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Mr Pete Dwyer
Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services
City of York Council
Mill House
North Street
York
YO1 6JD

Dear Mr Dwyer

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the City of York 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.

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

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

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 4

The City of York Council consistently delivers outstanding services. The council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations made in the 2007 APA and JAR report published in June 2008.

The council has built on significant achievements to further its outstanding provision. It has maintained its level of outcomes for enjoying and achieving, staying safe, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. Of particular note are: the continued upward trend in learners' educational attainment across all key stages, when figures are already above national average; the overall quality of childcare and the improvement in young children's development; the quality of the schools; and the preparation for young people for adult life, with nearly all young people leaving school entering further employment, education or training.

The council accords a high priority to looked after children and young people, with notable success in securing and supporting stable, longer-term placements. The recent JAR inspection judged that inclusion services in schools were excellent.

Since the 2007 APA the council and its partners have further improved the outcomes for children and young people with respect to being healthy. For example, the council has worked hard to achieve some reduction in the rates of teenage pregnancy, though for 16- to 18-year-olds this remains an aspect to target. The council is ranked highly nationally for its commitment and success in the Healthy School standard.

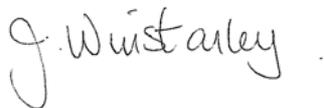
The council's capacity to improve is outstanding. The leadership team, new at the time of the 2007 APA, have shown that they can deliver on their vision. They have clear priorities for continued improvement, established through extensive consultation, and enjoy strong partnerships and support to realise these. The council represents very good value for money.

The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development is consistent with the evidence. There are no additional recommendations to make as a result of the APA.

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 as part of this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues in preparing for the assessment.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection

Major strengths and important weaknesses

Major strengths	Important weaknesses and areas for development
<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 6th best performing council in the country in relation to the Healthy Schools initiative, reflecting the high priority given by the council. ▪ An excellent child and adolescent mental health service, targeting the most vulnerable young people, whilst also delivering preventive initiatives. ▪ The strategic planning and coordination of services for children and young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties. 	<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite good improvements this year the rate of conceptions for 16–18 year-olds is high. The actual numbers involved are, however, low.
<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The planning and consistent delivery of permanent longer term placements for looked after children and young people. ▪ The very high rates of stable family care placements for looked after children and the good support provided for them. 	<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The timeliness of reviews of looked after children and young people, at 83%, is below those of statistical neighbours and the national average. The actual reviews were recognised in the JAR as being of high quality and well-attended.
<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The overall quality of childcare and the improvement in young children's development, as measured by the Foundation Stage profile. ▪ Above average attainment in schools at all key stages and a continuing trend of improvement. ▪ Excellent school improvement and inclusion services, as noted in the JAR, with only one school in a category of concern. ▪ The overall effectiveness of schools, with most judged good or better on inspection. 	<p>Enjoying and achieving</p>

<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultation with and active encouragement of children and young people, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, to become involved in the planning of services. ▪ Strong systems to help prevent first time offending of children and young people, through engagement with hard to reach and vulnerable groups. 	<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low attendance at school and instances of re-offending of a very small group of young people in care.
<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong record of ensuring that all young people leaving school enter further education, employment or training, with less than 4% failing to do so – well below the national average. ▪ As identified in the JAR there is good support to help young people’s transition to adult life. ▪ Clear strategy for the 14–19 curriculum, including a good range of accredited Diplomas. ▪ High success rates in Level 3 qualifications, and nearly 5% better than statistical neighbours and the national average. 	<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low work-based learning success rates for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shared vision and ambition, with clear priorities for continued improvement, strong partnership working and a high priority to children in care and young people. ▪ Substantial and demonstrable improvement on the outcomes for children and young people. ▪ Improved health outcomes. ▪ Services that represent very good value for money. 	<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p>