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Mr Michael O'Connor
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Westminster
13th floor west, City Hall
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Dear Mr O'Connor

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in April 2011 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with other published data.

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of inspection outcomes including the arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against similar authorities and/or national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2010, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

London Borough of Westminster children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Westminster perform excellently. In 2009 and 2010 services were judged to be performing well. In the last year there have been further improvements in the quality of universal provision for children and young people. The overall effectiveness of the large majority of all types of settings, services and institutions is good or better. The very large majority ensure that children and young people enjoy their learning and achieve well and the large majority are good at helping children and young people to stay safe.

The latest inspection of children's social care contact, referral and assessment arrangements took place in June 2011. The inspection identified an area of strength and areas of practice that met requirements, with five areas for development. The very recent inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children judged both services as good. The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe is outstanding.

Strengths

- While the number of registered day-care providers and childminders in the borough has reduced over the last year, the overall quality is good and improving.
- The large majority of primary and secondary school provision are at least good and no school in the borough is currently in an Ofsted category of concern, which is an improvement since last year. The very large majority of schools are good at helping children and young people stay safe. Previous very good performance in relation to young people with poor attendance has improved further.
- The overall effectiveness of special schools and the quality of the one special school sixth form has improved further since last year. One of the two special schools and its sixth form provision has recently been judged to be outstanding. The other special school is good overall, with a particular strength in the extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles.
- Performance is at least in line with the appropriate comparator for the very large majority of 2010 published indicators. Educational outcomes are as good as, and sometimes better than, similar area and national averages at ages 11, 16 and by age 19. Since 2007, results in tests and examinations have been improving at a faster pace in Westminster than nationally for these age groups. Of note is the very good improvement in the proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics; performance is significantly above the national average and provisional 2011 data show further improvement.

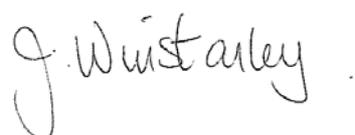
- The attainment of young people from low-income families is higher than found in similar areas and nationally at age 16 and by age 19. The proportions achieving five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics at age 16, and level 3 or equivalent qualifications by age 19 are amongst the highest in England. Achievement gaps between these young people and their peers in the borough are consistently small in comparison to all local authorities.
- The local authority has no children's homes of its own. The very large majority of the children's homes used by the local authority are good or better and none are inadequate.
- The very recent inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children found the impact of services on enabling looked after children and young people to enjoy their learning and achieve well is outstanding.

Areas for further improvement

- The overall quality of nursery school and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools remains very good, as it was last year. Progress has been made in the area for development identified in the 2010 children's services assessment letter regarding the achievements of children by the end of their Reception Year. In 2010 the proportion of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development was significantly below national and similar area averages; however, provisional data for 2011 show that there has been a good improvement and the gap with the national average is closing. The borough has a larger than average cohort of five-year-old children from low-income families and the proportion of these children achieving a good level of development fell slightly in 2010 and was below similar area and national averages. Provisional 2011 data for this group of children is not available, so this is an area for further improvement this year.
- Alternative provision for children and young people not accessing mainstream school is currently satisfactory. Partnership working is underway to rationalise and improve services for these children and young people.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment