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Ms Romi Bowen  
Director of Children's Services  
London Borough of Southwark  
Mabel Goldwin House  
49 Grange Walk  
London  
SE1 3DY

Dear Ms Bowen

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Southwark 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	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	2
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

Southwark Council provides services that consistently deliver above minimum requirements. There are some areas of innovative and very effective practice, such as well coordinated provision for looked after children and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that leads to consistently good outcomes. The council is ambitious for its residents and service management and capacity to improve are good. In staying safe, areas for development in the 2007 APA have been addressed well, for example, the reduction in staying safe actions in childcare inspections. The contribution of services to improving outcomes in staying safe has improved within the good grade. The council has worked persistently and with very clear purpose to continue the culture change in the education service that is seeking to redress long-standing deficiencies and underachievement in a number of schools. It has had considerable success in doing so, and the direction of travel is positive, but outcomes for young people, although generally improving, remain adequate rather than good. The council’s self-assessed grade of good for enjoying and achieving is therefore too high. In the other three outcome areas, services continue to improve and remain good, although in achieving economic well-being, overall outcomes for young people have not risen as fast as those in similar councils.

## Being healthy

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 being healthy is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong partnership working at strategic and operational levels results in good performance in most actions to secure the health of children and young people.</li> <li>▪ Good, well-targeted integrated support for vulnerable groups, in particular looked after children, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young people with mental health needs.</li> <li>▪ A good range of initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles within education and community-based services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continuing high levels of teenage pregnancy, despite a wide range of preventative initiatives.</li> <li>▪ Continuing high levels of childhood obesity, despite increased participation in a wide range of health promotion activities.</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 staying safe is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong multi-agency safeguarding partnership work, overseen by an effective Local Safeguarding Children Board.</li> <li>▪ Good performance in prompt identification, assessment and safeguarding of children.</li> <li>▪ Good range of community-based multi-agency preventative initiatives. In particular those resulting in reduced numbers of looked after children and of children missing education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The increasing levels of re-registration of children previously the subject of a child protection plan.</li> <li>▪ The high proportion of primary schools responding to the school survey that place the effectiveness of the council's support in improving health and safety in school, road safety, reducing crime against young people, reducing fear of crime and combating bullying in the bottom quartile.</li> </ul>

## Enjoying and achieving

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 enjoying and achieving underestimates the significance of some important weaknesses. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Following reorganisation, the council is providing strengthened leadership, support and challenge to early years settings and schools in order to raise attainment and is intervening robustly in some very low achieving schools. This is having a positive impact on outcomes in the Foundation Stage, and historically low standards at Key Stage 2 in a number of schools are rising. Schools are generally appreciative of the support they receive.</li> <li>▪ There is an increasingly open and trusting relationship between the council and its schools. A culture of shared responsibility for the service as a whole is much more prominent. Several effective head teachers are working with schools other than their own in a support or seconded capacity, or through federation, which is bringing improvement in provision and standards. There are improved arrangements for succession planning for head teacher vacancies.</li> <li>▪ The recent rate of improvement at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 is above average, and</li> </ul>
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broadly in line with similar councils over a four year period. Attainment is broadly in line with similar councils.

- The council provides good educational support for looked after children, a notably higher proportion of whom take and gain at least one GCSE than in similar councils.
- Statements of special educational need are timely and of good quality. A higher proportion of young people with such statements gain five good GCSE passes than the national average.

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

- The proportion of early years settings judged to be inadequate has declined since the last APA but remains too high.
- Despite improvements, educational attainment remains in the lower national quartile at all key stages, and low at Early Years Foundation Stage. There remains variation in the performance of schools serving similar areas, especially at primary level.
- Improvements in attainment and progress seen at key stages 2 to 4 have not applied at Key Stage 1, where there has been some decline in outcomes in reading and writing.
- Overall effectiveness, and the achievement of pupils, were graded good or better in less than a third of school inspections since the last APA.
- A much higher proportion of primary schools are in an Ofsted category of concern than is the case for similar councils or the national average. Whilst advisory support for these schools is generally good, the council's evaluations of progress and quality are too generous.

## **Making a positive contribution**

## **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 making a positive contribution is consistent with the evidence.

### **Major strengths**

- Good impact of local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society, with good access to training, volunteering, sports, physical activity, arts and media opportunities.
- Effective strategies and initiatives to promote equality, inclusion and diversity that engage a wide range of vulnerable young people in disadvantaged areas, in particular events to celebrate diversity and reduce neighbourhood territorialism.
- Good systems to engage routinely with, listen to and take account of the views of vulnerable groups, in particular children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children, to influence plans and service development.

<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High or rising levels of exclusions from schools, especially primary schools, with an over representation of young people from Black and minority ethnic groups.</li> <li>▪ Increased numbers of first time entrants into the youth justice system.</li> </ul> |
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## 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 achieving economic well-being is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clear strategic planning for the introduction of all diploma lines, through a strong 14–19 partnership and the successful 'Southwark Guarantee'.</li> <li>▪ Good provision and outcomes for looked after young people and care leavers. The proportion of these young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) at age 16 and 19 is low. Their educational outcomes are improving well, and better than average at GCSE.</li> <li>▪ Good support for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, effectively enabling them to move on to employment or further education.</li> </ul> |
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<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of young people who are NEET remains significantly higher than in similar councils and the national average but has fallen considerably, addressing an area for development in the 2007 APA.</li> <li>▪ Young people's attainment in Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications and work-based learning at age 19 is improving but not as rapidly as in similar councils.</li> </ul> |
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## Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

**Grade 3**

The council's capacity to improve services for children and young people is good, as is its management of these services. There is effective leadership and a clear sense of ambition from senior staff and councillors. Data are well used to formulate policy and plans. Good prioritisation has led to 10 well-founded and well-established key priorities, with preventive services continuing to have prominence. This has led to further improvement in the last year and generally good performance. The council is realistic about the challenges it faces, shown in its well written and carefully targeted CYPP and its review of progress is honest and robust. However, whilst identifying strengths and weaknesses correctly, its self-assessed grade for enjoying and achieving focuses heavily on the important progress made in restructuring the education service and gives insufficient attention to outcomes for children and young people when compared with similar councils and national averages. The council's work with partners is good, with all parties sharing the same objectives and targets.

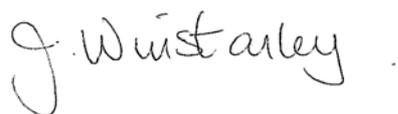
This has led, for example, to effective inter-agency cooperation in tackling youth crime and good relationships with its academies.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Very clear leadership from councillors and officers, resulting in well-targeted plans made in conjunction with partners and young people themselves.</li><li>▪ Overarching plans are linked well to performance management arrangements for individual staff.</li><li>▪ Systematic self-evaluation leads to improvement, despite the self-assessed grade for enjoying and achieving being too high.</li></ul>
<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Systems for evaluating value for money of services are insufficiently robust.</li><li>▪ Educational outcomes for children and young people remain low.</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



Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection