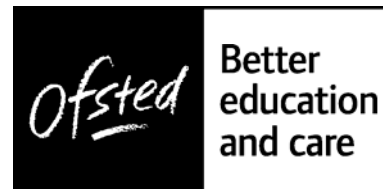


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800
Email edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms Carol Chambers
Director of Children's Services
Rutland County Council
Catmose
Oakham
Rutland LE17 BE

1 December 2005

Dear Ms Chambers

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF RUTLAND COUNTY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on Monday 27 June 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are good, particularly in the way that healthy lifestyles are promoted through partnership between key services. The incidence of teenage pregnancy has declined and the latest figures at 2% of the female population are well below the national average of 4.3%. The number of schools participating in the Healthy Schools Programme is high and compares favourably with the national average. The health needs of looked after children has shown satisfactory and steady improvement. The indicators demonstrate very good performance.

Access to services for children and young people with mental health needs is good. There is a full range of services accessible to children and young people from CAMHS, ranging from an early intervention scheme and counselling through to non-acute and acute referrals for formal assessment. Additional support is available to professionals via the availability of the CAMHS telephone answering service so that professionals can obtain immediate advice to support young people in crisis. For children with disabilities or with significant and complex health needs, the early years service co-ordination scheme between social care, education and health provides families with positive support and a seamless service.

The effectiveness of the actions taken by primary schools to ensure that sex and relationship education is delivered to all children and young people is inconsistent. It is recommended that the authority further engage with those schools that have not been delivering the programme to ensure all children have equal access to the programme.

Staying safe

Outcomes in relation to staying safe are very positive. Children and young people living in Rutland are provided with the safe environment to which they are entitled. The authority has strong Child Protection policies and procedures that recognise what constitutes a safe environment and their implementation is monitored consistently and rigorously. The council and other agencies share these procedures and work together to ensure that any alleged child protection concerns are fully investigated and appropriate action taken to ensure the safety of the child or young person.

The authority has clear referral systems in place, families and children at risk are identified and the quality of preventative support is good. The time taken to carry out initial and in depth assessments has shown significant improvement. All assessments are checked against service plans and monitored during the supervision process.

One hundred per cent of all child protection reviews have been carried out within the required timescales and conducted by an independent chair. All children and young people who are on the child protection register and looked after children are allocated to a qualified social worker.

All key performance indicators relating to looked after children are very good particularly in relation to stability of placement within foster care and placement for adoption within twelve months of the child's best interest decision having been made.

There has been collaborative working between the Head of Children's Services and school heads to ensure child protection protocols and procedures are fully understood and acted upon. The recent integration of children's services should further strengthen the work already undertaken.

Together with partner agencies the authority has undertaken some good work by piloting BRIDGES, an information-sharing database that aims for early identification of children in need. With neighbouring authorities, the authority has signed up to a regional Special Educational Needs Protocol aimed at ensuring children and young people do not become 'lost' to agencies when moving into and out of area so that their needs can continue to be tracked and maintained.

There is an inadequate approach to promoting diversity within the school setting and thus securing the wider safety of all children and young people whatever their circumstances. At an individual level the authority responds appropriately to any allegations of child abuse to ensure the safety needs of a child or young person. However, there is a lack of awareness of the potential connection between children and young people's diverse situations and abuse as a result of bullying. The authority is recommended to explore this issue further with schools to encourage wider learning opportunities for children and young people so as to prepare them to live and work in a multi-cultural society.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are good. The overall quality of early years provision is good and supports children well in enabling them to meet the early learning goals. Results at the end of Key stage 1 have been improving for the last three years and in 2003-04 they were above statistical neighbours for reading and mathematics and similar to statistical neighbours for writing.

Standards in key stages 2, 3 and 4 are generally above national average and in line with or above statistical neighbours. The value added between key stages is generally satisfactory. However, there is some under performance amongst boys at Key stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 2 mathematics results have been above statistical neighbours for the last three years but English and Science were slightly below in 2003/04. At Key Stage 3 English and mathematics have shown continuous improvement; science results dropped in 2003-04 but were still good when compared to those of similar authorities. Until last year there had been a steady increase in the number of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A*-C grades; this fell in 2003/0-4 to just below statistical neighbours although it was still well above the national average. The authority has set a challenging target for 2004-5 and senior officers are working with the three community colleges to analyse the reasons for the decrease and to put in place appropriate improvement plans. This varies from school to school but overall the authority recognises the need to improve the performance of boys and to help the more able pupils achieve more highly.

The proportion of looked after children achieving one or more GCSE A*-G is satisfactory and strategies are being developed to improve this further. Inclusion of pupils with special education needs has been a priority for the Council and 84% of statemented children are provided for in mainstream education. Their progress is monitored and action taken where necessary but the Council does not systematically analyse the data to identify trends.

Attendance monitoring is good. There has been a downward trend in the number of authorised and unauthorised absences to below that found in similar authorities and well below the national average. The rate of exclusions is low in primary schools, it is higher in secondary but is broadly in line with similar authorities. Young people excluded from school receive appropriate alternative provision. There are currently no statemented pupils or looked after children permanently excluded from school.

Support for schools has improved since the last LEA inspection in 2003. There are currently no schools identified by Ofsted as causing serious concern. The authority's systems for data monitoring have improved considerably and support for schools is well targeted.

A broad range of recreational and voluntary opportunities exist for children and young people to become involved in informal learning. Accessibility and affordability is an issue for some of these opportunities. Activities and transport are fully subsidised for children with special educational needs and the Council is exploring the possibility of subsidies for other

groups. There is good provision for informal learning for looked after children, with funding provided for extra-curricular activities. The Youth Service links effectively with other agencies. Some activities have been promoted to break down gender stereotyping, such as girls sports and boys engaging with library services. The Duke of Edinburgh scheme is well used but there are few other accredited opportunities available.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The rate of youth crime is low in relation to national averages. The authority is part of a wider Youth Justice Board area and has access as required to youth offending services from a neighbouring authority.

The majority of children and young people are given adequate support in managing changes in their lives. Although there are few looked after children overall, over the past year there has been a significant decrease in the number of them who contribute to their review. The authority plans to further investigate this issue.

The local authority is piloting a new scheme to help children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs to manage the transition between specific phases in their lives. The pilot is in its early stages so the authority is not in a position to assess the impact.

The authority has established a number of fora to elicit the views of children and young people and to seek ways in which they participate in service planning. Whilst some very positive outcomes have been arrived at and in some instances children and young people have engaged directly with elected members, their views do not consistently include a representative range of children and young people. Representation of those with learning difficulties and disabilities is limited and there is no adequate system for gathering the views of very young children. Some of the young people who are involved in consultative groups have sought assistance in how to become more representative with the aim of advocating for hard to reach children and young people. The council is aware of this shortfall and is planning to address this issue as a matter of priority.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in the area are good overall. The staying on rate at 16 is well above the national level and the number of young people not involved in education, training or employment is low. Looked after children are well supported; in 2004 all those in care at aged 17 were in employment or training at 19.

There is no authority led post 16 provision. Significant progress has been made with the Local Learning Skills Council in developing a 14-19 Strategic Partnership that involves schools, colleges, training providers, employers and Connexions. Widening vocational provision is a high priority for the Council.

Partnership working is leading to improved opportunities for young people. The range of provision on offer is developing and young people are increasingly able to access programmes with appropriate specialist resources. Two hundred young people are involved in the Increasing Flexibility programme within further education colleges and the Rutland Opportunities for Vocational Achievement was launched in the Community Colleges this year. A 14-19 development co-ordinator has been appointed and a pilot scheme for young apprentices is due to start in September 2005. A mapping exercise of 14-19 opportunities has identified some gaps in provision and the Council is aware that it needs to continue the rate of progress in developing the 14-19 agenda to ensure all young people have access to an appropriate curriculum.

