director of education and with the lead member to discuss local and national initiatives. Officers hold regular briefing and consultation meetings with clerks and link governors and also provide an informative termly newsletter and telephone helpline service which governors value. The LEA gives timely guidance on the recruitment of governors and promotes broad representation on governing bodies. Successful recruitment drives have ensured that there are very few governor vacancies.

84. Support for schools causing concern is good. This includes the recruitment of additional governors to strengthen governing bodies, the provision of expert clerking support; training in the use of monitoring and reviewing procedures; and advice on personnel issues. This support is consistent with the LEA's policy of supporting school self-review and targeting help where it is most needed.

Support for school management

85. Support for school management is good. Evidence from OFSTED inspection reports shows that, with a few exceptions, the quality of leadership and management in the LEA's schools is good. In the case of schools that have been inspected twice, there has been a considerable improvement in the quality of management and efficiency. Discussions with officers, visits to schools and documentary evidence showed that the LEA has a good understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and developmental needs of management in its schools.

86. Newly appointed headteachers are well supported by link inspectors and mentor headteachers and through the Leadership and Management Programme for New Headteachers (HEADLAMP) training scheme. The national training for serving headteachers (Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers) and for those aspiring to headship (National Professional Qualification for Headship) are also well supported by the LEA. In addition, the LEA organises headteacher and deputy headteacher conferences. Discussions with senior managers and visits to schools showed that these have been well received. The LEA has also organised courses and conferences for middle managers. These are valued by the teachers concerned. Unfortunately, a significant proportion of courses organised by the LEA has had to be cancelled because of the lack of availability of supply staff to enable teachers to be released.

87. The LEA provides a carefully planned and highly effective programme of support and monitoring for newly qualified teachers. This is well received by newly qualified teachers and their mentors. There has been a good rate of retention of newly qualified teachers by the authority. Despite this, however, many schools are experiencing considerable recruitment difficulties. The LEA has recently appointed a recruitment strategy manager to deal with this problem. What impact this is likely to have, it is too early to judge.

Early years

88. The LEA's support for early years is very good. It is very well managed and led through the borough's early years development and childcare partnership (EYDCP). There are regular newsletters, surgery times, open house time and exhibitions at the resource centre. Courses are of very good quality, well attended and made more interesting and varied by the use of outside speakers. There are ambitious expectations for childcare across the borough, but it is difficult to retain trained staff. The take up by childminders of courses is good and a close relationship exists with social services. There are also very good links with health education and both services work closely with the EYDCP group. The authority is building up individual profiles of pupils from birth. This is followed by a check-up at three-and-a-half-years-old and records are used to track children through the authority. The provision for special needs for the early years is good. There are quick referrals and follow up visits as soon as problems occur. The enthusiastic EYDCP group has made strong links across the borough to all interested parties, and this has ensured good quality care and provision for the early years across the borough.

89. The provision of pre-school education in a range of different settings is good. This is regularly monitored to ensure that a high quality curriculum is provided. From government funding the authority funds places for 20 per cent of three-year-olds where there is a need or where a request is made. There are sufficient part-time places for all four-year-olds across the borough. The diversity of provision gives a wide variety of choice to parents, ranging across maintained, independent, private and voluntary sectors.

90. The LEA's policy is to admit pupils in the term after they are five, resulting in three admission points. However, some schools admit pupils earlier. This causes difficulties in both staffing and the organisation of pupils. Although the LEA has a robust baseline assessment scheme, it does not have performance data at the end of Key Stage 1 which would enable it to assess the impact of these complex arrangements.

Recommendations

- analyse the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in relation to the type and length of early years provision received. On the basis of this analysis, review the policy for admitting pupils to mainstream schools before they are five.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate planning

91. Corporate planning is clear and consistent. The prime document is the community plan which sets out the borough's approach to its responsibilities as a unitary council, makes a clear statement of strategic direction and priorities and shows how this is to be aligned with financial planning. The plan sets out core values and principles, one of which is maximising educational opportunities and achievement, and key themes, one of which is a commitment to education. The council has a well-developed consultation strategy involving focus groups, questionnaires, a citizens' panel and other mechanisms. Following a major consultation exercise, a new community strategy incorporating local strategic partnerships, as required by central Government, is currently being developed. The Best Value Performance Plan states corporate priorities and is well aligned with the community plan. It sets out the targets from the Education Development Plan and reviews performance against them. Key plans for the education service are the Education Development Plan and the education strategy, both of which relate clearly to the central corporate plans. The council also has a social inclusion strategy which is cross referenced to the other plans.

92. Financial planning is currently based on medium-term projections. It is moving towards a three-year-cycle, but this has not yet been established. An excess of expenditure over income in the past has now been addressed by a large increase in council tax and some reductions in central expenditure. This resulted in a difficult budget-setting round this year. A cabinet sub committee has now been set up to take reports on financial monitoring and under the modernised system, lead members are much more deeply involved in financial planning. Finances are now on a footing which should ultimately facilitate longer term planning.

93. Corporate performance management is via an annual appraisal system. Within education, personal objectives are dovetailed into those of the Education Development Plan and education strategy. Individual units produce service profiles focused on outcomes. A strategic management group, established as a Best Value review group, of headteachers, governors and officers has a developmental brief for performance management in education and other key strategic functions.

94. The new administration initially adopted a unilateral approach to the leadership of education. With time they have developed a more consultative approach and members, including the lead member, are well informed about education and fully committed to raising achievement. The director and officers have a low key, consultative and open approach to leadership, which has generally won the trust of schools. Though some secondary schools hanker after the maverick leadership styles of the past, the primary schools appreciate the practical and hands on approach of the present leadership, its openness, responsiveness and accessibility, and its good knowledge of their schools. There is unanimous appreciation of the impetus to school autonomy given by the head of quality assurance and her team.

95. The new political processes, coupled with the change in administration, have increased the demands on officers, in particular the director. The political turbulence

caused by these changes has not impacted on schools, largely because the director has managed the process effectively centrally, ensuring continuity, but this has taken up too much of his time and energies. Lead members are expected to develop policy and, in order to do so effectively, need to keep in close touch with officers. In particular, the requirement to present papers in cabinet demands a close involvement in their development. The director meets weekly with the lead member, attends education scrutiny, full council and weekly cabinet meetings and all the user forums set up by the new administration. He and other officers produce clear and comprehensive reports for members, brief them regularly, keep them informed about developments in national policy and offer informed analyses of the direction in which things are moving.

96. The teachers' forum, the headteachers' forum and the governors' forum bring together staff, governors and members to feed in to the process of policy formation, whilst the school improvement forum monitors and evaluates the performance of schools rigorously. The director meets regularly with heads and governors and twice termly with a small group of heads who constitute a think-tank. Consultation and communication are good, though there has been some consultation overload which the department is now addressing via the fortnightly bulletin and other means.

97. Some key and difficult decisions have been taken by the LEA, including the decision to close The Princess Margaret Royal Free school, which will release an estimated £4 million for use elsewhere in education. The consultation on re-organisation in Windsor resulted in a decision not to proceed, as detailed in section five of this report. The decision to raise council tax by 11 per cent enabled the authority to maintain school budgets. Though some recent decisions have raised hackles in some quarters, overall the council's readiness to take decisions, including unpopular ones, and to do so promptly, has been beneficial to education.

98. Partnership is built into the authority's policy and planning framework and permeates the ethos of the LEA. Strategically, partnerships are working well. They are also good at the operational level with most agencies, namely, the police, the diocesan authorities, the youth service, employers, community organisations, the minority ethnic communities and the trades unions. The learning partnership and the early years partnership are effective.

99. There are, however, problems in schools at operational level regarding partnership with social services, and to a degree with health and these are reflected in the responses of schools to the audit commission's school survey. Nonetheless, there are successful joint initiatives such as the database for children in public care, the research for which was funded by social services.

100. The tone is set at the top, with the chief executive spearheading the council's partnership approach, serving as vice-chair of the learning partnership and leading on the crime and disorder strategy and community safety. The first has the active support of local employers for developing the work related curriculum with disenchanted young people, whilst the second has facilitated the involvement of the police in a range of useful work with schools and young people. This includes work at the pupil referral units and in developing restorative justice approaches. The youth service work with young offenders or those at risk of offending and have

seconded a member of staff to work on development of the personal social and health education curriculum in schools. The community and youth services and community partnerships unit, as part of the social inclusion strategy, are involved in anti drugs work and the creation of diversionary facilities for young people such as a skateboarding park. The current co-operative proposals on change to voluntary aided status for four schools reflect the very good relationship with the diocesan authorities.

Management services

101. Brokering arrangements overall are satisfactory. The council has developed a clear 'schools services traders prospectus' which includes the levels of service offered to schools, standards and costs. This has been refined in response to schools and buyback is nearly 100 per cent of all services. Evaluation and monitoring of the service level agreements (SLAs) are through questionnaires and the representative groups of headteachers. These are not fully established and are still being developed. There is appropriate liaison with the quality assurance team to support schools in difficulty. The services have been affected by recruitment and retention problems, and are tightly stretched and dependent on individuals. Personnel and bursarial support are also purchased by a few schools from another LEA. In the current labour market, the LEA has difficulty in providing sufficient expertise and maintaining continuity at a reasonable cost.

102. Client support is good. It has sharpened the management of the catering, grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts, and is now also providing successful general training for schools on managing contracts and developing procurement skills.

103. **Bursarial support** is an expert service which provides good advice and an effective support network for school finance officers. Schools are encouraged to draft three-year budget plans, big surpluses have been challenged and the LEA operates a loans scheme for large purchases. However, the reconciliation between school and central council financial systems is clumsy and has led to time-consuming errors in some schools. This has been recognised and mitigated and a new corporate financial management system is planned which should resolve the matter, possibly through the schools directly using the corporate system.

104. **Personnel support** is satisfactory, although fragile. It is well managed and provides reliable contract and payroll administration. Though responsive to schools, it is a small, overstretched corporate service, which lacks sufficient education expertise to support complex casework. In part, this is because cases are rare, so experience does not accumulate. The service regularly monitors recruitment and retention in schools and the sickness absence returns from schools. Some schools are confused by job-evaluation procedures for school-based non-teaching staff. The corporate service is undergoing a Best Value review which will include the service to schools.

105. **Administrative information and communication technology (ICT) support** provides a sound framework for schools' administrative and financial information. The education department is developing central systems to capture the information

and improve LEA data analysis. All schools use e-mail and the LEA has plans for an intranet which will share key data and be a platform for sharing curriculum and other content developed by schools. Some secondary schools already have broadband connectivity and all other schools are to have it within 18 months. This is partly funded through the south east grid for learning consortium and links to libraries. Following a Best Value review of the corporate ICT service the charges were reduced for the technical support service level agreements and the service specification improved to better meet schools' needs. This included a better help desk and optional hardware support for schools. The aim is to develop a managed service which will advise the schools' own technical support.

106. **Reactive building maintenance** is effective, reliable and generally well regarded by schools. The positive points are the named surveyor for each school who was involved in the asset management plan (AMP) so knows the buildings, and the quick response in emergencies. However, some schools are critical of the lack of advance estimates for jobs, although a maximum price is set, and experience difficulties identifying charges to the schools with specific jobs, but they are confident the LEA will improve this.

107. **Home-to-school transport** is satisfactory. It has been managed by the LEA since April 2000 when the inherited multi-borough contract ended. However costs had risen and it was the biggest overspend in 1999/2000. A Best Value review of the service is underway, but the service has already developed an integrated strategy which is likely to prove effective in managing costs in future. A new information system enables routes and costs to be closely monitored. The LEA is reviewing its discretionary policies for entitlement to subsidised transport and has improved the delivery of SEN transport. To reduce cost increases, the LEA is undertaking small contract renegotiations rather than major tenders, and is considering piloting the yellow school bus scheme to increase use of public transport and reduce traffic congestion.

Recommendations

In order to secure effective management services that support school improvement:

- strengthen the processes for evaluating the delivery of the traded service level agreements and communicating the outcomes to all schools;
- ensure schools are fully involved in the implementation of the new corporate financial information system and that it ends schools' financial reconciliation problems;
- ensure the need to secure sufficient expertise in education is included in the Best Value review of personnel services; and
- consider the scope for expanding some support services in a joint approach with other LEAs.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Strategy

108. The LEA's strategic planning for developing services to support pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good, but some elements of detailed implementation are unclear and create confusion in schools. Early in its administration, the LEA established its policy on increasing inclusion of pupils with SEN within mainstream schools. The key principles underpinning the policy were equality of opportunity and the need for a continuum of provision to support as wide a range of pupils as possible within the authority's schools. These principles are well embedded in the priorities of the Education Development Plan and the borough's community plan, and have underpinned a thorough review of existing provision and a strategic plan for development from 2001-2004. This is laid out in the publication *'Effective schools for all: developing inclusive approaches to education'*.

109. The rationale for developing inclusive approaches to education is clear and reflects both national developments and local need. The principles of the Revised Code of Practice underpin the planning and restructuring of services in line with the newly-defined areas of need. The strategic plan sets out the planned developments, including early years developments, the role of the special school and strategies for increasing support for speech and language.

110. The LEA has undertaken a thorough review of its provision for SEN and identified gaps in existing provision, for example, for pupils on the autistic spectrum. Key priorities at an early stage were the redistribution of resources to target support more effectively for pupils from Stage 3 of the Code of Practice for SEN, and the delegation of further funding to schools for preparatory work for changes in the structure and delivery of the services.

111. The SEN strategy group had well-defined terms of reference for its work and consultation has been thorough and wide-ranging. Reviews of provision and need have been well planned and thorough. For example, focus groups identified themes which guided the development of a clear action plan. Task groups were then set up each with a specific aspect of SEN to review. These reviews informed the proposals for future provision over which all stakeholders were consulted. Conferences for schools and parents were held on developing inclusive education for all. The strategic plan was launched in 2000. While this level of preparation and consultation is admirable, the process has taken three years and many schools are rightly concerned that the planned three-year period for implementation of the new strategy is too long.

112. Although there is a high level of support in schools for the LEA's strategy, there is also some concern about how it will be implemented. Those schools which have additionally resourced provision that is likely to be phased out, would welcome a clarification of the process and some remain unsure that the planned provision will fully meet the needs of the pupils they support. The role of the special school is also under review. If, as is currently envisaged, it is to become a major resource for a very wide range of need, including pupils with educational and behavioural

difficulties, consideration will need to be given to developing the accommodation and to the level of funding.

113. The appointment of an 'inclusions officer' and the involvement of other agencies in planning have supported the LEA's planning and the early stages of implementation of its strategy.

Recommendation

In order to ensure that the LEA's support for special educational needs provision is fully effective:

- reduce the timescale for implementation of the special educational needs strategy.

Statutory duties

114. The LEA meets statutory requirements with regard to special educational needs. The SEN administration section was selected for a Best Value review and has set out clear targets for continued improvements in completing proposed statements. The review also identified a need for support for schools to ensure that applications for statements are properly completed and thus avoid potential waste of expensive specialist advice. Eighty-six per cent of statements are currently produced within the recommended timescale, despite some staffing problems. Good liaison with other agencies minimises delays in providing advice. The Parent/Partnership scheme provides independent advice and support to parents. The LEA has funded a part-time post for a partnership officer centrally to ensure that this support is sustained.

115. The quality of statements is generally good, with clear objectives that provide a very sound basis for the development of individual education plans. The guidance and criteria provided in the SEN handbook to help schools manage the stages of the Code of Practice have been useful, but are now out of date. Review procedures are good and officers or other professionals attend where appropriate, although the Best Value review identified the need to ensure that liaison between services is improved to decide who will attend and avoid waste of time.

School improvement

116. The LEA has made improvements in both the management and delivery of SEN services. The 'integrated pupil support service' has been reorganised to address gaps in previous provision. The LEA is currently operating a buy-back scheme in preparation for its plans to establish specialist teams operating as cost centres. The LEA has yet to establish the criteria that will be used to ensure the effectiveness of the total service. Schools visited and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) interviewed felt that some services were well established and effective, such as the support for visually and hearing-impaired pupils, and that some new services such as the support for autistic pupils in mainstream schools were developing well. In other areas, such as speech and language therapy, there were shortages.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that the LEA's support for special educational needs provision is fully effective:

- establish criteria to monitor the effectiveness of services.

117. The wide range of training provided for SENCOs and teaching assistants is valued as a reflection of the LEA's strong commitment to SEN. Training is well planned to enhance their skills and understanding through a range of courses at different levels.

118. The educational psychology service (EPS) contributes effectively to the planning and delivery of support and was a core member of the SEN review. The service has developed and managed a range of initiatives, especially in the field of autism, such as the 'Early bird' scheme for supporting pre-school children with autism. The allocation of time to schools is based on an equitable formula, and generally used well, though some additional time for work with pre-school children had not been fully used. Schools rate the support and expertise of the team highly.

119. The LEA works well in partnership with health and social services to fill gaps in provision. The East Berkshire children's services board has funded work in occupational therapy, which will benefit schools. A project is being piloted in six primary schools to address shortages in speech and language therapy by providing training for all staff and teaching assistants under the leadership of a designated teacher.

Value for money

120. Spending on special educational provision is in line with similar LEAs although above the national average. The LEA is aware that spending on independent special school placements is higher than similar authorities and the national average and is taking action to reduce this, whilst ensuring all pupils receive appropriate provision. The reorganisation of the SEN service has made it more efficient and sharply focused on meeting the range of needs in the LEA's schools. The special school provides good quality education for a range of pupils at reasonable cost. The possible extension of its role to provide for some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties has cost implications. The educational psychology service is providing effective support for children with statements and good advice and training for schools. The allocation of time in the educational psychology service needs to be reviewed, since the current allowance for early years is not fully used. The Best Value review has provided valuable information on the efficiency with which the service operates and has resulted in clearer priorities for development. The LEA is aware that there is a need for further alignment of the work of the various departments who manage and support SEN, to avoid duplication of services at school level and to improve monitoring, for example, of the use of funds devolved to schools. Overall the LEA provides satisfactory value for money.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that the LEA's support for special educational needs provision is fully effective:

- plan and cost the changes in provision needed for the special school if its role is to be extended;
- monitor in more detail the use of funds devolved to schools; and
- review the allocation of educational psychologist's time to schools and ensure that it fully reflects need.

SECTION 5: ACCESS

The supply of school places

121. The organisation of school places is well co-ordinated and the complex local context is clearly set out within the school organisation plan. Forecasting has proved accurate and there is appropriate liaison with dioceses and neighbouring LEAs. The infant class size plan has been successfully implemented. There are a few schools with surplus places and more that are overcrowded, but in January 2001 the proportion of surplus places was very low, less than one per cent, in both, primary and secondary sectors. This is below the five per cent target set by the LEA to offer efficiency and some scope for parental choice. There are sensible plans to expand places in areas under pressure.

122. Very soon after inception, the LEA launched consultation on the three-tier system operating in Windsor and the future of one upper school. The consultation included limited debate on the wider educational issues, such as the impact of three changes of school rather than two on pupil achievement and the disjuncture between the three-tier system and national curriculum key stages. There was no analysis of comparative or value-added pupil performance data as has been undertaken in relation to the three-tier system in other areas of the country. The concerns of parents within the schools dominated the debate and the outcome was no change. However, one upper school was subsequently closed and this was well-managed for pupils and staff. The consequent capital receipts will fund improvements in other schools. The three tier schools remain popular locally but their smaller size adds to overall costs and though their results are similar to national averages. This masks some under-performance when compared with similar schools.

123. Two secondary and two primary schools are considering a change to Church of England voluntary aided status, to promote their individual ethos. The secondary proposals are more advanced and supported by the LEA and the diocese. In one case, this includes a bid to open a sixth form. The other secondary schools have sixth forms and appropriate liaison with the Learning and Skills Council, and the colleges is developing.

Recommendation

In order to ensure that the organisation of schools promotes pupil achievement:

- commission detailed analysis of the educational impact of the three points of transfer in the Windsor schools, including analysis of the performance of schools and individual pupil-tracking. Share the results with schools and consider appropriate action to raise standards and improve the efficient use of resources.

Admissions

124. Although policy is not always entirely clear, this is an effective, well-managed service. The LEA has continued the previous LEA policy to admit pupils to school in the term following their fifth birthday. Therefore summer-born pupils start school in

Year 1, although most have benefited from good pre-school provision, mainly in non-school settings, as described in paragraph 89 of this report. Aided schools have their own admissions policies and a number take rising-fives into reception, with some community schools also doing so, resulting in half of all schools in total having rising fives in reception classes. The range of different policies in neighbouring LEAs increases the confusion to parents and the cross-borough movement of pupils.

125. Community secondary schools operate neighbourhood catchment areas. The two consulting on becoming aided aim to continue to be 'local' schools, although inevitably they will attract denominational applications which could lead to higher transport costs and more cross-borough movement. Most secondary schools are very over-subscribed, and the number of appeals has doubled in three years. Appeals are well managed and are resolved by the end of the summer term. The LEA has successfully reduced the catchment area of one school this year following complex and sensitive negotiations.

126. Information to parents is adequate but improvements in presentation are planned, including more information on the previous pattern of over-subscription, and the application of the criteria for admittance to help inform and focus parents when stating preferences.

Asset management

127. The LEA inherited school buildings in a poor state and has been successful in dealing with the worst. Major works have been completed on time and to budget, in close liaison with schools. The asset management plan (AMP) is the result of detailed discussion and surveys in every school, and schools value and understand the process. Clear information is shared with individual schools and an AMP group about building issues, planning and priorities for capital works. Schools are clear about their own responsibilities and funding for buildings. Officers give advice to help them plan improvements, and bid for external funding such as grants for double-glazing for schools under the Heathrow flight-path. To date, the authority has used modular buildings very efficiently to improve provision, but the result is not always a coherent educational site. A few buildings remain in poor condition and at least two schools visited, ideally, require radical, imaginative, large-scale rebuilding, although constraints of green belt and flood plain, which affect much of the borough, limit the options available.

Recommendation

In order to provide schools with quality buildings and specialist provision to meet new curriculum demands:

- consider more innovative solutions to rebuild buildings in at least two schools.

Provision of education otherwise than at school

128. Procedures for identifying and monitoring pupils out of school are very thorough. Provision for pupils permanently excluded is of good quality, but the amount of tuition is limited. The LEA has plans to increase this provision

substantially to provide full-time education for pupils registered at its pupil referral units (PRUs) by 2002. Although satisfactory plans are ready for implementation in September 2001, at the time of the inspection the support for pupils educated otherwise than at school was unsatisfactory.

129. The LEA has a clear policy on support for pupils out of school, which emphasises its commitment to reintegrating pupils into school wherever possible. The policy is successful with younger pupils. However a small group of pupils from Year 9 upwards is currently on roll at the Key Stage 3 and 4 PRUs and is unlikely to be reintegrated into schools. Admissions and exclusions are monitored carefully by the education welfare service (EWS) and referred to the out-of-schools panel which monitors progress. The length of time pupils are out of school is not monitored. The LEA monitors satisfactorily the small number of pupils who are educated at home. All are referred through the education welfare service and receive visits from the advisory service. Support for pregnant schoolgirls is allocated on the basis of individual need where the pupil cannot be reintegrated into school. Home tuition is provided for a small number of pupils, though this is reducing.

130. The Key Stage 4 PRU at St Edmund's House provides tuition for both permanently excluded pupils and pupils who are deemed to be too anxious to attend school. Procedures for referral are clear and reflect good levels of co-operation between the LEA and health and social services. The amount of tuition available to pupils is very limited, on average six hours. Although other provision is available, for example placements at local further education colleges, few pupils take up the offer. Opportunities for work experience are limited. A recent OFSTED inspection of the unit praised the quality of teaching in English, mathematics, citizenship and careers advice. The quality of relationships and support for behaviour within the unit were also rated highly. Although pupils' overall attainment is below average on entry, pupils make good progress in the limited range of subjects offered, and more able pupils achieve good standards. Most are entered for accredited tests or for GCSE examinations. The unit uses information on pupils' prior attainment to plan support and to challenge the most able. The LEA has acted on the inspectors' recommendation that the St Edmund's unit should be formally constituted as a PRU in line with national guidelines.

131. An urgent priority now for the LEA is to extend this good quality provision to ensure that the programmes offered to pupils are increased from September 2001 and provide full-time education by September 2002. Some steps have been taken to extend the range of subjects on offer for the two main groups of pupils taught at the Key Stage 4 PRU. The accommodation is to be modified to provide extra classrooms so that specialist teaching for humanities, art and modern languages can take place. A teacher has been appointed at a local further education college specifically to provide extended courses including ICT. A small number of long-term work experience places are to be set up with a major local employer, but the provision of work experience remains a challenge. The LEA now has a costed plan to develop its provision. If this is followed through the LEA should be able to develop full-time programmes by 2002.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision for education otherwise than at school:

- monitor the length of time pupils are out of school;
- ensure that the current plan to extend provision to full-time by 2002 is implemented in full; and
- seek a wider range of opportunities for long-term, part-time work experience placements.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

132. The LEA has increased support for gifted and talented pupils and it is now satisfactory, both in terms of funding to schools and in raising schools' awareness of the needs of more able pupils. Given the high proportion of able children in the Royal borough's schools, this aspect of the LEA's work is receiving appropriate emphasis.

133. The LEA has, in partnership with a working group of schools, drawn up a draft policy for identifying and working with gifted and talented pupils. It places proper emphasis on the high proportion of more able pupils, and to those with specific talents or very high ability. Helpful links are made with other aspects of training to raise standards, for example, the development of thinking skills and independent learning. The policy will be launched in September at a conference. All schools have received a sum of money for supporting more able pupils and will be required to report on its use. Initiatives developed by individual primary schools with able intakes, such as the mathematics master-classes for Year 4 have become part of an LEA-wide strategy. A summer school was targeted at underachieving able pupils, although it did not recruit its full-intended cohort.

Support for attendance

134. Support for attendance is unsatisfactory overall. The education welfare service (EWS) is currently short-staffed, and support for schools is uneven. The service lacks a clear strategy for improving attendance and reducing unauthorised absence. Attendance in the LEA's schools is above the national average and broadly in line with statistical neighbours. Levels of unauthorised absence are also broadly similar to those in similar authorities. Little progress, however, is being made towards the LEA target for unauthorised absence at either primary or secondary level and there is insufficient support and advice for schools to help them improve attendance. Some schools have themselves established effective systems for monitoring and improving attendance.

135. Schools reported variable levels and quality of support from educational welfare officers (EWOs). Schools, with very good attendance, were satisfied with the 'light touch' contact specified in their service agreements. Some individual EWOs monitored attendance rigorously, took action over absences and gave schools guidance on strategies to improve attendance and reduce unauthorised absence.

Good support is provided for the special school by the EWS and for a school with high numbers of Traveller children by the Traveller education team. Two schools are making good use of the pupil retention grant to buy-in added support from EWOs. However eight of the 17 schools visited were dissatisfied with the level of support provided. In some cases, this was because the school currently had no EWO; in others, the school felt that the support was insufficient given the school's attendance levels or that home visits were not undertaken regularly enough or pursued with sufficient vigour. There were concerns that the LEA has undertaken very few prosecutions.

136. The EWS is currently understaffed and this, in part, is the cause of schools' dissatisfactions. The service works hard to fulfil its statutory duties, for example monitoring children in employment, and levels of attendance are reported systematically. However, the service does not provide sufficient leadership and guidance to improve levels of attendance and make progress towards the LEA's target.

Support for behaviour

137. Despite difficulties in reducing the number of permanent exclusions, particularly at Key Stage 4, the LEA provides good support for behaviour. The number of pupils excluded permanently from school during the LEA's first year fell from 39 to 15 but rose again in 1999/2000 to 28, and is likely to be just below this figure for the current year. Overall, the proportion of pupils excluded is not above the national average, but the LEA is unlikely to meet its target to reduce permanent exclusions to an average of 18 per year over the period 1999-2002.

Recommendations

In order to improve support for attendance:

- review the service plan and strategy in order to provide clearer leadership, guidance and support to schools; and
- aim to recruit a full complement of staff.

138. OFSTED inspections of both primary and secondary schools show the quality of schools' ethos has improved since the first inspection at a faster rate than in LEAs nationally. The number of schools judged to be good or very good is above the national average and the number requiring some improvement has fallen. Within this overall pattern, there is considerable variation. The majority of permanent exclusions occur in Year 10. In 1999/2000 there were no exclusions at Key Stage 1 and the number of pupils excluded from Key Stage 2 was low. Pupils permanently excluded at Key Stage 2 are reintegrated into schools, though sometimes after a period where they are at the Key Stage 2 PRU. At Key Stage 3 the number of permanent exclusions remains low though the rate of fixed-term exclusion rises. The proportion of excluded pupils who live outside the borough is quite high; in 1999/2000, it represented a third of the total number of pupils excluded. Very few of the pupils excluded at Key Stages 3 and 4 are successfully reintegrated into school.

139. There is a clear policy guiding exclusion procedures and appeals are referred to an independent panel. The education welfare service monitors permanent and fixed-term exclusions thoroughly and provides detailed reports for officers and members. Currently it is difficult to find places for older excluded pupils within the borough's secondary schools. There is no agreement between heads to take pupils excluded from other schools and currently the burden of taking excluded pupils, or pupils who transfer to avoid exclusion, falls most heavily on a few schools, those with surplus places. A few pupils find places in neighbouring LEAs. At Key Stage 4, most pupils who are excluded have places at the Key Stage 4 PRU.

140. Despite difficulties in reducing exclusion in Years 9 and 10, the LEA's strategy for providing support for behaviour is well thought out, based on a clear behaviour support plan. All the schools visited during the inspection felt that the support was effective. The policy of early identification and intervention is particularly successful at Key Stages 1 and 2, but middle and secondary schools also cited instances of effective support with older pupils. Support provided by the behaviour team to help pupils and provide advice for teachers is highly valued by schools. The Key Stage 2 and 3 PRUs provide additional support through well-planned dual placements which schools find effective in helping pupils address behaviour problems. An OFSTED inspection of the Key Stage 2 PRU reported that the procedures for promoting discipline, good behaviour and attendance were effective. Liaison with schools was good. The quality of education was less successful and standards achieved were low. Since the inspection the quality of planning has improved and now takes into account pupils' different abilities.

141. The number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EDB) is relatively stable and most are managed within school, some with good support from the behaviour support team. The LEA has difficulty finding appropriate placements for a small number and is considering how to provide for them.

Support for children in public care

142. There are 50 children of compulsory school age in public care educated in the borough's schools. The LEA has, in close partnership with the social services department, a strong commitment to support children in public care and has made a sound start by identifying a range of information, including educational attainment, on the current cohort in its schools. This should act as a basis for individual monitoring and target-setting. The LEA's data shows that the performance of the small numbers of children in public care in each cohort taking national tests and examinations is variable, though currently better at Key Stages 1 and 2. The proportion who are excluded is above the borough average, as is the proportion who have a statement of special educational need. A significant minority become poor attenders by Year 11. All schools now have a designated teacher, and attendance is monitored by the education welfare service. A former education welfare officer has been seconded part-time to the behaviour support service to identify strategies for supporting children in care. Training is planned for all schools and the LEA is offering some additional support for pupils in Key Stage 4 whose attendance is poor. The support overall is satisfactory.

Recommendations

In order to improve support for behaviour:

- develop provision for the small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who are not in mainstream schools; and
- in partnership with schools develop the LEA's strategy for reducing exclusions, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

143. The support for health and safety, for welfare and for child protection is good and valued by schools. The LEA has procedures in place to deal with health and safety issues in schools and procedures for emergency planning. There has been a thorough audit of provision and training has been provided for head teachers, governors and designated teachers on their responsibilities. A regular programme of inspections is carried out. Schools were appreciative of support in completing risk assessments.

144. The LEA is developing a strategy for health-promoting schools and has gained accreditation for its scheme. This is well conceived and includes drugs education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). An adviser seconded by the youth and community team provides support for the development of PSHE in schools. She is working with schools to develop policies for drugs education and the management of drug-related incidents. A high proportion of secondary schools are already participating in the scheme and the service now aims to encourage more primary schools to attend training.

145. There is a good policy on child protection. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified. The LEA has a register of named teachers, which is regularly updated. Advice and training are provided by social services. Schools are visited regularly and value the information and advice given. A programme of training is offered which is welcomed by most school, although one school was concerned that identified training needs had not been met because a course had been cancelled.

Minority ethnic children

146. Since its inception, the LEA has moved rapidly and decisively to create appropriate arrangements for supporting the achievement of ethnic minority pupils. Schools rate the service as good and particularly value the contribution of the skilled specialist staff, often bi-lingual, who work with them and contribute to the training of non specialist mainstream staff. The ethnic minority achievement grant action plan is well constructed and cross referenced to the Education Development Plan (EDP). The EDP gives consistent consideration to issues of minority ethnic group achievement and the specific needs of minority ethnic children. It makes important commitments to improve the quality and use of achievement data analysed by ethnicity, but these have been only partly realised. Provision is currently good and could be very good but for the limited quantity and quality of data on minority ethnic

achievement provided by the education planning and information team. Without this, the service managers, effective as they are, cannot fine-tune their work to ensure maximum impact.

147. Support for the education of Traveller children is ensured via a service level agreement (SLA) with the Wokingham LEA led consortium. The head of pupil and student services sits on the Traveller liaison group and monitors the SLA. The consortium carries out an annual evaluation via questionnaires to schools and, this details a high level of satisfaction. One of the schools visited serves a community of settled Travellers and reported very good support for these children and their families from the service. Elsewhere, schools reported satisfactory or good support, including support for attendance from the Traveller education service EWO.

Recommendation

In order to enable the ethnic minority achievement service (EMAS) team to target their work to maximum effect:

- improve the quality and quantity of achievement data analysed by ethnicity.

148. The LEA has recently received an increase in its ethnic minority and Traveller achievement grant (EMTAG) and 48 per cent of its schools now have some support from the devolved funding. The allocation formula is currently based on stages of language acquisition, but is moving to national curriculum levels. It contains a weighting for pupils of Pakistani heritage, given the identified underachievement by this group. Ninety per cent of schools buy-back into the service and sufficient is retained at the centre for co-ordination, training, bilingual assessment and rapid response arrangements including the offer of learning support assistant time. There is also a home school liaison worker. There are good arrangements for regular communication and consultation with schools.

149. The service is located within quality assurance and the head of quality assurance monitors progress and reports back to the education scrutiny panel. Links with the literacy and numeracy strategies and the work of link inspectors are good. The service manager is also the officer for lifelong learning and this has facilitated the development of parent education programmes that contribute to the support ethnic minority parents are able to offer to the education of their children.

150. The service contributes wherever possible to supporting mainstream teachers in their work and has produced useful guidance on EAL pupils in literacy and numeracy. A newly completed publication, *'Equity and excellence: good practice in our schools'* has been developed, in collaboration with local minority ethnic community groups, to offer information and guidance to schools on cultural diversity and combating racism. In addition, the EMAS service offers advice and support on dealing with racial harassment.

Social exclusion

151. It is to the council's credit that, in a context of considerable advantage, it has done some clear and sensible thinking about disadvantage and its alleviation. The community plan makes a commitment to combating deprivation wherever it occurs in the borough and the social inclusion strategy builds on that. One of the five themes in the strategy is education, training and skills. Actions and initiatives undertaken under various umbrellas such as the learning partnership and the special educational needs strategy contribute to combating social exclusion through improving access to education. The range of work with pupils at risk of exclusion supports efforts in schools to raise achievement.

152. The council's corporate response to the Macpherson report on the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence has been appropriate and well managed. Initial discussions by the equal opportunities working group led to the adoption of an action plan. This was followed by training in equal opportunities for managers; workforce monitoring by ethnicity; and the finalisation of incident reporting procedures. In January 2001 a 'diversity working group' was established to facilitate consultation with minority ethnic groups. In May 2001, full council approved a policy and an action plan.

153. The education directorate's response was very prompt and effective. The level of awareness in schools is high, as is their confidence in the informed support of the education department in dealing with any such matters. Between April 1999 and February 2000 when the agreed racist incident guidelines went out to all schools, the department consulted on the guidelines, trained and informed governors, clerks, staff and headteachers. As a result, the request in February of this year to schools to report on any incidents for the period September 2000-February 2001 elicited a high level of response.

154. The work done on the guidelines together with the Equity and Excellence Initiative, which draws on expertise and advice from both the local minority ethnic communities and committed headteachers, has ensured that very firm foundations have been laid for combating racism.

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 1

In order to improve public confidence and specifically that of education stakeholders in the operation of the modernised political system:

- incorporate within the revised arrangements for education scrutiny adequate opportunities for open and informed debate on all key issues.

SECTION 2

In order to support school improvement:

- copy notes of link inspectors' visits to the chairs of governors so that they are better informed about the performance of their schools;
- review good practice in the provision and analysis of key data in other authorities and use this as a basis for improving the quality, range and relevance of data provided;
- develop further the training provided in the use and analysis of data for target-setting;
- update the strategy for information and communication technology on the basis of a thorough audit of progress being made in schools as a result of recent teacher training provided by New Opportunities Fund; and
- analyse the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in relation to the type and length of early years' provision received. On the basis of this analysis, review the policy for admitting pupils to mainstream school before they are five.

SECTION 3

In order to secure effective management services that support school improvement:

- strengthen the processes for evaluating the delivery of the traded service level agreements and communicating the outcomes to all schools;
- ensure schools are fully involved in the implementation of the new corporate financial information system and that it ends schools' financial reconciliation problems;
- ensure the need to secure sufficient expertise in education is included in the Best Value review of personnel services; and

- consider the scope for expanding some support services in a joint approach with other LEAs.

SECTION 4

In order to ensure that the LEA's support for special educational needs provision is fully effective:

- reduce the time scale for implementation of the special educational needs strategy;
- plan and cost the changes in provision needed for the special school if its role is to be extended;
- monitor in more detail the use of funds devolved to schools;
- establish criteria to monitor the effectiveness of services; and
- review the allocation of educational psychologist's time to schools and ensure that it fully reflects need.

SECTION 5

In order to ensure that the organisation of schools promotes pupil achievement:

- commission detailed analysis of the educational impact of the three points of transfer in the Windsor schools, including analysis of the performance of schools and individual pupil tracking. Share the results with schools and consider appropriate action to raise standards and improve the efficient use of resources.

In order to provide schools with quality buildings and specialist provision to meet new curriculum demands:

- consider more innovative solutions to rebuild buildings in at least two schools.

In order to improve provision for education otherwise than at school:

- monitor the length of time pupils are out of school;
- ensure that the current plan to extend provision to full-time by 2002 is implemented in full; and
- seek a wider range of opportunities for long-term, part-time work experience placements.

In order to improve support for attendance:

- review the service plan and strategy in order to provide clearer leadership, guidance and support to schools; and
- aim to recruit a full complement of staff.

In order to improve support for behaviour:

- develop provision for the small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who are not in mainstream schools; and
- in partnership with schools develop the LEA's strategy for reducing exclusions, particularly at Key Stage 4.

In order to enable the EMAS team to target their work to maximum effect:

- improve the quality and quantity of achievement data analysed by ethnicity.

© Crown copyright 2001

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

Tel: 020 7421 6800

This report may be produced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are produced verbatim and without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

A further copy of this report can be obtained from the Local Education Authority concerned:

**Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
SL6 1RF**

A copy may also be obtained from the OFSTED website: www.ofsted.gov.uk