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Ms Wendy Fabbro
Strategic Director, People Group
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Dear Ms Fabbro

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.

Warwickshire County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Warwickshire County 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 provision helps children and young people learn well and stay safe. Areas of strength and aspects needing improvement have not changed significantly. As elsewhere, secondary school provision is changing in Warwickshire. The most recent inspection judgements for schools that have become academies 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 found two strengths, much that is satisfactory and no areas requiring urgent remedial action. Six of the eight areas for development identified at the previous inspection, in June 2010, have been addressed well. Two areas require further development to improve the consistency of practice.

Strengths

- For very young children, provision in early years and childcare settings is mostly good or better and very little is inadequate. The children's centres inspected provide good support for children and their parents or carers. The large majority of nursery provision is good or outstanding. Children make good progress in their levels of development and, over the past four years, outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved at a faster pace than the national rate of improvement. Outcomes for children from low-income families have also improved and they now do as well as such children in similar areas.
- As in 2010, most primary schools are good or better. The local authority provides effective support to the two schools in an Ofsted category of concern. Key Stage 2 results have improved year on year and, in 2010, they were above those of similar local authorities. Provisional results for 2011 however, show a slight dip.
- Most post-16 education provision is good or better. Three of the four colleges are at least good and the majority of school sixth forms are also good. The proportion of 19-year-olds achieving a level 2 qualification continues to match the average in similar areas, including young people from a low-income background.
- At Key Stage 4, results for 16-year-olds have risen at a faster pace than the national rate of improvement. In 2010, results matched similar areas and were slightly above the national average. The proportion of 16-year-olds from low-income families who achieve at least five good GCSEs

including English and mathematics has also risen. These young people do as well as their counterparts in similar areas.

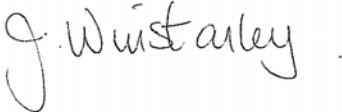
- One local authority special school improved from satisfactory to good this year and all nine special schools are now good or outstanding. The two residential special schools and much of the special school sixth form provision are good, as they were in 2010.
- For looked after children and young people, half of the children's homes are good and the remainder are outstanding. The adoption and fostering agencies, including those run by private and voluntary organisations, are mostly good or better.
- The inspection of the youth offending service identified good performance overall and found that working relationships with partner agencies were effective.

Areas for further improvement

- The large pupil re-integration unit is inadequate as it was in 2010. An Ofsted monitoring visit to the unit in May 2011 found that, although progress since the previous monitoring visit was satisfactory, inadequate progress had been made since the unit became subject to special measures. It found that targets set out in the action plan had not been met and teaching was inadequate. Despite some reduction in cases of extreme poor behaviour, persistent disruption was still too frequent. The inadequate progress made on ensuring good provision for all pupils with special educational needs, particularly those with statements, is a serious concern. The local authority has recently published proposals to improve provision for excluded pupils. These proposals include the closure of the pupil referral unit, with funding devolved to partnerships of schools to invest in inclusion and alternative provision.
- As reported in 2010, provision in some key areas is only satisfactory. This is found in over a third of local authority secondary schools, four school sixth forms and the sixth form college. Although results are improving for all young people and are in line with similar authorities, at the age of 16 and 19 the attainment gap between young people from a low-income background and the majority of young people of the same age in Warwickshire remains wider than the national 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 style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment