

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2002-2007

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Cumbria Education Service

EDP 2

2002-2007

Part 1: statement of proposals

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1. TARGETS

1.1 Targets at LEA level, for KS2, KS3 and KS4 for 2003 and 2004

			2003	2004
KS2	English test	% @ L4+	86	87
		% @ L5+	35	38
	Maths test	% @ L4+	84	87
		% @ L5+	34	37
KS3	English test	% @ L5+	75	79
	Maths test	% @ L5+	76	80
	Science test	% @ L5+	74	75
	ICT	% @ L5+	76	78
KS4	GCSE	% with 5 or more GCSE (or equivalent) at A*-C	55	58
		% with 5 or more GCSE including English and maths (or equivalent) at grade G or above	92	95
	All qualifications	Average qualification points score per pupil	41.5	43

1.2 LEA targets for the achievement of children leaving care

	2003	2004
% of children leaving public care with 5 or more GCSEs at A*-C	15	15
% of children leaving public care with 1 or more GCSEs at A*-G	75	75

1.3 LEA targets for reducing absence

	LEA attendance targets	2002/03	2003/04
Primary	% of half days missed at maintained primary schools	5.7	5.6
Secondary	% of half days missed at maintained secondary schools	8.4	8.3
Special	% of half days missed at maintained special schools	10.2	10.1

1.4 Information used to support target setting

The LEA and its schools use a variety of data and information to ensure appropriate school and LEA targets can be set. Each school receives annually from the LEA its own set of data together with guidance on its use. This is produced by the data handling team within the LEA which has a remit for the production of information to support school improvement.

Primary schools receive baseline, Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2) data which show:

- “baseline” performance and analyses with KS1 predictions;
- percentages of pupils at each National Curriculum level at the end of the key stage;
- pupil progress over time;
- performance compared with other schools in the LEA and nationally;
- performance compared with schools operating in similar contexts, based on free school meal entitlement;
- comparative performance of girls and boys.

Schools are no longer provided with comparisons based on similar size. The analysis of data over three years showed no statistically significant correlation between attainment and size of school/cohort. The LEA will, however, continue to monitor this.

Secondary schools receive Key Stage 3 (KS3), Key Stage 4 GCSE/GNVQ (KS4) and Advanced Level/Advanced Subsidiary Level/Advanced GNVQ (A/AS/Adv GNVQ) data which show:

- Year 7 Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) analyses, ability profiles, KS3 and GCSE predictions;
- percentage of pupils at each National Curriculum level at the end of KS3;
- performance compared with other schools in the LEA and nationally;
- performance compared with schools operating in similar contexts, based on prior attainment and free school meal entitlement;
- comparative performance of boys and girls;
- subject analysis at GCSE, compared to national norms;
- pupils’ relative progress over time including KS3 to GCSE;
- GCSE to A Level analysis, compared to national norms.

The LEA’s approach provides schools with a minimum data set which is manageable and which enables them to undertake the analyses described below and to set their performance in a local and national context and to compare with schools in like circumstances. This allows them to set challenging yet realistic targets. The provision of, for example, boy/girl and National Curriculum level breakdown enables schools and the LEA to identify under-performing groups of pupils. If schools require further information/analysis it is available on request; for example, to allow them to investigate the performance of sub-groups within cohorts.

1.5 Processes used to set targets

POLICY

The target setting process is a central strand of the LEA's school improvement programme. Cumbria LEA works with all schools to:

- place the raising of standards at the front of school improvement planning and development;
- support school self review and evaluation;
- know about and understand levels of attainment and achievement in each school;
- build a longer term picture of each school which helps the school to recognise its strengths and to identify areas for development;
- provide an annual review of performance for each school;
- establish levels of appropriate support in proportion to need;
- support the development of good practice in school improvement.

PROCESS

All schools are encouraged to use assessment diagnostically and formatively. At individual pupil level an analysis of prior performance, the charting of progress and intervention where necessary are intended to help to raise standards. This process enables schools to base their targets on an aggregate of individual pupil targets. Schools are also strongly advised to analyse their end of key stage tests, GCSE/GNVQ and A/AS/Adv GNVQ results in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Schools have been assisted in the analysis of this data by written guidance from the LEA's statistical support officers and by inspector/advisers in the scheduled visiting programme.

In the primary sector analysis at both school and LEA level involves comparison of performance with the appropriate national benchmark tables and with similar LEA schools (based on prior attainment and free school meal entitlement). Further analysis takes place by gender. Performance trends over time are also identified to assist in forecasting and ensure that targets are challenging in relation to the forecast. The use of teacher assessment to help with individual pupil target setting is also encouraged. School data derived in this way are fed into the target-setting dialogue.

At secondary school level the LEA encourages the use of GCSE predictions to help with individual pupil target setting. Whole school and subject performance data at KS3, GCSE/GNVQ and A/AS/Adv GNVQ level are provided allowing schools to make local as well as national comparisons. Year-on-year comparisons for GCSE and A Level are available from 1992 onwards at both LEA and school level. Analysis of these allows trends to be identified to assist schools with forecasts and target setting. School level residual analysis takes place at GCSE for subjects and by gender to help identify areas of concern so that appropriate action can be planned. Value added information is also provided by the LEA to assist comparison of pupil performance between schools in the LEA and nationally for boys/girls and for all pupils combined.

The LEA's approach particularly encourages schools to compare their results with the appropriate national benchmark tables and other schools operating in similar contexts. The LEA encourages schools to use relevant parts of the QCA and Standards websites appropriately to track individual pupil progress, compare their own results with more detailed national trends and to set challenging targets. The LEA

acknowledges, however, that for its smallest schools simple comparative data may not always present a fair picture of school achievement in any one year. In these cases the LEA has developed analyses using techniques such as three year rolling averages. Performance trends are identified and appropriate analysis offered, based on individual pupil performance.

The data handling team has developed a system for recording, analysing and presenting attainment information in a readily understood form for schools. The team is continuing to refine its data analysis operation, for example the use of matched pupil data KS1 to KS2, KS3 to GCSE, quadrant graph analysis, and an "alerts" system to identify schools where there is good performance or cause for concern.

CALENDAR

May to July

- Development of value added performance data and pupil-level attainment data.
- Training for headteachers and senior managers on data handling, use of PANDAs and Autumn Package, pupil tracking processes, target setting and school improvement.

September to October

- Collection, analysis and comparison of school data, both centrally and in schools.

October to December

- Contact by inspector/advisers with all primary and secondary schools to review recent performance and strategies for school improvement and to discuss and, where necessary, challenge the school's proposed statutory targets.
- Record established of proposed statutory targets with summary of judgements, evidence and issues raised for the school or for the LEA.
- Alerts to chief inspector/adviser where in the judgement of the inspector/adviser the school's targets require further review.
- Confirmation of targets in writing by governing bodies.

December to January

- LEA collation of schools' targets.
- LEA level analysis of targets, followed by communications with schools where targets still appear insufficiently ambitious. Discussions with schools about support required to achieve targets.
- Distribution of school profiles.

March

- LEA process review, evaluation and improvement in consultation with a working group of headteachers

2. LEA CONTEXT AND AUDIT

2.1 The context of the LEA

The County Council election in June 2001 saw a change in political control in Cumbria. While Labour remains the largest single party, the administration is now run by a partnership of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. Members remain committed to the central importance of raising education standards. Their draft strategic plan also expresses a commitment to supporting small rural schools and expanding their community rôle; redirecting savings from surplus places towards enhanced provision aimed at raising standards; and providing effective support for young people who struggle to get the best from the education system. The plan also expresses members' belief in a broad education and a wish to see enhanced provision for the arts and physical education. In all of this, it envisages working in partnership with other providers.

The modernisation of local government is also well advanced in Cumbria. New structures have been established and both elected members and officers are learning to work within these new structures as they become embedded. An education forum has been established which serves as a test bed for ideas and development. A learning and recreation scrutiny panel exercises a scrutiny function with regard both to policy and to achievements. The Cabinet determines matters within the policy framework and approves specific action, as appropriate.

One feature of the LEA context which directly affects education provision remains the high number of small schools and the relative isolation of many of them. The diversity of schools also continues to present challenges. The largest secondary school currently has 1,730 pupils on roll, the smallest 156; some 90 primary schools have fewer than 90 pupils on roll while six have more than 350. While school size and diversity are certainly not of themselves a problem, there are clearly no "one size fits all" solutions to the school improvement issues facing the authority.

Part-time places for all three year olds in Cumbria whose parents want them are now provided in a range of settings – private, voluntary and maintained, depending on parental choice. All four year olds are offered full-time education in reception classes from September after their fourth birthday. The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) is functioning well. Strong links have been established between the maintained and non-maintained sectors, with a focus on the quality of provision. The EYDCP Strategic Plan 2001-2004 is committed to meeting the 29 government targets. There are workers in place to support all sectors and area early years co-ordinators co-ordinate provision within each geographical area to match supply to demand. Sure Start is providing enhanced family support and early education and childcare in a number of communities. Many schools host out of school clubs, pre-schools and mother and toddler groups and are developing more integrated provision to meet the needs of children and parents.

Since the inception of the last EDP, an EAZ has been established in Barrow-in-Furness and an excellence cluster along the west Cumbria coast, based on Workington. These initiatives will help schools and the education service to tackle the low attainment associated with endemic social and economic problems in the areas. Though it is too soon yet to evaluate the impact of the Excellence Cluster, the evidence is that in Barrow improvement in test results has been above the national and LEA levels; there has been a significant impact on attendance; enhanced professional development is leading to positive changes in classroom practice; and combining residential learning with after-school study clubs has led to improvements in motivation and engagement in secondary schools. Since 1998, the advent of

beacon schools, advanced skills teachers and the newly-defined outreach rôle of specialist schools have also added to the potential expertise available to schools in Cumbria. The setting up of Connexions Cumbria will add to the sources of advice and support available to young people. Every effort will be made to co-ordinate the work of LEA teams and Connexions advisers in the provision of pupil support. There are, however, challenges to be overcome in harnessing all this potential, given the geography of the county.

A variety of other developments, in partnership with other organisations and making use of various funding streams, have also greatly enhanced provision. Pre-eminent among these are the provision and use of ICT to enhance opportunities, sports and physical education development and the Healthy Schools initiative. Cumbria CREDITS (Community Regeneration through the Development of IT Skills) is well established and providing opportunities for adults as well as enhanced resources for a large number of schools across the county. A more recent development, the Alston Moor "Wired-up Community" project will put a computer into every home in one of Cumbria's most remote areas. The Sports Action Zone, the enthusiastic response of schools to the Youth Sports Trust's TOPs programme and the Sports Council's Active Sports Programme and the development of Spaces for Sports and the Arts have all, in their different ways, given a higher profile to and enhanced provision for sport and physical education for schools and communities alike. The development has been co-ordinated by a collaboration between the County Council and the six district councils which seeks to provide strategic oversight. Cumbria Healthy Schools, now formally accredited to the NHSS, is providing support for over 50% of the schools in Cumbria in developing initiatives related to a broad range of needs including PSHE, citizenship, emotional health, drugs education and sex and relationships education. The programme is managed by a strong LEA/health authority partnership.

The county has a long-standing policy of appropriately supported integration of children with special educational needs, which has recently undergone a major review led by an elected members' working party that is producing an overall inclusion policy for consultation. Notwithstanding the county's commitment to inclusion, there has been over the last few years a significant growth in the very small special school population. Although Cumbria remains one of the LEAs with the highest levels of integration, this growth has caused concern. Analysis of the growth profile indicates that there are a number of contributing factors, including the tension between the inclusion agenda and the standards agenda and the fact that the excellent special schools are a choice of preference for many parents. The LEA is working to review the rôle of the special schools so that they can contribute even more effectively to the development of good practice and to enable them to provide a more flexible and integrated response to support local communities of schools including outreach work in mainstream schools. The LEA is also working to support schools in the implementation of the new SEN Code of Practice and the requirements of the SEN and Disability Act 2001.

The foot and mouth epidemic in 2001 had an enormous impact on schools in the north and east of the county. Attendance during the summer term was hit; entitlement to free school meals rose sharply; and, while no general pattern was observable, attainment in national tests in a number of schools in 2001 was reported to be affected by the difficulties faced by teachers, other adults and pupils in attending at key times. It is not possible to quantify at this stage what the wider social and economic implications of FMD will be, nor how they may affect schools but the LEA will continue to monitor any impact in schools with a view to taking action if necessary.

Teacher recruitment and retention is an issue beginning to affect the LEA, though not to the same extent as other LEAs elsewhere in the country. Of the 550 advertisements in the summer term 2001 for teaching and non-teaching staff, only six went to re-advertisement. Turnover of teaching staff, at about 400, is less than 10% of the teaching force. A survey of secondary heads late in the summer term indicated that they expected to have to cover some 20 vacancies in September by the use of supply teachers, part-time staff and other contingencies, pending the appointment of permanent staff. This represents rather less than 1% of posts in secondary schools. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that in many subjects in secondary schools it is difficult to attract applications; headteachers express concern about the quality of some fields; in some subjects, notably mathematics, a considerable amount of teaching may be in the hands of "non-specialists" and in individual subjects in particular schools, it can be difficult to replace immediately teachers who leave. Headteachers of both primary and secondary schools report that finding adequate supply teachers, especially in urban areas, is becoming almost impossible. The LEA is responding to these challenges by providing training for supply teachers and would-be "returners". It has arranged representation at a number of teaching fairs and bought space in "Think Teaching" in order to attract teachers to Cumbria. It is also piloting the programme of early professional development for teachers in their second and third years, in the hope that this will assist retention as well as enhance the skills of teachers early in their careers. It is developing its partnership with St Martin's College. Further action is planned to alleviate the situation, pending the possible appointment of a recruitment manager to deal with this growing issue and co-ordinate the LEA's response.

2.2 Evaluation of the effectiveness of EDP 1

STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT

The LEA has made good progress in working with schools to raise attainment. At Key Stage 2, from a baseline in 1998 of 66% achieving Level 4+ in English, 62% Level 4+ in mathematics, the LEA figures in 2001 were 77% in English and 74% in mathematics. In both 1999 and 2000 results in both subjects were above the national average and were ahead of targets, so much so in mathematics that the LEA raised its target for 2002 to 81%. Results in 2001 were broadly in line with the national picture in that they dipped by almost 1% in English and by 1.5% in mathematics. Improvement in schools supported intensively by the literacy and numeracy teams, however, continued to be greater than the LEA average. Despite the challenge which the figures represent for the final year of EDP 1, therefore, the LEA remains confident about its targets for 2002.

At GCSE level, the improvement between 1998 and 2001 stands at: five A*-C passes: 44% to 51%; one A*-G pass: 94% to 96%; average points: 36 to 40. This represents improvement in line with the targets which were set in EDP 1 and, on the five A*-C standard, improvement at a rate faster than the national rate of improvement. In particular, there has been improvement in almost all departments which were targeted for support under the EDP. In response to higher aggregate targets set by schools, the LEA target for five A*-C passes in 2002 was raised to 55% and this remains a particular challenge for schools and the LEA alike.

The attainment of children in public care has also improved on most measures. The percentage of 11 year olds achieving at least Level 4 in English rose from 39% in 2000 to 42% in 2001, though in mathematics it fell from 44% to 33%. At GCSE between 2000 and 2001 achievement also rose: at one A*-G from 33% to 63%; at five A*-G from 21% to 47%; and at five A*-C from 8% to 11%.

The most obvious underachieving group in Cumbria remains boys, especially in English and in higher grade passes at GCSE. Although the attainment gap between boys and girls in English has narrowed in Key Stages 1-3, there remains a case for making boys a specific focus in EDP 2. The same is true of higher grade passes at GCSE level (see section 2.3 for further detail).

ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS

Permanent exclusions have been reduced between 1998 and 2001, well ahead of the target set in the EDP. In 1998-99 they were reduced to 69 and in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 to 39, compared with targets of 80, 70 and 64 respectively. The Best Value review of Cumbria Education Welfare Service in 2001 highlighted an efficient and effective service. However, it also highlighted the length of time it took for a permanently excluded pupil to be reintegrated into education. In an attempt to address this issue reintegration officers were appointed. First evaluations of their work show a reduction in the number of days permanently excluded pupils are out of provision from an average of 194 days to an average of 42 days.

Unauthorised absence presents a different, though more complicated picture. In primary schools in 2000-2001, it stood at 0.2% compared with a target of 0.1%; in secondary schools at 0.7% compared with a target of 0.42%; in both cases this represents a small rise against the figures for the previous two years. Part of the reason for this "rise", however, is the application of more rigorous criteria for authorising absence and a drive towards greater consistency between schools across the authority. During the same period, authorised absence in primary schools fell and in secondary schools remained steady. Figures for unauthorised absence are well below national averages; those for authorised absence are in line with national averages. The LEA believes, therefore, that action to promote attendance has been effective.

SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

The LEA's effectiveness in identifying and intervening in schools causing concern has also improved during the operation of EDP 1. Broadly speaking, the number of schools subject to special measures or identified as having serious weaknesses was halved as a result of action taken. Prior to September 1998, nine schools in Cumbria had been identified as requiring special measures, one of them a grant maintained school. Since that date, a further five have been thus identified, again one of them a grant maintained school which by its own choice had no dealings with the LEA. The comparable figures for schools with serious weaknesses are six and seven respectively; again, the latter figure includes three schools which had for a long period been grant maintained. Monitoring HMI have described the LEA's support for such schools as highly effective and all but one have made significant improvement within the time allowed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Action in support of other school improvement priorities has been modest in comparison with support for the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and schools causing concern. However, support for school self-review has been effective. Guidance, including periodic updates, has been issued to all schools. The LEA is a training provider accredited by OFSTED; 165 out of 298 primary and special schools and 19 out of 42 secondary schools have attended LEA training on the use of the Framework for self-evaluation. In a survey conducted in the spring term 2001 inspector/advisers judged that self-evaluation was established or securely established in 28% of schools; developing in a further 61%; embryonic in 10%. In partnership with the former Enterprise Cumbria, the LEA has also promoted and supported IIP in schools. 17 have achieved the standard and a further 85 are currently working towards it. On-going support for self-review has been more firmly embedded within the school visiting programme throughout the life of EDP 1.

Support for leadership and management has also been provided by the promotion of continuing professional development opportunities for headteachers and aspiring headteachers through NPQH, HEADLAMP and LPSH; training on a “commissioned” basis for subject leaders in both primary and secondary schools; and advice and support for governors through newsletters, updates and the Governor Development Programme. Although heads in Cumbria have responded well to national training programmes, with uptake of both NPQH and LPSH above the national average and all new heads registered for HEADLAMP, evaluation suggests that the LEA should be doing more to support headteachers, particularly new headteachers. Training for middle managers, on the other hand, developed both in-house and in partnership with HEI, has been well received, with courses consistently rated 90+% excellent or very good. The Governor Development Programme is similarly highly praised.

QUALITY OF TEACHING

Within the EDP, support for teaching and learning through the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been both intensive and effective. Much of the LEA’s other work to support improvements in the quality of teaching goes on outside the EDP through the annual programme of in-service training. Within the EDP, the programme of monitoring and support for teachers whose teaching was identified as needing improvement has resulted in all such teachers either achieving the necessary improvement or resigning their posts. The LEA also maintains a programme of monitoring and support for newly qualified teachers which is well regarded both by the new teachers and their schools. Typically, 98% of schools choose to register their NQTs for this programme and evaluation indicates that schools regard both the LEA’s induction programme and its monitoring rôle as particular strengths.

The provision of curriculum updates and advice, including guidance on assessment and mixed-age teaching, is also highly rated. Specific projects to raise attainment in secondary schools through recognised cognitive acceleration programmes (CASE and CAME), through initiating school-based research in formative assessment techniques and specifically through support for such work in small secondary schools, have all proved influential. The Advanced Certificate in Specific Learning Difficulties, accredited by the University of Wales, is proving successful: in 1999-2000 22 teachers out of a cohort of 26 successfully completed the course, 50% of them with top grades; in 2000-2001 32 out of 35 completed, again with some 50% achieving top grades; a further 18 are enrolled in 2001-2002. Overall, the LEA profile for 2001 identifies the quality of teaching in Cumbria as better than that in statistical neighbour authorities and the national average.

GOOD PRACTICE

Progress has been made, too, in disseminating good practice, though more slowly than was the ambition of EDP 1. A website has been established through CLEO (Cumbria and Lancashire Education On-line) and arrangements made for the dissemination of interesting practice through the advisory service’s curriculum updates. However, fewer examples have been notified than was the target. This appears to be partly because of the effects of the former competitive climate on schools, partly because teachers have a variety of other commitments. During the life of the EDP other initiatives to share good practice have also been developed: advanced skills teachers, beacon schools, the outreach rôle of specialist schools, among others. Networking and establishing beneficial partnerships thus remain a key focus of EDP 2.

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND FUTURE PLANNING

With regard to broader issues, it is clear that those activities which have had the greatest impact in EDP 1 have been those which were tightly focused and had significant resource attached to them. While the LEA cannot hope to match from local resources the sort of funding which has been deployed in support of NLS, NNS, NGfL and now the Key Stage 3 Strategy, there is a case for focusing time and attention on a smaller number of activities in EDP 2. In EDP 1, outcome measures were not always easy to define and evaluation has been easiest in relation to those activities where specific, measurable outcomes were envisaged from the outset. More careful attention will be given to success criteria in EDP 2. Similarly, the approach which the LEA has taken to the creation of the new EDP and will continue to take to its on-going development is intended to overcome another relative weakness: the difficulty of getting schools to “own” the EDP.

Making a secure judgement about cost-effectiveness has also been difficult, not least because school improvement activities, by their very nature, are not discrete and do not happen in isolation from other influences. It can therefore be difficult to determine their direct, individual impact on achievement. However, in overall terms, Cumbria spent £16 per pupil on “school improvement” in 2000-2001; £33 per pupil on “central administration”; and £23 per pupil on “other strategic management”. All of these figures indicate expenditure well below the national and shire county averages and bear out OFSTED’s judgement that Cumbria operates a “lean strategic centre”. Meanwhile, on every measure, attainment has risen at least in line with national averages and on every measure it is now above the national average. The authority thus feels justified in claiming that EDP 1 was cost-effective.

2.3 Audit of LEA strengths and weaknesses and school performance

OVERALL STANDARDS

Analysis of the statistics indicates that standards of attainment have risen on all measures and across all key stages since 1998. The performance of LEA schools is above the national average on all measures. Performance is generally in line with that in statistical neighbour authorities for all core subjects and across the key stages, although within this improving picture there are wide differentials between schools. According to the LEA’s most recent statistical profile from OFSTED the number of schools falling within the lower quartile on key stage test, GCSE and A Level results compares favourably with the national average. However, when comparisons are made only with schools in like circumstances, more schools than might be expected fall into the lower quartile on all tests at Key Stages 1 and 2 and in science in KS3. These schools are identified for intensive support in the school improvement programme.

FOUNDATION STAGE

Currently there is nothing in place to judge attainment in the Foundation Stage and value added across all schools. Most schools assess pupils on entry to nursery, on entry to reception and during the nursery year and reception year using “A Flying Start”, the Durham Scheme for Baseline Assessment, but this information is held by individual schools. The LEA has data from the statutory baseline. This is entry data and therefore of no use in tracking attainment year on year. From 2003 there will be a national statutory assessment of pupils at the end of the Foundation Stage using the new Foundation Stage Profile. It will then be possible to track attainment year on year and to set targets for improvement.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

The performance of both boys and girls has improved in all core subjects. However, while boys have closed the attainment gap, the difference between boys' and girls' attainment remains, especially in English. Thus in 2001:

- 9% fewer boys achieved Level 2+ in reading and 8% fewer achieved Level 2+ in writing at the end of Key Stage 1;
- 11% fewer boys achieved Level 4+ in English at the end of Key Stage 2;
- 18% fewer boys achieved Level 5+ in English and 17% fewer Level 6+ at the end of Key Stage 3.

Boys' and girls' attainment in mathematics and science differs very little, except that:

- at Level 5+ in mathematics girls now have a 3.3% "lead" over boys at the end of Key Stage 3 compared with a 1.9% difference in 1998;
- in science, the small "advantage" in favour of boys has become a small one in favour of girls at the end of Key Stage 3.

Within the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and at Key Stage 3, there will, therefore, be a particular focus on raising the attainment of boys; particularly so in English.

Standards at GCSE have risen at a faster rate than nationally. Though boys have closed the attainment gap on girls with regard to overall passes, at higher grades girls have moved even further ahead over the past three years. The differential between girls and boys now stands at:

- 14% at five A*-C passes;
- 3.1% at five A*-G passes;
- 1.3% at least one A*-G pass.

The LEA inspection report identifies as issues GCSE attainment in west Cumbria and boys' attainment relative to that of girls, again particularly in west Cumbria. The LEA's own analysis suggests that schools' performance cannot be delineated along such clearly geographic lines. For example, of the ten lowest-attaining schools (as judged by average GCSE points score) in 2001, five were in west Cumbria, three in Carlisle and two in Barrow-in-Furness. The LEA's focus will thus be on particular schools and groups of schools rather than broader geographic areas.

MINORITY GROUPS

The attainment of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is broadly in line with that of all pupils in Cumbria. At KS2 in 2001, 81.8% achieved Level 4+ in English, 79.5% Level 4+ in mathematics. At GCSE 53% achieved five or more higher level passes, 100% at least one A*-G. These figures confirm the trend of recent years, though numbers are so small (45 11 year olds, 59 16 year olds in 2001) that year on year fluctuations are inevitable. Of greater concern to the LEA is the provision of English as an additional language for first generation immigrants and new arrivals, particularly

refugees and asylum seekers. The modest numbers but wide dispersal of such children present a challenge to the LEA and to schools. The LEA is aiming to meet the challenge by increasing the level of expertise within the LEA. Three members of the Specialist Teaching Service are currently registered on a postgraduate training programme in Educational Support for Bilingual Learners run by Edinburgh University. Members of the Pupil and School Support Division are also currently developing a service delivery model designed to meet the needs of bilingual learners, their teachers and parents.

Whilst Cumbria has an established and effective service for Travellers providing a positive educational experience through the primary phase, very few Traveller children make the transfer to secondary school. Developing a strategy to address this problem and to ensure that Travellers' children have access to school places remain high priorities.

PUPILS IN PUBLIC CARE

The attainment of pupils in public care has improved between 2000-2001 at every key stage and on every measure, except Level 4 attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. The percentage of 11 year olds achieving at least Level 4 in English rose from 39% in 2000 to 42% in 2001, though in mathematics it fell from 44% to 33%. At GCSE between 2000 and 2001 achievement also rose: at one A*-G from 33% to 63%; at five A*-G from 21% to 47%; and at five A*-C from 8% to 11%. It is thus above the national average, in some cases well above, on every measure. However, the attainments of this group remain well below the attainments of pupils generally in Cumbria. Further activities are included in the school improvement programme to narrow this gap.

TEENAGE MOTHERS AND PREGNANT SCHOOLGIRLS

Teenage mothers and pregnant schoolgirls, similarly, do less well than their peers at GCSE and in KS3 tests, with major difficulties related to attendance. In 2001, of a cohort of 20 16 year olds, five achieved five A*-G at GCSE, a further seven at least one A*-G. In Key Stage 3 tests, eight out of a cohort of 24 achieved at least Level 5 in English; five Level 5 in maths; six Level 5 in science. Seven pupils were absent from the tests in all three subjects. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the cohort, as in the case of looked-after pupils, is very small, rendering the statistical analysis more liable to random variation.

SETTING TARGETS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Heads and governors in secondary schools continue to set aspirational targets. However, headteachers and governors of primary schools have demonstrated a "resolute pessimism" in respect of English. The LEA sees this as related to the cautiousness of colleagues rather than the attainment of their pupils. Thus, in each of the last three years the schools' aggregate target has been exceeded and, except in 2001, the LEA's target achieved. Despite the pressure and support from LEA inspector/advisers acknowledged in the LEA's inspection report, the issue remains. In 2003 the gap between the LEA's target and the aggregate of schools' KS2 targets is 6% in English, 2% in maths. Coaching and additional support for heads and governors in some 20-30 schools whose approach can be shown over time to be over-cautious will be provided through the target setting visit. Where that fails, the LEA will record its concerns formally through its annual review of a school's performance and challenge the school to address the issue.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance in the LEA's schools compares well with national figures and is broadly in line with that in comparator LEAs. Unauthorised absence, at 0.7% in secondary schools and 0.2% in primaries, is among the lowest in the LEA's statistical neighbour group and places Cumbria in the upper quartile of all LEAs. Authorised absence, at 7.8% in secondary and 5.4% in primary schools, is in line with the average. The Best Value review on Services for Educationally Vulnerable Pupils in 2002 showed that Cumbria performs very well on many measures where comparisons can be made, and this was reflected in the OFSTED inspection. Two areas were identified in the review for improvement. The first was the possibility of promoting earlier intervention and reducing bureaucracy through an extension of non-statutory funding mechanisms. The second involved better joined up working within the Education Service, with Social Services, and with other agencies. These are reflected in both the Behaviour Support Plan and the detail of this plan.

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The quality of teaching in both primary and secondary schools is identified in the most recent LEA profile as somewhat better than that in statistical neighbour authorities with improved teaching a notable strength in secondary schools since the introduction of the new Framework for Inspection in January 2000. However, the broader "quality of education" grades identify weaknesses in junior schools and "satisfactory" as the norm in secondary schools. Assessment and its relationship to teaching and learning is identified as a weakness in both primary and secondary schools, as is the quality of the curriculum at Key Stage 3. The monitoring of teaching and learning and curriculum planning is a weakness in primary schools, though not to a greater extent than elsewhere in the country; in secondary schools, it is less often good than in other LEAs. These data suggest that there should be a focus on the use of assessment to support teaching and learning rather than a more general priority given to the quality of teaching; also on monitoring and evaluation as a management issue.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

On more general aspects of management, the LEA profile reports high standards in all-through primaries, satisfactory performance among secondary schools and weaknesses in junior schools. Development planning and monitoring and evaluation are the most significant weaknesses identified in all phases. The inspection of Cumbria LEA in 2001 also identified as matters for attention:

- greater support for school self-evaluation;
- the induction of new headteachers;
- the use of the small schools' network to ease the burden of consultation;
- the need for more rigorous challenge in matters relating to management.

Taken with the point about monitoring noted above, this indicates that on-going support for leadership and management needs to be a key feature of EDP 2.

GOVERNORS AND GOVERNANCE

The position on the recruitment of governors is positive with an overall vacancy level of 7% for LEA appointed governors. This masks specific problems in the Allerdale, Barrow and Copeland districts of Cumbria, where the level of vacancies is more like 12%.

New governors on their appointment are offered an introduction to governance course, which has been recognised by new governors attending as providing high quality support. However, the level of uptake amongst new governors presently stands at 45%. By making the sessions available more locally and using distance learning, the LEA aims to increase this level of attendance over the period of the plan.

In Cumbria, no centralised clerking service is provided; rather each school appoints its own clerk. Annual turnover of clerks is high. DfES, following a sponsored survey, has now put training and development for clerks as very high governance priority. Training materials are being developed and a national training programme will be on stream from January 2003. This will support the proposed Cumbria activity.

SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

Since 1995, 14 schools have been identified as needing special measures. Of those, 12 have been removed from special measures, all but one within the two-year timeframe. 14 schools have been identified as having serious weaknesses. Most have made the requisite progress within 12 months. The LEA has got better at identifying schools in difficulties and working with them to head off concerns before they become serious weaknesses. There are currently two schools in special measures and five with serious weaknesses. A further five schools are on the LEA's list of schools causing concern. The LEA's inspection report commended LEA support for these schools, which was described as good. However, the report was also critical of procedures for identifying them as insufficiently formalised and insufficiently challenging on management issues. These matters will be attended to within the school improvement programme.

HEADTEACHERS' VIEWS

In the spring term 2001, discussions began with primary school headteachers about the focus of EDP 2. Colleagues were asked at area heads' meetings what needed to be included. In addition to clear national priorities, responses tended to cluster around four themes:

- Early education; support for family learning; the Foundation Stage curriculum.
- The primary curriculum beyond literacy and numeracy; the arts; personal, social and health education; multicultural education; and citizenship.
- Learning and pupils' readiness to learn.
- Progression across the key stages.
- Networking and the sharing of good practice.

Towards the end of the summer term, a survey was conducted of a 25% sample of school development plans, both primary and secondary. It indicated that the most frequently occurring priorities in schools' plans were:

- Literacy; especially, in primary schools, improving writing.
- Leadership and management of schools; including monitoring and evaluation, school self-evaluation, aspects of performance management and subject/department leadership.
- ICT.
- Numeracy.
- Citizenship, linked to personal, social and health education; in many primary schools, linked to broader aspects of health education.
- The foundation subjects, though most plans did not specify which subjects.

The survey also indicated that development planning itself was in need of improvement in many schools. It revealed a lack of clarity in some cases between a longer-term development plan and a one-year plan (known in Cumbria as the school management plan). There was frequently no clear sense of priorities in plans. Plans themselves often displayed structural weaknesses, particularly in relation to success criteria and monitoring and evaluation.

In ascertaining the views of schools, account has also been taken of a “barriers to learning” survey completed by the heads of the schools in the West Cumbria Excellence Cluster. Headteachers identified the following issues as the most important and most urgent to tackle:

- Raising the aspirations of both parents and pupils in an area of social and economic deprivation.
- Improving attitudes to and involvement in education of both parents and pupils.
- Overcoming social and cultural isolation.
- Improving the self-confidence and self-esteem of pupils.
- Improving the physical and mental health of pupils.

Although the survey has not been replicated in other areas, the LEA believes that these results would have equal validity in other disadvantaged areas of the county.

The views thus expressed indicate a clear wish on the part of primary schools to see more attention given to the Foundation Stage and the broader primary school curriculum than was evident in the first EDP. They also indicate a need, especially in the most isolated and disadvantaged areas of the county, to focus on social inclusion as a means of improving attitudes to school, enhancing self-esteem and thus improving learning and raising standards. They also indicate a need, perhaps, to ensure that, in those areas particularly, the quality of teaching is the best and most challenging possible since it is through the quality of the teaching provided that schools can best influence pupils’ aspirations and raise attainment. Finally, they demonstrate the need to provide on-going support for aspects of leadership and management.

CONCLUSION

The context within which schools in Cumbria work and the audit of local needs leads to the identification of the following local priorities within the EDP:

- On-going support for leadership and management in schools, within the context of local management, enhanced autonomy for schools and the developing capacity of institutions to be self-evaluative and self-improving.
- Developing inclusion/inclusiveness, especially to improve the motivation and self-esteem of pupils who are disaffected or in danger of becoming disaffected in order to raise their attainment and thus improve their life chances.
- Developing partnerships and networks to make best use of the expertise which exists throughout the education system for the benefit of as many as possible; and to maximise the support available to schools from partner organisations, thus enhancing the quality of education and raising standards.

Within these and the nationally-declared priorities, audit has further identified the need for specific focuses; for example, on boys’ achievement, on improving the quality of planning for school improvement and on raising attainment of schools in challenging areas. These are reflected in the themes and activities which support the school improvement programme.

2.4 How the EDP links with other local authority plans

The EDP sits within the Education Directorate's Strategic Plan, which in turn sits within the County Council's Corporate Strategy. The Corporate Strategy expresses its support for school improvement through key priorities such as:

- encouraging provision of a broad education, whilst continuing to work to raise educational standards of all young people.
- extending early years education and helping parents to secure childcare and a wide range of services for under fives;
- improving services for young people aged 13 to 19, particularly those who find it most difficult to take advantage of educational opportunities; and
- supporting small rural schools and expanding their rôle in the community.

The Directorate's Strategic Plan, of which the EDP is a key component, converts those broad intentions into specific activities and associated targets.

The EDP also relates closely to a number of other plans. Some of the areas for development are also targeted in the LEA's post-inspection action plan; for example, the need to devise strategies for relieving the burden on small school headteachers and to develop a strategy for multicultural and anti-racist education. The literacy plan, numeracy plan and Key Stage 3 Strategy plan identify in considerable detail the actions to be taken to raise achievement, which is the main focus of the first four (national) priorities of the EDP. Co-ordination of the EDP and EYDCP Strategic Plan will also ensure a consistent and coherent approach to improving the quality of education and childcare and raising standards in the Foundation Stage. The plans for addressing exclusions and improving attendance link directly to the strategies identified in support materials for schools which accompany the Behaviour Support Plan.

Care has been taken, both in the planning and consultation stages, to ensure that the EDP and strategic plans of the Barrow Community Learning Partnership, Connexions Service, West Cumbria Excellence Cluster, Drugs Action Team and Cumbria Healthy Schools Initiative are properly aligned. In particular, as a result of detailed feedback from the Director of the EAZ and the Chief Executive of Connexions, modifications have been made to the EDP, better to express the collaboration between the LEA and those organisations.

The EDP also expresses the intention, through the local priority focusing on networks and partnerships, to work with other authorities and organisations to bring a strategic overview to the provision of services and opportunities which will enhance the quality of education for the people of Cumbria. Relationships with these organisations – for example, Northern Arts, local museums and galleries, environmental and development education support providers, national and local sports organisations, the district councils, police and fire service – are already good and will be strengthened by further collaborative working.

3. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The following matrix expresses in diagrammatic form the way in which implementation of the EDP will be organised. A number of key themes, related to national and local priorities, will allow the LEA to address key concerns in a coherent way, and with an eye to continuity and progression across the key stages. It is envisaged that these themes, like the priorities, will endure for the full five years of the plan while the activities are liable to change. The activities which are listed under each theme heading are those which will apply to the first year of the plan. Some are specific, time-limited undertakings. Others may run for the full five years. Annual evaluation of the programme, including feedback from schools, will enable the schedule of activities to be reshaped year on year. The matrix also identifies how the plan will ensure appropriate coverage of the priorities. Full details are given in the activity plans included at Annex 2. An account of how activities have been derived from audit follows.

Raising standards in literacy and numeracy

The main focus of these themes will be the on-going implementation of national strategies in order to raise attainment in all key stages. Within the Literacy Strategy, there will be a particular focus on boys' attainment since data indicate that boys are Cumbria's predominant underachieving group. Intensive support will be focused on schools identified by data as being the lowest attaining in absolute terms; also on those which appear to be underachieving relative to their intake and/or pupils' prior performance. The focus at Key Stage 4 will similarly be on departments which are underachieving relative to other departments in their school. Work on family literacy and numeracy and the Foundation Stage derives from evidence from headteachers that in the most deprived areas of the county, children enter education with a considerable deficit in basic skills.

Raising standards in other core subjects

Activity within this theme will again focus mainly on implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy for science and ICT. The work on ICT in Key Stage 4 follows the identification of support for secondary schools as a relative weakness in the LEA's inspection. Work in Key Stage 1 and 2, conversely, builds on an area of relative strength, including the need to progress a very successful initiative which encourages joint projects between primary and secondary schools and provides local accreditation for work done in primary schools.

Enhancing teaching and learning

As well as promoting teaching and learning in the foundation subjects in Key Stage 3, this theme picks up on other areas of need, including strategies to promote boys' learning and attainment; the rôle of formative assessment in teaching and learning, identified as a weakness in both school inspection reports and the LEA profile; the need to raise expectations, especially among pupils from the most deprived communities, seen by headteachers as a key issue; influences on pupils' readiness for learning; and effective use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool, as envisaged in current government thinking. Again, the focus on the Foundation Stage is seen as offsetting social deprivation, as evidenced above.

Enhancing curriculum balance, continuity and coherence

This theme is concerned with PSHE and citizenship programmes, as required by government regulation and expectation. It also focuses on multicultural, multi-ethnic and anti-racist education, which was identified in the LEA inspection as requiring development. Better support for small schools was also identified by OFSTED; headteachers themselves identify a need for curriculum guidance, especially but not exclusively in relation to mixed-age, mixed key stage classes. Alternative curriculum provision and routes to accreditation in Key Stage 4 picks up on the new “freedoms” recently announced for secondary schools.

Enhancing the effectiveness of school leadership

This theme responds to a number of points made in the LEA inspection report; to specific weaknesses identified in school inspections and the LEA profile; also to heads’ own view of their support needs. There is a very strong degree of congruence between all three perspectives. It also signals the LEA’s intention to take a more strategic view of recruitment and retention, identified clearly as a growing concern, even in the context of Cumbria.