The Council has identified the need to improve the choices available to young people with special educational needs when they leave school and also the need to strengthen the alternative curriculum for excluded older pupils.

Summary

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people service co-ordination scheme across education, health & social care to jointly provide services to meet the needs of children and young people with complex health needs. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engagement with schools in the provision of sex and relationship education.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing children and young people with a safe environment robust child protection procedures support for children looked after well established multi agency collaborative practice. 	<p><i>Staying safe</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to explore further with schools diversity issues and how non-awareness may contribute to bullying eg homophobic bullying, children with disabilities, asylum seekers etc.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good levels of achievement for most children and young people high attendance rates high level of inclusion for pupils with special educational needs range of informal learning opportunities available. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> difference in achievement between girls and boys provision for gifted and talented pupils ensuring access for all to opportunities available.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • range of projects for engaging with young people. • transitions pilot for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reduction in the number of looked after children and young people contributing to their reviews • ensuring fuller engagement and participation by hard to reach groups of children and young people.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level of participation in post 16 education or training • good progress in developing strategic partnership working for 14-19 provision. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further develop vocational opportunities.

Service management

The authority has made substantial progress in meeting the national agenda of Every Child Matters by making an early decision to integrate its children's services. It has collaborated closely with relevant partner agencies in taking the first steps in its new direction of travel. However, it is not altogether clear how the views of parents, carers, children and young people have been taken into account in establishing priorities for initial development. The authority has commissioned a wider ranging consultation exercise for the autumn to establish what it is like being a child or young person in Rutland. The authority plans to use the findings of the consultation in its final priority setting.

Good progress is being made in moving towards the production of a single children and young person's plan. It is acknowledged that this is a transition year for the authority and currently attention is more on processes rather than outcomes. Because the authority is in the early stages of developing its integrated services it makes it difficult for the council to assess the impact of its actions and to establish the extent to which its early strategies provide value for money.

In accordance with recommendations from the Audit Commission the authority's capacity has been positively strengthened. Until the restructuring of children's services, limited capacity within the authority meant that senior managers within both social care and education were more operational than colleagues of a similar status in other authorities. The integration of children's services has, for the first time, provided the authority with the capacity to allow the most senior managers the opportunity to operate strategically whilst building capacity around a second tier Operational Management Board. The Board will become operational from September 2005.

Performance management has become much more strongly embedded within the culture of the authority and is now being used by the authority in its partnership working with

schools. The use of performance management information has been used to inform social care practice.

Diversity and equal opportunities remain a challenge to the authority. In terms of direct service provision the authority provides appropriate services to meet individual need. The authority's weakness is in promoting diversity within the wider context of educating children and young people to live and work in a multi-cultural society.

Overall the council's capacity to further improve its services for children and young people is promising. However, to maintain its quality of service delivery it is recommended that the authority ensures it puts in place robust risk assessments and contingency plans to underpin its transitional phase from separate social care and education services to that of an integrated service.

Areas for exploration in the Joint Area Review

Staying Safe

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

- Progress with ensuring there is diversity training and teaching within schools so that children and young people are prepared for living and working in a multi-cultural society and that they learn to respect one another thus reducing the potential for bullying.

Enjoying and achieving

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- Progress in the development of strategies to tackle the differences in achievement between girls and boys.

All children and young people can access a range of recreational and voluntary learning provision:

- Ensuring accessibility for all children and young people to a broad range of informal learning opportunities.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives:

Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:

- The authority's strategy for inclusion and participation of very young children and hard to reach children and young people.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- Progress, in partnership with other providers, in ensuring appropriate vocational opportunities are in place for 14-19 year olds.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY
Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS
Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

cc Keith Franklin, Chief Executive
Colin Foster, Director of Social Services and Housing

APA final judgements 2005: Rutland County Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

1

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate