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Ms Bronwen Lacey
Director of Children's Services
Plymouth City Council
Windsor House
Tavistock Road
Plymouth
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Dear Ms Lacey

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Plymouth 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.

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

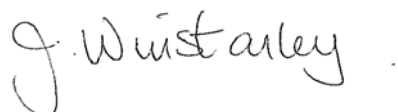
Grade 3

Plymouth City Council consistently delivers good services. The council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations made in the 2007 APA and the JAR published in December 2006. They have sustained their good performance in being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being, and improved their performance in staying safe, which is now good. The council works efficiently within budget to achieve the good outcomes reported. It manages this through extensive and well developed, often joint, commissioning, drawing on expertise from the private and voluntary sectors to meet the diverse needs of the local community. Children at risk are well protected. Educational attainment continues to rise with particular success in the 14–19 age range. Since the 2007 APA, joint initiatives have been developed to reduce further the continuing high rates of teenage conceptions. 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"> ▪ Good access for most children and young people to jointly commissioned child and adolescent mental health services. ▪ High numbers of looked after children have health and dental checks. ▪ High numbers of schools achieving Healthy School Status. 	<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High rate of teenage conceptions.
<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very high numbers of looked after children live in family placements. ▪ Effective child protection systems. ▪ Stability for looked after children is better than similar areas or nationally. 	<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The high numbers of looked after children.
<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attainment is good compared with similar councils, especially in Key Stages 2 and 4. ▪ A good range of out of school activities. ▪ The number of pupils excluded from school is lower than similar areas and nationally. 	<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A small number of schools not reaching their floor targets.
<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective consultation and involvement of children and young people in decision-making. ▪ Improved Youth Service meets the needs of children and young people more effectively. ▪ Good partnership work resulting in a reduction in the number of children and young people who offend for the first time. 	<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Re-offending rates are higher than those in similar areas or nationally.
<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective 14–19 strategy. ▪ Good access to a broad 14–19 curriculum. ▪ A high proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training. 	<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High rates of teenage mothers, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young offenders who are not in education, employment or training.

<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strong leadership from all senior managers in children’s services.▪ Accurate self-assessment.▪ Sustained trajectory of improvement across all areas of the service.	<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The retention of qualified social and youth workers.
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