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Dr Peter Simpson and Mr Stephen Richards
Joint Acting Strategic Directors of Children, Young People and Learning
London Borough of Sutton
Children, Young People and Learning Services
The Grove
Carshalton
Surrey SM5 3AL

Dear Dr Simpson and Mr Richards

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.

London Borough of Sutton children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Sutton perform excellently. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary school provision are taking place and 11 of the 14 secondary schools have become academies. Previous inspection grades for these schools have been taken into consideration in this assessment. The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and provision of high quality helps children and young people learn and stay safe. Areas of strength remain as last year.

An unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection carried out in 2011 found strengths and areas for development but none required priority action.

Strengths

- Provision for early years and childcare has improved and the large majority are now good or better.
- For children under five, provision in nurseries and primary schools has improved and the very large majority are good or better with a quarter outstanding. Very young children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved steadily and are higher than in similar areas and much higher than the national average. Children from families with low incomes consistently do better than the average for such groups in similar areas and the gap between these children and their peers in Sutton has narrowed more than it has nationally in recent years.
- Primary schools have improved in their overall effectiveness and the large majority are now good or better and none are inadequate. The local authority provides good support to help schools improve. Standards achieved by 11-year-olds in national tests are well above national and similar area averages and improved further in 2011.
- All secondary schools are now good or better. Young people do much better in national tests at the age of 16 than elsewhere as do those from families with low incomes and the gap between these young people and others in Sutton narrowed last year.
- After the age of 16, the very large majority of provision is good or better with all but one school sixth form good or better. Proportionally, far more young people than elsewhere achieve five or more good GCSEs or two A levels or equivalent qualifications by the age of 19 and standards have improved steadily. Young people of this age from families with low incomes also do better than elsewhere and particularly well in the extent to which they gain higher level qualifications.

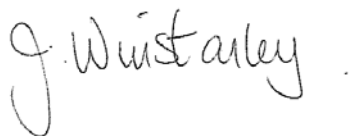
- For children and young people requiring specialist services, all special schools and pupil referral units are now good. Young people with special educational needs who follow the national curriculum do a little better than they do nationally and the gap with others in the borough is narrowing. For looked after children, fostering and adoption services continue to be good. Where the local authority commissions services, the very large majority of placements are with good or better fostering or adoption agencies and the large majority in good or better children's homes.

Areas for further improvement

- The recent inspection of the general further education college found that overall effectiveness has not improved since the previous inspection and continues to be satisfactory.

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, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment