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| Friday 15 March 2024 | | |
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To the children and young people in Plymouth

## Inspection of children’s services

In January 2024, I and other Ofsted inspectors visited your area. We looked at your experiences of the help, protection and care given to you by workers at Plymouth City Council. We also looked at what leaders at the council do to make the services you use better.

We were very pleased to able to speak with children and young people who were receiving Plymouth’s services. We met some who are a part of various groups. For example, the young safeguarders and young carers. All the children and young people we spoke to gave us really helpful information about their experiences of children’s services in Plymouth.

We have asked the workers at the council to share this letter with you. It tells you the main things that inspectors found. There is a more detailed report on our website that you can read if you would like to.

**What grades did inspectors give the local authority?**

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| **Judgement** | **Grade** |
| The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families | **Requires Improvement to be Good** |
| The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection | **Requires Improvement to be Good** |
| The experiences and progress of children in care | **Requires Improvement to be Good** |
| The experiences and progress of care leavers | **Requires Improvement to be Good** |
| Overall effectiveness | **Requires Improvement to be Good** |

**What did the inspectors find**

Since the last inspection, people in charge and people who work in Plymouth have started to make improvements in services that help children.

* When children and families first need help, they are able to get help from early help support services. Where early help workers are involved they work with adults already involved in children’s lives like teachers, nurses and police officers to stop problems from getting bigger and for children to quickly get all the help that they need. Sometimes it isn’t always easy for this help to be provided to families and the managers in Plymouth are going to try to make this better
* We are really worried that school attendance in Plymouth is too low and the number of children and young people being excluded from school is too high. Both individual schools, academies and children’s services have to work together to make this better for children and young people.
* Most children and young people get the support they need to help them to be safe. Social workers make sure that they spend time with children and listen to what they are worried about and what they want to happen. The leaders in Plymouth recognise more needs to be done to make this even better.
* Social workers work hard to support children to be able to stay living with their parents by talking to them, their parents and other professionals like teachers, nurses or police officers, and by giving help and advice. When social workers have meetings with families they try to include other relatives even when they do not live in the same home as the children. This is to make sure that children and young people get help and support from their wider family and people who are important to them.
* Before children come into care, social workers think really carefully about whether a family member or friend could look after them. They also think carefully about whether children can go home with their parents when things are more settled. They make sure they are supported at home too.
* Most children and young people who are in care live with people who care about them and work hard to do their best for them. Many are helped well to be healthy, to have hobbies and to take part in fun activities. Staff in Plymouth need to do more work to make sure all the children are supported to be healthy.
* Social workers help children in care to understand the reasons why they are in care. They also work hard to make it possible for children to spend time with people who are important to them.
* Most Care experienced young people who have left care get the right support from their personal advisors who work hard to support them to be healthy, have a nice home, to study or work and do their best to achieve as much as possible.
* The children and young people in Plymouth work successfully alongside leaders, helping to improve life and opportunities for children in care and care experienced young people. They also help the council in providing training and interviews for social workers to make sure they are the best people to work with the children of Plymouth.
* Children who are young carers are given lots of support and fun activities to make sure that they are well supported too.
* The people in charge want to keep making children’s lives better and continue to look for more ways for services to improve.

We would like to thank all the children and young people who spoke with inspectors. We greatly appreciated the time you took to tell us about your experiences.

Yours faithfully,

Tracey Ledder

His Majesty’s Inspector