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Ms Laura Johnston
Interim Director of Children's Services
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Dear Ms Johnston

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.

Telford and Wrekin Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Telford and Wrekin Council perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of provision is good or better overall and helps children and young people to stay safe and enjoy learning. There have been some changes in the strengths and areas for improvement identified last year. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and more schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

In May of this year, the local authority received an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection. This identified strengths in protecting children at risk of sexual exploitation and in the business support provided for social workers. There were no areas for priority action.

Strengths

- Since 2010, there has been an increase in the proportion of childminders who are good and outstanding and the number of inadequate providers has fallen from three to one. Since last year, five children's centres have been inspected. Of these, three are outstanding and have outstanding capacity for improvement. The other two are good on both accounts.
- The very large majority of nurseries and primary schools continue to make good or better provision for children under five. As in 2010, none of these settings is inadequate. Since 2007, the achievement of five-year-olds at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased at a faster rate than nationally and is now in line with the averages for similar areas and across the country. Over the last three years, the achievement gap between five-year-olds from low-income families and others of the same age has narrowed and is now smaller than the averages nationally and for similar areas.
- The attainment of 11-year-olds has risen at an increasing rate over the last three years and moved from being below the national average to being in line with it. Provisional figures for 2011 indicate that this good improvement has been sustained.
- Over the last four years, the attainment of 16-year-olds has improved at a considerably faster rate than elsewhere. The proportion gaining A* to C grades in five GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics, is now in line with the averages nationally and for similar areas. The proportion of students gaining two or more grades A* to C in science subjects is higher than in similar local authorities and across the country. The gap in attainment between 16-year-olds from low-income families and others of the same age has fluctuated over the last five years. The most recent

figures show that it is in line with the national average and slightly narrower than in similar areas.

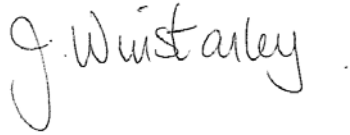
- The proportion of 19-year-olds gaining two A level passes or the equivalent has increased over the last three years. It is now in line with the averages nationally and for similar areas. The achievement gap at this age between young people from low-income families and their contemporaries has fluctuated over the last five years. The most recent figures show that it is slightly above the averages elsewhere.
- The local authority's fostering agency has not been re-inspected since last year and remains good.
- The local authority has no children's homes of its own. Of the 20 homes that it commissions from other agencies or local authorities, 18 are good or better and the remaining two are satisfactory.

Areas for further improvement

- There is a need to increase the number of good and better schools in the local authority. As in 2010, none of the primary schools is inadequate but almost half are no better than satisfactory. The recent removal of the notice to improve from one secondary school means that there are no longer any inadequate schools in this phase. Nevertheless, five of the 10 maintained schools are no better than satisfactory.
- As in 2010, provision for education beyond the age of 16 is too variable. Three of the six providers are only satisfactory. There is a greater proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, work or training in this local authority than in similar areas. This has been the case for the last three years.
- The quality of provision in the pupil referral units has declined. In 2009, the short stay pupil referral unit was judged to be good. Since then it has been restructured and the most recent inspection shows that it is now satisfactory with good capacity to improve. The centre is successful in returning pupils to mainstream education but less so in the case of Key Stage 3 pupils who have been permanently excluded. This is because partnerships with the local authority are not consistently effective in supporting the process. The pupil referral unit for 14- to 16-year-olds is inadequate. The most recent monitoring report shows that, with the strong support of the local authority, it is making satisfactory progress. However, attendance remains low, with a minority of students having particularly poor attendance records.

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, reading "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment