

17 December 2008

Mr Chris Spencer
Corporate Director of Education and Children's Services
London Borough of Hillingdon
Civic Centre 4E/01
High Road
Uxbridge
UB8 1UW

Dear Mr Spencer

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Hillingdon 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	4
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	4

*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

The London Borough of Hillingdon makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people. It delivers services which are consistently above minimum requirements. Strong performance has been sustained and built upon in all of the outcome areas. There is a discernable, positive impact on the outcomes for young people, including those from vulnerable groups. This is most apparent in the now outstanding contribution that Hillingdon makes to the arrangements for safeguarding. Multi-agency working in this regard is exemplary. Children and young people appear to be safe. This is especially noteworthy given the many challenges presented by the high numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children that arrive at Heathrow Airport. The council makes a good contribution to the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers; their health and welfare needs are met very well and their educational attainment is better than in similar councils. The educational achievement of Hillingdon's young people is good, as is their economic well-being. The positive impact of the school improvement service is clearly seen in the substantial improvements in results in secondary schools that have received targeted support. The comprehensive Children and Families Trust Plan makes clear that the council is moving towards a sharper focus on preventative services. It is based on a secure knowledge of strengths and weaknesses.

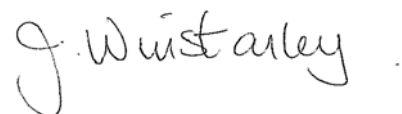
The continuing improvements across all five areas confirm that there is an excellent capacity to improve. Leadership by senior officers and council members is effective and strategic planning is strong. There is a clear focus on achieving the best value for money in the context of continuing improvement in outcomes. Excellent co-operation and joint commissioning are ensuring services are appropriately targeted and cost effective. The areas for further development set out in the council's self-assessment and the Children and Families Trust Plan are appropriate.

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"> ▪ All schools are participating in the Healthy Schools Programme and almost half have achieved Healthy School Status. ▪ Good progress has been made to develop a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health services including a highly rated outreach support team for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. ▪ Performance in health checks for looked after children is good. 	<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Performance in reducing the teenage pregnancy rate is weak in relation to statistical neighbours and it is unlikely that the target for 2010 will be met. ▪ The proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding is below average. ▪ The proportion of young people under the age of 20 in drug treatment is above that of statistical neighbours.
<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outstanding inter-agency collaboration for safeguarding. ▪ Very good safeguarding arrangements, including targeted provision for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and effective action on child trafficking through Heathrow Airport. ▪ Numbers of those adopted have improved as well as the recruitment of new adopters. ▪ Very good placement stability performance. 	<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The current rate of repeat referrals is higher than statistical neighbours.
<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Targeted efforts are successfully closing the attainment gap between pupils of Black African and Black Caribbean origin and the council average. ▪ The attainment gap between pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their peers is narrower in Hillingdon than nationally at both age 11 and 16. ▪ The effective work of the school improvement service. ▪ Rapid reduction in the rate of fixed-term exclusions from both primary and secondary level where rates are lower than the national figure. 	<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate of improvement in standards at primary schools is slower than the national rate.

<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good provision for consulting with children and young people including a nationally commended youth council. ▪ Effective multi-agency initiatives address anti-social behaviour and keep children and young people involved in positive activities during their leisure time. ▪ Almost all looked after children participate in review meetings. 	<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The involvement of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is under-developed.
<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of young people in employment, education or training is greater than that found in statistical neighbours and nationally. ▪ The proportion of care leavers in employment, education or training is greater than that found nationally. ▪ All young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a transition review at the age of 14. ▪ The proportion of young people who continue in learning after Year 11 is greater than statistical neighbours and nationally. 	<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some inconsistencies in the performance of school sixth forms.
<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children's services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong leadership, clearly focused on improving outcomes for children and young people. ▪ A strong and consistent track record of improvement. ▪ Resources appropriately targeted to secure improvement and achieve good value for money. ▪ Good involvement of children and young people in developing and reviewing performance and services. ▪ Excellent partnership working. 	<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children's services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of qualified social workers for looked after children is lower than statistical neighbours.