

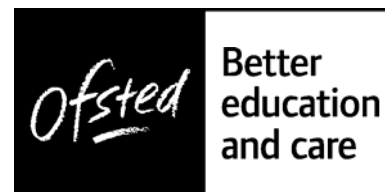
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045

email: edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms Sally Jack
Acting Deputy Director of Children's Services
Eleanor Street
Grimsby
North East Lincolnshire
DN32 9DU

1 December 2005

Dear Ms Jack

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 27 June 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 adequate. The council is addressing the key areas and is particularly committed to positive partnership, working to improve health outcomes for children and young people. Although the incidence of teenage pregnancy has declined considerably, it remains too high. The council has identified possible influencing factors in this area and it recognises more work is needed using a targeted approach in specific wards of the council's area.

There is good participation by schools in activities supported through the Healthy Schools project. Three-quarters of schools are expected to have achieved the standard by the target date in 2006. Overall participation rates in sport have improved and are particularly strong in the primary phase.

The health needs of looked after children are met effectively. Performance has increased to Band 5 with further improvement planned, linked to a health self-assessment carried out by the young people themselves. Through continued effort, the effectiveness of the actions taken to promote the mental health of children have improved. Multi-agency arrangements and joint commissioning work with the health service offer opportunities to improve outcomes further.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are good overall. The council is addressing the key areas for maintaining safety well and it is improving performance across a range of key indicators. The council is working with partners to ensure children and young people are provided with a safe environment. The council's policies show good recognition of what constitutes a safe environment and implementation is monitored consistently and rigorously, particularly in relation to children who are looked after.

The overall number of children looked after has reduced significantly. There is a successful and continuing programme for the safe return to the council area of those children formerly placed outside the council's boundaries which has had a positive impact on expenditure. Performance for the stability of foster care placements in the short term remains excellent, and improvements in the stability of longer term placements now place the council nearer to comparator averages.

Relatively high levels of children in need referrals have been examined, and explanations found for this in recording practices that are being addressed. There is continued excellent performance in the completion to the required timescales of both initial and core assessments. Audits on the application of thresholds are planned following multi-agency workshops. A multi-agency assessment tool is in place to measure neglect, and multi-agency arrangements to respond to the alleged sexual abuse of children are being implemented effectively. Monthly management reviews of the council's cases of children in need are in place.

Numbers of children whose names are included on the child protection register have reduced appropriately, and performance on reviews of these children is excellent. Performance for both de-registration and re-registration is good, indicating positive multi-agency arrangements. A protocol is in place with the police to respond to children who are missing.

Performance in the adoption of looked after children, including young children in foster placements or placed for adoption, remains excellent. The inevitable challenges of placing together a sibling group has resulted in slightly reduced overall performance for children adopted within 12 months of the best interest decision.

The performance of services for children with disabilities known to the council, often through established partnership arrangements, is good. However, currently less than 50% of the children with disabilities known to the council who are old enough have a transition plan, and attention is required to improve this as part of the integration of council services in the change for children agenda.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are inadequate. The overall quality of early years provision is broadly in line with the national picture. However, the quality of day-care settings and pre-registration support to childminders is not sufficiently consistent to ensure all settings are helping children to achieve early learning goals. At Key Stage 1, results in 2004 at level 2 and above are in line with the national averages for reading and writing; performance in mathematics has been more variable but improved in 2004 to be in line with the national average. The rate of improvement overall is above the national average in all three areas. At Key Stage 2, results in 2004 at level 4 and above are in line with national averages for English, mathematics and science. Value added between Key Stages 1 and 2 is slightly above the mean and in line with the national average. Overall, the outcomes for primary education are highly satisfactory.

At Key Stage 3, attainment is well below the national average in English and science, and below for mathematics. Standards have risen, but too slowly since 1999 in English and mathematics. However, in science, standards have fallen back significantly in this period. Value added between Key Stages 2 and 3 has dropped each year for the last three years and remains well below the national average. There is significant underperformance at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Results remain well below the national average and below the average achieved in similar authorities. The value added between Key Stages 2 and 3 is too low and the performance of six secondary schools is too variable. The value added between Key Stages 3 and 4 is well below the national average. The council acknowledges this level of performance is unsatisfactory and, together with its new strategic partner, strategies are being devised to challenge and support secondary schools to improve levels of achievement for children and young people.

The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE grades A* to G or an equivalent general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) improved in 2003/04, although it declined in 2004/05. However, the most recent results show a significant improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, up from 3.6% in the previous year to 18.7%. Looked after children are engaged well by study support, a range of homework clubs and extra-curricular activities, and the effective work of the looked after children education team. The council is aware that the attendance of looked after children is poor and has deteriorated steadily over the last two years. A satisfactory multi-agency response is underway, including the recruitment of a designated education welfare officer, to target improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties make sufficient progress through careful monitoring and analysis by the council, the support of learning mentors, and inclusion funding targeted to early years settings to support the work of special educational needs coordinators (SENCO).

Attendance in primary schools remains in line with the national average. Although authorised absence rates have fallen steadily in secondary schools, they remain above the national average and those of similar authorities. The council has a clear strategy to

improve levels of attendance in secondary schools but the improvement required is challenging. Exclusion rates have increased in secondary schools, particularly at Key Stage 3. There are several strategies in place to improve rates of reintegration of excluded pupils and, for those schools in the excellence cluster, there is a strong commitment to improve attendance and behaviour. However, overall, the council does not meet its statutory duty to provide full-time education for children educated other than at school.

The council has begun to take action to reduce the number of schools with significant surplus places. A consultation process is underway, although it will be some considerable time before any reduction in surplus places is achieved and schools are able to see the cost benefits.

Support for schools placed in formal categories of concern by Ofsted has been generally effective. No mainstream schools have been placed in special measures in the last 12 months, although one primary school has been identified as having serious weaknesses and two were identified as underachieving. Effective support has recently brought the two underachieving schools out of this category. At the time of the last inspection, the council did not have a satisfactory procedure in place to monitor schools' progress, to challenge and to focus interventions. Subsequently, following a thorough consultation with schools, a new policy and procedure have been introduced.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are adequate, and include positive features such as coordinated engagement with young people, targeting some vulnerable groups of people with forms of contact.

The council has effective approaches to gathering the views of children and young people, evidencing 100% of looked after children contributing to a statutory review. Looked after children over 4 years of age have the offer of a visit/contact from the Independent Reviewing Officer prior to the review meeting, to prepare them for this meeting, and to ensure that issues that the child wishes to be discussed are on the agenda.

The council has evidenced a wide range of organised activities demonstrated through the self-assessment; for example, Children in Need Surveys are carried out annually to obtain their views.

Performance for looked after children receiving final warnings, reprimands and convictions, remains at Band 3 with an improvement of figures within this.

Positive outcomes are identified by the inspection reports of nursery settings and schools, showing that personal, social and emotional development and freedom from bullying and racism are being addressed appropriately.

Effective work by the council's specialist Multi Agency Support Team (MAST) team supports children during the transition from primary to secondary school. The work of this team has contributed to reducing the number of exclusions in primary schools and improved outcomes for children transferring to secondary education.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are adequate overall although post-16 performance is below that for similar authorities and the national average.

The support given to looked after children to improve outcomes and the transition to adult life and economic independence is good. All looked after children over 16 years of age have pathway plans agreed and all have a named personal adviser. The percentage of care leavers in education, training and employment has improved sharply to a creditable 85.1%.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in Year 9 with transitional reviews. Although the overall quality of education provided for 14 to 19 year olds is too variable, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively once they make the transition to further education. The proportion of young people progressing to higher education is improving although overall participation rates, post-16, remain below the national average and that for the Humber area. The number of young people not in education, employment or training is lower than the Humber area average, but reducing this further remains a key priority for the council, together with the need to improve access to work-based learning.

The council works effectively with schools and other providers to deliver the 14 to 19 learners' entitlement as part of an overall strategy to enhance the range of curriculum opportunities. Collaboration in the planning and delivery of post-16 education and training is improving. The effectiveness of the council's work with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is exemplified by the agreement to develop cross-borough quality assurance procedures for 14 to 19 provision.

Young people with disabilities who are in transition are helped to make their choices about the services they use and to take direct responsibility for their own travel arrangements to further education provision.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health of children looked after • healthy school indicators and PSHE • participation rates in sport. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce teenage pregnancy rates • CAMHS strategy and provision.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessments • Child Protection Register – numbers/re-registrations/de-registrations/reviews • looked after children, the stability of shorter-term placements, foster placements, adoptions from local authority care. 	<p>Staying safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transition plans for disabled children moving to adult services.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early years provision and the improving standards at Key Stages 1 and 2 • achievement of looked after children has improved significantly • primary school attendance • overall reintegration rates for excluded pupils are improving • range of provision to support recreation and voluntary learning • percentage of care leavers in employment, education and training at age 19. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the consistency of day care settings and increase support pre-registration to childcare providers • standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 • value added between Key Stages 2 and 3 and 3 and 4 • secondary school attendance • attendance of looked after children • reduce permanent exclusions in secondary schools, particularly at Key Stage 3 • meet the statutory requirement for full-time provision for education other than at school • reduce the number of surplus places in secondary and primary schools • increase the resources and support for the youth service • ensure data sharing between services and schools is effective and efficient.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rates of final warnings and convictions of children looked after • percentage of children looked after who communicated their views to a statutory review • looked after children 4 years and over have the offer of a visit/ contact from the Independent Reviewing Officer • inspection evidence of nursery education and schools shows that personal social and emotional development, freedom from bullying and racism are all positive • MAST supporting children from primary to secondary schools during transition. • targeting of some vulnerable groups to improve consultation and contact. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement the corporate participation policy consistently across the council's departments • reduce the number of first time offenders entering the youth justice system • develop the corporate race equality scheme and monitoring to support longer term strategic planning.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of care leavers in employment, education and training at age 19. • strategy to increase the range of accommodation for care leavers • all looked after children young people currently have Pathway Plans • transitional reviews for Year 9 pupils with statements of special educational needs • support given to those young people with learning difficulties in post-16 provision • the Looked After Children's Education (LACE) Team. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementation of the 14 to 19 strategy • educational attainment 14 to 19 requires improvement • increase participation rates post-16.

Service management

The council is improving the level of collaboration with relevant partners in analysing needs and setting targets for improvement. However, it recognizes that it has been slow in implementing the change for children programme. Many of the improvements and changes put in place to respond to the significant weaknesses identified by the last Ofsted inspection of the local authority are too recent to demonstrate sustained impact. The changes underway to the internal work of the council's departments look to be promising. There is some early evidence of better cooperation and collaboration brought about by the review of service planning and performance management. The directorate's activities are being mapped against the five outcomes for children and this is helping managers to develop a clearer understanding of areas for improvement. Achievements include significant improvements across a range of social care indicators and steady progress has been sustained with educational achievement in the primary phase. However, the council recognizes educational attainment in the secondary phase remains below the national average. Significantly, although the turnover of teachers is below that of similar authorities, schools have almost double the national average of vacancies unfilled. This, combined with the high turnover of leadership and management posts resulting from early promotions, and a shortage of qualified teachers in some specialist subjects, is a significant barrier for the council in its drive to improve standards in secondary schools.

This council has ambition and a determination to bring about improvement. It is working with its new strategic partner and is underway to strengthen the capacity in education services and to improve the outcomes overall for children's services. The children and families partnership board has commissioned work to support the development of the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan. This should be finalised by April 2006.

Adequate progress has been made with the post-Ofsted inspection action plan. It is closely linked to the five outcomes for children and young people. Quarterly performance reporting is secure and improvements in data collection and handling are planned to improve internal information systems and those between the council's services and schools.

The council's self-assessment clearly maps priorities for children and young people to the strategic plans of partners and statutory plans. At the operational level, there are effective collaborative partnerships with health and other agencies such as the local LSC. There are very sound examples of collaborative work leading to improved outcomes, for example, the health of children looked after.

The self-assessment demonstrates that the council is now better able to analyse its strengths and areas for improvement. Further work is required to strengthen strategic planning to manage the children's change agenda but overall capacity is being enhanced by the strategic partner's contribution. The council has promising capacity to improve further.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review:

Being healthy

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

- teenage pregnancy rates and effectiveness of strategies to reduce rates in localities
- access to key support services to improve health outcomes for all vulnerable groups.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- educational achievement in secondary schools and post-16.

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

Educational provision is made for children who do not attend school:

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

- provision for education otherwise than at school, linked to rates of exclusion.
- attendance at school, particularly that of children looked after.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make a positive contribution:

- services for children with disabilities including those with a learning disability and the transitional phase to Adult Services.

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:

- outcomes for 14-19 year old young people and the impact of the 14-19 strategy and the learners' entitlement.

Service management

*There are clear and challenging ambitions for the area:
Ambitions are based on a shared understanding of local needs amongst partner organisations and with the community:*

- implementation of the learning and childcare directorate's service plan and progress in meeting key targets.

Capacity is used efficiently and effectively and is developed to deliver ambitions, priorities and value for money:

- capacity for improvements in relation to the council's corporate structures and the work of the strategic partnership
- functioning and effectiveness of the CYPSP Board, the Safeguarding Board and CYPP from April 2006.

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

APA final judgements 2005: North East Lincolnshire 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.	1
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	1
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