

8 November 2011

Mr Nick Wilson
Acting Strategic Director for Children, Schools and Families
Surrey County Council
County Hall, Room 116
Penrhyn Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT1 2DJ

Dear Mr Wilson

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.

Surrey County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Surrey County Council perform well, as in 2010. Almost all services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding. Almost all are good at keeping children and young people safe and all help them to learn well. Good performance has been sustained and areas of strength, notably the significantly high proportion of good and outstanding provision, remain largely the same as last year. More provision is now of high quality and less is inadequate. Standards at the age of five, 11 and 16 are mostly above average and continue to improve steadily, although not as fast as nationally or in similar areas. Some gaps in educational achievement for key vulnerable groups have closed on the previous year. The areas for improvement identified in 2010 have also not changed significantly. As found elsewhere, changes to primary and 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.

In 2011, Ofsted's most recent annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found two strengths, many areas of satisfactory practice and four areas for development, one remaining from the previous inspection in 2009. There were no priority areas requiring urgent attention. However, a full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children carried out in 2010, found the overall effectiveness of both as only adequate, although the local authority's capacity to improve was judged good. The local authority identifies good progress in consolidating and improving safeguarding services but the adequate overall effectiveness judgements from this inspection are pivotal to the children's services assessment in 2011 and the local authority remains as performs well until further inspection evidence is available. Recent inspection findings show excellent safeguarding in youth offending work.

Strengths

- The large majority of provision for early years and childcare is good or outstanding. More childminders and registered day-care is good or better since last year and all five children's centres are good or outstanding.
- The very large majority of early years education in nursery and primary schools is good or outstanding. Five-year-olds show above average achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage that continues to improve steadily. The proportion of children from low-income families who show a good level of development is above that found in similar areas but just below that found nationally. The gap with others of the same age reduced in 2010.

- The large majority of primary schools are good or outstanding. Two that are outstanding and one that is good have become academies since last year. Two inadequate primary schools are now satisfactory. Children make the progress expected in primary schools and by the age of 11 reach average standards, as do looked after children. In previous years, standards for 11-year-olds have been above the national average but results have not improved in line with the national trend. Provisional results for 2011 are above the national average.
- The large majority of secondary schools are good or outstanding. Five outstanding and five good schools have gained academy status since last year. One school that was inadequate in 2010 is now satisfactory. Most secondary schools have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and poor attendance by some young people is reducing steadily. At the age of 16, above average standards for five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics show steady improvement and looked after children show average attainment. For minority ethnic groups, attainment is above average and gaps between these groups and their peers are either small or closing.
- The large majority of provision after the age of 16 remains good or outstanding. Since last year, one secondary school sixth form is no longer inadequate and all five sixth form colleges are good or better. In 2010, average and increasing numbers of young people were in education, employment or training, including care leavers. Local data for 2011 show improvement with most 17-year-olds in education or training and numbers continuing to rise. Nineteen-year-olds gaining higher level qualifications are above average, but include only average numbers of young people from low-income families. The gap between them and their peers has closed steadily, but increased in 2010. Steadily increasing numbers of 19-year-olds, including those from low-income families, gain level 2 qualifications
- For young people not in mainstream education, most special schools and pupil referral units are good or outstanding.
- For looked after children, all arrangements for adoption and fostering remain good or outstanding as do almost all children's homes. The very large majority of services and providers commissioned by the local authority are good or better, including children's homes.

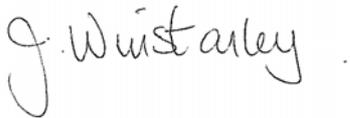
Areas for further improvement

- Seven primary schools are inadequate as is one secondary school. Monitoring visits show mainly good progress with the local authority making a good contribution.
- Sixteen-year-olds from low-income families and those with special educational needs have shown above average attainment for several years. However, in 2010, attainment for those from low-income families was slightly below the national average, although remaining above that

found in similar areas. Similarly, attainment for young people with special educational needs was just below that found in similar areas, although remaining above the national average. For both groups, gaps with their peers in Surrey have increased over the last four years.

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 period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment