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Mr Jim Taylor
Executive Director for Services for Children and Young People
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Council Offices, Room 2.5
Wellington Road
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Dear Mr Taylor

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.

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately, as in 2010. The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and provision helps children and young people to learn and stay safe. The areas of strength and areas for further improvements remain similar to last year. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and more schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

An unannounced inspection was recently carried out of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection. Although this identified areas for improvement, it also identified strengths relating to out-of-hours social work for children and service user involvement. There were no areas for priority action.

Strengths

- For children under the age of five, the large majority of nurseries and primary schools make good or better provision; a situation that is very similar to last year. Since then, two of the local authority's children's centres have been inspected. Both were found to be good and to have good capacity to continue to improve. For the last three years, the achievement of five-year-olds at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been in line with the averages nationally and for similar areas. Over the same period, the gap in performance between young children from low-income families and others of the same age has narrowed.
- As in 2010, the majority of primary schools are good or better. With strong support from the local authority, one school that was inadequate last year is now satisfactory and has good capacity for further improvement. Of the two schools that remain inadequate, one is making good progress and the other satisfactory progress. They are receiving good and well focused support from the local authority.
- Of the five special schools maintained by the local authority, one has been re-inspected since last year and continues to be outstanding. Therefore, as in 2010, all these schools are good or better, with three of them being outstanding.
- Of the three pupil referral units, one has been re-inspected since last year and continues to be good. Therefore, the overall picture remains unchanged, with all settings being good.

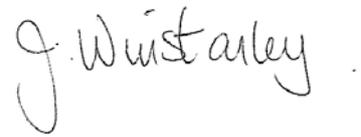
- The very large majority of children's homes in the area are good or better. Of the four homes run by the local authority, one is outstanding, compared to two last year. The other three are good. Nine of the 13 children's homes commissioned from other agencies or local authorities are good or better and none of them is inadequate.
- For the last four years, the attainment of 11-year-olds has been in line with the averages for similar areas and across the country. Provisional figures for 2011 indicate that performance is now slightly above the national average. As in the previous two years, GCSE results for 16-year-olds achieving A* to C in five subjects, including English and mathematics, are in line with averages elsewhere. The proportion of 19-year-olds gaining two A level passes or the equivalent has increased and is in line with the averages nationally and in similar areas.

Areas for further improvement

- There has been an increase in the proportion of early years and childcare providers that are good or better. However, too many of them are still no better than satisfactory.
- Too many secondary schools are only satisfactory. Since last year, one secondary school that was satisfactory has closed. Three other schools, one of which was outstanding and two of which were good, have become academies. Taken together, and with some improvement on 2010, only half of all the schools are good or better.
- One of the secondary schools that closed had an outstanding sixth form. When this judgement is taken into account, the proportion of post-16 providers that are good or better increases. As in 2010, none of the provision is inadequate. Nevertheless, there are still too many providers that are only satisfactory.
- The quality of adoption and fostering provision remains the same as last year, with only one out of three services being better than satisfactory. This is the adoption agency run by the local authority which, in its inspection in December 2009, was judged to be good overall and in each of the aspects examined. Additional support is being provided to the local authority's fostering agency to help it improve but, at present, it remains satisfactory.
- The gap between the attainment of 16- and 19-year olds on free schools meals and others of the same age is smaller than in similar local authorities and nationally but, against some measures, has widened since last year.

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 style with a large initial 'J' and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment