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Mrs Jane Portman
Executive Director, Children and Families Services
Bournemouth Borough Council
Town Hall
Bourne Avenue
Bournemouth
BH2 6DY

Dear Mrs Portman

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Bournemouth Borough 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	2
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	2
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

Bournemouth Council makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people. All outcomes are now good with the exception of those for enjoying and achieving and achieving economic well-being, which are adequate. The council's capacity to improve its contribution and its management of services is good.

The council has maintained and further developed strong partnerships to promote and achieve key targets for children and young people's health. Of particular note is the introduction of hot school meals in all the council's primary schools. The council continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to discharging its safeguarding responsibilities and has recently strengthened the leadership of the local safeguarding children board (LSCB). It is a good corporate parent to those children in its care. For these children, and other 16-year-olds across Bournemouth, GCSE results have reached their highest ever level and children's educational progress is broadly in line with that in similar councils. Children and young people continue to be creatively engaged in decision making across Bournemouth through a wide range of effective initiatives. Although vocational provision for 14- to 19-year-olds has improved, progress remains slow towards ensuring that young people of varying aptitudes are able to follow clear pathways to a suitable curriculum. The council has made limited, although recently improved headway in reducing the comparatively high percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

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

- The percentage of mothers initiating breastfeeding remains good, and is above national and benchmark group averages.
- The teenage pregnancy strategy is making a consistent and positive impact on reducing the rate of conceptions, and the council is on track to achieve its 45% reduction target by 2010.
- The percentage of schools achieving National Healthy School status is above the national average and all are participating in the programme. A hot midday meal is now served in every primary school.
- The delivery of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to young people is good, and the wait for their first appointment with these services is shorter than the national average.
- There is very good coverage of health and dental checks for looked after children.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate of hospital admissions of young people under 20 years of age for alcohol misuse remains higher than similar areas. ▪ The proportion of young people with substance misuse problems in treatment remains low, compared with regional and national averages. |
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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

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good and developing partnerships promote better outcomes for children and young people affected by bullying and domestic violence. ▪ The number of initial assessments completed within timescales is impressive and the second best figure nationally. ▪ Looked after children are supported well by strong corporate parenting and stable short term placements. ▪ Both the Bournemouth council's children's home and the adoption service were judged good in inspections in 2008. |
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Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Local Safeguarding Children Board has yet to establish effective processes for the management of serious case reviews. ▪ The percentage of core assessments completed within statutory timescales has declined, and is below the average achieved by similar councils. ▪ Longer term placement stability for looked after children has declined. |
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Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

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

Major strengths

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children's attainment by the time they leave the Foundation Stage is above that expected nationally. Their early reading and number skills are particularly strong. ▪ At Key Stage 2, effective and well targeted intervention by the council has |
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contributed to a good rise in English results which now meet the national average.

- The percentage of young people attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics rose in 2007
- More young people in Bournemouth make at least two levels of progress in English and mathematics during Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 than is the case nationally. This trend has risen over the past three years.
- No secondary schools are now in an Ofsted category of concern.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Despite the improvement in English, rates of progress for Bournemouth's children overall across Key Stage 2 are slower than national rates.
- Attendance of young people at secondary school and of some looked after children has dropped and is below the national average.

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

- Children and young people are positively engaged in decision making and service design through a range of effective initiatives.
- Re-offending rates are below statistical neighbour and national averages.
- A very high percentage of looked after children participate in their reviews, and this is above the performance achieved by similar councils and nationally.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The percentage of relevant care leavers with pathway plans and a personal advisor is low compared with similar councils and the average national performance.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. 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"> ▪ Young people’s performance in A levels or equivalent Level 3 qualifications is well above national average. ▪ An increasing number of vocational qualifications are available to young people. ▪ Overall and timely success rates for young people on NVQ courses are well above average. ▪ Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported through the transition to Adult Services.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress towards providing young people of varying aptitudes appropriate pathways to a full curriculum, including vocational education, remains slow. ▪ The proportion of young people aged 16 to 18, including those from vulnerable groups, not in full time employment, education or training is well above statistical neighbours and the national average.

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.

Overall, the council has made good progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous APA. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the challenges facing Bournemouth. Their ambition in improving outcomes for children and young people is demonstrated convincingly in the new children and young people’s plan. The plan is well prioritised, aligns well with corporate planning and the local area agreement. It enables all partners and stakeholders, including parents and young people, to measure progress from existing baselines towards specific targets in each of the five outcomes.

All partners are committed to embedding the work of the children’s trust. Multi-agency work is maturing; the council has made a start towards securing fit for purpose and transparent commissioning and pooled budget arrangements with the primary care trust (PCT), but these are not yet fully in place.

The council has worked successfully to fill third tier vacancies. A judicious school improvement commissioning strategy reinforces the capacity of directly employed staff to make a good impact on areas of specific need.

Major strengths

- Bournemouth's children's services provide good value for money
- Senior leaders have high ambitions and an accurate understanding of the challenges facing the council.
- Priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people are clear, supported by well founded plans for securing improvement and managing performance.
- A good track record in improving children's services is underpinned by strong team working, with an increasing focus on closing identified performance gaps between different groups.
- Good progress has been made on improving the stability of the workforce.

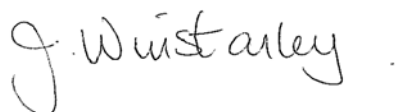
Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Comprehensive arrangements for commissioning and pooled budgets with the PCT are not yet fully in place.

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