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Mr John Coughlan
Director of Children's Services
Hampshire County Council
Children's Services Department
The Castle
Winchester
SO23 8UG

Dear Mr Coughlan

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Hampshire County Council 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	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
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

Hampshire County Council consistently delivers good services. The council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations made in the 2007 APA and joint area review report, published in August 2007. There has been steady progress in maintaining the services at a good level since this time. For all five outcomes the gap has narrowed between the most vulnerable groups and all children and young people. Outcomes are mostly better than in similar councils. Partnership and governance are well embedded and effective. There has been good development towards the Children’s Trust. The responses of most children and young people to service delivery and provision are positive. Capacity to improve is good.

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health promotion work is effectively implemented and targeted. This is in excess of government targets and national average performance as well as that of statistical neighbours. ▪ All schools are part of the Healthy Schools Programme of which 61% have achieved healthy schools status. ▪ The prevalence of obesity is below the national average and young people’s life styles are increasingly healthier than the national average.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immunisation rates for looked after children and young people are low and have not improved in the last year.

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good and innovative support to families to prevent care and support placements. ▪ A steady reduction in numbers of looked after children to a level well below that of comparators. ▪ Effective and proactive work by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A continuing trend of looked after children that experience three or more moves, which is above average. |
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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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistently above average attainment in relation to national figures and good progress being made by the majority of children and young people. ▪ Significant improvement in attendance for the majority of children and young people. ▪ Good partnership working such as in the Early Years Foundation Stage which consistently provides good quality provision. |
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Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of primary schools causing concern is higher than national averages and statistical neighbours and it is rising each year. ▪ The attendance of looked after children at school is poor. |
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Making a positive contribution

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

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very strong culture of participation by and consultation with young people, including hard-to-reach and vulnerable young people. ▪ The views and opinions of children and young people have made a discernable difference to services. |
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Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children is at the 'acceptable' level but is higher than national and local comparators. |
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Achieving economic well-being

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.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of 19-year-olds achieving Level 2 has increased and is now above the national average. ▪ There is an increasing number of students participating in work-based learning. ▪ There is a good 14–19 strategy. ▪ The number of young people including vulnerable groups in education, employment and training is above national averages.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of looked after children leaving school with five or more GCSE at A* to C is lower than national averages. ▪ The proportion of looked after children in education, employment and training is lower than statistical neighbours and the national average. ▪ The proportion of children and young people aged 14 and over with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with a transition plan is lower than most statistical neighbour comparators.

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.

The council has a strong commitment to partnership working. It has effectively developed good working relationships with the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. There is a strong track record of improvement. Leadership is effective; there are common objectives, a sound framework for future development and a strong ambition to implement the preventative strategy. These objectives, while realistic, are appropriately challenging and rightly focus on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people. Most services function well and outcomes are mostly better than in similar councils. There is good allocation of resources and a clear focus of activity across the five outcomes, ensuring that there is significant financial stability so that projects are delivered in a timely way.

The council has graded itself as outstanding and this self evaluation is not as rigorous and as accurate as it could be. The pace of improvement and effective action to remedy weaknesses has slowed in some key areas. For example, in improving the life chances for the children looked after through better health care, better attendance at school and higher qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4.

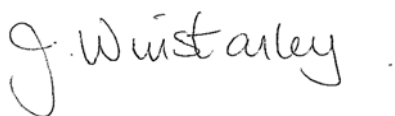
Similarly, the number of primary schools being identified as causing concern is rising and the rate of progress of some pupils during their time at school is not as good as it could be.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Most service functions are well-managed and are good across all five outcome areas.▪ All services benefit most children and young people and the gap in provision and outcomes is narrowing for the most vulnerable groups.▪ Children are actively engaged and believe the county is a good place in which to live, work and study.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ There is still work to do in improving the life chances for the looked after children through better health care, better attendance at school and higher qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4.▪ The number of primary schools being identified as causing concern is rising and the rate of progress of some pupils during their time at school is not as good as it could be.

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



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection