

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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Mr Michael O'Connor
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Westminster
13th Floor West, City Hall
64 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6QP

Dear Mr O'Connor

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.

The London Borough of Westminster children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Westminster perform well.

The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The large majority of early years and childcare settings are good or better. The large majority of nursery and primary schools are also good or outstanding. Significantly, two-thirds of secondary schools are now at least good; a proportion that is better than that found in similar areas and nationally and five of the nine are outstanding. The majority of sixth forms in schools are at least good. One of the general further education colleges is good and the other satisfactory. All of the special schools in the borough are good. Two of the three pupil referral units are now satisfactory, the other, providing for children who are unwell and cannot attend school, is good. The local authority's adoption and fostering agencies are both good. The very large majority of services and settings are good at helping children and young people to stay safe and the large majority are good at helping children and young people to enjoy their learning and do well.

The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found many satisfactory areas of practice, one strength, seven areas for further development, but no areas requiring priority action.

Most performance measures are at least in line with appropriate comparators. However, childhood obesity levels are higher than average. The large majority of performance measures for educational attainment, including results at the age of 11 and 16, are in line with the average in similar areas. However, the number of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development, although improving, is below average. Overall, strategies to close the gap in educational outcomes between vulnerable children, such as those from low-income families, and others of the same age are proving successful.

Key areas for further development

- Improve the overall effectiveness of pupil referral units.
- Increase the number of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception year at school.
- Reduce the high levels of childhood obesity.

Outcomes for children and young people

The large majority of health performance measures are at least in line with appropriate comparators. More babies are being breast-fed six weeks after birth than previously and performance is better than the national average. Childhood obesity

however, remains a concern for the local authority and its partners with levels higher than those in similar areas and an increase in 2009 for five-year-olds. The local authority and its partners have a strategy in place to bring about improvement. More children and young people are taking part in sport regularly, although numbers are below the national average. The borough has a lower rate of teenage pregnancies than found elsewhere. The rate of reduction over the last decade is broadly in line with the average in similar areas, but latest figures show an increase in both the number and rate. Higher numbers of young people are being screened for chlamydia to improve their sexual health than elsewhere and performance has improved significantly on last year.

The very large majority of settings and services for children and young people are good at helping them to stay safe. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services found no very serious weakness requiring urgent action. Staff morale in the duty and assessment team is high and staff turnover is low. Almost all staff are permanent and have manageable caseloads. Staff feel very well supported by their managers who are approachable and easily accessible. However, included in the seven areas for further development are concerns about initial assessments of children in need cases being undertaken by social work assistants without the additional oversight by, or joint allocation to, a qualified and experienced social worker; concerns about the low number of child protection enquiries of children with severe and complex disabilities; and concerns about the embedded use of the common inspection framework.

The large majority of all types of services and settings are good at helping children to enjoy their learning and achieve well. However, provision is not as good in the pupil referral units in this respect. More five-year-olds, including those that have English as an additional language and those from low-income families, are achieving a good level of development than previously. However, despite a significant improvement in 2009, overall performance remains below the average for similar areas. By the age of 11, results in national tests match similar areas and 2010 provisional data show significant improvement, especially for girls. GCSE results for 16-year-olds also match similar areas, and are improving at a faster pace than the average for similar areas. More young people are getting five good GCSEs including English and mathematics than in previous years and more are getting good science grades. Provisional GCSE results for 2010 show significant improvement. Strategies to reduce absences continue to be successful. Less than 3% of pupils now have poor attendance at school, significantly lower than those in similar areas and the lowest rate in England.

The local authority has a strong track record in ensuring children and young people have good opportunities to contribute their views and be involved with planning and reviewing local services. The number of young people involved in the youth parliament continues to increase and higher than average numbers of 15-year-olds are taking part in organised activities outside of school. Youth crime remains a priority for the local authority and its partners. The youth offending service partnership is performing well against national performance measures and has a good record in ensuring that young offenders are in appropriate education, training

or work. Prevention activity is contributing to lower numbers of young people breaking the law for the first time. The re-offending rate is improving and is now in line with similar areas.

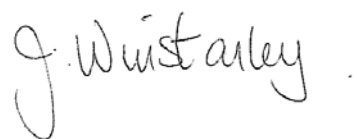
The number of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in work, education or training has fallen year-on-year since 2005 and is in line with similar areas. However, there has been an increase in the numbers of young people leaving the local authority's care that are not in work, education or training. More young people are gaining qualifications by the age of 19 than previously. However, although the numbers gaining two A levels or equivalent are broadly average, performance is not as good as the average in similar areas at GCSE level. Westminster has closed the gap in attainment between young people at the age of 19 from low-income families and others of the same age. In 2009, Westminster had the highest proportion of these young people achieving two A levels or equivalent in England.

Prospects for improvement

The local authority and its partners demonstrate a good understanding of local needs, show strong ambition to enhance the life chances of children and young people in the borough and set challenging targets for improvement. The large majority of local provision for children and young people is of good quality. The local authority provides a good level of support to schools causing concern. Secondary school inspections show improvement with no secondary schools not meeting the expected standard in 2009. However, two pupil referral units for more vulnerable pupils are only satisfactory. Outcomes continue to improve for children and young people in Westminster; however, challenges remain in some areas, such as the high levels of childhood obesity and below average educational outcomes at age five.

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