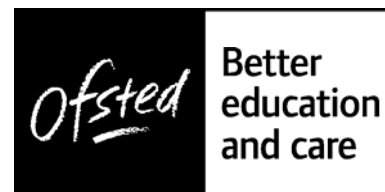


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456-404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Matt Dunkley
Director of Children's Services
East Sussex County Council
County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
Lewes
East Sussex BN7 1SW

1 December 2005

Dear Mr Dunkley

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S
EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 27 June 2004 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

Overall outcomes for the area are good. The trend is one of improvement and the health of children in care is well provided for. Partnership working both at the strategic and operational level is good. Good collaborative initiatives are reducing the incidences of teenage pregnancy although, as identified by the council, the incidence continues to be high in socially deprived areas. Multi agency support to reduce substance misuse is effective, with clear targeting of pupils who are at risk. Schools are contributing well to improving children and young people's health through personal, social and health education initiatives. Participation of children and young people in sport is at least satisfactory and mostly good in the majority of schools and there are good initiatives to support sex and relationship education. The council and its partners have correctly identified developing a more comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) service to be a priority and significant improvements in referral waiting times have been achieved, despite the area suffering a shortage of key staff, such as child psychologists and paediatricians.

Services for children with disabilities are improving. A scheme for early diagnosis of 0-3 year-olds is enabling the local authority to target support effectively to parents and their children. Services are being extended to include the 3-5 age group focussing on early identification of autism and the provision of a fully integrated service for autistic children. The council has recognised that children and young people in rural areas do

not always have easy access to services and this group have contributed to improving the county's transport plan to address this deficiency.

Staying safe

Outcomes for the area are good. The council has introduced some innovative practice and achieved sustained improvement. Collaborative working is strong and child protection and safeguarding is given a high priority by the council. Procedures for intervention to protect children are robust and reviews of child protection cases are undertaken in a timely manner. Procedures for protecting children with a disability have been strengthened and all child protection is supported by robust management oversight and guidance. Child protection training for social care and education staff is effective and an agreement is in place with neighbouring councils for cross audit purposes. The council's plans to improve the performance through completing core assessments within a 35 day period has been successful with outturn showing a 100% improvement on last year. In line with the council's objectives, the number of young people placed in residential care is stable and the rate of placements is one of the lowest in its comparator group. Foster placements have increased and the council is making more use of its in-house service. Significant investment has been made by the council in improving the long-term stability of looked after children. Overall performance on stability of placements for children is good and the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) target provides a good framework for achieving further improvement. Out of county placements are used responsibly for some looked after children, in order to meet the specific needs of individuals.

The proportion of black and minority ethnic groups in the county is low but they are disproportionately represented in the looked after children population and on the child protection register. They do not have sufficient access to appropriate preventative services. Transition plans are not in place for all children with disabilities and only limited use is being made of the council's Kinship Care Placement scheme. Although parents are represented on the county's disabled children's development group, parents are not sufficiently involved in developing services. Pupil care is at least satisfactory and often good in most primary and all secondary schools. Combating bullying in schools and communities is a council priority and children and young people are actively involved in initiatives to reduce bullying and racial harassment in schools.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes for this area are good. Early years' education providers are supported well by the council and the rates of imposed actions following inspection are low. A small proportion of settings have serious weaknesses or are unsatisfactory and procedures for monitoring and challenging providers have been strengthened. The county's literacy and numeracy strategy is leading to improvement. Achievement levels in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 have improved and in 2003/04 were in line with national averages but remain below those of statistical neighbours. Detailed

analyses completed by the council to support the implementation of improvement strategies indicate underachievement to be mostly confined to one geographical area and pupils entitled to free school meals in particular.

Standards at Key Stage 2 have improved over a four-year period. Achievement in English and mathematics is at statistical neighbour averages and pupils make better than average progress between Key Stage 1 and 2. At Key Stage 3, standards have also improved but remain just below the average for similar areas although pupils make above average progress in relation to their prior attainment. The authority recognises that improving performance at key stages remains a priority in one geographical area. The gap between the authority and statistical neighbours in the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE qualifications grade A*-C has been closed but a lower than average proportion gain 5 or more GCSE grade A*-G including English and mathematics. A broader curriculum, with more vocational options, is being developed to support further improvement.

Improving the achievements of children and young people in the council's care together with those who are eligible for free school meals has been identified as priority areas by the council. The support provided for children and young people in the council's care has been strengthened. Their progress and the effectiveness of their personal education development plans are now monitored more carefully. Standards achieved by these young people have improved at all key stages. Their achievements at age 16 have improved significantly over a twelve-month period but, despite being in line with national averages, remain low overall. The council has also identified the need to respond more appropriately to the educational needs of young carers and are in the process of identifying their individual needs.

The proportion of children and young people with statements are in line with national average although the number of children placed in special schools is higher than average. The council is reviewing its specialist provision in order to promote greater inclusion and more effective use of resources.

Action to improve attendance has been effective in reducing authorised absences in both primary and secondary schools but the level of unauthorised absences is consistently higher than average in secondary schools and the rate has increased in primary schools. Secondary school pupils have at least good and mostly very good enrichment opportunities. In primary schools enrichment opportunities are at least satisfactory, and much are good or better. Pupils' learning is mostly well supported outside the school day particularly in secondary schools. The level of exclusions is in line with national averages. Although the time taken to make alternative arrangements for excluded pupils has reduced dramatically, the proportion of pupils receiving alternative tuition for more than one year is high.

Support for school improvement has improved considerably during the last three years. The authority has established clear procedures for self-evaluation and effective

strategies for improving school leadership and management. The proportion of schools placed in special categories is reducing. Schools are removed from designated categories in reasonable time and receive at least satisfactory and often good support.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. Most children and young people are provided with good support in managing change and responding to challenges in their lives. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are supported through well-developed multi-agency procedures for transition planning, resulting in effective transition from children's to adult services. A range of projects has been established to support and engage vulnerable children and young people and to reduce youth offending rates. Although there has been some recent reduction in re-offending rates and a lower than average proportion of young people receive custodial sentences, the full benefits of these initiatives are still to be realised. Despite the council's plans to reduce the rate of final warnings and convictions for looked after children the rate has increased slightly and performance has remained below average over a number of years. The council recognises that outcomes for some children cared for through its in-house residential services are poor and is re-organising and re-provisioning these services.

The Youth Offending Team has been effective in improving the proportion of young people under their supervision continuing in education or training or progressing to employment. There is effective targeting of support for vulnerable groups such as young mothers and settled travellers. Young people are provided with structured opportunities to express their views about the effectiveness of services and areas for improvement. The local authority has been particularly effective in ascertaining the views of looked after children who respond well to the opportunities provided to submit their views to statutory assessments and reviews. The council has recognised the need to improve the involvement of hard to reach groups in consultative processes and is making good progress through the use of the youth service.

The council makes good use of direct payments to support young people and their families. All looked after children are encouraged to express their views on issues affecting their care and education. They contribute to reviews and their personal education plans. Looked after young people are supported by the council to enable them to chair their own reviews. The council has a dedicated complaints officer for children and young people and an effective complaints policy underpinned by a process that seeks early local resolution and satisfactory outcomes for service users. Children with disabilities participate in their care reviews and the quality of social work practice in the specialist disability team is good.

The council has adopted a robust approach to combating bullying and has produced an anti-bullying video and toolkit, which is being used successfully by schools and children's homes.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The proportion of young people not in education or employment is well below the national average but above the average for the southeast. The LA is collaborating well with partners to bring about improvements. Severely disabled young people are supported well, which enables the majority to continue with their education until age 19. The proportion of young offenders continuing in education, training or employment is improving and is in line with similar authorities. Inequalities suffered by children in social care and by those from minority ethnic groups are being addressed but services are not yet sufficiently responsive to differing cultural needs.

The quality of education provided for 14-19 year-olds is variable. Recently inspected school sixth forms are at least satisfactory although average point scores for the area are below statistical neighbour and national averages. Most young people are provided with good support and guidance to help them make correct choices about post-16 education, training and career opportunities. Collaboration with the local Learning and Skills Council to improve education and training opportunities and learners' outcomes is very effective. The education and training needs of 14-19 year-olds have been analysed well and areas for improvement identified. Clear strategies have been developed to improve young people's access to appropriate education and training provision, particularly in specific localities where outcomes are unsatisfactory. In Hastings for example, wide ranging consultations over proposals to re-organise post-16 education and change the designation of five schools have been completed and the government's response is awaited.

The council has two effective leaving care teams who work closely with borough and district housing departments, local social landlords and voluntary organisations to provide a range of flexible accommodation for care leavers. Some 90% of care leavers are accommodated in appropriate settings. All care leavers have pathway plans, are involved in their preparation and have access to a good range of support services. There are strong links between the leaving care teams, the Connexions partnership, youth development groups and local colleges to ensure that young people progress to appropriate education, employment or training opportunities.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools' participation in sports • sex and relationship education in schools • teenage pregnancy strategy • multi agency substance misuse service for under 19s • health checks of looked after children. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage pregnancies in specific geographical areas • early intervention services to BME groups • expansion and re-provisioning of CAMHS services.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in foster placements • good overall performance on stability of placements • anti-bullying strategy, informed by consulting with young people • robust management oversight of case tracking, referrals and systems • robust partnership working with ACPC and good VCI self audit. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information and service delivery to black and minority ethnic groups • transition plans for children with disabilities • develop kinship care services further.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved school improvement services • making use of data to identify areas for improvement • improvement in alternative education services to excluded pupils • integrated support for looked after children to improve educational achievements • improved educational achievements for looked after children. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • level of unauthorised absences in both primary and secondary schools • achievements of specific groups such as FSM and achievements in specific geographical areas at all key stages • proportion of young people achieving 5 A*-G grades including English and mathematics.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted support from Youth Development Service and Connexions showing demonstrable improvement • proportion of looked after children who communicated their views at the statutory review • council's approach to consulting and involving young people • support for severely disabled young people to participate in their reviews • stability of looked after children population • appointment of an equalities officer. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rate of final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children • appropriate placement provision for minority ethnic groups • respite care services for disabled young people.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progression of young people with learning difficulties or disabilities to post-16 education and training • collaboration between the LA and local LSC in developing strategies for improving post 16 education and training • partnership working to improve education and training opportunities • improvements in number of care leavers in education, employment and training. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sensitivity of services to differing cultural needs of children and young people in the care of the council • access to appropriate post-16 provision in specific areas • below average A-level achievement in some schools.

Service management

The council is implementing a coherent strategy for responding to national priorities to improve outcomes for children and young people. Children and young people are appropriately involved and firm foundations have been established for further improvement. Chief Executives and senior managers in social care, education, youth justice and health services are committed to developing integrated services. Elected members have made a positive commitment to developing children's services and senior councillors frequently meet with children in a variety of settings.

Senior managers are visible, accessible and provide effective leadership. Council departments are working together well to improve services and the council has restructured its management and organisation in response to the Children's Act and

Every Child Matters. An integrated children's department has been established and the council is discussing the establishment of a Children's Trust with health partners. Inter-agency working at both strategic and operational levels are good and is already resulting in improved outcomes for children. Child protection is robustly managed by the Area Child Protection Committee. The council is committed to involving children and young people in policy development.

Clear strategies have been established for raising educational achievements. The council works well in partnership with other authorities to raise standards and improve value for money. Support for school improvement has been strengthened considerably. Working in partnership with the local Learning and Skills Council, the council has prepared clear plans for re-organising post-16 education and training in Hastings but plans have yet to receive government approval.

The council has significantly increased the budget for children's services this year. Gross expenditure on children in need services remains stable, weekly costs of children's homes and foster care is at an acceptable level and is in line with the comparator group. Although, an overspend of some £0.5 million was reported last year - an effective system of budget management is now in place with clear accountability for budgets and accessible advice from finance departments. The council plans to deliver a balanced budget in 2005-06. Performance management data has significantly improved information about expenditure. Commissioning priorities are set out in the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan and Children's Services have in place key elements of commissioning. The council has a Best Value Review programme and action plans are monitored through the scrutiny committee of Social Services and Health. There is a robust system in place enabling managers to use a range of performance information to inform decisions about service development. The council works well with the voluntary sector and is exploring ways of developing longer-term contracts to enable some voluntary organisations develop services on a longer term basis. The proportion of surplus places in primary schools is high and is being reviewed by the council.

Social care staff turnover and sickness levels are low and the workforce is stable. The council provides substantial training and development for care staff and managers, and allocates almost 5% of the budget to training. The proportion of BME staff employed exceeded the profile of minority groups within the wider population of the council. However, this is not mirrored at more senior levels. Recent changes in the organisation have been managed successfully. Staff are clear about how the council is responding to Every Child Matters, and are able to contribute to the process of realising the vision for an integrated Children's Service. The level of unfilled teacher vacancies is higher than similar authorities.

Outcomes in this area are good and improving. Social care services are showing sustained improvements year on year and achievements in education have improved steadily. The council has excellent capacity 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:

- a review of CAMHS services.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

Agencies collaborate to safeguard children according to the requirements of current government guidance:

- a review of early intervention and preventive services for ethnic minorities.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- a review of achievements in underperforming areas such as Hastings.

Making a positive contribution

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

- the impact of strategies to reduce offending rates in the looked after children population.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make a positive contribution:

- respite care services for children with disabilities.

Economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- the impact of the 14 to 19 strategy.

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: East Sussex County 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	3
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall 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