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8 November 2011

Dr Sharon Menghini  
Director of Children and Young People's Services  
Stoke-on-Trent City Council  
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Dear Dr Menghini

## 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.

## Stoke-on-Trent City Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Stoke-on-Trent City Council perform adequately. This is the same as in 2010. The majority of provision for children and young people is good or better and helps children to stay safe and enjoy their learning. However, although improving, the overall quality of universal provision in secondary schools and in post-16 education remains only satisfactory. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and some schools have become academies. The most recent inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment. The strengths and areas for development remain largely the same as last year.

A recent full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children found services to be adequate, with good capacity to improve. It found that the areas for improvement identified in the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, that took place in April 2011, had been addressed. However, the full inspection identified further aspects of services needing improvement and a few requiring immediate attention. Outcomes for looked after children and young people are mostly good, but inadequate for young people leaving care.

### Strengths

- Early years and childcare settings are mostly good or outstanding and none are now inadequate. The proportion of good or better registered day care has improved and the very large majority are now good or better.
- Nursery schools are also mostly good or better. Levels of development for very young children in the Early Years Foundation Stage match those found in similar areas. Children from low-income families also do well and the gap in attainment between this group and all children in Stoke-on-Trent of the same age is closing.
- Specialist education provision is mostly good. One of the two pupil referral units is outstanding, as are all the special schools, including the independent special schools. The two special school sixth forms are outstanding.
- For looked after children and young people, the local authority fostering agency has improved from satisfactory to outstanding. All 10 local authority children's homes are at least good and this is an improvement on 2010. Almost all the privately-run children's homes used by the local authority are also good or better.
- Results at GCSE match similar areas and have improved at a faster pace than the national rate of improvement. The proportion of 16-year-olds

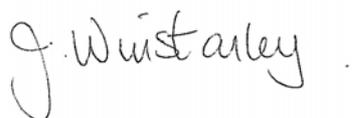
eligible for free school meals who achieve at least five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics is also rising and matches similar areas. However, as reported in 2010, the proportion of 16-year-olds with special educational needs obtaining good qualifications is below the average for this group in similar areas.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- Over a third of primary schools are only satisfactory. There were no published Key Stage 2 results in 2010 but, in the three previous years, results did not improve and were consistently below similar areas. Provisional results for 2011, however, show some improvement.
- Too much secondary and post-16 education provision is only satisfactory. This includes almost half of the local authority secondary schools and the two school sixth forms. The general further education and tertiary college is good, but the sixth form college and the two independent specialist colleges for young people with moderate or complex needs are only satisfactory. The proportion of 19-year-olds, including young people from a low-income background, attaining a level 2 qualification matches performance in similar areas, but fewer young people than in similar areas achieve a qualification at level 3. The gap in attainment, at that level, between all young people in Stoke-on-Trent and those from a low-income background is not narrowing.
- The full inspection of services for looked after children and young people found that care leavers, especially those over the age of 17, do not engage sufficiently in education and training. Almost half of care leavers aged between 17 and 19 years are not in education, work or training. Good quality emergency accommodation for homeless young people was found to be lacking.
- Attainment of young people from an Asian background, is improving but it is still well below the average for the same group nationally and in similar areas.

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