

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. **Meeting** Cabinet Member and Advisory Board

2. **Date of Meeting:** 13 July 2004

3. **Title** A report highlighting the key findings of the District Audit Report on SEN progress completed in July 2004

4. **Originating Officer** Roger Higginbottom, Strategic Leader Inclusion ext 2677

5. **Issue**

The report provides members with the key findings of the District Audit Report 2004 evaluating progress made in relation to ongoing SEN developments

6. **Summary**

The report indicates to members how District Audit has evaluated the progress and impact made within the borough with regard to implementing changes and developments within the Special Educational Needs Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006 and other associated work. This report should be read in conjunction with the most recent evaluation of progress within the Special Educational Needs Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006. The areas identified as strengths by District Audit are indicated below:

STRENGTHS

- Ofsted recommendations addressed satisfactorily in relation to strategic planning; action in hand with evidence of improvement in the case of BVPI43 performance.
- Issues raised in the District Audit report of February 2003 have been addressed or action is in hand to complete them.
- School perception of the LEA's inclusion services is positive (Audit Commission school survey).
- The LEA has produced an appropriate strategy and is actively implementing it. The principles of the strategy strongly reflect current (DfES) thinking on SEN and the development of outreach work whilst maintaining special school capability is a strength.
- Progress in implementing the strategy is evident from the Council's own audit, as well as document reviews and interviews conducted during this study.
- LEA policies appear to be leading to greater inclusion of pupils with statements within mainstream schools.

- Business planning reflects the strategy; plans are properly costed and resources.
- Clear arrangements are in place for monitoring and evaluation of both the Post Inspection Action Plan and SEN Strategic Development Plan, with responsibility clearly assigned for monitoring and periodic formal progress reviews.
- There are satisfactory procedures in place to ensure that stakeholders are consulted and kept informed of developments in SEN and inclusion.
- Supported School Evaluation Review for Inclusion is appropriately scoped and should provide a sound basis for assessing school effectiveness in the area of SEN and inclusion.
- Comprehensive training and development opportunities relating to Inclusion are available for school staff and governors. The provision of workshops for parents is particularly worthy of note.
- The Parent Partnership Service in Rotherham is developing well, with appropriate engagement with parents, regional working to share good practice and a thorough review of its own practice against required standards.
- Statements reviewed appear to be satisfactory and performance against BVPI43a/b is improving.
- Overall, it appears that satisfactory progress is being made in the development of funding mechanisms for special schools and pupils in mainstream with statements of SEN.

As with any District Audit inspection areas for development have also been highlighted and these are presented below.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure that schools make parents aware of the PPS when pupils reach School Action Plus stage.
- Develop anonymised case study material to enable PPS to demonstrate inclusion success stories to parents; preferably covering a range of special needs.
- Statutory assessment case files lack a 'control sheet' commonly used in other LEAs which records key dates to enable monitoring of progress against statutory timescales.
- Little or no monitoring of school use of delegated resources in place at present; although proposed Supported School Evaluation Review for Inclusion

arrangements will address this requirement. This remains an area for development until implemented.

7. Clearance/Consultation

There has been no formal consultation as the report is presented for members' information.

8. Timing

There are no implications for timing, other than members may request to have this information presented to them following any future District Audit inspections

9. Background

The information provided presents an extremely positive picture of the progress made against the targets set within the Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006. The process of review involved analysis of a range of information, policies and protocols, and interviews with the Strategic Leader Inclusion, Principal Adviser Inclusion, SEN Assessment Manager and the Manager of the Parent Partnership Service. This process commenced in May 2004 and was completed in July 2004. The findings indicate that positive and significant progress has been made in addressing the specific actions contained within the SEN Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006.

10. Argument

The District Audit Report on SEN progress highlights whilst very positive actions have been taken and new strategies implemented, the Council needs to consider further work in relation to the parent partnership service, file management and budget monitoring. The issues highlighted have been analysed and plans to address them are currently being implemented

In addressing these issues it would be appropriate to incorporate these areas into a revised Inclusion Strategic Plan which captures these recommendations, ongoing implementation from the Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006, and activities that are currently forming part of the Children's and Young People's Development Team.

11. Risks and Uncertainties

There are no specific risks or uncertainties contained within the report other than the need for Inclusion Services alongside others to continue to develop strategies that promote the inclusion agenda within the borough.

12. Finance There are no specific financial implications contained within the report, and through the strategies outlined in the SEN Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006 the Council will continue to implement systems to develop more inclusive provision whilst evaluating the effectiveness of money allocated to schools for pupils with special educational needs.

13. Sustainability Members should note that further plans which outline the continuing work with schools and partner agencies in developing more inclusive long term provision within the borough whilst capturing the changing national agenda will presented in the future.

14. Wards Affected

All wards

15. References

Special Educational Needs Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006

16. Presentation

The information presented gives a clear update of the progress made within the SEN Strategic Development Plan 2002-2006, and in associated developments

17. Recommendations

That members receive and comment on the report.