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8 November 2011

Mr Clive Webster
Executive Director for Children's Services and Learning
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Dear Mr Webster

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.

Southampton City Council children's services assessment 2011

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Children's services assessment | Performs well (3) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|

Children's services in Southampton City Council perform well. This marks a clear improvement on the assessment in 2010 when services performed adequately. The local authority has achieved good recent improvements at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 and all primary schools are now at least satisfactory. The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. However, although the proportion of local authority secondary schools judged to be good or better has increased this year, the quality of secondary schools overall and of some the specialist education provision remains mixed. The very large majority of provision helps children and young people learn and stay safe.

An unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, published in June 2011, found three strengths, many areas that met requirements and three areas of development. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention. Significant progress has been made in almost all areas since the first unannounced inspection in August 2010.

Strengths

- The very large majority of registered day care and the large majority of childminding provision are good or better. The proportion of outstanding providers has increased over the last year.
- For children under five, nursery schools and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools are mostly good or outstanding. Levels of development for five-year-olds match similar areas and the national average. Improvements over the last four years are better than those seen in similar areas. Children from low-income families do better than their counterparts nationally, with levels of development that are also improving well.
- All primary schools are satisfactory or better and the majority remain good or outstanding. Key Stage 2 results are in line with the average for similar areas. Good improvements have been sustained since a low point in 2009, and the city's schools are closing the gap in performance with the national average.
- The inadequate pupil referral unit received good support from the local authority and was judged to be satisfactory in 2010. The other pupil referral unit remains outstanding.
- All four post-16 education institutions are good. Achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications at the age of 19 is in line with the average for similar areas and improving. The achievement of young people from low-

income backgrounds is also improving, but is not yet as good as performance for their counterparts elsewhere.

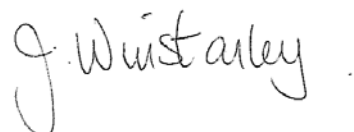
- The local authority fostering and adoption services are good. All services commissioned through independent fostering and adoption agencies are good or outstanding. The large majority of residential placements commissioned by Southampton for looked after children are also good or better. The local authority recognises the need to improve the quality of provision in its own children's homes which were judged to be satisfactory prior to closure in November 2010. Since re-opening under new statements of purpose this summer, one home has been judged to be satisfactory and the other awaits inspection as a new provision.

Areas for further improvement

- Standards at Key Stage 4 are in line with similar areas and improving well, but the quality of secondary schools remains mixed. The majority of local authority-run schools are good or better, but too much provision overall, including the two academies, is only satisfactory. The inadequate academy is making satisfactory progress. Persistent school absence rates remain above the average for similar areas. The proportion of young people from low-income backgrounds achieving five or more A* to C grade GCSEs in 2009/10 is below the average for similar areas and that found nationally.
- The quality of provision in special schools remains mixed. One of the two special school sixth forms is now inadequate and three of the five maintained special schools are only satisfactory.
- The performance of the Wessex Youth Offending Service, which serves Southampton and two other local authorities, is inconsistent across the area. Some teams and offices produce work of a much higher standard than others and overall performance is below average.

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