

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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

Direct T 0117 945 6293
Direct F 0117 945 6554
South_apa@ofsted.gov.uk



17 December 2008

Mr Chris Kiernan
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
Silver Birch House
Uplands Business Park
Blackhorse Lane
London
E17 5SD

Dear Mr Kiernan

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Waltham Forest 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 | 3 |
| Being healthy | 3 |
| Staying safe | 3 |
| Enjoying and achieving | 3 |
| Making a positive contribution | 3 |
| Achieving economic well-being | 3 |
| Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people | 3 |

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

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

The London Borough of Waltham Forest consistently delivers good services. It has sustained good performance in each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children, in service management and in capacity to improve.

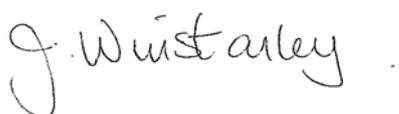
The council has made progress in responding to the recommendations made in the 2007 APA. The access to second tier child and adolescent mental health services is now good, hard-to-reach groups are more involved in decision making and data is used more reliably in a range of areas to drive improvement. For looked after children, care planning processes are now good, the proportion made subject to adoption or special guardianship orders has increased greatly and attainment has risen. However, there are no discernible improvements in reducing the rate of teenage pregnancy or the timely completion of initial social care assessments.

Children's services have good capacity to improve further and are well managed. Through strong leadership and management, good strategic planning, productive inter-agency partnerships and effective safeguarding arrangements, the needs of children and young people are being addressed well. A good track record of improvement has delivered clear benefits. Children start school with much lower than expected levels of attainment and make outstanding progress between Key Stages 2 and 4, although the standards they reach at each key stage remain below national averages. The successful focus on equalities and diversity is closing gaps in outcomes. Very good engagement with children and young people contributes greatly to the improvements. Nevertheless, there are some weaknesses in communication with schools. 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 black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

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"> ▪ Very good multi-agency partnerships that promote healthy lifestyles. ▪ Good and improved access to second tier child and adolescent mental health services. ▪ Continued very good performance on health checks for looked after children. | <p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Links between healthy schools initiatives and measures to tackle the very high incidence of childhood obesity are underdeveloped. ▪ The teenage pregnancy rate has not diminished in the last two recorded years and remains above the national average. |
| <p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong innovative work with children and families on safeguarding and community safety. ▪ Highly effective multi-agency child protection case planning and reviewing ▪ Good support and positive outcomes for looked after children. | <p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportions of timely initial and core assessments are below figures nationally and in similar areas. ▪ The quality of assessment varies across the partnership. |
| <p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continued outstanding progress between Key Stages 2 and 4, and rising standards at Key Stage 4. ▪ Secondary school attendance well above, and improved more than, figures nationally and for similar areas. ▪ Narrowing attainment gap between most vulnerable groups and their peers. | <p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes for childcare and attainment at all key stages are below national averages. |
| <p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good involvement in strategic decision making of children and young people, including those who are hard to reach. ▪ Low and decreasing proportions of young people re-offending and entering the youth justice system for the first time. | <p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited participation in education, employment or training by young offenders. |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very high proportion of young people aged 17 in education and training. ▪ Low proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 from minority ethnic groups not in education, employment or training. ▪ Higher percentage of young people gaining Level 3 qualifications than nationally and in similar areas. | <p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an insufficient range of learning options post-16 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"> ▪ Strong leadership and management that has ensured continued improvement. ▪ Good strategic planning. ▪ Very good engagement with children and young people to improve planning. ▪ Productive inter-agency partnerships contributing effectively to improving outcomes. ▪ Successful focus on equalities and diversity helping to close the gap. | <p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not all services have their workforce needs fully met. ▪ Communication and engagement with schools and some smaller partners are limited. ▪ Gaps in the measurable outcomes in some plans restrict performance monitoring. |