Ensuring support for inclusion

The focus on inclusiveness within this theme derives both from government thinking as expressed in the SEN and Disability Act 2001 and the context of SEN in Cumbria, including the views of headteachers on what needs to be done to support the most disadvantaged pupils. The emphasis on inclusion and improving attendance, despite their being relative strengths, is again consistent with national expectations. The need better to support specific minority groups was identified in the LEA inspection report and is dealt with within the fourth activity under this theme.

Ensuring appropriate support for schools

This theme builds on previously acknowledged good practice whilst addressing a criticism of the LEA inspection report: that the LEA’s reasons for intervening in schools were not openly declared and that its procedures for doing so were insufficiently formalised. Beyond that, all activities focus on tackling problems and preventing difficulties escalating once a need to intervene has been identified. This is clearly consistent with the Code of Conduct for LEA-School Relations and with national as well as local needs.

Enriching provision through networks and partnerships

Collaboration and the sharing of expertise throughout the education system were key themes in the recent White Paper. They need explicit support in an authority such as Cumbria if they are to contribute to school improvement, as is strongly reflected in consultations with headteachers, especially primary school heads. This theme seeks to harness the benefits of networks and partnerships, both formal and less formal, within and beyond education itself. Among a range of partnerships, the specific focus on the arts and physical education will enable the LEA to draw in additional sources of support for schools; it also accords well with the White Paper and the views of heads themselves. Other key partnerships include those with agencies beyond the LEA aimed at promoting the personal, social and health education of young people as they develop towards adulthood.

SSID/QA/GH/HG
29 January 2002

Themes and activities	National priorities					Local priorities		
	Raising attainment in early years and primary education	Raising attainment in Key Stage 3	Raising attainment in Key Stage 4	Narrowing the attainment gap / tackling underachievement	Support for schools causing concern	Promoting self-confident, self-evaluating schools	Developing inclusiveness	Networks and partnerships
Raising standards in literacy in all key stages								
• Develop practice in the teaching and learning of literacy in the Foundation Stage.	✓			✓			✓	✓
• Continue to develop practice in the NLS in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
• Continue to develop practice in the KS3 English Strand of the KS3 National Strategy.		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
• Promote improvements in English at Key Stage 4.			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
• Maintain the development of the Family Literacy programme.	✓			✓			✓	✓
Raising standards in numeracy in all key stages								
• Develop practice in the teaching and learning of mathematics in the Foundation Stage.	✓			✓			✓	✓
• Continue to develop practice in the NNS in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
• Continue to develop practice in the KS3 Mathematics Strand of the KS3 National Strategy.		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
• Promote improvements in mathematics at Key Stage 4.			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
• Maintain the development of the Family Numeracy programme.	✓			✓			✓	✓
Raising standards in the other core subjects in all key stages								
• Raise standards in ICT in the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2.	✓			✓	✓			✓
• Implement the Key Stage 3 Strategy for science.		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
• Implement the Key Stage 3 Strategy for ICT.		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
• Work with secondary schools to ensure that all students achieve some recognised accreditation for their work in ICT in Key Stage 4.			✓	✓			✓	✓
Enhancing teaching and learning								
• Promote the development of children's learning in the Foundation Stage through play-based activities.	✓						✓	
• Implement the National Strategy for teaching and learning in the foundation subjects at Key Stage 3.		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
• Promote improvements in children's capacity to learn.				✓			✓	✓
• Pilot the use of teaching strategies to promote boys' learning and attainment in all key stages.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
• Promote the effective use of off-line and on-line resources to improve teaching and learning in Key Stage 4.			✓	✓			✓	✓
• Develop the use of assessment to support teaching and learning and raise expectations and attainment across all key stages.	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Enhancing curriculum balance, continuity and coherence								
• Provide guidance on ensuring breadth and balance in the curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2.	✓					✓	✓	✓
• Provide guidance on alternative curriculum provision and routes to accreditation at Key Stage 4.			✓	✓			✓	✓
• Provide guidance on developing PSHE and citizenship programmes, including the statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.						✓	✓	✓
• Assist and support schools in developing policies and practices for multicultural, multi-ethnic and anti-racist education.						✓	✓	✓

Themes and activities	National priorities					Local priorities		
	Raising attainment in early years and primary education	Raising attainment in Key Stage 3	Raising attainment in Key Stage 4	Narrowing the attainment gap / tackling underachievement	Support for schools causing concern	Promoting self-confident, self-evaluating schools	Developing inclusiveness	Networks and partnerships
Enhancing the effectiveness of school leadership								
• Improve induction and support procedures for new and acting headteachers.						✓		✓
• Develop a strategy for sustaining small schools and making small school headship more manageable.						✓		✓
• Provide guidance and organise training to support school self-evaluation and school improvement planning.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
• Develop guidance and organise shared training for governors and headteachers on their respective rôles and responsibilities and develop a campaign to recruit, induct and train school clerks and governors.						✓		
• Develop a strategy for teacher recruitment and retention across the LEA.					✓			✓
Ensuring support for inclusion								
• Promote good behaviour.				✓			✓	✓
• Support schools to improve attendance.		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
• Develop and promote inclusive education and inclusive learning.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
• Develop and promote good practice in the education of vulnerable minority groups.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Ensuring appropriate support for schools especially the most vulnerable								
• Review annually the performance of all schools.					✓	✓		
• Provide intensive support for schools causing concern.					✓	✓		
• Provide intensive support for underachieving schools/subject departments.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
• Support and monitor headteachers and teachers under capability procedures.					✓	✓		
Enriching provision through networks and partnerships								
• Develop effective partnerships to make use of the expertise available in schools as a result of local/national initiatives.						✓		✓
• Maintain and develop a range of networks to share best practice in schools and to access current research, including further development of the use of ICT.	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
• Maintain and develop multi-agency partnerships to promote early years development; health development of young people; support for young people through their teenage years and in preparation for adult life.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
• Maintain and develop a range of partnerships to promote physical education, the arts and environmental education.	✓	✓	✓					✓
• Develop better partnerships within the LEA in the provision of services to schools.								✓