

**Behavioural units : a survey of special units for pupils with behavioural problems / Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools.**

**Contributors**

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**Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools**

# **Behavioural units**

**A survey of  
special units for  
pupils with  
behavioural  
problems**

**December 1978**

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**Department of Education & Science**  
Elizabeth House, York Road, London SE1 7PH

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# PREFACE

In recent years there has been increased awareness of the educational needs of those pupils, not formally assessed as in need of special educational treatment, who for a variety of reasons find it difficult to accept the normal framework of life and work in schools. This has led to the development, particularly though not exclusively for adolescent pupils, of special units attached to ordinary schools or serving a group of schools where it is hoped that, with the benefit of smaller groups and experienced teachers, these children and young people can be helped to continue their education and be prepared for life beyond school.

There are considerable local variations in the provision which schools and local authorities make for these disturbed and disturbing pupils. The number, nature and objectives of the units which have been established are affected by estimates of the number of such pupils in the school or area, the way their needs are perceived, and the point at which schools feel that the pupils concerned are best provided for outside the normal classroom setting. Given this diversity it is not possible to point to one type of unit or one approach as suitable for universal adoption. Each will be the product of local circumstances and, to be effective, each must be part of an overall plan for catering for pupils with special needs that includes the development of an appropriate curriculum in local schools.

In 1977 HM Inspectors visited almost half of the units known to exist in English local education authorities. Their visits were chiefly intended to examine the organisation, staffing and programme of these units, and it is hoped that the data on these aspects will be of value to those in schools and local authorities who are concerned with the operation of existing units or with plans for their introduction. The nature and duration of the visits were not such as to permit an evaluation of the full range of work in the units or of the measure of success in relation to their declared objectives. Indeed a thorough qualitative assessment of the work done in units would be complicated. The units are small and the nature of the interaction between teachers and pupils is such that the presence of observers for any length of time may markedly change those relationships and the daily routines of work and organisation. However, in the course of this survey HMI identified a number of issues which are felt to be important

whatever the form of organisation or programme of work, and it will be seen that prominent among these issues are the need for LEAs to:

- i. make reasonable physical and financial provision;
- ii. establish clear and realistic educational aims for their units and relate to these aims decisions about the referral of pupils to units and their return to normal schooling;
- iii. give continuing professional and pastoral support to the teachers working in units;
- iv. encourage the continued involvement of the schools and the parents in the educational and social development of these pupils.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In June 1976 the then Secretary of State for Education and Science convened a conference to discuss with representatives of local authority and teacher associations and other interested bodies the problems of non-attendance and disruptive behaviour in schools. An undertaking was given by the Secretary of State and welcomed by the conference representatives that the Department and HM Inspectorate would carry out a survey of the provision of special units for disruptive pupils in ordinary schools, excluding those provided through special education procedures.

The survey was undertaken in two stages. The first need was to discover how much special provision existed and where it was situated. Accordingly, a letter and questionnaire were sent by the Department to all LEAs in England, with the exception of the Isles of Scilly. Copies of the letter and questionnaire are reproduced in Appendix 1. The second stage was undertaken after the completed questionnaires had been analysed. A team of eight HMI visited a sample of almost half of the units, to assess the facilities available and the methods of dealing with the pupils referred to the units. The choice of units visited was determined by the need to achieve a representative spread, with particular reference to whether the units were within metropolitan or county areas; served one or more schools; were located on a school site or elsewhere; served different age groups of pupil; were recent or long-standing, single-sex or coeducational; were the product of cooperation between LEA committees, other local authority departments and/or voluntary organisations.

Section 2 of this report summarises the main findings of the completed questionnaires. Section 3 forms the main body of the report; the material is drawn from information obtained from the units visited by HMI.



## 2. RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

2.1.1 Statistical tables summarising the results of the questionnaire are provided in Appendix 2.

2.1.2 In 1977, 69 of the 96 LEAs in England who received questionnaires had special units (Table 1, Appendix 2). A comparison of the figures for metropolitan and county authorities revealed that 32 of the 39 county authorities had units, compared with 37 of the 57 metropolitan authorities. While the proportion of county authorities with units was higher than that of metropolitan authorities, the scatter of units was remarkably similar. In both types of authority around two-thirds of those with units had established from one to three units. Indeed, the figures suggest that the provision of behavioural units was spread fairly evenly across both types of authority and was not, as might have been supposed, predominantly an inner city phenomenon.

2.1.3 The total number of units extant in 1977 was 239 (Table 2, Appendix 2). The oldest unit had been established as early as 1960. However, 199 (83 per cent) of the units had been established in the years 1973 to 1977. The peak year for establishing units was 1974, when 62 units (almost a quarter of the total) were provided.

2.1.4 A majority of the units served pupils in the secondary age group (Table 3, Appendix 2). 172 units (72.1 per cent) served only pupils of the secondary school age group, and a further 46 units (19.2 per cent) served pupils of both secondary and primary school age groups. The remaining 21 units (8.8 per cent) served pupils of primary school age only.

2.1.5 Table 4 of Appendix 2 gives summary figures of other aspects of the units, which reveal the following significant characteristics:—

- i. 229 units (95.4 per cent) served both boys and girls;
- ii. 188 units (78.3 per cent) served more than one school;

- iii. 168 units (70.0 per cent) were not sited on the premises of a contributory school;
- iv. 216 units (90.0 per cent) were staffed wholly by qualified teachers; the remaining 24 units were staffed by qualified teachers and other staff trained in social work;
- v. 226 units (94.2 per cent) were administered wholly by LEAs, and a further 11 (4.6 per cent) were administered by LEAs and other departments of the local authority.

2.1.6 The 239 units provided sufficient places for a total of 3,962 pupils.

### **3. HMI SURVEY**

#### **Number and distribution of units visited by HMI**

3.1.1 HMI undertook their visits to the sample of units in the spring and summer terms of 1977. 108 of the total of 239 units were visited, and the visits covered 57 of the total of 69 authorities with units. 51 of the units visited were located in 25 metropolitan authorities, and the remaining 57 units were located in 21 county authorities. Further details of the authorities visited, and the numbers of units in each authority, are provided in Appendix 3. The tables in Appendix 3 provide additional comparisons for a range of characteristics between the total population of units and those units visited by HMI. These comparisons confirm that HMI visited a representative selection of units.

3.1.2 Unless otherwise stated, all figures given in the remainder of this report refer to the 108 units visited by HMI.

#### **Number of schools served by units**

3.2.1 Units were sharply differentiated by the number of schools they catered for; almost one quarter served one school only and a large group, 69 per cent, served more than 10 schools each. Units serving from two to ten schools made up only a small percentage of the total units visited.

3.2.2 It is reasonable to assume that many of these units serving more than 10 schools were in fact catering for the needs of all the secondary schools in an authority. It cannot be assumed that each of these was the only unit within the LEA, as some areas had several specialised units, each catering for all the authority's secondary schools by concentrating in the one centre on withdrawn or school phobic or violent, aggressive pupils.

### **3.3 ACCOMMODATION**

3.3.1 The 108 units visited were housed as follows:

- |     |                                    |          |
|-----|------------------------------------|----------|
| i.  | in all or part of a disused school | 33 units |
| ii. | in houses of various types         | 20 units |

iii.	in old hutted buildings, mainly Horsa type	14 units
iv.	in modern hutted accommodation	3 units
v.	in part of the main school	14 units
vi.	other	24 units

The 24 units whose accommodation is classed as 'other' included units in a court house, a scout hut, two in day nurseries, a hospital, a drill hall, a church hall, an orphanage, an old people's home, a recreation hall, a child guidance clinic, a library, a children's home, and a polytechnic.

## *QUALITY OF ACCOMMODATION*

3.3.2 In recording their visits HMI made reference to the quality of the accommodation used in a number of units. Favourable comments about accommodation drew attention to pleasant and spacious rooms and surroundings, the quality of internal decoration, the quality of the furnishing and effective and attractive refurbishing of old buildings. The following comments show that it was not necessary for old Horsa huts to be unattractive:

Originally a central kitchen, the Horsa-type building provides one large room with a sink, and a smaller room which is used as a quiet/library/TV area, an office and a store-room. There is inside sanitation; one WC and washbasin. Everything is in a good state of repair and decoration. The site is pleasant; grassed, on a quiet by-road, it adjoins a primary school playing field.

Similarly the conversion of an old house could be highly successful:

The unit is housed in a suitably converted Victorian/Edwardian house. The accommodation includes three teaching rooms, a library, a resources and typing room, a small room for individual testing, offices for Head and secretary, a large kitchen and a garage. The garage has been converted into a workshop. There is a large walled garden that is maintained with lawns, mature trees and flower-beds. The Head is determined to retain it as a garden for the use and relaxation of the pupils and staff and not to see it converted into a playground. The whole building is tastefully and sensibly converted, pleasantly decorated, well furnished and very clean and seemly.

The adverse comments referred to dilapidated buildings, poor internal decoration, lack of cleaners, failure to carry out regular maintenance of and repair to the building and above all a general unappealing shabbiness of building and surroundings. A fairly extreme example of poor accommodation was described as follows:

The unit is housed in a dilapidated old house and used partly by a community group and partly by the centre. The walls are poorly decorated, some of them are bare and others have peeling wallpaper. There is a considerable amount of dirt on the floors. There are loose floorboards and there is a smell of gas in the kitchen. Books, paper and equipment are littered about the place. There are two upstairs rooms and two downstairs rooms available to the centre. There is a gas cooker and a water supply. Of the two toilets available only one was usable.

Rather less extreme, but somewhat more typical of the general neglect suffered by some units was the following example:

A double demountable classroom of the Horsa type is in some need of repair. The roof leaks and several window frames are broken. The teacher in charge described it as being in an appallingly filthy condition when it was taken over as a unit; she and her husband had to clean it and carry out some minor repairs. The huts contain no running water (if one excludes the leaking roof), and the only available lavatories are some 200 yards away in another building on the campus.

3.3.3 A number of units had poor sanitary facilities. Some had outside lavatories (at one unit described as 'deplorable and condemned'); at others lavatories were shared with other users of the buildings, or were dirty, or inadequate in number.

### *SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION*

3.3.4 While all the units had at least one room described as a classroom, there were few mentions of accommodation suitable for practical subjects. Fourteen returns mentioned art and craft accommodation, eight drew attention to provision for home economics, while only five mentioned accommodation suitable for woodwork/metalwork and/or car main-

tenance. Although this seems to suggest that little practical work took place, many units did, in fact, provide for art and craft within the general teaching areas, and others had such equipment as a woodwork bench or a cooker, allowing for some practical craftwork and cookery. Eighteen returns made particular mention of specialist accommodation; 15 units had gardens or grounds surrounding them and 16 returns noted that units had hard play areas. Eight units were said to have library and resource areas, seven returns mentioned a hall, seven a games-room, or a gymnasium; and three units had use of a coffee-bar. One unit based in an old 1870 Board School was described by HMI as "well rehabilitated"; it provided a central hall, a home economics room, a secretarial room, a separate dining room, woodwork room, two classrooms, a games-room and a library.

3.3.5 In a number of units other facilities were available. In some cases off-site provision was used in a planned and regular way, but in others it was part of more ad hoc arrangements. Sometimes the additional accommodation and services were those provided by a nearby sports or recreation centre, youth club or school sports hall; many units seemed to make use of local swimming baths.

### *SHARED USE OF BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES*

3.3.6 Those units that shared accommodation did so with a wide variety of other users. Among these were social services, community and youth centres, special schools, nurseries, teachers' centres, day centres, remedial classes, child guidance and school psychological centres, a home economics centre, an FE annexe, an autistic unit, a reading clinic, a hostel for maladjusted boys and an art/drama centre. Some of this accommodation was shared by several users which explains the fact that ten units shared accommodation, but 15 different other users were mentioned.

In some cases shared accommodation was beneficial to unit staff and pupils. One unit that used youth club premises had the use of a coffee-bar, gymnasium, games-room and hard-court area. Another unit that also shared youth club accommodation had ready access to a gymnasium, a games-room, a workshop, kitchen, tennis courts, swimming baths and a recreation ground. Several units in disused schools seemed to benefit from the wider range of accommodation this arrangement made available.

### 3.4 PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT, CONSUMABLE MATERIALS AND FURNITURE

Financial arrangements to cover expenditure on equipment, consumable materials and furniture but excluding those for staff and premises.

3.4.1 A small number of units was financed from more than one source; therefore the total number of responses from the 108 units visited was 113 distributed as follows:—

Method of financing	No. of responses
i. by capitation allowance	37
ii. from central fund	42
iii. by combination of i. and ii.	6
iv. by contributory school(s)	21
v. from other sources	7

Number of units visited: 108

3.4.2 Clearly capitation allowances and central funds were the common method of financing units. Together they financed almost three-quarters of the total number of units visited. Overwhelmingly, the capitation allowances and/or central funds were provided by the local education authority, but in four the bulk of the finances was obtained through schemes approved under the Urban Programme.

3.4.3 The units that were financed by contributory schools were usually units serving one named school and were often based in the school or on its premises. In one case where a separate unit served a group of named schools ten per cent of the total capitation grant of each of the named schools was used to fund this centre.

3.4.4 Under the category listed as "other sources", two units were financed directly by child guidance centres and were, therefore, indirectly funded as they were independent institutions, and one unit was an independent trust jointly financed by a private trust and the social services department. One school-based unit had no regular pattern of financing as the head regarded it as a punitive institution, and resources were being grudgingly provided as a result of pleading and borrowing by

unit staff. There were many references by HMI to the fact that teachers in units obtained additional funds from a variety of activities including jumble sales, special appeals and social occasions.

3.4.5 In some of the units visited the staff did not know what the annual financial allowance was. A sizeable number of teachers in charge of units were not clear about the limits on spending. Quite a few knew that there was a central fund or a capitation allowance but had never been told how much money this involved. Several mentioned sums that they described as nominally allocated to the unit, but said that they had never been able to claim that amount. The central fund type of allocation seemed to raise most difficulties, in that it was common for unit staff to be told that there was such a fund available, although they were not told what the amount was, being usually encouraged to 'put in' for what they required. Often they got what they asked for, but sometimes they did not. Ignorance of the global amounts available made resource planning and development much more difficult.

3.4.6 Sixty units claimed that they received an annual allowance. Over half received between £100 to £400 per annum. The two largest groupings were within the £100 to £200 and the £300 to £400 ranges. However, three units received £1,000 and three £1,500 per annum. One unit had received £20,000 over 5 years. Most of those receiving such large sums seemed to have received them as first year grants, to cater for both the setting up and the running costs, while others received the money through schemes approved under the Urban Programme.

3.4.7 In the majority of units, those catering for between ten and 16 pupils, the annual allowance ranged from £100 to £2,000. Those units catering for ten pupils received annual allowances of between £100 and £600 and the range in units with 15 pupils was from £100 to £700 per annum. Four units, each with 18 pupils, received £120, £130, £175 and £189 per annum respectively, while a further three 18-pupil units received £1,000, £1,500 and £2,000 per annum. Units catering for between 20 and 25 pupils had a range of annual allowances of between £300 to £1,000. This inconsistency in the relationship between the size of a unit and its annual allowance is perhaps best revealed by the fact that a unit with five full-time pupils in one LEA received an annual grant of £445 while a unit with 25 pupils in a different authority received £450 per annum.



### *3.4.8 PETTY CASH ALLOWANCES FOR IMMEDIATE NEEDS*

The total number of responses to this section was 103 for the 108 units visited.

3.4.9 Petty cash was an important issue for teachers in units as the nature of their work seemed to demand greater flexibility in the availability and spending of money than would have been the case in an ordinary school. It was impossible to give figures for the amounts of petty cash available as some units had a weekly maximum allowance and others a monthly amount, while yet another group received all their financial allowance on an imprest basis and could negotiate the proportions spent by means of cash purchases and by means of standard requisition procedures.

3.4.10 It was interesting to note that there were variations in petty cash allowances even within the same local authority. There seemed to be no standardisation in the amounts allocated or in their issue on a weekly, monthly or annual basis.

3.4.11 School-based units seemed to fare particularly badly; they rarely received a petty cash allowance. In some cases it was said that they could make use of the school's petty cash allowance. This often presented difficulties as there were many other calls upon this allowance from other activities in the school, and the procedures for obtaining it could be lengthy.

### *3.4.12 HOW CONSUMABLE MATERIALS WERE OBTAINED*

Method of obtaining consumable materials	No. of responses
From unit capitation allowances	46
From central fund	38
Through contributory schools	27
Others	4
Total responses	115

Number of units visited: 108

Some of the units financed expenditure on consumables from more than one of the specified sources [and this accounted for the total exceeding the number of units visited].

3.4.13 Most units obtained consumable materials through use of the unit's capitation allowance or from a central local education authority fund. School based units were largely supplied from the main school stocks, while the few units that obtained consumables from other sources included the independent units mentioned in section 2.1.5, one unit that was funded for such materials by the area health authority, and another that received £50 per month petty cash allowance to cover all expenditure.

#### 3.4.14 *INITIAL GRANT FOR LARGE CAPITAL ITEMS*

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	No. of responses
Initial grant given	63
Initial grant not given	37
Information not available	8

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Number of units visited: 108

3.4.15 From the returns it seemed that a negative answer to this section could mean either that no initial grant of any kind was given to establish the unit or that where a grant was given, there was no provision for purchasing large capital items. In some, equipment appeared to have been provided by the LEA or school so that there was no sum of money which would have allowed staff to decide on priorities and purchase accordingly.

3.4.16 Only 25 units could specify a sum of money in this section. Of these returns, 10 indicated that initial capital equipment grants of £400 to £600 had been made. Eight returns revealed initial grants of between £100 and £400. One unit received £1,200, and two units each received £2,000 (in one of these the money was spread over a period of two years).

### *3.4.17 FINANCIAL PROVISION FOR REGULAR AND CONTINUED BUILD-UP OF CAPITAL ITEMS*

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	No. of responses
Regular, continued provision	22
No regular, continued provision	71
Information not available	15

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Number of units visited: 108

3.4.18 The majority of responses indicate that there was no provision for the regular and continued build-up of capital equipment. This was particularly striking for, as shown in table 3.4.14, over half the units had received an initial grant for such equipment. Without a continuance of provision for large, expensive items some units must have found it difficult to develop and plan future programmes. Equally important was the wear and tear to which the equipment could be subjected in behavioural units catering for disruptive pupils.

3.4.19 Many returns drew attention to the fact that teachers in units had to beg and borrow from LEAs, schools and other available sources items of equipment such as typewriters and tape-recorders.

3.4.20 A few units also indicated that they could get such equipment by putting a special case directly to the authority or by persuading an LEA adviser to provide it for them. This method might or might not be effective but all these uncertainties made planning more difficult for teachers.

### *3.4.21 HOW UNITS WERE FURNISHED*

There were 140 responses to this section, from 108 units. This number of responses is accounted for by the fact that the great majority of units were furnished through a combination of second-hand LEA stocks and some new purchases. School-based units often received furniture surplus to need in the schools; much of this was in poor condition or not appropriate to the needs of the unit.

3.4.22 From comments by HMI and teachers in units it is fair to assume that few units were furnished entirely from new purchases and that the majority of units made extensive use of second-hand furniture. Much of this was begged or borrowed and some was in poor condition.

## 3.5 STAFFING

3.5.1 The total number of teachers working in the 108 units visited was 321. This total was made up of 235 full-time and 86 part-time teachers. Most of the part-time teachers were employed specifically to teach in the unit and there were rarely more than one or two such teachers at any one unit. In some of the school-based units some teachers were appointed to the school on a full-time basis, with their teaching time divided between the unit and the main school. In one or two authorities the unit was a centre for home tuition and was staffed by one or two full-time teachers and used by as many as ten part-time home tutors as a base for their work with their pupils. In some of these units the pupils progressed to full-time attendance, working partly with their personal tutors and partly with the full-time staff of the unit.

### *Number of teachers in units*

3.5.2 In 86 of the 108 units all the teachers were employed on a full-time basis. Of these 86 units, 27 were one-teacher units, 35 were two-teacher units, 20 were three-teacher units and four were four-teacher units. In the 22 units where part-time teachers only were employed, or a mixture of part and full-time, the numbers of teachers involved in any one unit ranged from 2 to 15, with the higher numbers usually occurring in school-based units.

### *Salary scales*

3.5.3 Any comparison of the salary scales of teachers in units was made impossible by the great variety of the units themselves. Some were much larger than others and catered for more pupils; others were school-based, the teachers often carrying responsibilities both in the unit and in the main school; and some were clearly considered as units catering for extremely

difficult pupils and as such carried higher salary scales. Among teachers-in-charge of units, salary scales ranged from a very small number on Scale I through all the salary scales below deputy head, including one or two teachers with special school allowances and one teacher on the Senior Teacher scale. However, over three-quarters of teachers in charge were on Scale III or above, with almost half on Scale III itself. Among the assistant teachers the range was from Scales I to IV and again included one or two teachers with special school allowances. The majority were on Scale II or above, with just over half on Scale II itself.

### *Qualifications*

3.5.4 All the teachers in the units visited had qualified teacher status: one-third of teachers in charge and slightly less than one-third of assistant teachers were graduates. The majority of degrees held were first degrees (including the BEd) but there was a number of teachers with higher degrees including BPhil (Malad), MA, MSc, MEd and PhD. Some were clearly degrees directly relevant to the previous employment of the teacher concerned, such as a degree in theology. A few teachers had additional qualifications, including the NNEB Certificate, NDD, and CQSW.

### *Further qualifications*

3.5.5 Almost half the teachers in charge of units had taken a further qualification. These included diplomas in various branches of special or remedial education, child or adolescent psychology, counselling or youth work. Among assistant teachers there was a similar range of diploma courses; one-fifth of these teachers had taken a diploma course. Most of the diplomas were awarded by universities or other higher education institutions, indicating a high level of further training.

### *Length of teaching service and experience in units*

3.5.6 Details were received in respect of only 216 of the 321 teachers. Thirty-seven per cent of teachers responding had between six and ten years experience, 32 per cent between 11 and 20 years experience. Only one-fifth were in their first five years of teaching; two were new teachers

in their probationary year and three had passed retirement age but had been re-employed to work in units. The full range covered was from less than one to over 30 years' teaching experience. The average teaching service was  $11\frac{1}{2}$  years for the two-thirds of those teachers for whom information is available, suggesting a considerably experienced teaching force working in the units visited.

### *Previous experience of teachers*

3.5.7 One-third of the teachers had some experience of primary school teaching and over half had taught in secondary schools. A quarter had worked in some branch of special education, a few had experience of teaching in borstals and the former approved schools and a very small number had previously been employed in the youth service. The bias of previous experience was clearly towards the secondary phase, reflecting the larger proportion of units catering for older pupils.

3.5.8 A variety of other experience was noted, including nursing, social work, free-school teaching, the police, the priesthood and a range of industrial and commercial employment. Several teachers had taught overseas.

3.5.9 Despite the wide range of previous experience overall, the large majority of teachers had worked in the mainstream of primary and secondary schools, some teaching specialist subjects, but a significant number having gravitated towards work with pupils with special needs.

## **3.6 PUPILS**

3.6.1 The overall number of pupils attending the units visited by HMI totalled 1,890, of whom 469 attended units exclusively for full-time pupils and 655 units exclusively for part-time pupils. The remaining pupils attended units which took both part and full-time pupils.

Pupil numbers for individual units were difficult to gauge exactly, as some catered for full-time attendance only, some for part-time attendance only and others for both full and part-time pupils. Further difficulties were caused by the fact that pupils were often phased gradually into schools and by the determination of some heads of units to keep one or two places

## Number of pupils on the registers of units visited by HMI.

Type of Unit	NUMBER OF PUPILS IN ATTENDANCE															Totals
	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	75-79	80-84	100-104	145-149	405-409	
For Full-time pupils only	1	13	15	10	2			1								42
For part-time pupils only		2	5	10	2	1	1	1	1	1			1		1	26
For full- and part-time pupils	3	5	12	10	2	3	1	1			1	1		1		40
Totals	4	20	32	30	6	4	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	108

available in case of crisis referrals. In the units visited by HMI it was possible to record the numbers of pupils actually registered at each unit. As can be seen in the table above there was a wide range of numbers of pupils in both part-time only units and those catering for full and part-time pupils. However, in all three types of unit the largest group catered for between five and 19 pupils.

### 3.6.2 Number of pupils in the 108 units visited in each age group as on 1 September 1976.

	Age in years as of 1 September 1976														Total
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16 and over		
Number	7	24	43	68	73	58	66	90	144	248	421	639	9	1890	
%	0.4	1.3	2.2	3.6	3.9	3.1	3.5	4.8	7.6	13.1	22.2	33.8	6.5	100.0	

The age range extended from 4 to 17 years but the largest concentration of pupils was from those in their fourth and fifth year of secondary education, who between them accounted for over half the total. Pupils over 11 years of age accounted for 82 per cent of the total. Fourteen per cent of units had children of infant age (under 8 years) on roll but only one unit appeared to cater for them exclusively. This unit was based in an infant school and contained two pupils in each age group from four to seven

years: eight pupils in all. Each of the pupils was in full-time attendance at the unit and the staff consisted of one full-time qualified teacher and one full-time nursery assistant. The children were referred to the unit by the educational psychological service and could come from schools other than the one in which the unit was based.

3.6.3 Children of junior age (8 to 11 years) were represented in 12 per cent of the units and pupils of secondary age (11+) in 97 per cent. Typical of many units catering for secondary pupils was an off-site unit housed in a set of old Horsa huts. This unit contained eleven pupils of whom seven were 15 year olds, three were 14 year olds and one was 13 years old. The staff consisted of three qualified teachers, all with additional qualifications in the education of pupils with special needs. The unit served some 25 secondary schools and could take a maximum of 12 pupils. All pupils were in full-time attendance at the unit and the average length of stay was 12 to 13 months, although a few had stayed for as long as two years.

3.6.4 The distribution of age groups in some units suggested that unless there was sufficient accommodation and staffing to meet differing age needs in the same unit, some very young children were being educated alongside substantially older pupils. One unit catering for 36 full-time pupils contained the following spread of ages: under five, 2 pupils; 5-6 years, 4 pupils; 7-8 years, 4 pupils; 9-10 years, 4 pupils; 11-12 years, 10 pupils; 13-14 years, 9 pupils; and 15-16, 3 pupils.

The unit was staffed by four full-time qualified teachers and many of the pupils stayed in the unit for as long as five or six years.

Another unit catering for the full statutory school age range but offering both part and full-time attendance contained the following pupils:— 5-6 years, 17; 7-8 years, 31; 9-10 years, 20; 11-12 years, 12; 13-14 years, 35; 15-16 years, 31; a total of 146 in all. At any one time it seemed that 10-15 per cent of the pupils would be attending the unit full time. The staff consisted of 12 full-time qualified teachers and one part-time qualified teacher. The average length of stay at the unit by pupils was one year and the problems that the unit attempted to deal with included those of disruptive pupils, pupils experiencing emotional difficulties, school phobics, pupils suspended from school and pupils temporarily out of school as a result of having been in attendance at community homes.

3.6.5 Of the 108 units visited, 83 were separate units serving a number



of schools and 25 were school-based units serving their own school. In the majority of units all the pupils remained on the roll of their own school in addition to the unit's register, and this was always the case in school-based units. In some all the pupils were registered only at the unit. However, a few units contained a mixture of pupils solely on the unit roll and those who were also on the roll of contributory schools. Where pupils remained on the school roll, a clear route existed for maintaining links with the school that could facilitate the return of pupils. Where no links existed and children were removed from the school roll, there seemed a greater possibility of problems of continuity and of curricular provision.

3.6.6 Almost all the units kept a daily register of the pupils. In all but one of the others, pupils were registered in the main school on the same site. In the one exception there was no registration procedure. The reasons for this were difficult to ascertain as new teaching staff had been recruited recently and they claimed that no admission register existed.

3.6.7 The overall attendance figure for all the units visited was 83 per cent. In units that were school-based, the attendance figures averaged 76 per cent and in those on separate sites it was 85 per cent. The attendance figures may have been higher than those normally expected from the pupils concerned when they were within their main schools, since a relatively common characteristic encountered during the survey was that many of the pupils had been poor attenders at the main school and many had been suspended or excluded.

3.6.8 The small size of the units, enabling close personal relationships between teachers and pupils to be established, may have been a factor contributing to the high attendance figures. Other factors may have been the somewhat freer atmosphere of many units, the greater flexibility of organisation and working patterns and the less complex academic demands.

## **3.7 REFERRAL, ADMISSION AND RETURN TO NORMAL SCHOOLING**

3.7.1 In most units procedures had been developed for the referral of pupils. The procedures reflected different philosophies and objectives, the most marked differences being between off-site units serving a number of schools and on-site units serving one school.

3.7.2 On-site units had often been established at the school's request and were under the jurisdiction of the head and senior staff. It was rare in these cases to find much reference to agencies outside the school. The possibility of creating 'sin-bins' had often been recognised when the unit was being planned and admission to nearly all school-based units was channelled formally through a committee of senior staff. In such cases the teacher in charge worked closely with appropriate members of staff. It was rare to find referral to the unit left to any one teacher. In these units the risk of categorising children as in some way special could be minimised and their return to normal schooling could be made almost imperceptibly as the teacher in charge eased the paths of pupils and staff through frequent informal discussion. Furthermore, it was possible to share general knowledge about the pupils, and school records could be consulted.

3.7.3 Admission to off-site units was rarely as straightforward as to those that were school-based. Off-site units nearly always served a number of schools, a situation which imposed a limit on places and resulted in careful appraisal of entrants. A number of heads of unit described their early experiences when they were faced with a group consisting of every school's most aggressive pupils, or found that they had no control over the composition of the group; a control they felt to be necessary if the stated objectives of the unit were to be met.

3.7.4 The initiative for admission to a unit could come from a number of different sources. In schools it was usually channelled through the head, but education welfare officers were likely to report truants and school-phobics, as were the social services workers and probation officers. Children had been known to refer themselves and anxious parents had personally approached some teachers in charge of units.

3.7.5 A substantial number of pupils in units had been through other forms of treatment. In a small number of the units visited some pupils were undergoing intermediate treatment, though this was not available everywhere. In one-quarter of the units visited there were pupils who had been in Community Homes, and about a third of the units also accepted pupils who had previously attended assessment centres. Pupils recommended for special education appeared in 27 per cent of units. Among these were some whose parents had refused the offer of residential provision and others who were awaiting places. Many teachers in charge

claimed that there was pressure to take more such pupils but they had made it a matter of policy to refuse children ascertained as in need of special education.

3.7.6 The part played by educational psychologists ranged from giving professional advice on specific referrals through membership of admissions panels, to having the final word on all referrals. In some local education authorities where the educational psychological service or a child guidance team initiated the establishment of units, this could lead to an emphasis being placed on rehabilitation and to the consequent admission of younger children in the 5 to 11 age range. In units of this kind it was not easy to distinguish between de facto special education and provision catering for more transient difficulties. In one local education authority the referral system was comparable with that of special education, a fact deplored by the educational psychologist running that unit, since it could involve serious delays in the admission of pupils and curtail the possibilities of flexible and speedy action for which he thought the unit was established.

3.7.7 In some areas the teacher-in-charge was responsible for liaison with the school, the child and other agencies involved. Usually the educational psychologist was among those consulted. In most units stress was laid on involving both parents and pupil in the decision on admission, whether through meetings at the school or home visits. Almost always a joint visit by pupil and parents to the unit itself was obligatory and many teachers in charge insisted not only on parental consent but also on that of the pupil. In one or two cases, the pupil was asked to sign a contract between himself/herself and the unit.

3.7.8 In one unit there was a six week trial period. The staff of some units also demanded a contract from the school, agreeing to admit the pupil to normal lessons on at least one day a week. In other areas referral followed a case conference and may have been one of a number of possible approaches reviewed by those involved. Divisional Officers in large local education authorities were sometimes involved as members of the admission committee as well as being responsible for the administrative process, as were assistant education officers and local advisers (usually those responsible for special services). At least one teacher in charge saw this as a great relief from the paper work which would otherwise have kept him from work in the classroom. Some authorities used admission in

such a way as to allow time for all concerned to approach the problem afresh. The formality of these procedures, especially where parents and pupils were involved in them, was sometimes sufficient to bring about improvements in attitude and behaviour.

3.7.9 The percentage of pupils who returned to school was difficult to calculate. Most units were still relatively new, making an average impossible to determine. Those for the younger age-groups were most specific on this point. Time spent by children in these units varied from two or three terms to two years, with generally a high percentage of children returning to normal school. Of those who did not return, a number went into special schools for maladjusted pupils. In one all-age unit a pupil's stay could vary from two months to seven years, and in another catering for the same age-range the duration ranged from one term to five or six years. This unit was described to HMI as almost a school for long-stay pupils.

3.7.10 Units catering for the secondary age range often had a preponderance of disaffected 14–16 year old pupils who were unlikely to return to school. A large proportion of these pupils had been suspended from their schools. In fact well over half of all the units visited took some suspended pupils and in these units about half of the pupils had been previously suspended from school. Suspended pupils accounted for just over a quarter of all pupils in the units visited. It was suggested by teachers in units that many other pupils had long previous histories of non-attendance at school.

3.7.11 Regular assessment and constant observation were the usual means of assessing the possibility of return to normal schooling. In many units this was a co-operative effort on the part of unit and main school staff while, in others, the head of unit and the admission panel conducted regular reviews of pupils' progress. Actual return to school was nearly always a phased, gradual process with the final decision about full-time return being taken by the head of the unit and the educational psychologist, sometimes after discussion with the pupil.

3.7.12 Resistance to a return to normal schooling could arise from the degree of disturbance originally created by the pupil or from the more general difficulty of finding schools willing to take pupils from disruptive units. More specific difficulties could arise where the pupils' curricular pattern of work in the unit failed to match that in the school, or because

of resistance from a particular teacher. The return of a pupil to normal schooling from full-time attendance at a unit was more difficult when contact between school and unit was minimal or non-existent.

3.7.13 In general, teachers in units were more vague about the arrangements for return to normal schooling than they were about admission to the units. Some talked generally of improved behaviour and willingness to learn, while others were more definite and used criteria which included: completion of five consecutive days' satisfactory work and behaviour; growth of even-temperedness and diminution of adverse reactions; ability to assure the school that the pupil intends to work; conformity to rules; ability to relate to others, improvement in attitude and ability to hold his own academically. The relative newness of most units meant that few had much experience of returning pupils to normal schooling.

## **3.8 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME**

3.8.1 Many local education authorities had based their policy on reports from working parties appointed to assist them in setting up and defining the aims of their units. Generally these documents gave little guidance about the educational programme to be pursued.

3.8.2 In most, one of the stated aims was to return pupils to normal schooling. In various ways the programme of most units was directed towards this end. This aim applied across the age range which in some units included pupils from 4-16 years.

3.8.3 The overall emphasis within the programme varied, and of the staffs of the units visited 16 per cent claimed to concentrate mainly on remedial work, 54 per cent on social training and the remaining 30 per cent equally on both.

3.8.4 The high incidence of remedial work in English and mathematics seemed to reflect the belief of many teachers that disruptive behaviour could lead to under-achievement and that low achievement could lead to disruptive behaviour. The close linking of disruptive behaviour and remedial teaching led to varied responses: for instance, one unit had established a

separate remedial department. In another local education authority it was policy not to admit disruptive pupils of high ability to its units. There was some indication of regional differences in that units in the North East and in the Greater London area seemed more likely to have a remedial emphasis.

3.8.5 Whatever the emphasis, teachers in units overwhelmingly stressed the need for pupils to develop systematic patterns of working. The means of encouraging this differed, in that some teachers reacted empirically to the perceived needs of pupils, while in other units there were structured programmes aimed more at developing consistent working habits than at covering specific areas of learning. One example of a structured approach is described in an HMI's visit note:

The staff organise and carry out a programme of behaviour modification. They use the Rutter scales\* and close observation of individual pupils to assess changes in behaviour patterns. A system of awarding points for good work, helpfulness and good behaviour is used to encourage positive attitudes and responses. These points can be 'traded' for privileges such as obtaining tea, coffee and biscuits. A record is kept of the points gained by each pupil. This record enables teachers to keep a close check on work and behaviour. Academic work is very structured as it is felt that pupils in the unit work better and feel more secure within a tightly structured programme. Contracts are entered into to spend a certain amount of time on each subject and points are awarded for completing the contract successfully. Staff have done a great deal of work in preparing programmes of work that give precise guidance to pupils. Extensive use is made of commercially produced tests and learning programmes.

3.8.6 In small units the range of the teachers' experience and expertise was inevitably limited, but where teachers had specific specialisms or interests, these naturally featured largely in the programme. In others where teachers were generalists there were fewer opportunities for pupils to develop specialist interests. Overwhelmingly, whatever programme was followed, great concern for pupils' welfare was evident.

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\* A system for rating pupil behaviour developed by Professor Rutter is his study of pupils in Inner London and the Isle of Wight. The scales are in two parts, one concerned with behaviour in the home, completed by parents, and one about behaviour in school, completed by teachers.

3.8.7 In just over half the units visited all the academic teaching was done by the unit staff. In the remainder, visiting staff taught a range of subjects that included biology, English, religious education and remedial reading. Visiting staff were also deployed to teach a range of practical and vocational subjects including motor mechanics, catering and guitar playing, and to provide careers education. There was some evidence that school based units made more use of visiting staff than those which were separate and off-site, although one authority as a matter of policy encouraged teachers in the schools to do some teaching in the units and unit staff to teach in the school.

3.8.8 In a small majority of units the entire programme of work was carried out wholly within unit accommodation and by the unit's staff. In the remainder, use was made of outside facilities and/or of non-unit teachers. These facilities included colleges of further education, specialist accommodation in neighbouring schools, and sports halls. The range of subjects covered included drama, foreign languages, typing, swimming and a variety of link courses. Sometimes the use of shared outside facilities was regular and well organised but there were examples where arrangements were on a more ad hoc basis. Often the availability of transport was a decisive factor in the effective use of off-site facilities. A number of units had their own mini-bus while others shared with other users on the site, or occasionally with a nearby school.

3.8.9 Despite the variety of aims and approaches among the staffs of the units, the great majority regarded academic work in major areas of the curriculum as an important part of their task. The range of subjects taught in the units visited was fairly comprehensive, as shown in the table opposite:—

While English and mathematics were taught in almost every unit, other academic subjects such as history, geography and science appeared far less frequently. Modern languages, religious education and music were taught in only a very small minority. This pattern meant that for many pupils in units the range of school subjects available was limited and this in turn could create particular difficulties for older secondary pupils, although well over half the units claimed that they could provide opportunities for pupils to follow external examination courses where desirable. School-based units seemed to find this easier than separate units but there was evidence of real effort, and one or two off-site units had met this

Subjects taught	Number of units
English	108
Maths	106
Art/Craft	61
H/E	45
Swimming	29
History	23
PE	22
Sciences	21
Geography	20
Games	20
M/V Engineering, Car Maintenance	14
Woodwork	11
Commercial Subjects	11
Modern Languages	5
Music	2
RE	2

Total number of units visited: 108

difficulty by offering correspondence courses in examination subjects. A little under half the units claimed that it was possible for their pupils to follow internal school examination courses and be involved with their original schools at times when critical decisions about options and courses were made. There was also evidence of co-operation between schools and units aimed at trying to provide a wider range of subject possibilities. In a number of instances pupils returned to school on a regular basis for teaching in particular subjects. In one unit an art teacher and an English teacher from a nearby school came to teach their subjects to interested pupils and a biology teacher came into another unit to teach beauty care. Several units had developed link courses for older pupils that involved attendance at nearby colleges of further education for engineering, bricklaying, plastering, domestic science, catering, soft-furnishing or child-care. In one unit pupils were able to continue examination courses in CSE and O level English, metalwork, woodwork, French, and Design for Living. The development of typing courses in the units often brought in teachers from schools or FE colleges and a few made use of adult volunteers coming into the unit to teach the subject.



3.8.10 Some units lacked specialist resources, particularly text books, other reference material and works of fiction, but many teachers claimed that, where necessary, they could obtain such material from neighbouring schools or from the local library services.

3.8.11 Teachers in units often attempted to complement the limited number of academic subjects which they could offer by providing a varied range of other experience of a recreational, social or cultural nature. Such activities included squash, skating, fell walking, sea fishing, residential holidays, camping, youth hostelling and visits to places of interest. One example was the unit where four teachers, all voluntary wardens of the nearby national park, had planned their work around their own interests and knowledge of the national park itself. The programme had been planned as follows:

A large part of the programme takes place outside the centre. This work is divided into four areas: i. field studies in the country; ii. community work for individuals and institutions such as the national parks service, Task Force and local councils; iii. leisure activities at the neighbouring leisure centre; iv. planned expedition work at the coast and in the country.

The outside activities take up some 60 per cent of the pupils' time and include well constructed programmes of work based on close observation of flora and fauna and the planning of expeditions. In this way they form a base for and an extension of the academic work done in the centre by the pupils.

This unit was well equipped with appropriate resources and ideally situated geographically for this kind of work. In others, local charitable organisations paid for residential experience, and many authorities had good stocks of camping equipment available for short or long term loan. The interests of individual teachers which included canoe building, sailing and navigational experience, and, in one case, the restoration of church buildings often gave the impetus for the development of interesting work.

3.8.12 There was considerable emphasis on pastoral and vocational guidance in that most units provided individual and group counselling, vocational guidance and careers advice. In addition the staff of several units mentioned contract counselling in which pupils undertook to maintain certain behavioural patterns for a given period of time. Most

units were successful in placing school leavers in work. They claimed they did this best by working through their own initiatives, although recognising the value of the support often given by careers officers. The main reason for working outside the formal careers structure was said to be the need to establish personal links with local employers for the particular pupils for whom they catered. The staff of one unit claimed success in placing difficult pupils in jobs through the judicious use of the local edition of the Post Office Yellow Pages Directory, together with carefully sustained contacts with local employers.

### **3.9 RECORD KEEPING**

3.9.1 The staff of two-thirds of the units received some kind of written record of pupils at the time of referral; a small number claimed they did not always receive such records and a quarter received no written records. Of those not acquiring records at this time, almost a third were working in on-site units where teachers in charge had access to the normal school files. Instances were quoted where schools were tardy in passing on records, often waiting until specific requests for information reached them. When this happened they occasionally preferred to give information orally rather than in written form. Some schools were found to have little information to pass on because they had no recent regular contact with the pupil concerned.

3.9.2 The amount of information held in records varied considerably between units. In some the records were systematic and comprehensive, but the staff of others preferred not to have any at all. Most common among the types of records noted were reports from educational psychologists and child guidance clinics, local education authority record cards and schools' individual assessments. Among other reports mentioned were those from the Social Services, medical reports, copies of correspondence with parents and others leading up to referral, and reports from education welfare officers. Several units were dissatisfied with the records they received and the staff of one had drawn up a very comprehensive list of all the information that they wanted to have, for example, details about the onset of the behavioural problems, the possibilities for rehabilitation, the pupil's academic performance, the family history and social difficulties, the involvement with other agencies, and the medical background.

3.9.3 Once pupils were admitted to the units, almost all staffs kept some kind of record on individuals although practices varied widely between units. A very small number kept no records at all. The staff of one unit spoke of fears of vandalism and the consequent lack of security which deterred them from keeping detailed records on the premises. In another it was thought prudent to keep the records at the home of the teacher-in-charge, while in another the teacher-in-charge, for want of a secure place on the premises, kept them in the boot of her car. Some staff felt that the small numbers of pupils involved made it unnecessary to have written records.

3.9.4. There were many different items within the records kept by the units: records of behaviour; copies of reports made by the school; results of standardised attainment tests; records of work done in the unit; correspondence about individual pupils other than reports; records of attainment; individual profiles; reports by psychologists and records of case conferences.

3.9.5 Where records were kept, the items most frequently mentioned related to levels of individual behaviour and work. Many records were also part of the full pupil profiles and reports sent back to schools (and others) used by a quarter of the units. In some cases reports were made at regular intervals in a structured format. The staff of one unit discussed these reports in some detail with individual pupils and also thought it important for records to be continued as part of the programme of reintegration into normal schooling.

### **3.10 LINKS BETWEEN THE UNITS AND PARENTS**

3.10.1 Contact with parents at the time of referral was attempted by the staffs of the majority of units. Almost a third described interviews with parents at referral either in their homes, or at the schools and units. The staff of some units would not consent to the admission of pupils until interviews of this kind had taken place, parental co-operation had been secured, and problems had been discussed with the head teacher who was then requested to discuss the matter again with the child's parents. A visit to the unit was then usually arranged so that pupil and parents could meet the head of the unit and discuss ways in which the child might be helped. Parents were often encouraged thereafter to contact the units for

help, information and advice. However, the staff of one on-site unit thought it important to keep a "low profile", and, because of this, did not seek much in the way of discussion with parents over questions of referral, while another reported a total lack of response from parents to all invitations to become more involved.

3.10.2 The staff of most units claimed that they undertook to foster contact with parents of the pupils in attendance. One invited parents to accompany their children to the unit on their first morning, while another reported that on most days some parents came. Successes in sustaining and fostering contacts differed. Some staffs were very disappointed by the meagre parental response to their overtures. Others found that parents welcomed the development of contacts and were anxious to seek advice and to invite teachers into their homes. The staff of many units did a great deal of home visiting, and guidance to parents was given at their request. In one area where little parental concern was shown at the time of referral, the head of the unit found that once pupils were admitted to the unit he was able to visit all the homes of his pupils on a regular six-weekly basis. Some units closed for one session each week to provide time for such visiting. The staff of some other units thought it important to be open on one evening a week so that it was possible for both parents to seek advice and support. A number of staffs claimed that they sent regular monthly reports to all parents.

3.10.3 Although more than three-quarters of the staffs said they were prepared to discuss with the parents the children's eventual return to normal schooling, for the large number of pupils who were in their last months of schooling this was generally considered to be unrealistic. One teacher in charge said that many parents appeared reluctant to discuss a return to situations where previously their children had had a history of failure and unhappiness.

3.10.4 Where pupils were approaching the school leaving age, over half the teachers-in-charge of such units said that they had tried to have discussions with parents about careers advice and job placement. Little information was available to HMI about the success of this, and the staff of at least one unit claimed that most parents had been uninterested. Another had reservations about parent involvement at this stage because the teachers believed that sometimes the parents would intervene against the best interests of their children.

## 4. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SURVEY

### ACCOMMODATION, EQUIPMENT AND FINANCES

4.1 Some units were sited in attractive, well maintained buildings that were pleasantly furnished and well equipped, but there was a number where the physical accommodation was in a poor state of repair and decoration, the furnishing drab and dirty and equipment sparse and poorly maintained. The varied needs of different units makes it difficult to describe ideal accommodation but, wherever the units are sited, the same conditions as those governing the repair and maintenance of school buildings should apply. Internal decoration and furnishing should generally be attractive and welcoming as well as functional and hard wearing.

4.2 There was concern amongst the staff of some units about aspects of safety and hygiene, and about sanitary provision.

- i. The dangers most frequently mentioned lay in the use of equipment such as power tools and pottery kilns, and materials such as glass fibre. Under proper safeguards the provision of these machines and processes often added considerably to the variety of experiences the unit could offer and led to greater involvement of pupils.
- ii. Many units had acquired cookers and kitchen equipment, and were therefore able to provide simple cooked midday meals and to include some cookery as part of the curriculum. In some units meals were neither prepared under fully satisfactory hygienic conditions nor adequately supervised, and might have constituted a hazard for pupils and teachers.
- iii. The provision of toilets and washing facilities was inadequate in some units either because of poor maintenance or because of actual shortages in provision.

To avoid dangerous situations and hazards to health, local education

authorities should ensure that the teachers in the units are aware of safety regulations and that units, in general, are subject to the same supervision of their health and safety provision as are normal schools.

4.3 Financial provision varied widely, even sometimes within the same local authority. Often this variety and the ad hoc nature of the funding made it difficult for the staff of the unit to plan consistently and thus to provide effective programmes of work. A matter that seemed of vital importance to the staffs of many units was that of the availability of a petty-cash fund for immediate spending. In many, such a fund was not available and in others where it existed there was uncertainty about its limitations and possibilities. There was similar uncertainty about the first-time purchase of large items of equipment, or their replacement. Often heads of units were placed in the position of having to make individual requests for such items to advisers or administrators and then await the outcome. Again, this could seriously reduce the hope of being able to plan on a long-term basis.

## **REFERRAL, ADMISSION AND RETURN TO NORMAL SCHOOLING**

4.4 The difficult work of teachers in units was greatly eased and made more effective where local education authorities had established bodies involving all the interested agencies, giving them oversight of pupil referral, admission and return to normal schooling.

4.5 Procedures for returning pupils to school were often less well developed than those for referral to units. Several factors contributed to the difficulty of devising clear cut patterns of rehabilitation. These included:—

- i. Differences between units and schools about acceptable patterns of work and behaviour. In most units relationships between teacher and pupils were less formal than was possible in most schools, and this raised the problem for the staff of how to react to such matters as smoking, swearing and outbursts of temper.

Patterns of working in nearly all the units were individually devised and allowed flexibility in timetabling and approach. The staffs of a minority of units seemed prepared to accept and encourage individual

non-conformity, but most attempted consistent patterns of modification so as to help pupils to conform to the demands of school and society. Even where the staff was attempting to help pupils to conform there were likely to be intractable problems where what could be allowed or could reasonably be expected of pupils in the small unit and in the school differed widely.

- ii. There was some evidence that schools were often unwilling to take back particular pupils. It was also reported that some parents were unwilling to return their children to schools where they considered them to have failed. This raised the issue of whether or not pupils should return to their contributory school or make a fresh start elsewhere. Return to the contributory school involved difficulties of re-establishing relationships. Transfer elsewhere, as well as involving the pupil in building yet another set of relationships, risked overloading some schools with a high proportion of difficult pupils. Transfer could also discourage the original school from taking any further interest in the pupils, or from examining its own responsibilities in relation to non-conforming pupils.
- iii. Most units had within their brief the responsibility of returning pupils to normal schooling. The majority of pupils in units were in the 14 to 16 age range. In view of their age and the technical difficulties of fitting into the complex curricular patterns at this stage, few of these pupils were likely to return to normal schooling. Teachers were therefore faced with a difficult choice between looking ahead to the world of further education and work, or directing their efforts towards return to school.

4.6 Cases of successful return to normal schooling seemed more often to have involved pupils under the age of 14 and to have taken place in situations of good liaison and co-operation between teachers in schools and units.

## **THE PUPILS**

4.7 Although most pupils were in units because of disruptive behaviour in classrooms, there were also many who were there because of histories of truancy or school phobia and yet others who came from Community

Homes, assessment centres or other special institutions. Even where all the pupils were said to be disruptive there was a wide variety of individual case-histories revealing that disruptive behaviour was a symptom with many different causes, ranging from psychiatric disturbance, or conflict with a particular teacher, to temporary difficulties in family situations. Where the variety of problems was too great, the possibility of one unit being able to cater for the needs of all the pupils individually was seriously reduced. These difficulties need to be taken into account when referral and admission procedures are first established.

4.8 In full-time units attendance was generally good, particularly in comparison with previous patterns for individual pupils. This was also true of the attendance of pupils in part-time units, both school-based and off-site. It was often found that while the part-time attendance at the unit was good, that at school was poor. In several local education authorities there were pupils whose only schooling was part-time attendance at a unit. In some local education authorities this attendance was for a fixed weekly period while in others the policy was to encourage a steady and gradual increase in the time spent at the unit. Clearly a variety of factors contributed to good attendance at units and any evaluation of this should attempt to elucidate those factors favourably influencing pupil attendance, and to assess whether or not these were capable of transfer for use in schools.

4.9 The majority of pupils in units were of secondary school age and most were 14 or older. The evidence suggested to HMI that many of these pupils had long histories of being in trouble at school and in society generally. It seemed that schools and authorities were seeking to contain disruptive behaviour at an age when it could no longer be controlled by normal sanctions, or ignored. This raises the question of what else might be done, perhaps through earlier identification and intervention, to help pupils and schools to cope with the problems more effectively.

## **THE TEACHERS**

4.10 There were a few instances where probationary teachers were being employed in units. This practice is to be discouraged as it is unlikely to be helpful to probationary teachers to be placed at such an early stage in their careers in such highly specialised areas of education



without appropriate experience or qualifications. The majority of teachers in units, however, were well qualified for and highly experienced in work with difficult pupils. A part of the cost to be borne by authorities which had established separate units was the loss of these experienced and knowledgeable teachers from their schools, as their skills and experience were confined to work with a small number of pupils.

4.11 Despite the experience and qualifications of the large majority of teachers in units, working exclusively with disruptive pupils was a relatively new situation for most of them. In such a context most teachers were conscious of the pragmatic nature of much of their day-to-day work. Consequently many felt uncertain, isolated and in need of the support and advice that would normally come through contact with others working with similar pupils and with a variety of outside specialists. These needs ought to be taken into account. Where possible support for teachers should be provided through national and local channels of in-service training and the work of the advisory services. These problems of isolation and stress were increased in units staffed by one teacher. Furthermore those teachers working entirely alone in off-site units with difficult and sometimes violent pupils seemed to HMI to have been placed in positions of undue personal and professional vulnerability.

4.12 Many teachers in units were concerned about their career prospects, working as they were outside normal schools. This may be a difficult matter to resolve but something might be done to ease the problem if local authorities reviewed the responsibilities of the teachers in units within the wider context of similar posts in the authority. In some authorities it might be possible to place teachers in units on secondment from their work in normal schooling. It is also important to ensure that teachers in units are kept abreast of developments taking place in normal schools and in their subject specialisms. The main burden of this must fall upon the individual teacher, but wherever possible initiative and continuing contact might be encouraged and facilitated by the appropriate advisory services.

4.13 In the majority of units visited HMI found orderly reasonable routines, acceptable standards of work and behaviour and evidence of respect and ease in the teacher-pupil relationships. However, teachers were at pains to point out that they did have those days where some incident caused tempers to flare and gave rise to difficult confrontations

between pupils or between pupils and teachers. To keep these to a minimum the staff had to be constantly watchful so as to defuse or circumvent situations that could lead to trouble. This meant that the teachers needed a deep personal knowledge of each pupil and that there was no time in the day when they could be off duty. Consequently, staff invariably shared lunch and breaks with their pupils and took no free periods. In some units where the accommodation or the numbers of pupils made this constant watchfulness difficult there was evidence that teachers were under considerable strain. The demands of close pupil/teacher contact placed upon a small group of teachers made it difficult for individuals to be absent to attend courses or make visits to other schools. It also obliged many to do the sometimes extensive paper-work associated with detailed record keeping in the evenings and at week-ends. Some authorities overcame this last problem by allowing full-time units to close for one half-day per week so that staff could use the time available for consultation, administration, home-visiting or attending courses.

## **PROGRAMMES OF WORK**

4.14 Programmes of work seemed to depend upon a combination of overall philosophy, the qualifications of teachers and the availability of resources. Philosophies varied, emphasising different approaches, among which were social adjustment, remedial work in basic skills and general enrichment for deprived pupils. A few units were seen as punitive institutions, or simply as concerned with the containment of disruptive pupils. These emphases were not mutually exclusive, as many units contained elements of several or all of them. However, the weighting within a particular unit's programme often depended upon the particular bias implicit in the overall philosophy. The nature of the work done from day to day depended upon the qualifications, previous experience and interests of staff. The extent to which subjects and interests could be developed was in turn dependent upon accommodation, financial provision, other resources and geographical location. Teachers in units were generally conscious of the fact that it was not possible to provide a curricular pattern comparable with that of schools. However, many of them did not see their task in this way, but rather in terms of encouraging pupils to develop systematic patterns of working and positive attitudes to behaviour. While these differing approaches presented overall a picture of widely varied activities, it was apparent that most pupils spent a great deal of time in basic skills

work in English and mathematics. In some cases a narrow concentration on remedial work seemed in conflict with the stated philosophy of the unit, while in others, teachers were vulnerable to the accusation that they were not providing a normal curricular pattern for pupils. To avoid the risk of teachers trying to satisfy overwhelming demands it would seem desirable to define from the outset the philosophy, aims and objectives of particular units and then to devise programmes of work accordingly.

## **RECORD KEEPING AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

4.15 It is important for teachers in units to have access to as much information as possible about the pupils they receive. It is also vital that detailed records of behaviour and work should be maintained during attendance at the unit. For these conditions to apply it is necessary to develop systematic procedures of drawing together all relevant information about pupils so that, while it is accessible to appropriate recipients, its confidentiality is secure.

4.16 Separate units generally made consistent efforts to encourage parental involvement. This was less often true of school-based units: pupils were sometimes placed in these without consultation with their parents. Many of the problems faced by these pupils lay within the home and family, and the help and support of parents was even more important for such pupils than for the generality. In view of this the co-operation of parents in the work of the unit should be actively pursued.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The widespread provision of units for disruptive pupils is a relatively recent phenomenon, the bulk of them having been established in or since 1974. In attempting to explain this growth, educational administrators, psychologists, heads and teachers in schools and those in units offered a variety of suggestions. These suggestions seemed to fall into two general groups:—

- i. those that attributed the need for units to general social decline, itemising such issues as family breakdown, lack of respect for authority, a fall in moral standards and a widespread lack of self-discipline;
- ii. those that postulated that schools were less able to cope with deviant behaviour and non-conformity than they used to be. Several reasons for this change were suggested, including the impersonal nature of some large schools, the prevalence of external examination courses in secondary schools, the uncertainties produced by curricular and organisational changes, the high rates of teacher turnover that obtained until very recently.

It was beyond the scope of the survey to determine whether any, some or all of these factors were major causes of the rise in provision. The problems that had resulted in particular pupils being referred to units were extremely complex. Amongst these pupils there seemed to be two broad groupings; those experiencing acute difficulties arising out of transient crises in school or private life, and those with chronic problems of personal maladjustment and/or serious social and family breakdown. The latter group often contained pupils with long histories of truancy, violence, school-phobia or crime, but there were some whose disruptive activities were entirely confined to their school life. For both groups of pupils there seemed to be a need to have some time out of normal schooling. For some this time out needed to be as short as possible, but for others, particularly for many 14 to 16 years old pupils with chronic difficulties, it was difficult to envisage a return to school. For some the stay in a unit could be as long as four or five years and in a few local education authorities it was possible, in theory at least, for a pupil to

spend the whole period of statutory schooling in behavioural units. The educational implications for short stay and long stay pupils are very different. Lengthy provision becomes de facto alternative education and raises the difficult questions of reasonable financial and curricular provision. One difficulty in many of the units visited was that they contained a mixture of long and short stay pupils and any evaluation of the suitability and effectiveness of provision differed depending upon which group of pupils was being considered. Now that local patterns of need are becoming clearer, local education authorities may be able to define the purposes of their units more precisely. Where this is done, careful observation of the work of the units should make it possible to identify effective and successful practices which could be developed to the benefit of pupils, schools and units.

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO LEAs**

Dear Chief Education Officer

### **SPECIAL UNITS FOR CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS**

At the meeting in Elizabeth House on 21 June 1976 with the local authority and teachers' associations and others on truancy and disruptive behaviour in schools, the then Secretary of State, Mr Mulley, gave an undertaking that the Department in consultation with the local authorities would gather information on special units which provided for children with behavioural problems. The conference was informed that HMI had already inspected some of these units and had noted the wide variety of problems displayed by pupils referred to them. It was not easy to come to any firm conclusions about the units as most had been established only recently. It was generally agreed that it would be useful to conduct a more extensive survey of the wide range of units in the metropolitan and county authorities.

This survey is now being arranged and will be carried out by a team from HM Inspectorate. As a first step your help is being sought in order to ascertain the number and variety of units in existence, and I should be glad if you would arrange for the enclosed questionnaire to be completed. As a second stage, HM Inspectors will visit a representative selection of units.

We are aware that provision for truants and disruptive pupils has been made by local authorities over a long period, but recently there seems to have been an acceleration in the establishment of special units for children who are posing problems in ordinary schools. It is this kind of provision rather than that available under special education procedures which is the subject of this enquiry.

The team of Inspectors plan to begin their visits in the coming spring and  
*(continued overleaf)*

summer terms and it would be helpful if you would kindly return the completed questionnaire to me as soon as possible and preferably not later than 14 January 1977. In due course, we hope to convey the findings of the HMI survey to you.

Yours sincerely

P S Litton

## NOTES

1. Please include any units expected to be brought into use before the end of the current school year.
2. The units to be included should be all of those specifically for the accommodation within school hours of truants and/or disruptive pupils, whether situated centrally or in individual schools. This is NOT intended to include provision made by schools to deal with day-to-day disciplinary matters, such as sanctuaries or "sin bins", but only units which have been formally established to deal with the more serious behavioural problems.
3. Six copies of the form are attached. If more are needed, returns on copies of the form will be acceptable; or extra copies can be obtained from the DES (Mr N J Sanders: Tel 01-928 9222 Ext 2343).

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE  
December 1976

The authorities and units visited by HMI

# DES enquiry into provision for truants and children with behavioural problems

1. NAME OF LEA †.....
2. NAME AND STATUS OF LEA OFFICER HAVING OVERSIGHT OF ALL UNITS WITHIN THE AUTHORITY

Name .....

Status .....

3. NAME OF OFFICER COMPLETING THIS RETURN

Name .....

Telephone Number †.....

4. PLEASE STATE HERE THE NUMBER OF BEHAVIOURAL AND/OR TRUANCY UNITS IN OPERATION

Number of units  (see notes 1 and 2)

FOR EACH OF THESE UNITS PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN A COPY OF THE ATTACHED FORM (see note 3)

5. THIS SHEET AND THE FORMS FOR EACH UNIT SHOULD BE RETURNED (if possible by 14 January 1977) to:

Mr P S Litton  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE  
Elizabeth House  
York Road  
LONDON  
SE1 7PH

6. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE TELEPHONE THE DES (Mr N J Sanders 01-928 9222 Extension 2343)

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. NAME OF LEA †.....

