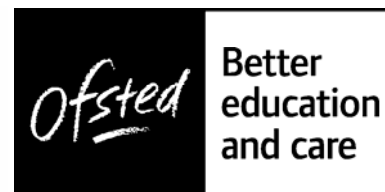


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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Ms Jacquie Dean  
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**1 December 2005**

Dear Ms Dean

## **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF WALTHAM FOREST COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 4 July 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**

Although outcomes are satisfactory overall, there are some important areas that need further development. Healthy lifestyles are promoted through partnership working between key services but more evidence is needed to demonstrate that the actions taken are effective.

The incidence of teenage pregnancy has started to fall, but rates remain higher than average and it is likely that at the current rate of progress the 2010 target will not be met. Detailed analysis of the teenage pregnancy data is being undertaken to identify issues and trends to inform future action. There is good multi-agency support to young parents.

Most schools are implementing drug education programmes but the north of the borough has a higher incidence of substance misuse and there is insufficient preventative action focussed here which the council is addressing.

A high number of schools compared to the London average participate in the Healthy Schools Programme. Planning is well advanced to open an integrated service for disabled children and their families to improve access and planning. A high number of looked after children had health checks although dental checks were more difficult to arrange with so many out of borough placements.

Rates of childhood immunisation are high but there are also health inequalities in the borough which have been rightly identified as priorities for action. Infant mortality rates are high.

Joint commissioning and a single point of access for mental health services for children and young people have contributed to an increase in the take-up of these multidisciplinary services, including voluntary sector provision. However, more evidence is required about outcomes to demonstrate the effectiveness of the multidisciplinary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team.

Whilst most looked after children are provided with health checks, dedicated arrangements are needed to ensure that more receive dental care. More evidence is needed to show the outcomes from these health checks.

### **Staying safe**

Performance has continued to improve steadily and outcomes are generally satisfactory. However, the authority has identified some important areas for improvement in their child protection quality assurance process to demonstrate consistency of practice. Work to strengthen these areas is underway but not yet completed. The needs of looked after children are now better understood and the availability of family placements in-borough is increasing. Efforts are being made to ensure more have access to borough services to improve their life chances and enable them to reach their potential.

Re-referrals of children in need to social services are down, suggesting a better first response to requests for assistance. In addition, in 2004-05 a higher percentage of social services budget was spent on family support than was the case previously. However, the authority recognises that preventative work is still relatively under-developed and requires more focus and co-ordination.

Minimum standards in child protection work have improved and there is some evidence of sound practice, but depth and quality still need to be improved. Effective performance management has identified a number of weaknesses in the protection process and corrective action is being taken to tackle these issues. Administration of the child protection register has improved and the council reports no further late reviews of children on the register in the last 6 months. All child protection cases have an allocated social worker and senior managers are keeping close scrutiny of the work. The post of child protection manager is filled on a temporary contract until the post is filled permanently and there are also vacancies in the team of reviewing officers which the council is recruiting to.

There are plans to revise and strengthen quality assurance for child protection work to ensure more consistent practice. There is as yet insufficiently clear evidence that children in need are being effectively safeguarded, especially since the council believes that too much risk is managed outside formal procedures and that there are lower than average numbers of assessments. An audit of thresholds for holding case conferences is also underway given the higher than average registration rates. Greater scrutiny has been introduced by the authority to ensure that children are not spending too long on the child protection register. The results of these audits will need to be monitored and remedial action taken where problems are identified.

Problems resulting from the introduction of a new information system has prevented accurate recording and reporting of timescales for assessments. Whilst interim manual recording of timescales reports acceptable performance, this process does not provide sufficiently accurate and comprehensive performance information.

As well as progressing well to open a new integrated service for disabled children, the council is now supporting fourteen families and one disabled young person to use Direct Payments. All disabled children and young people have transition plans although further work is needed to develop Person Centred Planning with them.

The stability of placements for looked after children has been much improved and the successful recruitment of twenty-four new local foster parents has increased the number of younger children placed with families in the borough.

A large number of looked after children were historically placed outside the borough and, following analysis and review, efforts are now being made to return them back to borough where this is appropriate. Plans to recruit another forty foster parents this year should assist with this process. Adoptions remain low although twenty children are awaiting final court decisions.

The separation of court work and the establishment of a dedicated team for looked after children is enabling more focus on their needs and improving their life chances. All have a named social worker and reviewing officer and all fifteen year olds have pathway plans and personal advisers. The number of looked after children absent from school have fallen and those achieving one GCSE have risen. However, less than half of those eligible actually sat for GCSEs and few of them achieved higher grades. Offending amongst looked after children is also too high. The standards and targets set for work with looked after children are not being consistently applied to ensure that all problems are identified and addressed and that these children consistently reach their potential, wherever they are placed. A high proportion of care leavers are in employment, education or training.

## Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the council makes to outcomes in this area is good. Continuing progress has been made since the local education authority was judged as poor in 1999. The number of childcare providers has increased faster than the national average although the growth in full day care is only half the national average. The quality of provision in nursery education is better than the national picture with significantly higher standards of teaching and good outcomes for children in the area of communication, language and literacy. At Key Stage 1 results in reading and writing are improving well and are closing the gap on the national average. Significant improvements have been secured every year since 2001/02 and these now significantly exceed the standards found in similar areas and are similar to the national average.

Standards at Key Stage 2 have shown considerable improvement each year in most subjects since 2001/2002. The gap between the area's results and the national average has closed significantly. This represents good progress for many pupils during this period. Pupils of black Caribbean heritage have made significant progress and now perform above the area average for English.

Pupils make average improvement as they progress through Key Stage 3. Recent gains in English and science have continued to move pupils' standards close to the national average. Mathematics results have improved every year since 2000 and are now close to the national average. At Key Stage 4 many pupils do well and the percentage that achieve 5 A\*-C passes at GCSE has remained close to that found in similar areas. The number achieving only 1 A\*-G passes, including a significantly higher number of Black Caribbean is too high. Overall, the rates of improvement achieved by pupils from Key Stages 2 and 3 to Key Stage 4 are strong.

The number of pupils with special educational needs is similar to the national average and they do well in primary school tests for 7 and 11 year olds consistently achieving higher than the London average.

The percentage of looked after children sitting at least one GCSE or its equivalent has risen from 22% to 42% in the last year. The percentage of these children achieving at least one A\*-G pass is also improving. However, the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 A\*-C GCSE passes is well below the national average and does not compare favourably with similar areas. The number missing 25 days or more schooling is improving but is still slightly below the national average.

Attendance rates have shown good improvements on the whole over recent years. Improvements in secondary schools have been particularly noteworthy. The rates of permanent exclusions for pupils in primary and secondary schools are close to the national average and for similar areas. The local area's self assessment suggests that the rate of secondary exclusions has been reduced from twice the national average in 2002 to presently below national averages.

Since 1999 the authority has significantly reduced the number of schools falling into formal categories of concern and has played an important role in helping schools causing concern improve to a position where they no longer require this high level of support. The current number causing concern is similar to the national average.

Recent school inspections signify a particular strength in the climate for learning in Waltham Forest schools. During the last full year 84% of primary schools and 83% of secondary schools were judged to have at least a good climate for learning. It is perhaps significant that recent improvements in the outcomes for pupils in secondary schools are reflected in the strong grades awarded for leadership and management by school inspectors in this aspect of school provision.

### **Making a positive contribution**

Outcomes in this area are good. The rate of youth offending is significantly lower than the national average and there is evidence to show that the actions of the Youth Offending Team have had a positive impact on this rate of improvement. Of young people who offended in 2004/05, 97.5% were in education, training and employment. This was an increase on the 2003/04 figure. An area for further improvement, however, and one recognised by the Council, is the number of looked after children receiving final warnings, reprimands and convictions.

Many children and young people are given good support in managing their own lives. The council has developed a range of approaches to consult with children in various settings and are soon to implement a borough wide consultation through a children's questionnaire. A recent consultation on crime and social behaviour involved over 3000 children and young people. Great importance is placed on the involvement of young people in council committees and they are regularly invited to discuss the workings of the council with elected members. Recent school inspection reports also indicate effective consultation with young people through the use of school councils and youth parliaments. Evidence gathered from recent school inspections suggests that in most schools the development of pupils' personal, social, moral and cultural awareness is often good. All secondary schools inspected in the last full year were judged to be free of bullying, racism and harassment. A minor weakness in the council's self assessment is the limited use made of the views of children and young people in supporting its evaluations and judgements.

98% of looked after children contributed their opinions for their last statutory reviews. The percentage of statements of special educational needs made for the first time which were prepared within 18 weeks was significantly better than that achieved by statistical neighbours and was much better than the national average. The percentage of pupils receiving alternative tuition following exclusion is below those that found in similar areas and the national average. Re-integration levels are slightly better than those found nationally. A large reduction in the number of pupils being educated at home has resulted in many more being readmitted into a school setting.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes in this area are adequate overall. The main strengths are the benefits many pupils gain from general improvements in educational outcomes but weaknesses exist in the percentage of young people, particularly Black Caribbean boys who do not achieve a formal qualification when they leave school.

Pupils make strong progress between Key Stages 3 and 4. When compared to their starting points they achieve well at GCSE and this encourages many to continue with their education after the age of 16. While attainment at 16 for the measure 5 A\*-C has improved steadily over last ten years and now stands at 47% (target 53%) further improvement is still needed.

The number of young people, including those leaving care and looked after children, not in education, training or employment is low. Black African, Chinese and Turkish pupils are doing particularly well. The quality of teaching provided in post 16 settings is generally good and supports the achievements of pupils well. No sixth forms have been judged to be inadequate.

An important weakness in this area, however, continues to be the poor performance of some young people in gaining a formal qualification at the age of 16. This has been a problem for some years although the gap is narrowing when compared to the national average. A particular concern is the disproportionate number of Black Caribbean boys that leave school with no formal qualification at 16 and do not progress to reach Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19.

## SUMMARY

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting healthy lifestyles through partnership working.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more evidence of improved outcomes as a result of activity.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rigorous scrutiny and sustained improvement</li> <li>• some sound practice in child protection</li> <li>• direct payments for disabled children and their families</li> <li>• increasing availability of family placements in-borough</li> <li>• more placement stability</li> <li>• improving knowledge about needs of looked after children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prevention under developed</li> <li>• revise quality assurance systems in CP work</li> <li>• continue to ensure no further late reviews of CP cases</li> <li>• accurate reporting of timescales for assessments</li> <li>• consistent application of standards with all looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rate of progress made by many pupils</li> <li>• the impressive reduction in number of schools causing concern</li> <li>• effectiveness of secondary schools</li> <li>• the percentage of pupils receiving alternative tuition following exclusion and their successful reintegration into school</li> <li>• pupils with special educational needs do well in national tests at Key Stage 1 and 2.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the percentage of pupils achieving 1 A*-G GCSE or its equivalent</li> <li>• the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 A*-C passes at GCSE or its equivalent.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• re-offending rate</li> <li>• the high number of children and young people who re-offend participating in education, training and employment</li> <li>• the number of secondary schools judged to be free of bullying, racism and harassment</li> <li>• consultation with children and young people.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• final warnings and convictions of looked after children.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the percentage of pupils, including care leavers and looked after children, in employment, training or education</li> <li>Black African, Chinese and Turkish pupils do well.</li> <li>pupils benefit from effective secondary schools.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>too many young people, particularly Black Caribbean boys, do not reach level 2 in their education/training by the age of 19</li> <li>continue to improve the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades at GCSE.</li> </ul>
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## Service management

The council has good capacity to improve further. There is strong leadership in the authority, which is committed to partnership working. There is good joint working with the health service and the contracted education service provided by EduAction. Priorities for improvement have been set collaboratively and there is a high commitment amongst staff in all sectors to deliver a quality service in the borough. The views of children and young people and their families and carers have been sought frequently to provide feedback to improve services. However, it is acknowledged that in future a more co-ordinated approach to consultation needs to be developed to better inform planning.

There has been a continuous and steady improvement in both education and social services in recent years. There is effective and systematic performance management which has gone beyond simple performance monitoring, and is being used to drive service improvement.

To effectively commission services in the future, a more comprehensive and shared analysis of need is required. The process of service mapping and gap identification also needs to be completed. There is also further scope to develop the use of available resources to deliver the prevention agenda. Action plans amongst partners also need to be better co-ordinated and harmonised. Despite a well-developed workforce strategy, the vacancy rate amongst social workers is too high and further action is needed to address the reasons for high staff turnover in some frontline services.



## **Areas for exploration in the joint area review**

### **Being healthy**

*Healthy life-styles are promoted for children and young people:*

- evidence of improved outcomes as a result of the health activity being undertaken.

### **Staying safe**

*The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:*

- the range and effectiveness of prevention services
- evidence of effectiveness and consistency in Child Protection work
- timeliness of reviews of Child Protection cases
- timescales for assessments
- consistent application of standards for work with all looked after children.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

*Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:*

- the percentage of pupils achieving 1 A\*-G GCSE or its equivalent.

*Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:*

- the percentage of looked after children achieving 5 A\*-C passes at GCSE or its equivalent.

### **Making a positive contribution**

*Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:*

- final warnings and convictions of looked after children.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

*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:*

- the number of young people, particularly Black Caribbean boys not reaching level 2 in their education/training by the age of 19.

## 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: Jo Olsson - Head of Children and Families**

## APA final judgements 2005: London Borough of Waltham Forest

Areas for judgement	Final judgements <sup>1</sup>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>2</b>
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	<b>3</b>

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### 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