

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
**Textphone** 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk

**Direct T** 020 7421 6666  
**Direct F** 020 7421 5633  
[Juliet.Winstanley@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:Juliet.Winstanley@ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr Richard Williams  
Acting Director for Children's Services  
Torbay Borough Council  
Children's Services  
Oldway, Torquay Road  
Paignton  
Devon TQ3 2TE

Dear Mr Williams

## 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.

## Torbay Borough Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs poorly (1)
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Children's services in Torbay Borough Council perform poorly. In 2010, a full inspection of safeguarding judged arrangements to be inadequate and, as a result, children's services overall were assessed as performing poorly because of significant weaknesses in social care provision. Capacity to improve was also judged to be inadequate. Since that time, there have been no further inspections of safeguarding and, until a full re-inspection of safeguarding takes place, the judgment remains that the children's services in Torbay perform poorly.

In other key respects, the strengths and areas for improvement remain largely the same as in 2010. The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and provision continues to help children and young people learn well and stay safe. A number of primary and secondary schools have become academies in the last year and almost all of them were good or outstanding at their last inspection as local authority schools; these grades have been taken into account in making this assessment.

### Strengths

- The very large majority of childminding and childcare provision is good or better and this proportion has increased in the last year, with a quarter of all providers now judged to be outstanding.
- Provision for children under five in nursery schools and primary schools is mostly good or better. Both children's centres that have been inspected are good. Standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now in line with similar areas and the national average, having improved substantially over the last four years.
- All secondary schools, bar one, are now good or better. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is in line with similar areas and the national average and continues to improve. Young people from low-income backgrounds also do as well as their counterparts elsewhere.
- The pupil referral unit and the sixth form in the special school are good.
- With one exception, all the school sixth forms are good or better, and the general further education college is outstanding. Achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications at the age of 19 continues to improve and is in line with similar areas and the national average. The proportion of young people in learning or work remains consistently above the average for similar areas. At the age of 19, young people from low-income backgrounds do better than the average for this group elsewhere. The gap in attainment between the low-income group and the majority of young people of the same age in Torbay is closing.

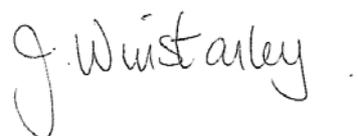
- The fostering service is good. The local authority has no children's homes of its own, but the large majority of the provision it commissions from other providers is good or better.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- Safeguarding arrangements are inadequate and capacity to improve is also inadequate. The effectiveness of services in helping children and young people feel safe is adequate but, in too many other important respects, arrangements are inadequate. These include the quality of provision, assessment and direct work with children and families, leadership and management, partnership work and quality assurance.
- Services for looked after children overall and capacity to improve are only satisfactory. The adoption service is also only satisfactory. The contribution of services to supporting looked after young people to prepare for adult life and independence is outstanding, with a high proportion of care leavers in education, training or work. However, in all other respects, outcomes for children in care are no better than satisfactory. The quality of most commissioned services is good or better.
- One in three primary schools are only satisfactory. Inspection grades over the last year continue to show marked variation in the quality of provision, with some schools improving while others deteriorate.
- The quality of special schools is mixed with one outstanding, one good and one that is now inadequate.

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 black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment