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Ms Carolyn Godfrey
Corporate Director, Children and Education
Wiltshire Council
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Dear Ms Godfrey

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.

Wiltshire Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Wiltshire Council perform well. This good performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and the very large majority of provision helps children and young people stay safe and learn well. Strengths and areas for development remain much the same as last year. A number of outstanding schools have now become academies so their most recent inspection grades as local authority schools have been taken into account in making this assessment.

In July 2011, an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection identified areas of strength and areas of practice that met requirements, with some areas for development. The majority of areas of development identified in the previous unannounced inspection in July 2010 have been addressed.

Strengths

- The large majority of childminding and childcare provision is good or better and all provision is now at least satisfactory. The proportion of good and outstanding providers has increased over the last year.
- For children under five, the very large majority of provision in nurseries and the Early Years Foundation Stage within primary schools remains good or better. Standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage are in line with similar areas and the national average and have improved at a faster rate than average over the last four years. Children from low-income families do better than their counterparts in similar areas and the attainment gap between this group and the majority of five-year-olds in the county is closing.
- The proportion of primary schools that are good or better has increased and the large majority are now good or better. Standards at Key Stage 2 are in line with the average for similar areas and the rate of improvement over the last four years is much better than the national rate.
- The large majority of secondary schools and their sixth forms are good or better, as they were in 2010. The local authority has provided good support to the two secondary schools that were in an Ofsted category of concern. One has now been judged to be satisfactory for overall effectiveness and the other is making satisfactory progress. The proportion of 16-year-olds achieving five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, and the proportion of 19-year-olds achieving level 2 and level 3 qualifications are in line with similar areas and the national average; however, the rates of improvement over the last four

years are not as good as those seen elsewhere. Provisional results at Key Stage 4 in 2011 indicate an improvement of four percentage points.

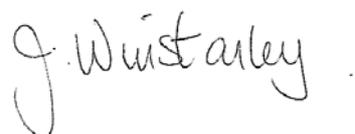
- The local authority children's home is outstanding and the very large majority of provision commissioned for children and young people who are placed elsewhere is good or better. Local authority fostering and adoption services are good, as they were in 2010. The large majority of private and voluntary fostering and adoption agencies used by the local authority are good or outstanding.
- All three aspects judged in the recent inspection of the youth offending service are strong, with only minimal improvement required.

Areas for further improvement

- In most respects, contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection are satisfactory. However, three areas for development remain unresolved from the 2010 inspection and additional areas for development have been identified in 2011.
- For young people from low-income backgrounds, achievement at the age of 16 and 19 is amongst the lowest within the group of similar areas to Wiltshire, with improvements over the last few years that are also slower than average. However, provisional GCSE results for 2011 show a notable reduction in the gap between the low-income group and the majority of 16-year-olds locally. Young people with special educational needs do not do as well as their counterparts elsewhere. Persistent absence rates for the county's secondary schools remain above the average for similar areas.
- Some areas of provision remain, or have been judged, only satisfactory in 2011. These include the general further education college, a third of childminding and the three children's centres that have been inspected. The pupil referral unit has deteriorated from satisfactory to inadequate this year.

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 "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment