Inspection of

Swansea Local Education Authority

Additional learning needs, child protection and looked-after children

May 2006

by Estyn, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
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- primary schools;
- secondary schools;
- special schools;
- pupil referral units;
- independent schools;
- further education;
- adult community-based learning;
- youth support services;
- LEAs;
- teacher education and training;
- work-based learning;
- careers companies; and
- the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre plus.

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1 Context

The Inspection

The inspection was originally planned to take place in January 2006 as part of the cycle of local education authority (LEA) inspections which ended in March 2006. With the agreement of Swansea LEA, the inspection was postponed to May 2006. This was agreed to allow Estyn to inspect the six pupil referral units in the Authority as a pilot initiative.

In April 2006, a new cycle of LEA inspections under section 38 of the Education Act 1997 and the Children Act 2004 began. LEA inspections have been established to cover the period from April 2006 to March 2012. The inspection framework for the new cycle was published in May 2006. With the agreement of Swansea LEA, the new framework was used as the basis for the Section 38 inspection and this report.

The scope of the inspection was agreed to include:

- the LEA’s strategy for special educational needs (SEN);
- the LEA’s work to meet its statutory obligations in respect of SEN;
- the SEN functions to support school improvement;
- value for money of the LEA’s SEN functions;
- the education service’s support for child protection; and
- the education service’s support for looked-after children.

The inspection focused on the agreed scope. The findings are reported using the relevant sections of the new framework relating to additional learning needs and promoting social inclusion. Swansea LEA undertook a review of SEN aspects of additional learning needs, child protection and provision for looked-after children as part of social inclusion that were included in the scope of the inspection as originally planned, and produced a self-evaluation report.
The inspection team makes two key judgements about each service. These are:

(1) **How good is the local authority’s performance?**

The local authority’s performance in discharging its responsibilities is rated on a four-point scale as follows:

Grade 1 – good with outstanding features (***)

Grade 2 – good features and no important shortcomings (**) 

Grade 3 – good features outweigh shortcomings (*)

Grade 4 – shortcomings in important areas

(2) **Will the local authority’s performance improve?**

The prospects of improvement are rated on a four-point scale as follows:

Grade 1 – improvement prospects are good, with significant improvements already in place

Grade 2 – improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers

Grade 3 – some good prospects, but barriers in important areas

Grade 4 – many important barriers to improvement

In order to make the two key judgments, inspectors evaluate the authority’s performance in relation to each of four key questions. These four key questions and the evaluations are set out in Section 4 (findings) and also recorded as grades, using the four-point scale set out at (1) above. All of the grades are included in the Grading Profile (Section 6).

**Background to the authority**

The city and county of Swansea has a population of approximately 225,000 located in an area centred on Wales’ second largest city. Swansea has the third largest population of any local authority in Wales. Approximately 13% of the population are Welsh-speaking.

The local authority is economically diverse, with areas of relative prosperity to the north and west, and pockets of acute socio-economic deprivation, mainly in the east. In 2006, the proportion of pupils aged 5-16 eligible for free school meals is 22% in primary schools and 20% in secondary schools. This compares with 19.7% for primary schools and 17% for secondary schools in Wales as a whole in 2005. Comparisons across Wales in respect of 2006 data are not yet available.

The Council is composed of 72 elected members. Following 30 years of Labour control, the June 2004 elections resulted in a new administration comprising a
coalition of Liberal Democrat, Independent and Conservative councillors. Two weeks before the inspection, one member resigned from the Swansea Administration, resulting in the Administration having only 35 out of 72 Councillors.

**Schools in the authority**

The school population is 36,094 (compared with 36,596 in 2005). The LEA maintains 89 primary schools, two nursery schools, 15 secondary schools, two special schools and six pupil referral units. Fifteen primary schools host specialist teaching facilities (STFs) for children with a range of disabilities. Specialist teaching facilities for secondary pupils are located in eight secondary schools. New or extended STFs are planned during 2006. These will enable young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties, Asperger’s syndrome or high functioning autism to attend secondary schools within the authority and for infant aged moderately autistic children to attend a local primary school. The STF development plan forms part of the overall school organisation programme.

In January 2006, 1,235 under 19s (1,185 in 2005) (0–19) were the subject of a statement of special educational needs. This represents 3.42% of the population (3.17% in 2006). This is a little lower than the Welsh average in 2005 with figures for 2006 not yet available. The Council’s SEN strategy seeks to reduce this percentage still further whilst continuing to provide high-quality support to children without the need for a statement.

According to the Council’s education directorate’s 2005 SEN survey of additional support required for SEN pupils 3976 children received additional targeted support without the requirement of a statement. This means that, overall, about 20% of the school population aged five to 16 years old receive targeted support either through a statement or through additional targeted support.

**Special Educational Needs services in the authority**

Services supporting children with SEN are located in the education inclusion and education effectiveness branches of the education directorate. These branches aim to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations. They work to raise standards and provide high-quality support and provision for learners.

Access to learning service is part of the education inclusion service and includes the education psychology, SEN support, behaviour and learning, along with the education welfare and education other than at school (including pupil-referral units and the home tuition service) teams.

All these services supporting learners with SEN rely heavily on partnership work. These partnerships are the education service, with other Council services and with other agencies. These all work under the overarching framework of the children and young people’s partnership (CYPP).

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1 These 2006 figures are the most recent available, but have not been formally audited.
Child Protection

Responsibility for child protection lies within the education inclusion branch of the education directorate. A third-tier officer has specific responsibility for child protection. This officer has been vice-chair of the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) for several years. The senior professional officer in the School and Governor Unit also provides support to schools over the telephone as required on issues related to child protection. A principal officer in Human Resources provides support for senior strategy meetings.

Child protection is a multi-agency activity involving close partnership between the education directorate, social services and all the constituent agencies of the ACPC. Schools and LEA staff use the all-Wales procedures and refer pupils about whom there are concerns using the common assessment record and referral form (CARR). The number of children on the Council’s child protection register is currently 137. This figure has fallen from its highest point of 181 in 2004-2005. This is mainly as the result of many looked-after children being de-registered. In 2004-2005 the number of children on the child protection register per 10,000 children was above the all Wales averages but below a number of authorities with similar socio-economic profiles.

Looked-after children

The education service has worked with the social services directorate to raise the profile of looked-after children (LAC) in schools. It has committed resources to developing better systems and support for schools and pupils.

The LAC team is an education LAC co-ordinator at a senior level, a part-time education welfare officer and a project worker. They are all members of the education inclusion team and are line managed within that team. The education LAC co-ordinator works closely with the social services department’s dedicated LAC team. The education LAC group includes principal officers of the education and social services directorates and representatives from schools.

Funding

The Welsh Assembly Government’s Standard Spending Assessment (SSA)\(^2\) per head of population for the City and County of Swansea for 2005-2006 was a little below the average for local authorities in Wales. The education component (education Indicator-Based Assessment (IBA)\(^3\)) was £131.8 m. This represents a little over £3,800 for each pupil in Swansea’s schools. This level of IBA is slightly lower than the average for Wales. This reflects the fact that Swansea includes areas of affluence as well as areas of deprivation, and that a comparatively low proportion of Swansea’s population lives in communities with small schools.

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\(^2\) SSA is the means by which the Welsh Assembly Government distributes Revenue Support Grant to local authorities.

\(^3\) Education IBA is that part of SSA relating to the delivery of education services. Education IBA is not intended as a spending target and councils are free to spend at levels above or below IBA, in accordance with their priorities.
In both 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, the Council set its total revenue budget for managing and delivering all its services at a level slightly above the SSA. In each of these years, the net education budget was set at a level well above the education IBA (105.1% of IBA in 2004-2005 and 103.3% in 2005-2006). This level of funding by the Council yielded a net education budget per pupil for 2005-2006 of £3,936 compared with an average of £3,884 for Wales as a whole.

The Council has agreed a net education budget of £142.8m for 2006-2007. Comparative budget data for 2006-2007 was not available at the time of the inspection. However, the new budget represents a 3.4% increase on the revised 2005-2006 budget. The Council has approved additional spending of £4.07m, including £1.9m for SEN provision. This expenditure has been offset, in part, by savings that include £1.6m from schools’ delegated budgets and by reducing expenditure on a number of non-delegated and non statutory elements within the education budget.
2 Summary

The scoring chart displays information in two dimensions, one for each of the two key inspection judgements. The inspection judgements are represented by the position of the black circle in relation to the grades at the left-hand side and at the foot of the chart.

Scoring Chart

Swansea LEA: Additional learning needs

How good is the LEA’s performance?

Grade 1
Grade 2
Grade 3
Grade 4

Grade 4 Grade 3 Grade 2 Grade 1
* ** ***

Will the local authority’s performance improve?

Additional learning needs – How good is the LEA’s performance?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

The good features of the LEA’s performance are as follows:

✓ the special educational needs service benefits from effective leadership by officers at all levels within the authority;

✓ recent restructuring within the education directorate has given managers more time to focus and provide a clear strategic direction for the service;
there is a good range of partnership and cross-directorate collaboration, most of which works well;

performance management within the service is systematic and generally effective, reflecting the increased corporate focus on performance;

there is good financial planning within the inclusion service and budgets are managed effectively;

future provision and early intervention are planned effectively through the good use of data from the local health trust;

requests for additional resources from schools are allocated in an equitable and transparent way;

the Special Teaching Facility programme provides a well-planned and inclusive response to foreseeable increases in demand for SEN provision;

the very high proportion of Dyslexia-Friendly Schools increases the Council’s capacity to meet pupils’ needs in dyslexia without using statements;

statements are generally well written and produced efficiently; the proportion of statements maintained by the Council is modest and stable;

the very low level of tribunal cases is an indication that parents and carers are satisfied with the Council’s SEN provision; and

the authority has improved its capacity to provide Welsh-medium speech and language services.

The following areas require attention:

× the Council has not succeeded in securing the commitment of a few schools to its strategies for inclusion;

× many permanently-excluded pupils with statements of SEN attend well below 25 hours of alternative educational provision;

× there is not enough agreement between directorates about how they will share and use data; and

× objectives in plans are not always expressed clearly enough as measurable outcomes that will enable managers to judge how successfully they have been achieved.
Additional learning needs – Will the local authority’s performance improve?

**Grade 3: Some good prospects but barriers in important areas**

One factor is likely to support improvement:

- the SEN services’ policies and strategies are clearly structured and provide a clear direction Council services, schools and partners.

The factors that are likely to hinder improvement are set out below:

- the large number of corporate priorities and the resourcing of these impacts on the ability of the Council to deliver core services;

- elected members have a poor track record, over a considerable period of time, in taking difficult decisions over major issues such as school re-organisation; and

- Council arrangements for scrutiny are ineffective in ensuring that the full range of issues facing the education service receives sufficient attention.

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**Scoring Chart**

**Swansea LEA: Child protection and looked-after children.**

**How good is the LEA’s performance?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Will the local authority’s performance improve?**

8
Child protection and looked-after children – How good is the LEA’s performance?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

The good features of the LEA’s performance are as follows:

- arrangements for the protection of children and young people are good;
- recent restructuring within the education directorate has provided a clear strategic direction for the service;
- schools receive up-to-date information, support and training of high quality on child protection;
- the authority has made a very good response to recommendations in the Clywch report;
- schools rate the service highly;
- there is good multi-agency co-operation to deliver training;
- there is effective monitoring of the attendance of teachers and governors at training;
- schools are challenged effectively where procedures are not followed;
- support for looked-after children is good and improving;
- most looked-after children achieve in line with expectations;
- schools are better at recognising the needs of looked-after children;
- looked-after children receive appropriate priority for admission to schools, pupil referral units and other relevant provision;
- the Council is beginning to use data to target additional educational support for looked-after children; and
- there are good arrangements for the quality assurance of personal educational plans (PEPs).

The areas that require attention are as follows:

- operational planning to raise standards for looked-after children lacks detail;
- the number of looked-after children is increasing and is placing an increasing pressure on the capacity of staff to support them;
× there is not enough agreement between directorates about how they will share and use data; and

× the attainment of pupils who are looked-after children is low but improving.