2. NAME OF UNIT



	Month	Year
3. DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT		
4. MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PLACES IN THE UNIT		
5. IS THE UNIT PROVIDED FOR		
a. BOYS Only		
b. GIRLS Only		
c. BOTH		(Tick appropriate box)
6. AGE RANGE OF PUPILS FOR WHOM PROVIDED		
7. DOES THE UNIT SERVE		
a. One school		
b. More than one school		
	(Tick appropriate box)	
8. IS THE UNIT ON THE SITE OF ONE OF ITS FEEDER SCHOOLS		
	(YES or NO)	
9. DOES THE COMPLEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONSIST		
a. wholly of qualified teachers		
b. qualified teachers plus social workers		
c. any other (please specify overleaf)		
	(Tick appropriate box)	
10. IS THE UNIT ADMINISTERED		
a. entirely by the LEA		
b. by LEAs with other local authority dept(s)		
c. by LEA with voluntary body		
d. any other (please specify overleaf)		
	(Tick appropriate box)	

## APPENDIX 2

### TABLE 1 NUMBER OF UNITS IN EACH LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

	Number of LEAs					
	Metropolitan districts		Non-metropolitan counties		Total	
	All LEAs	LEAs visited by HMI	All LEAs	LEAs visited by HMI	All LEAs	LEAs visited by HMI
LEAs without units	20	—	7	—	27	—
LEAs with units— Total number of units in each LEA						
1	13	7	9	3	22	10
2	7	6	5	3	12	9
3	6	3	6	4	12	7
4	1	1	1	1	2	2
5	3	2	4	4	7	6
6	3	3	3	2	6	5
7	2	1	2	2	4	3
8	1	1	1	1	2	2
9	—	—	—	—	—	—
10	—	—	1	1	1	1
24	1	1	—	—	1	1
Total LEAs with units	37	25	32	21	69	46
<b>Total</b>	57	25	39	21	96	46

**TABLE 2 YEAR IN WHICH EACH UNIT WAS ESTABLISHED**

Year unit established	Metropolitan district	Non-metropolitan counties	Number of units		
			Total		
			Number	%	
Before 1967 <sup>1</sup>		2	4	6	2.5
1967		1	3	4	1.7
1968		4	—	4	1.7
1969		1	3	4	1.7
1970		2	3	5	2.1
1971		3	6	9	3.8
1972		3	4	7	2.9
1973		11	12	23	9.6
1974		40	22	62	25.9
1975		21	27	48	20.0
1976		23	20	43	18.0
1977		17	7	24	10.0
<b>Total</b>		128	111	239	100.0

<sup>1</sup>Including one unit established in 1960, one in 1961 and two in 1963.

**TABLE 3 AGE RANGE OF PUPILS SERVED BY INDIVIDUAL UNITS**

Age range of pupils served (years):	Number and per cent of units	
	Units	
	Number	%
5-7	2	0.8
5-11	18	7.5
5-16	19	7.9
7-11	1	0.4
7-16	15	6.3
9-15	12	5.0
11-13	8	3.3
11-16	106	44.4
13-16	58	24.3
<b>Total</b>	239	100.0
Units serving pupils of:		
Primary age groups only	21	8.8
Secondary age groups only	172	72.0
Primary and Secondary age groups	46	19.2

**TABLE 4 SEX, SCHOOLS SERVED, SITING, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION OF UNITS**

	Number and per cent of units	
	Units	
	Number	%
Total number of units	240	100.0
Sex:		
Boys	4	1.7
Girls	7	2.9
Mixed	229	95.4
Number of schools served by each unit:		
One school only	52	21.7
Two or more schools	188	78.3
Siting of each unit:		
On site of a contributory school	70	29.2
Elsewhere	168	70.0
Not known	2	0.8
Staffing of each unit:		
Staffed wholly by qualified teachers	216	90.0
Staffed by qualified teachers and other trained staff	24	10.0
Administering bodies:		
LEA only	226	94.2
LEA and social service	7	2.9
LEA and area health authority	4	1.7
Voluntary bodies only	3	1.3

**TABLE 5 NUMBER OF PLACES AVAILABLE IN UNITS**

	All units		
	Metropolitan districts	Counties	Total
Number of units	128	111	239
Number of places	2,131	1,831	3,962

## APPENDIX 3

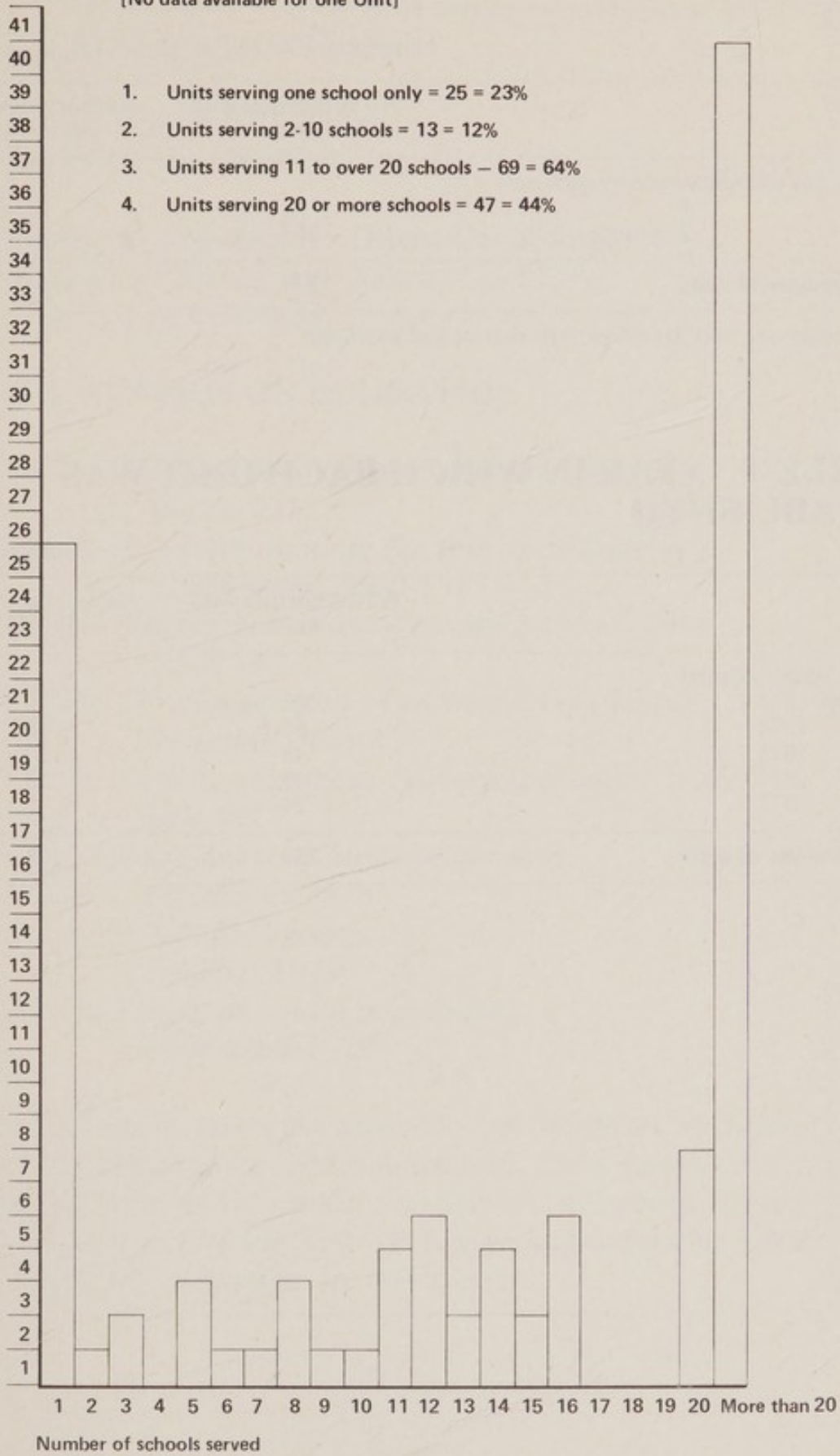
### TABLE 1 NUMBER OF UNITS VISITED IN EACH LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Metropolitan Authorities	Units visited	County Authorities	Units visited
Barnsley	2	Northumberland	1
Doncaster	1	Lancashire	2
Leeds	2	Lincolnshire	1
Wakefield	3	Northamptonshire	4
Newcastle upon Tyne	6	Staffordshire	2
Sunderland	1	Warwickshire	1
Oldham	1	Hereford/Worcestershire	3
Manchester	3	Shropshire	2
Bolton	1	Cambridgeshire	1
Liverpool	2	Hertfordshire	4
Wirral	2	Norfolk	4
Knowsley	1	Suffolk	3
Birmingham	4	Buckinghamshire	4
Solihull	1	Oxfordshire	2
Newham LB	1	Berkshire	7
Waltham Forest LB	1	East Sussex	6
Redbridge LB	2	Hampshire	1
Barnet LB	1	Kent	4
Ealing LB	4	Devon	1
Enfield LB	1	Gloucestershire	2
Haringey LB	3	Wiltshire	2
Harrow L	1		
Hounslow LB	3		
ILEA	2		
Bexley LB	2		
<b>Total number of units visited</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>Total number of units visited</b>	<b>57</b>

### TABLE 2 TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS IN EACH LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Number of units in each authority	Number of authorities	
	All authorities with units	Authorities visited by HMI
1-5	55	34
6-10	13	11
24	1	1
<b>Total number of authorities</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>46</b>

**GRAPH 1 NUMBER OF SCHOOLS SERVED BY INDIVIDUAL UNITS VISITED**  
 [No data available for one Unit]



**TABLE 3 NUMBER OF SCHOOLS SERVED BY EACH UNIT**

	Number of units	
	All authorities with units	Authorities visited by HMI
Number of schools served by each unit		
1	52	25
2 or more	187	82
<b>Total number of units</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>107*</b>

*\*Excluding one unit for which information not available.*

**TABLE 4 YEAR IN WHICH EACH UNIT WAS ESTABLISHED**

	Number of units	
	All authorities with units	Authorities visited by HMI
Year unit established		
Before 1974	62	20
1974	62	38
1975	48	22
1976	43	23
1977	24	5
<b>Total number of units</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>108</b>

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