

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



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Ms Romi Bowen
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Southwark
PO Box 64529
London SE1P 5LX

Dear Ms Bowen

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 Southwark children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Southwark perform well. Last year children's services were judged to be adequate. Improvements in the overall effectiveness of universal provision in the borough mean that there is now enough good provision for the higher grade. Changes in secondary provision continue with more schools recently converting to academy status. The previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment. The large majority of all services, settings and institutions are now good or better and the very large majority are good at helping children and young people to stay safe and enjoy their learning.

The February 2011 inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found two strengths, some areas of practice that met requirements and two areas for development. All but one area of development identified at the previous inspection in April 2010 have been addressed and further work is ongoing to embed the common assessment framework across children's services in the borough.

Strengths

- More nursery and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools is good or better than last year. The number of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development is improving year on year and at a faster pace than found elsewhere. Performance is in line with the national average and better than in similar areas.
- The overall effectiveness of primary schools has improved and the large majority are now good or better. Provisional 2011 data show a significant improvement in test results for 11-year-olds which will bring performance above the national average for the first time. The pace of improvement in these results since 2007 is much better than found nationally.
- Four of the five local authority maintained secondary schools are outstanding, the other being satisfactory. The overall effectiveness of secondary provision, both the local authority's maintained schools and academies, is improving with the large majority now being good or better. No schools are in an Ofsted category of concern. A new academy in the borough has not yet had a full inspection but an Ofsted monitoring visit shows that good progress has been made towards raising standards.
- Specialist provisions for more vulnerable children and young people, such as the local authority's fostering and adoption agency are good overall. The local authority's children's home is outstanding and the quality of provision it commissions is good overall. No children are placed in

children's homes that are currently inadequate. As last year, the large majority of special schools for those children and young people with additional and complex needs are at least good. The most recent inspections show that the care, guidance and support offered is a particular strength of these schools. All sixth form provision for these pupils is also at least good.

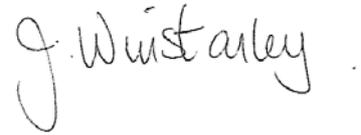
- Educational outcomes are at least in line with similar areas and the national average at all key stages. The pace of improvement in results for all age groups has been significantly better than that found nationally over the last four years. For example, in 2007 the proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics in Southwark was seven points below the national average. However, year on year improvement and a significant rise in results last year means that performance is now slightly above the national average.
- Achievement gaps between children and young people from low-income families and their peers in Southwark are comparatively small and attainment for these groups is above the national average. For example, the proportion of young people from low-income families achieving level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 is improving year on year and is significantly above the national average. The gap between these young people and their peers in the borough narrowed substantially in 2010.

Areas for further improvement

- Despite an improvement in the proportion of registered childminding that is good or better, early years and childcare provision remains satisfactory overall. There is a lower proportion of good or better registered day care provision in the borough than found nationally. Three of the six children's centres inspected this year are satisfactory with two being good and the other outstanding.
- The overall effectiveness of secondary sixth forms remains satisfactory overall. However, no sixth forms are now inadequate. The general further education and tertiary college is satisfactory and local data show that attainment for 16- to 18-year-olds is improving.
- Despite improvement in 2010, at the age of 16 only half of White young people gained five good GCSEs including English and mathematics, which is below the national average and the average for all young people in Southwark. White young people achieve less well than their peers in the borough from Asian, Black and mixed backgrounds.

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