Child protection and looked-after children – Will the local authority’s performance improve?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 3: Some good prospects but barriers in important areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The factors that are likely to support improvement are as follows:

- officers at all levels within the authority provide effective leadership of the service; and

- Child protection and LAC policies and strategies are well-structured and provide a clear direction for other Council services, schools and partners.

The factors that are likely to hinder improvement are as follows:

- the large number of corporate priorities and the resourcing of these impacts on the ability of the Council to deliver core services;

- elected members have a poor track record, over a considerable period of time, in taking difficult decisions over major issues such as school reorganisation; and

- Council arrangements for scrutiny are ineffective in ensuring that the full range of issues facing the education service receives enough attention.
3 Recommendations

In order to secure the improvements that are needed, the local authority should:

R1 reduce the number of corporate priorities so that the resourcing of these does not impact on the ability of the Council to deliver core services;

R2 improve the quality and robustness of decision-making and scrutiny by elected members;

R3 secure and maintain the commitment of all schools to Council strategies for inclusion;

R4 make sure that objectives in plans are expressed clearly as measurable outcomes that will enable managers to judge how successfully they have been achieved;

R5 make sure that there is robust agreement between directorates about how they will share and use data especially to analyse the effectiveness of different types of provision and initiatives;

R6 make sure that all permanently-excluded pupils receive full-time education or training; and

R7 improve the educational attainment of looked-after-children.
4 Findings

The two judgements for each field inspected are shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields inspected</th>
<th>Support for school improvement</th>
<th>Promoting social inclusion and well-being (Areas inspected were looked-after children and child protection)</th>
<th>Additional Learning Needs (ALN)</th>
<th>Access and school organisation</th>
<th>Support services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judgements</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How good is the LEA’s performance?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the prospects for improvement?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Question 1: How effective is the authority’s strategic planning?**

Overall, the quality of the Council’s policies and strategic planning is good. Most of these policies are well focused and link appropriately to other education plans, to corporate strategic plans and to the national and legislative context. The SEN and Inclusion strategies for 2006-2011 are clearly structured and convey a strong sense of direction to Council services, schools and partners. Each is a well thought out framework of proposed policies, actions and initiatives. They are accompanied by an action plan developed around:

- key activities;
- timescale;
- lead;
- resources; and
- expected outcomes and targets.

Some of the key plans and initiatives such as the Behaviour Support Plan are either in an advanced state of preparation or in the early stages of implementation. It is too early to judge their effectiveness or identify clear outcomes.

Financial planning and the management of revenue budgets within the education service are good. Officers have worked effectively with the Schools Forum to identify likely cost pressures and opportunities for savings in the medium term. This has led to the development of a range of options in response to the corporate requirement for
significant savings in the education budget this year and in the medium term. Strategic planning and funding decisions within the Inclusion service are well informed by the analysis of data. The Council has detailed information, for example, of young children with SEN and uses this to plan its provision of specialist teaching facilities (STF). SEN budgets are monitored carefully and effectively. Officers take timely and appropriate action to address areas of over or under-spending.

The Council is currently undertaking a SEN funding review which builds on comparative studies already undertaken by officers. As a result alternative models for funding SEN for the future are being developed.

Planning for the acquisition and use of capital is less well developed. The accessibility strategy is of generally good quality but it has significant resource implications for the Council. Nevertheless, there are examples of good project planning within the service. For example, planning for the development of new specialist teaching facilities (STFs) includes clear estimates of costs and likely savings that may result. This provides a sound basis for decision-making by elected members.

Many headteachers and other stakeholders feel they are consulted and are well informed about reasons for decisions. Officers and the cabinet member meet regularly to consult and communicate with a range of representative groups of primary and secondary and special school headteachers. However, these approaches are not fully effective. The results of the Wales Audit Office’s School Perception Survey indicate that schools are generally more supportive of the Council’s work in the fields of SEN and promoting social inclusion than they are of other aspects of its work. Nevertheless, a minority of headteachers is not fully engaged in the discussion of polices and initiatives. They do not, therefore, have an understanding and ownership of the authority’s strategy for inclusion. The use of the Educational Effectiveness Service and its School Development Advisers to promote and deliver the Council’s strategies during their visits to schools is underdeveloped.

Funding and support for pupils with SEN is allocated to schools on a transparent and equitable basis using clear criteria. The authority conducts an annual SEN audit of all pupils as a basis for the allocation of additional support to those pupils whose needs do not require a statement of SEN. This is a significant administrative task for schools and central services in the authority. However, the audit ensures that resources are re-allocated according to need each year. Allocating resources in this way contributes to sound budgetary control by ensuring that the proportion receiving such support remains roughly constant at about 17% of the pupil population. The allocation of support for pupils with statements is similarly well controlled. An appropriately trained multi-disciplinary moderation panel meets weekly to consider individual cases. The panel’s work ensures that decisions are informed by up-to-date assessment data and detailed information on action taken by the school. There is a high level of satisfaction overall from schools and parents with the mechanisms for the allocation of additional support through this panel.

Partnership work is developing well at both strategic and operational levels. The Area Child Protection Committee and the recently formed Complex Needs Panel are examples of effective cross-directorate working with social services. One of the roles
of the panel is to co-ordinate funding from education and social services, in partnership with health, for the benefit of pupils with complex special needs. These partnerships contribute well to the development of multi-agency work and in the move towards delivering the requirements of the Children Act.

**Key Question 2: How effective are services and how does performance compare, including value for money?**

**Additional Learning Needs**

The Council is making good progress in enabling its mainstream schools to provide for a broad range of SEN. An example of this is the effective steps taken to increase the capacity of schools to provide for pupils with dyslexia. This has contributed to the present stability in the proportion of pupils with statements. The Dyslexia Friendly School initiative enables both Welsh-medium and English-medium schools to train teachers and learning support staff in supporting pupils with dyslexia. To date, some 150 teachers in 98% of schools have been trained through the programme.

The LEA has been less successful in developing schools’ capacity to provide for pupils with a wider range of emotional, behavioural and social disorders (BSD). At present, 36 pupils with statements of SEN are taught in pupil referral units. The quality of much of this provision is good. However, the role of the PRU in supporting pupils with serious and longer-term emotional and behavioural difficulties contributes to the fact that places at the PRU are limited for those pupils requiring only shorter placements.

The Behaviour Strategy is at an early stage of development. The manager of Access to Learning has appropriately identified that the following areas require further work:

- developing individual school’s capacity to manage behaviour;
- the managed transfer of pupils at risk of exclusion from one school to another;
- developing a ‘revolving door’ policy for pupils in the pupil referral units;
- reducing the number of pupils who are permanently excluded; and
- making sure that all pupils who are not in mainstream schools receive 25 hours or more tuition.

The Education other than at school (EOTAS) Pathways project, which provides learning opportunities for pupils with no school place, is developing well. The range of approved placements available is growing in number and variety. All looked-after children and pupils with statements of SEN have been offered 25 hours of alternative provision. However, the majority of pupils involved attend for no more than 10 hours each week. Some of these pupils, who include looked-after children, are among the most vulnerable young people in Swansea. The authority has not adequately explored the potential involvement of its youth service with the inclusion services. In particular these services are not working together to provide additional guidance and learning opportunities for pupils who currently have no school place. A higher number of pupils than the Welsh average leave compulsory education without a GCSE, GNVQ or entry level qualification.
The Council’s support for parents and carers whose children are being assessed for statements has improved considerably in recent years. Though they see the process as being too lengthy, parents report a high level of practical and emotional support during this period.

Statements are generally well written and produced efficiently. The proportion of statements maintained by the Council is stable with further reductions planned. Almost 98% of pupils with SEN statements are taught in mainstream schools, in mainstream classes or in specialist teaching facilities. This compares favourably with other Councils in Wales. The very low level of tribunal cases is an indication that parents and carers are satisfied with the Council’s SEN provision.

The Council is taking positive steps to increase the level of Welsh medium provision for SEN services. Recently it opened an effective speech and language provision. There is good Welsh-medium capacity in the Educational Psychology service. However, gaps remain in some areas such as Welsh-medium advisory support for Dyslexia Friendly schools.

Future provision and early intervention are planned effectively by the Council through the good use of data from the local health trust. A good example is how the Specialist Teaching Facility (STF) programme provides a well-planned and inclusive response to foreseeable increases in demand for SEN provision. But the evaluation of pupils’ achievement in and the effectiveness of STF provision are underdeveloped.

The Council’s SEN services provide good value for money. Costs per pupil are above average for Councils in Wales, but this is not unreasonable given the range of services offered. Recent investment in additional specialist teaching facilities will, in the medium term, ensure that there is cost-effective, local provision for the needs of pupils with a wide range of special needs. This will avoid more expensive and less inclusive placements outside Swansea. Schools are supported and encouraged to become less dependent on specialist support in order to meet the needs of pupils.

The Council makes good use of all available data to compare costs and other aspects of its provision for pupils with SEN. There is good data available about the literacy levels for pupils with SEN and the Council is beginning to identify schools which show best practice. The Council has made good progress in developing a database that enables it to compare outcomes in schools within Swansea. The Council acknowledges as an area for development the need to evaluate in more detail the effectiveness of various initiatives and types of SEN provision. Its database is a potentially valuable tool in enabling the Council to move ahead in this respect.

**Child Protection and Looked-after children**

Child protection arrangements are good. Schools are generally pleased with the support and guidance they receive and are confident in dealing with child protection issues. The lead officer for child protection intervenes quickly and very effectively to resolve any difficulties between schools and social workers. She challenges schools where procedures are not followed correctly.
The lead officer for child protection is pro-active in ensuring that schools receive regular up-to-date information and good quality training. The training data-base is used effectively to identify non-attendees. Non-attendance is followed up and non-attendees reminded of their responsibility to attend future training.

The authority responded quickly and purposefully to the recommendations of the Clywch Report. During the last year an intensive programme of multi-agency training has operated within the authority for schools and their governors. Through this training, the authority has successfully increased the numbers of governors trained in child protection from approximately 30 per year to in excess of 500. As a result governors have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities in this area.

The multi-agency working of the Area Child Protection Committee has been effective in developing common practices for child protection referrals between all agencies. Very good working relationships exist within the group. The sharing of information about the nature of referrals has resulted in domestic violence being identified and prioritised for training for schools’ designated child protection officers.

Provision for the support of looked-after children is good and improving. The authority has established designated teams of professionals in Education, Health and Social Services to support looked-after children. Looked-after children receive appropriate priority for school admission, including admission to PRUs and for additional support from the SEN panel.

Training for schools’ co-ordinators of looked-after children and governors has been instrumental in raising awareness of the schools’ additional responsibilities for this vulnerable group of children. Schools are now better informed than before and better able to recognise the needs of looked-after children. Personal education plans are produced for all looked-after children and good arrangements exist by the Council for the monitoring of the quality of plans.

The appointment by the Council of an education looked-after children co-ordinator (ELC) has been an important step in enabling schools to plan quickly for looked-after children and to develop good cross-departmental working relationships. Generally the Council’s knowledge of individual children placed within Swansea is comprehensive. The Council:

- has a good understanding of their needs;
- is committed to and pro-active in ensuring their welfare and well-being;
- tracks and monitors their placements and progress well;
- contacts all out of county schools for key stage 4 data; and
- has effective links with the home-tutor service to monitor and report upon the progress of looked-after children who receive home tuition.

In recent years the number of looked-after children has increased significantly from 265 in 2001-2002 to 374 in 2004-2005. One hundred and thirty looked-after children
are placed outside the county. This increase in numbers and the greater use of out-of-county placements is placing additional pressures on services for looked-after children. The authority is not effective in tracking the educational progress of all pupils placed outside Swansea, especially those on alternative curriculum packages. The monitoring of provision is inconsistent.

Systems to monitor, evaluate and review the academic performance of looked-after children are developing appropriately. Value-added analyses are used to predict the performance of looked-after children at the end of key stages 2, 3 and 4. Predictive data, where available, suggests that most pupils achieve in line with expectations. However, the attainment of looked-after children, particularly at the end of key stage 4 is too low. In 2003, only 36% of looked-after children leaving care aged 16 or over achieved at least one GCSE or GNVQ qualification. In 2004, this figure deteriorated further with only 28% achieving at least one GCSE or GNVQ qualification. These figures compare unfavourably with all Wales averages. Unverified data supplied by the authority shows some improvement for 2005.

Although, the Council is committed to raising the standards of all looked-after children, its strategy to improve educational outcomes for LAC lacks detail. The Council has a £50,000 annual budget to support the educational achievement of looked-after children. This funding is used mainly to support those pupils approaching GCSE examinations, principally by supplying additional tuition. There are a few examples of the funding being used to support pupils at earlier stages of their education. However, not enough use is made of data to identify looked after pupils with particular educational needs early on. The education support fund is administered by the Children and Adolescent Support Team (CAST) from social services. Any request for a tutor or resources is considered by CAST with the ELC who check the appropriateness of the provision with the relevant school.

The contributions made by the education service to the Council’s wider responsibilities for looked-after children and for child protection represent at least satisfactory value for money. In child protection, in particular, a single officer has worked effectively with other services and partners to ensure that there is a high level of up-to-date knowledge of current issues and procedures within Swansea schools.

**Key Question 3: How effective are leadership and strategic management?**

Elected members are committed to promoting education as an integral part of the strategic development of the authority’s objectives and vision. Members are supportive of the work carried out by officers. Officers provide members with presentations and quarterly reports on performance indicators. When performance indicators have suggested that outcomes are not improving, members have requested more regular reports. This has helped them monitor progress more effectively. For example, the Personal Services Performance Review Board has investigated the Council’s limited provision of alternative placements for pupils without a school place. As a result of this work, the EOTAS Pathways project was established to improve the arrangements for such pupils.

Over many years the Council has an inconsistent record regarding its strategic decision making in the field of education. On occasion, decision-making has been
hampered by undue hesitancy and caution and at other times by undue haste and a lack of appropriate consultation. The current administration remains relatively inexperienced and has yet to establish a track record of effective decision-making. A few aspects of the school organisation programme have been completed successfully. However, the reversal of earlier decisions in relation to some elements of school re-organisation has contributed towards the negative perceptions of the administration by schools.

The leadership provided by senior officers is strong and purposeful reflecting the increased corporate focus on performance stemming from the Council’s ambitious ‘Top Performance’ agenda. There is a clear sense of direction towards implementing corporate aims. The sequential restructuring of the Education Directorate at head of service level then the senior management of Access to Learning has provided greater capacity and a clearer focus to the strategic direction of the service. Officers are very committed to improving the quality of education and to raising the achievements of learners.

The restructuring of the Access to Learning service has resulted in more effective communication between teams and within teams. It has given greater clarity to the roles of officers at both strategic and operational levels. As a result, there is now a full set of policies, strategies and plans to guide the Council’s work in the field of access and inclusion. While some of the strategies are relatively new, others more precisely formalise and clarify practices that were previously being implemented with considerable success. This is exemplified by the above average levels of inclusion in mainstream schools of pupils with statements of SEN.

Since taking up post, the head of education inclusion has successfully identified and filled gaps within the team’s strategic management capacity. As a result, teams in the inclusion service have built on well established joint working arrangements to more effectively support and complement each others work and to develop and advance policy and strategy.

SEN services take the lead in partnership groups with a specific focus on SEN and educational matters. They also contribute to other teams from the education directorate, other services in the Council, the voluntary sector and other agencies such as the NHS Trust. The SEN service works effectively with neighbouring authorities in South West Wales to plan for the support of pupils with autism and Asperger’s syndrome. The authority is very committed to regional working arrangements. However, links and protocols between agencies at a strategic level are less effective. There is not enough agreement between directorates about how data will be shared and used.

The Council’s medium-term financial projections indicate that there is not enough revenue and capital funding to maintain and, where necessary, further improve inclusion services. The Council has funded the education service comparatively highly in recent years. In 2004-2005, for example, the total education budget was set at over 105% of the Education IBA even though the Council’s overall budget was set at about 101% of total SSA. However, comparatively low settlements in the last two years, together with significant other spending priorities and the need for efficiency savings, have meant that budgets have had to be trimmed. The Council’s 23
priorities, as set out in its Improvement Plan for 2005-2006, are too numerous and broad in scope to influence budget-setting. As a result, in 2005-2006, cuts of a similar scale were made across all services. This restricts the ability of the Council to deliver core services in areas such as inclusion.

**Key Question 4: How well do leaders and managers, at all levels, monitor, evaluate and improve services?**

Over the last three years monitoring within the directorate has become much more systematic and effective. This reflects the much greater corporate emphasis that was placed on performance and review during this period. The head of service and other managers hold frequent and regular meetings with those that they manage in order to monitor how well team plan objectives are being implemented. In addition to monitoring progress, these meetings play a valuable role in supporting staff and helping them to focus on key tasks. The structure of regular meetings also helps to ensure that senior officers within the directorate and beyond have a sound grasp of operational progress as a basis for strategic planning.

Planning in SEN, CP and LAC is not focused enough on outcomes. The monitoring of progress in the delivery of planned actions is systematic and effective. However, the objectives in some operational plans tend to be formulated as tasks rather than in terms of outcomes. This has led to the less well developed evaluation of the impact of plans and initiatives.

The services prepared a self-evaluation review for this inspection. It is comprehensive in its coverage and clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement. It draws on a varied and detailed range of evidence. Officers in the SEN service make increasing use of data to plan service delivery and monitor the impact of this delivery.

The Council recognises that its committee structure is not fully effective. The Cabinet Advisory Committee, whose intended role is to advise Cabinet on policy matters, tends to duplicate the function of scrutiny. The current chair and vice-chair of the Personal Services Performance Review Board (PRB) have a very clear understanding of educational issues. The PRB has been influential in securing improvements in areas, such as the need to provide 25 hours of alternative tuition to pupils with no school place. More generally, however, the remit of the PRB has been too broad to enable it to fulfil its scrutiny role effectively enough for educational issues. The Council is introducing new arrangements to give education its own scrutiny board, with a much stronger focus on special education needs, looked-after children and child protection issues. However, these new arrangements have yet to be tested.

Following recent Estyn inspections of the education welfare service, the school improvement service and of strategic management the Authority produced well-focused action plans and acted effectively upon recommendations. These actions have brought about significant improvements. They included the restructuring of roles and responsibilities and the allocation of resources to achieve stated aims, for example by increasing the size of advisory teams and by investing more in the development of Welsh-medium provision.
5 The authority’s response to the report findings

In respect of services supporting SEN we are pleased that the inspection recognises:

- our fit for purpose structures and their positive impact on policy, strategy and service;
- the effective leadership at all levels across the authority;
- the effectiveness of many of our systems and processes notably planning of provision, financial management, fair and equitable resource allocation and performance management;
- the quality and value for money of services provided with the dyslexia friendly school initiative receiving its proper recognition; and
- the developmental work particularly in relation to tracking of pupil progress.

With regard to looked after children and child protection we are pleased that the inspection recognises:

- the value of our structures and their impact on policy strategy and service;
- the effectiveness of leadership at all levels across the Authority;
- the effective arrangements for child protection including information sharing, multi agency cooperation and training;
- the good and improving support for looked after children; and
- the quality assurance systems in place for those looked after.

Overall the inspection confirms our self evaluation in most respects and gives the team confidence to build on an already good service.

We recognise the areas for development as identified, most of which figure in our own self evaluation. The recommendations made will underpin our action plan to maintain and improve the services we provide.
6 The grade profile

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<tr>
<th>Key Judgement</th>
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<th>Additional Learning Needs</th>
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<td>Will the authority’s performance improve?</td>
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<th>Key Question</th>
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<td>2 How effective are the authority’s services?</td>
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<td>4 How well do leaders and managers monitor, evaluate and improve services?</td>
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7 The composition of the inspection team

The inspection team

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arwyn Thomas HMI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Reporting Inspector</td>
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<td>Alun Morgan HMI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Team inspector</td>
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<td>Beverley Jenkins HMI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
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<td>Simon Brown MHMI</td>
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<td>Team Inspector</td>
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<td>David Bush Al</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huw Lloyd Jones</td>
<td>Wales Audit Office</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharon Davies</td>
<td>Swansea Education Directorate</td>
<td>Nominee</td>
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