

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0115 944 9193  
Direct F 0115 944 9307  
Midlands\_apa@ofsted.gov.uk



17 December 2008

Mr Andrew Bunyan  
Director of Children's and Young People's Services  
Leicester City Council  
New Walk Centre  
Welford Place  
Leicester  
LE1 6ZG

Dear Mr Bunyan

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Leicester City Council 2008**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook.

I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

<b>Assessment judgement area</b>	<b>APA grade</b>
Overall effectiveness of children's services	2
Being healthy	2
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	1
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	2

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale  
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

## Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 2

Leicester City Council delivers services for children and young people that meet minimum requirements. The council’s capacity to improve, including its management of services is adequate. The council’s self assessment is not always accurate in assessing the quality of its services. This is because in some outcome areas a number of important weaknesses have been underestimated and on occasions there has been an overvaluing of the areas where progress has been made. Strategies and action plans have been developed to address weaknesses but many have yet to have a sustained impact on outcomes.

Outcomes relating to being healthy remain adequate. There is currently no coordinated strategy to tackle health inequalities in deprived areas. Good inter-agency relationships and an effective Local Children Safeguarding Board have led to effective safeguarding arrangements. There has been a reduction in the number of referrals and re-referrals to the council, indicating that partner agencies are aware of thresholds. However, the common assessment framework has yet to be fully implemented across the city.

Enjoying and achieving outcomes are inadequate. Although educational standards are beginning to improve from a very low baseline, standards remain too low. Rates of children and young people’s progress are not accelerating. Decisive and effective action is now being taken to challenge and support schools, but too many primary schools are in a category of concern. Exclusion rates are too high with a greater percentage of vulnerable children and young people being excluded. The opportunity for young people to make a positive contribution remains outstanding. Large numbers of children and young people are regularly consulted about the services they receive. Economic well-being outcomes are good overall. Post-16 success rates have increased and work based learners achieve well. However, despite the proportion of young people aged 14 to 19 not in employment, education and training (NEET) falling, this figure remains too high, with vulnerable groups in particular being over represented.

## Being healthy

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding is significantly higher than the benchmark average.</li> <li>▪ The number of health assessments for looked after children has increased and is now at a similar level to that of comparable councils.</li> </ul>

<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
---

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The number of teenage conceptions has continued to increase, and remains at a level that is higher than that of statistical neighbours and the national average.</li> <li>▪ There are insufficient child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) out-patient services.</li> </ul> |
|---|

## Staying safe

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<b>Major strengths</b>
------------------------

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children and young people are protected from the risk of significant harm by good inter-agency arrangements and the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.</li> <li>▪ Performance on the timeliness of core assessments is stronger than that of comparable councils.</li> <li>▪ Performance on the number and timeliness of adoptions of looked after children is stronger than of comparable councils.</li> </ul> |
|--|

<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
---

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The common assessment framework has not been implemented across the city within expected timescales.</li> </ul> |
|--|

## Enjoying and achieving

**Grade 1**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is inadequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<b>Major strengths</b>
------------------------

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improvement in attainment at Key Stage 4 is greater than that seen in similar councils and nationally.</li> <li>▪ Leicester City has Beacon council status for its work in improving the outcomes for children in care. Good educational support is provided for looked after children with a higher than average percentage achieving at least one A* to G GCSE or equivalent. This places the council as one of the top performers in the country.</li> <li>▪ Increasingly, the council is taking decisive and effective action to support and</li> </ul> |
|--|

intervene in schools such as issuing formal warning notices and using interim executive boards, interim and executive headteachers. This has led to some improvement in performance, particularly by girls. In addition, the number of primary and secondary schools below the government's combined English and mathematics floor targets is reducing.

- A higher than national percentage of excluded children and young people receives 20 or more hours tuition per week.

### **Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- The attainment of all groups of children and young people across all Key Stages is below or well-below that of similar councils and the national average. Rates of children and young people's progress are not accelerating. There is particular underachievement by boys from white backgrounds. There has been a decline in reading, writing and mathematics standards in Key Stage 1. When compared with similar councils and nationally, significantly fewer children and young people attain the highest levels in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.
- When compared with the national average and similar councils, a significantly higher number of primary schools are in an Ofsted category of concern.
- Fewer settings, primary and secondary schools are judged to be good or outstanding compared with national outcomes.
- Some looked after children have poor attendance rates which have a detrimental effect on their attainment particularly in Key Stages 2 and 3. Although the percentage missing at least 25 days schooling is reducing, it remains above similar councils and the national average.
- Exclusion rates remain too high. Fixed term exclusions in primary schools are high and show a rising trend. Although figures are lower in secondary schools, they are still above the national average. A greater percentage of children and young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties are being excluded compared to similar councils and nationally. Although there is a declining trend, there is a higher percentage of permanent exclusions in special schools compared to that found nationally.

## **Making a positive contribution**

**Grade 4**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

### **Major strengths**

- The council's involvement of children and young people in consultation and decision making is outstanding. Participation in a wide range of fora such as the city's young people's forum, young people's council and a wide range of voluntary organisations helps inform councillors of the vision, objectives and strategic direction of the city. A high proportion of children and young people

say that they have given their views to school councils and had them heard. They report these have been used to make positive changes.

- Leicester City has Beacon council status for reducing re-offending. Well-targeted action by the council and its partners, especially the youth offending team, has reduced the numbers of young people coming into the youth justice system and those re-offending, including those who are looked after. The restorative justice system has led to high levels of crime reduction.
- Looked after children and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are consulted well and they have a good involvement in their statutory reviews.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

**Achieving economic well-being**

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

**Major strengths**

- Post-16 achievement especially in colleges is a key strength. Success rates have increased and work based learners achieve well. The proportion of young people who obtain Level 2 and 3 qualifications by the age of 19 has improved rapidly over the last three years so that it is above that of similar councils.
- Outcomes for those children and young people who are looked after are good and improving. Care leavers receive good support and the number progressing to post-16 employment, education and training is above that of similar councils and nationally. Increasing numbers are attending higher education.
- Good provision helps young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve good outcomes. The National Vocational Qualification rate for work based learners is significantly higher than normally found. Success rates for Level 1 and attending further education colleges is higher than the national picture.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- The proportion of young people aged 14 to 19 NEET has fallen consistently and significantly, however, this figure remains too high. Vulnerable groups such as black and minority ethnic young people, teenage parents and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are over represented because provision is not located appropriately or is insufficient to meet need.
- The performance of young people in schools with sixth forms in all examinations is well below the national average and that of similar councils.

## Capacity to improve, including the management of children’s services

Grade 2

The council’s capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate and its management of these services is adequate.

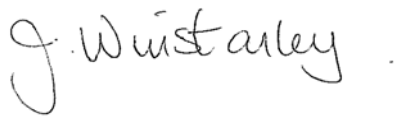
Ambition, prioritisation and some aspects of capacity are good. There are strong partnership and joint working arrangements with the Learning and Skills Council, the Connexions Service and a neighbouring council. Needs analysis has been undertaken and informs a set of priorities. Effective leadership is provided, and clear priorities are reflected in plans such as the children and young people’s plan review and the council’s Transforming Leicester’s Learning Strategy. The council appropriately acknowledges its shortcomings, such as the recent implementation of some strategies, for example, the strategy on tackling childhood obesity. Ambitions are communicated well and the council consults effectively with hard-to-reach groups. Diversity and equality issues are addressed well through the community cohesion programme. Commissioning strategies are at an early stage of development. Staffing capacity is uneven, with few vacancies in social care but some significant shortages in education, which have resulted in a lack of progress in the schools improvement programme. Whilst there is some evidence of performance monitoring, there is no evidence of a comprehensive performance management framework. Universal services are not performing as well as they should. For example, the council makes good provision for vulnerable groups in terms of enjoying and achieving. However, the educational attainment of most children and young people falls below or well below the averages nationally and in similar councils.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The council has a clear vision that has been the subject of extensive consultation with stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ Data is used effectively to prioritise and target interventions for improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There have been a significant number of changes in school improvement officers at all levels with many interim or temporary appointments.</li> <li>▪ Joint commissioning is at an early stage of development.</li> <li>▪ A comprehensive performance management process has yet to be implemented.</li> </ul>

The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection