

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 945 6293
Direct F 0117 945 6554
South_ap@ofsted.gov.uk



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Paul Clark
Corporate Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Harrow
PO Box 7
Station Road
Harrow
HA1 2XF

Dear Mr Clark

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Harrow 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	4
Achieving economic well-being	4
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

The London Borough of Harrow makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people. Good attention is paid to delivering services to meet the diverse needs of the borough’s varied minority ethnic communities. Harrow delivers services that are improving and are at least good across all five outcome areas. Good progress has been made in response to most areas identified in the 2007 APA. Excellent opportunities exist for children and young people to make a very positive contribution and to participate in a full and meaningful way in service planning. Whilst the promotion of healthy lifestyles is good overall, progress towards a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) has been slow. Services have only recently been fully implemented for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and access to age appropriate services for 16- to 17-year-olds remains at the same level as in January 2006. Staying safe has improved and is now good. For example, long-term placement stability for looked after children is much improved and the proportion and timely completion of initial and core assessments has been sustained. There is a strong focus on preventative services, very good joint working with partner agencies and effective measures are in place to promote environmental and home safety. Children and young people achieve well academically; standards are consistently well above national averages at the ages of 16 and 18. However, there is more to do to improve the outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and to continue narrowing the attainment gap for some minority ethnic and vulnerable groups. The council continues to be highly successful at increasing the numbers of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 engaging in education, employment and training.

The council’s capacity to improve including its management of services is good. Improving children’s services is a key priority for the council, its elected members, chief officer and partners.

Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate some important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significant increase in the proportion of young offenders receiving substance misuse assessments within five working days. ▪ Good reduction in teenage pregnancy rates and widely accessible and well used sexual health services for young people. ▪ Very good increase in the proportion of looked after children receiving annual health and dental checks.

- A good range of integrated services provided by children's centres to help parents keep their children healthy.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Low proportion of schools achieving Healthy School status.
- Transition protocols and arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities transferring from children's to adult services are not fully embedded.
- CAMHS for children with learning disabilities and access to age appropriate services for 16- to 17-year-olds continue to be underdeveloped.

Staying safe

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- The proportion of initial and core assessments completed has significantly improved and is above that of similar councils.
- Good range of preventative and support services resulting in a reduction in the proportion of children and young people subject to a child protection plan.
- Very effective partnership working to provide a range of educative programmes to enable children and young people to develop self-protection skills on and off-line.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Long term placement stability of looked after children is significantly below that of similar councils.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate some important weaknesses. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths

- The majority of children and young people make good progress during their time in Harrow schools; value-added measures are above average.
- Strong support from school improvement services challenges schools to raise standards, and performance at Key Stage 4 continues to rise steadily remaining above that of similar councils and well above the national figures.

- A higher than average proportion of schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or better; there are no schools in an Ofsted category of concern.
- Secondary attendance is consistently above national figures.
- Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are below average and the inequality gap is slow to narrow.
- Exclusion rates remain above national figures.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- Very good and comprehensive consultation with a wide range of young people leads to a high level of participation in decision making and service planning.
- Effective youth crime prevention and anti social behaviour strategies involving all partner agencies have shown impact through a reduction in first time offences and re-offending rates to a level below similar councils.
- Increased participation and influence of carers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has led to improved and more flexible service provision.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Black young people are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- The proportion of young people not in education, employment and training continues to fall and is now very low in comparison with similar councils and the national figures.
- Strong academic performance at Level 2 and Level 3 by the age of 19 which is significantly above similar councils and the national figures.
- Good progress on developing coherent partnerships to deliver 14–19 curriculum

through the Harrow Collegiate and in broadening the range of vocational opportunities.
Important weaknesses and areas for development

Capacity to improve, including the management of children’s services

Grade 3

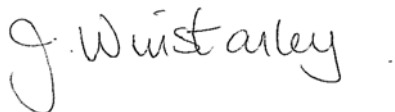
The council’s capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good and its management of these services is good. There is a clear vision and ambition for the development of children’s services in Harrow which is shared across partner agencies to reflect local needs and community aspirations. The council gives significant importance to the provision of services that reflect the cultural and diverse needs of the community. Priorities are clear, based on a thorough needs analysis and significant consultation with children and young people. Key priorities are appropriately linked to the local area agreement, the Children and Young People’s Plan and the Corporate Plan. Governance arrangements are effective and lines of responsibility and accountability have been clarified and strengthened. Partnership working, including the voluntary and community sectors, has increased resources and capacity. This has led to better support for children and young people. Extensive developmental programmes are in place to align services and frontline staff to meet the requirements of establishing a Children’s Trust. High priority is given to ensuring all activities are driven by data, research and performance management. A strong focus on continuous improvement is evidenced through weekly reporting on high risk areas and highly developed monthly/termly monitoring. However, some weaknesses remain. Formal joint commissioning arrangements are not yet finalised and council resources remain stretched as it faces financial challenges in delivering its priorities in the medium/longer term. Whilst the council’s self-assessment is generally accurate, it is overly optimistic in its judgements of outcomes in being healthy, enjoying and achieving, capacity to improve and overall effectiveness.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear ambition and priorities based on a thorough analysis of need and wide-ranging consultation that includes children and young people. ▪ Good capacity through strong leadership, effective partnership working and some alignment of budgets. ▪ Performance management information is well-used to monitor, review and plan services.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal joint commissioning arrangements are yet to be finalised.

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 to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection