

9 December 2010

Mr Cliff Turner
Director for Learning and Care (Children's Services)
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall, St Ives Road
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Dear Mr Turner

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes 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 data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against 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 2009, 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.

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead perform well.

The large majority of services and settings inspected by Ofsted are good or better. This reflects the local authority's strong performance of previous years. Very little provision is inadequate. The large majority of early years education provision and primary schools are good or better. The quality of childminding and childcare has improved and is good overall. The number of good or better secondary schools has increased, but 4 of the 13 remain satisfactory. Post-16 education provision is good overall. Seven of the eight school sixth forms are good or better but the local agricultural college is only satisfactory. The residential special school is good and the special school improved from adequate to good at its most recent inspection. Provision in pupil referral units overall and in the two sixth forms in special schools is not as good as that found nationally. The fostering service is outstanding and the adoption service is good. Arrangements to help children stay safe and achieve well are good or better in the very large majority of services and settings.

The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found a broad balance of strengths and areas for development. The local authority's work to identify and monitor private fostering arrangements is good.

Performance measures show that a very large majority of outcomes for children and young people are broadly average or better. Test and examination results for 11- and 16-year-olds are in line with the average for similar areas, with improvements also in line. The number of young people at age 19 who gain qualifications, equivalent to five or more good GCSEs or two A levels, is consistently well above average. The local authority is having some success in improving educational outcomes for children and young people from low-income families and in closing the gap in attainment between them and the majority at age 16. However the picture for children and young people with special educational needs is much less positive as the attainment gap at age 11 and 16 years is slow to close. The number of 17-year-olds in education or training has improved, but the most recent validated data show numbers are still 10 percentage points below the average for similar areas.

Key areas for further development

- Improve provision in pupil referral units and the sixth forms of special schools.
- Close the gap in attainment between the majority of children and young people and those with special educational needs.
- Increase the number of 17-years-olds in education or training.

Outcomes for children and young people

The very large majority of services give good support to children and young people in living healthy lives. A comparatively low and falling number of children are seriously overweight and participation in sport is above average. The latest figures show the teenage pregnancy rate is amongst the very lowest in England, following a marked decrease since 2005. By contrast, the proportion of young people screened for chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease, is well below average and amongst the worst performance seen nationally. The local authority and its partners have developed new sexual health services in Maidenhead, but recognise that there is more to do in Windsor and the surrounding areas.

Arrangements to help children and young people stay safe are good in the very large majority of services. The fostering service is outstanding and the adoption service is good. A recent inspection of front-line child protection services identified a broad balance of strengths and areas for development. Inspectors judged the quality of work to assess the risks to children as satisfactory overall, but some social workers' caseloads were too high and they were not always able to complete assessments and close cases on time. Road traffic accidents resulting in death or serious injury to children rose to their highest point in four years in 2008, but the number of unintentional or deliberate injuries to children more generally remains in line with the average for similar areas.

Provision to help children and young people achieve well and enjoy their learning is good in the large majority of services. Three quarters of primary schools are good or better but, with over a third of schools judged satisfactory, provision in secondary schools is not as good. Five-year-olds do better than children of the same age elsewhere. Test and examination results for 11-year-olds are in line with the average and improving at about the same rate. GCSE results are also in line, but improving at a faster rate than in similar areas. Provisional results for both age groups in 2010 suggest this good performance has been maintained. The local authority is having some success in raising the attainment of children and young people from low-income families and in closing the gap between them and the majority of 16-year-olds. However, the picture for children and young people with special educational needs is much less positive as the attainment gap at age 11 and 16 years is slow to close and, for the older age group, has been wider than the national average for some years. The number of young people with poor school attendance has been well below the average for some years and has reduced at a faster rate than in similar areas.

Arrangements to encourage children and young people to have a say in decision-making are well established, and the number of young people involved in organised leisure activities outside of school is high compared to the average in similar areas. By most measures, the youth offending service works very well. Strategies to reduce offending by young people are having a positive impact: young offenders are much more likely to be in education, training or work and much less likely to re-offend than is the case in similar areas.

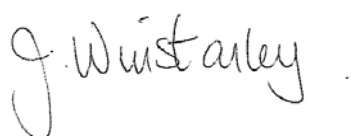
Children and young people overall get good support from the very large majority of services to do well in adult life. The number of young people at age 19 gaining qualifications equivalent to five good GCSEs, or two A levels, is well above average. This is also the case for those from low income families and the gap between them and the majority at this age is closing. The number of 17-year-olds in education or training age rose in 2008, but remains some 10 percentage points below the average for similar areas. The quality of schools' sixth form provision is good overall and local data show that a half of all young people choose to study there and another third at the Windsor campus of a good further education college based outside the area. The local authority and its partners recognise that the current economic climate has reduced employment opportunities for young people and are looking at ways to respond, for example through the development of new diploma programmes. The number of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, training or work is in line with the average and mirrors the rising trend seen in similar areas over the last three years. Outcomes for care leavers are much better than those seen nationally: all of them have a place to live that meets their needs and the very large majority are in work, education or training.

Prospects for improvement

Children's services performed well in 2009 and continue to do so. The local authority and its partners focus effectively on improving services, whilst maintaining the high quality provision that is already well established. A new multi-agency service for children with complex needs has been put in place. Staff in front-line child protection services have good managerial support and supervision. Good recruitment processes have helped to secure more permanent social workers and reduce the reliance on agency staff. Management information is used well by the local authority and its partners to make improvements. In schools, test and examination results for the great majority of children and young people are improving year on year, but the picture is not yet as encouraging for those with special educational needs. The local authority and its partners recognise that further work is also needed to consolidate the improvements made by children and young people from low income families. Reducing the attainment gap continues to be a high priority in local plans.

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 cursive script that reads "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment