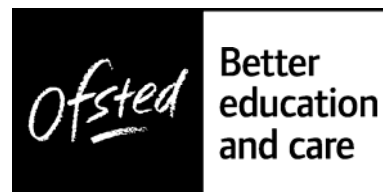


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
Email: edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Patrick Leeson
Director of Learning and Children's Services
Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames
Guildhall 2
High Street
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 1EU

1 December 2005

Dear Mr Leeson

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on the 20 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

Outcomes in this area are good, particularly in the way that healthy lifestyles are promoted through partnership between key services.

The proportion of schools participating in the National Healthy Schools Standards is high compared with the national average. Schools are fully compliant with the requirements for sex and relationships education and their participation in sport is good overall and often very good. The health needs of looked after children are met effectively and indicators exceed national averages.

Reduction in teenage conceptions overall should be improved and brought more in line with national targets. The mainstreaming of services should also be improved, particularly with regards supporting sex and relationships education in schools and young people's sexual health services.

The council identified that children in need and looked after children were not easily accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) services at Tier 1 and Tier 2. There are now plans in place to establish a new multi-disciplinary team by September 2005 to remedy this. The numbers of full time equivalent social workers employed or working closely with the CAMHS team has not increased in the last two

years, which is below the national trend. The council report that four posts will be funded in 2005, including one family therapist.

Staying safe

Outcomes are good overall. Children and young people are provided with the safe environment to which they are entitled. The authority's policies show good recognition of what constitutes a safe environment and their implementation is monitored consistently and rigorously. For example, there is very good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety in primary and secondary schools. The council has clear referral systems:- families and children at risk are identified early and the quality of preventative support is good, particularly through ASKK (Advancing Services for Kingston Kids).

There has been a reduction in the numbers on the child protection register over the last two years. All cases are allocated to a social worker and reviewed within timescale; the timeliness of initial and core assessments are particularly good. De-registrations have significantly increased and there have been no re-registrations of children on the child protection register, which are not consistent with the council's comparator group and national average. The council confirm that the Area Child Protection Committee Case Monitoring Group reviews all such cases. De-registrations were particularly high, as the children of three large sibling groups were removed from the child protection register. Monitoring mechanisms are robust and should continue.

The multi-agency Area Child Protection Committee also monitor serious case reviews when they occur, as well as senior managers and elected members. There is a clear process within the council for collating, monitoring and reviewing information from CRB checks.

There has been recent improvement in the support for looked after children, all of whom now have an allocated qualified social worker. All looked after children are reviewed on time, with all of those eligible having a personal advisor and pathway plans. Effective protocols and services have been established between education and social services in supporting looked after children, asylum seekers and those who have disabilities and Special Educational Needs (SEN). Short-term placement stability for looked after children is good. Long-term placement stability has improved but further progress should be made as planned, although the council has performed above its comparator group and national average. All young children are looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption. However, the proportion of all looked after children in foster placements or placed for adoption should be improved, as should the number of looked after children adopted from the council's care, which are below the council's comparator group and national average. The council report that success is mitigated by the increased numbers of children with complex disabilities who are appropriately placed in long-term residential care and relatively high numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeker children in semi-independent accommodation. The council estimate that

they need to increase placement capacity by approximately six foster placements. Recruitment is also underway for specialist foster carers for less disabled children. Adoptions dipped in 2004/05, as a result of the delays incurred with the freeing application concerning two children of the same family, now successfully placed. Rigorous monitoring and bi-annual scrutiny by elected members ensures that all looked after children are placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision being made.

Steps are taken to ensure that the identity and whereabouts of all children are known with a local protocol in place for children who go missing from care. This should be extended to cover all young people going missing from home, as planned.

While referrals of children in need have significantly fallen the number of re-referrals occurring within 12 months has increased and should continue to be kept under review to ensure that children and families who are referred receive an appropriate response. The council report that a permanent manager has now been identified for the Initial Referral Team, who will begin to work on reducing the high rate of re-referrals.

The ratio of children in need that were from black and minority ethnic groups who receive services continues to steadily increase, which is good. The council has made very good progress on the completion of initial race equality impact assessments. Assessments have been completed by each of the teams in the Learning and Children's Directorate, overseen by the Equalities Officer. Three policies have been identified for further fuller assessment – SEN Policy Strategy, Education and Leisure Strategic Plan and Admovere Project - which the council should complete by December 2005.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are very good. Over three quarters (78.5%) of children in need who were sampled in early 2005 expressed overall satisfaction with services and 73.8% indicate that they were given choices about care. This is a good result.

There is good and expanding early years provision. The overall quality of childcare and nursery education is in line with or better than the national averages: there is much that is good or very good. The teaching and provision for language and literacy is generally good or better and stronger than that found nationally. There are no settings judged to be unsatisfactory, and the authority has taken firm, wide-ranging action to reduce the significant number of weaknesses in meeting national standards in childcare settings, most of which occur at pre-registration.

Standards attained overall by schools at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 are well above the national figures and above those of similar authorities. Standards are rising, generally at a faster rate than nationally or in similar authorities.

At Key Stage 1 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above the national figures, highest in mathematics where they are well above those of the authority's statistical neighbours, and rising. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are well above the national averages; they are above average in science. Standards have steadily improved over the last three years: in mathematics and science the national test results have caught up with those of similar authorities and in English they have been consistently above this level. The proportions gaining or exceeding national expectations in each subject now exceed those of similar authorities. The value-added by the authority's schools during Key Stage 2 has improved from 2002-03 to 2003-04.

The authority's performance in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2004 was markedly higher than in 2003 with the results being above those of similar authorities and well above the national figures. The improvement was strongest in mathematics and science where the gains were high compared to the national results and the performance of similar authorities. Value-added measures show that the authority has steadily improved the pupils' achievement over three consecutive years.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are on an upward trend and stronger overall for the higher achievers than the lower achievers. The proportion gaining five or more grades A* to C is well above the national average and above that of similar authorities even though it dipped in 2004 after a strong rise in 2003. The proportion gaining one or more GCSE grades has risen steadily for several years and was in line with similar authorities and the national figure in 2004. The authority is rightly focusing on raising standards for specific groups of pupils, which is leading to positive outcomes; for example, the proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE grades have risen to above the national average. Overall attendance in primary, secondary and special schools is rising and in 2004 it was well above the national averages. The level of unauthorised absence is low compared to all measures.

The number of looked after children who are absent from school have increased. This is unusual for the council and is an area that the council intend to improve. No looked after children have been permanently excluded from school in the past two years. The council attribute this to regular meetings between senior officers in the Social Inclusion and Children and Families Services groups and the Education Advisor to review the progress of individual pupils. The authority's support to school and pupils in improving behaviour has improved significantly and is now very good. The levels of permanent and fixed-term exclusions are low and there is effective provision for those who are excluded. The Youth Offending Team (YOT) fully engages with young people presenting problematic behaviour in schools and the authority works well with other agencies, such as Connexions, to engage and educate young people.

Ofsted has placed no schools into a formal category of concern. The council's monitoring, challenge and intervention is good: there is a clear strategy for identifying underperformance coupled with matching strategic intervention. Rightly, the council is

working with schools to extend the use of performance data as a tool for self-evaluation. The leadership and management of schools are mostly good or very good; the quality of teaching is similarly strong as are the pupils' attitudes to learning. The extra curricular provision and the support for learning beyond the school day are good in secondary schools and very good in primary schools. The council is good at monitoring the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and in evaluating the effectiveness of schools in providing for them. The good and in parts very good provision for these pupils is being furthered by a carefully crafted strategy involving collaboration among clusters of schools that include special schools. The authority has improved the amount of medical advice that has been provided within 18 weeks.

Making a positive contribution

Although outcomes are good overall there are some areas, which require attention. The numbers of looked after children who offend has increased. The council has plans to improve this through earlier intervention and further integration of CAMHS. The number of children and young people who entered the youth justice system in the spring and summer of 2004 for the first time increased. However, the rate of re-offending has significantly decreased due to better engagement of young offenders in education, training and employment, improved assessment standards and more robust sentence exit strategies. The YOT is well regarded and together with the youth service provides a wide range of diversionary activities to reduce offending behaviour.

The majority of children and young people are well supported in managing changes in their lives. Eighty seven percent of looked after children contribute their opinions at reviews. The council has put strategies in place to help children and young people with disabilities and special education needs to manage the transition between specific phases in their lives. The council has established a number of innovative procedures to elicit the views of children and young people, including the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, the Youth Parliament and the Looked After Children Forum. The 'Young Living' website encourages young people to participate in local democracy and currently has 6000 visits per month. Consultation with children and their families takes place through the Children's Fund (8-13 years) and the Early Years Service. As part of the annual review of children and young people with a statement of special educational needs, the views of each individual is sought and considered. It is not always clear how the views of children and young people influence policy or how elected members take account of them. The council intends to make these arrangements clearer through the development of a participation strategy this year.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are very good overall. The number of children with disabilities receiving some form of service or short-term break has improved and is above the council's comparator group.

Overall, the quality of education provided for 14 to 19 year olds is very good and the proportion of young people progressing to higher education or training is above national averages. The council report that the Admovere Project and partnership with Connexions has ensured continued success in the engagement of care leavers in employment, education or training.

There is good collaboration in the planning and delivering of post- 16 education and training and the authority works effectively with organisations, such as the local Learning and Skills Council, particularly in broadening the range of vocational options. Standards achieved by sixth form students rose significantly in 2004 compared to 2003 and much faster than the national trend and more rapidly than in similar authorities. Standards overall were above the national average and in line with those of similar authorities. The council is well aware of the variations in quality between sixth forms: none have been found to be inadequate by Ofsted.

The council is committed to promoting its direct payment scheme with 12 direct payments made to carers of disabled children, including one direct payment for a young person, with a further increase planned this year. The council report that while the majority of parent carers have stated a preference for a directly provided service or vouchers it will continue to promote and provide direct payments through the Kingston Centre for Independent Living.

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 • number of health checks for looked after children • schools fully compliant with the requirements for sex and relationships education • participation in sport is good overall and often very good. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the establishment of an integrated CAMHS service by September 2005 • teenage conception rates should be reduced as well as mainstreaming of services improved.

<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing children and young people with a safe environment; prevention through ASKK (Advancing Services for Kingston Kids) • child protection procedures; timely initial and core assessments • support for looked after children 100% of young children in foster placements or placed for adoption • all initial race equality impact assessments completed • ACPC well placed to make the transition to a local children’s Safeguarding Board. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the high re-referral rate of children in need • the total number of looked after children in foster or adoptive placements and numbers placed for adoption • local protocol is extended to cover all young people going missing from home.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children’s overall satisfaction with services and choices • educational attainment of looked after children • good, expanding early years provision • standards above the national figures, above similar authorities and rising generally and for specific groups of pupils • high and rising attendance in schools, low unauthorised absence • low permanent and fixed-term exclusions • the authority’s monitoring, challenge and intervention for schools • no schools are in a formal category of concern • good, in parts very good provision for pupils who have special educational needs. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absenteeism of looked after children • actions against national standards in childcare settings • continue raising standards for specific groups of pupil • extend school’s use of performance data as a tool for self-evaluation.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rate of re-offending has reduced through effective YOT and diversionary activities • effective consultation procedures with children and their families • high numbers of looked after children contributing their opinions to reviews. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in the numbers of looked after children receiving final warnings and convictions • reduction in the numbers of first timers entering the youth justice system • effectiveness of the outcome of participation by children and young people in directly influencing policy development.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high numbers of care leavers in employment, education or training • direct payments scheme, providing information, advice and support to carers • very good quality of education for 14 to 19 year olds • high proportion of young people progress to higher education or training • standards achieved by sixth form students above the national average and rising. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uptake of direct payments • variations in quality between sixth forms.

Service management

The council has collaborated closely with relevant partners in analysing needs and setting appropriate, challenging targets for improvement. Consultation takes place with children, young people and their families in a planned way and this approach will be further consolidated by the development of a participation policy this year.

The council has developed strategies and structures to increase collaborative work between agencies and there are sound examples of services working together to promote better outcomes for children and young people. Priorities for children and young people are shared and agreed with partners and will form the basis of a single children and young people's plan from 2006. Discussion has taken place with key partners on the development of a Children's Trust, which will be taken forward by the Children's Services Development Board and Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, which have begun to review terms of reference for agreement in September 2005.

The council has taken early steps to appoint a single Director of Children's Services and has integrated education and social services. There is a lead member for children and young people's services.

Budget monitoring within children's services is robust, with continued rigour in managing financial pressures in demand led services. Cost pressures have been identified within the integration and service development agenda, which the council intends to address through best value opportunities and further cost efficiency savings, such as through the co-location of health and social care teams.

Performance management and quality assurance mechanisms are effective and enable the council to both anticipate and address emerging issues and problems. However, the council's comparative performance nationally on social care performance indicators has deteriorated and should be addressed.

In recent years, the council has experienced difficulties in recruitment and retention, particularly with field social workers, occupational therapists and residential care staff. However, the council has the corporate investors in people award, which reflects a clear focus on workforce development and strong service management. Other initiatives include a new pay and reward initiative, 'Investing in the Best' training for middle managers and an annual staff survey.

The council has excellent capacity overall to improve further.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:

- progress with integration and workforce issues in relation to CAMHS.

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

- delivery of improved outcomes to reduce teenage conception.

Staying safe

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- response to referrals for children in need.

Enjoying and achieving

Early years provision promotes children's development and well-being and helps them meet early learning goals:

- impact of initiatives taken to reduce the number of actions relating to national standards in childcare settings.

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

- effectiveness of actions taken to raise standards for specific groups of pupils.

Making a positive contribution

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

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution:

- reduction in the number of looked after children receiving final warnings
- reduction in the number of first timers entering the youth justice system.

Achieving economic well-being

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic well-being:

- opportunities are maximised to increase the uptake of direct payments.

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: Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames 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	4
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	4
The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people	4

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