

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



8 November 2011

Ms Therese Gillespie
Corporate Director for Children and Young People
South Gloucestershire Council
PO Box 2082
Castle Street
Thornbury BS35 9BQ

Dear Ms Gillespie

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.

South Gloucestershire Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------

Children's services in South Gloucestershire Council perform adequately. This is the same as in 2010. The overall quality of specialist and targeted provision remains good. However universal provision is not as strong, with slightly less than half of local authority maintained secondary schools and sixth forms being good or better. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and some schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment. Improvement can be seen in the proportion of registered early years and childcare settings that are now good or better. The key areas for further development identified in last year's assessment remain appropriate priorities within the local authority's plans.

The unannounced inspection of children's social care contact, referral and assessment arrangements carried out in May 2011 identified many areas of practice that met requirements, no strengths and four areas for development. Two of the areas for development identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in June 2010 have been addressed fully. In the two other areas, improvements have been made, but are not yet fully embedded.

Strengths

- The overall effectiveness of nursery school and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools is good or better in the very large majority of settings, which is an improvement on last year. The proportion of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development improved in 2010 and was broadly in line with similar areas and the national average. Provisional 2011 data show a significant improvement this year.
- The large majority of primary schools are good or better and only one school is inadequate, although last year there were none. Following a dip in performance in 2010, provisional data for 2011 show a good improvement in test results for 11-year-olds.
- The local authority provides good support to the very small number of schools that are, or have been, in Ofsted categories of concern. Monitoring visits to these schools show that improvement work has been well-focused and effective.
- Specialist provision, including all three special schools and the pupil referral unit are of good quality overall, as they were last year. One special school for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties has improved facilities for the increasing number of children with autistic spectrum disorders.

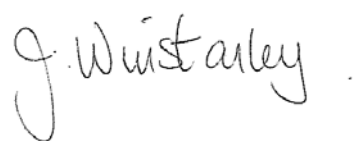
- The local authority and private and voluntary fostering and adoption agencies are all good or outstanding. The local authority has no children's homes of its own, but the overall quality of the homes it uses is good and none are currently inadequate.
- The very large majority of published indicators for educational attainment and progress compare well with other councils. There was a significant increase in the number of 16-year-olds gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2010 and performance is in line with similar areas and the national average. Results have been improving at a faster pace than found elsewhere since 2007, although provisional 2011 data show no further improvement this year. Alongside the overall improvement in 2010 results, those for young people from low-income families have also improved rapidly.

Areas for further improvement

- Improving the quality of secondary provision was an area for further development in last year's assessment. Despite some improvement, half of all secondary provision and slightly over half of secondary sixth forms are satisfactory. Inspections since last year's assessment show the majority of schools inspected improved their grade, although one has been issued with a notice to improve and one remains satisfactory. The one inadequate school is making satisfactory progress.
- Although showing gradual continuous improvement, the proportion of young people achieving level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 remains lower than in similar areas and the national average. This was also an area for further development in last year's assessment.
- In 2010 the attainment of the increasing number of children from low-income families at age five showed performance was improving, but not as quickly as the attainment of their peers in the area. Improvement for those from low-income families was taking place at a slower pace than in similar areas and nationally. However, 2011 provisional data show significant improvement. Overall the achievement gap between these children and their peers in South Gloucestershire has remained stable in the four years since 2008, but has not narrowed.

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 blue ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment