

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



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Mr Clive Webster  
Executive Director for Children's Services and Learning  
Southampton City Council  
1st Floor, Civic Centre  
Southampton  
Hampshire SO14 7LY

Dear Mr Webster

## Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes 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 data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against 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 2009, 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.

## Southampton City Council children's services assessment 2010

<b>Children's services assessment</b>	<b>Performs adequately (2)</b>
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Children's services in Southampton City Council perform adequately.

The majority of services and settings inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The quality of early years and childcare has improved in the last year and over three quarters of providers are now good or better. The large majority of nursery and primary schools, as well as post-16 education provision, are also good or better. All fostering and adoption services are good. However, in some key areas of provision, inspection findings are not as good as the national picture. For example, only a half of the secondary schools and three of the five special schools are good or better. One pupil referral unit is outstanding, but the other is inadequate. The two local authority children's homes are satisfactory, but are not as good as the other five homes in the city which are run by private and voluntary organisations.

The unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services identified a broad balance of strengths, satisfactory aspects and areas for development. There were no areas requiring priority action. The local authority's work to identify and monitor private fostering arrangements is inadequate.

National performance measures overall show that the majority of outcomes for children and young people are broadly average or better. However only just over half the measures for educational attainment are in line with the average for similar areas and none are better. Provisional results for 11-year-olds in 2010 show marked improvement, but performance has been below average for many years. The number of young people gaining five or more good GCSEs is in line with the average for similar areas. Results for young people with special educational needs and for those from low-income families have improved, and the gap between them and the majority at age 16 is closing. The number of 19-year-olds gaining good qualifications is broadly average, but the gap in attainment between the majority and those from low-income families is widening at this age. The number of young people in education, training or work has been below average for some years.

### Key areas for further development

- Improve secondary schools so more are good or better.
- Sustain the recent improvements in attainment for 11-year-olds.
- Increase the number of young people in education, training or work.
- Increase the number of young people from low income families gaining good qualifications at age 19.

## Outcomes for children and young people

The very large majority of services give good support to children and young people in living healthy lives. More children and young people participate in regular sport and physical activities than ever before, and this now puts Southampton on a par with similar areas. Fewer children are seriously overweight at the age of 11 than the average in similar areas. The number of young women under the age of 18 getting pregnant has reduced by some 15% over the ten years to 2008, but the rate remains above that seen nationally. Breast-feeding rates are comparatively low. Work is underway to improve access to sexual health services, but screening for chlamydia, a sexually transmitted infection, remains below average. A full range of services to support children and young people with emotional and mental health difficulties has been put in place. Services which support children with disabilities work well together.

Arrangements to help children and young people stay safe are good in the large majority of services and settings. The local authority's fostering and adoption services are good, but its arrangements to identify and monitor private fostering are inadequate. The stability of placements for children in care has improved and is now better overall than that seen nationally. Front-line child protection services have a broad balance of strengths, satisfactory aspects and areas for development. Clear procedures and practices ensure that legal requirements to safeguard children and young people are met. Communication and liaison between partners is well established. While work to assess the needs of children is satisfactory overall, inspectors found that many assessments lacked detail. The most recent data show a marked deterioration, to well below average, in the number of reviews completed on time for children in need of protection and for children in care. The number of children admitted to hospital as the result of unintentional or deliberate injury rose from 2008 to 2009 and is now well above the national average.

Arrangements to help children and young people achieve well and enjoy their learning are good in most services and settings. Two thirds of primary schools are good or better, but too many secondary schools and special schools are only satisfactory. The inadequate pupil referral unit is improving well. In the reception year, children now do as well as the average elsewhere, with good improvements made over the last two years. Provisional results for 11-year-olds in 2010 also suggest a marked improvement on the below-average performance of previous years. GCSE results are broadly average and improving at about the same rate as in similar areas. In the last three years, the local authority has had some success in improving attainment for children with special educational needs and for those from low-income families. The gap between them and the majority at age 16 is closing. The number of young people with poor school attendance is well above average, but reducing at a much faster rate. The local authority has introduced a text messaging system in 50 local schools as part of its strategy to tackle truancy.

Good arrangements are in place in the large majority of services and settings to encourage children and young people to have a say in decision-making. The number of young people involved in organised activities outside of school is below average.

Tackling youth crime and anti-social behaviour is identified clearly as a key priority in local plans. By most measures, the youth offending service works reasonably well. The number of young people who re-offend is above average, but falling rapidly. Young offenders are also less likely to be in education, training or work and less likely to have a suitable place to live than is the case elsewhere.

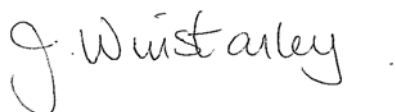
Children and young people get good support, from the majority of services, to gain the skills and qualifications they need for adult life. The large majority of post-16 education provision is good or better. By age 19, the number of young people gaining qualifications equivalent to five good GCSEs, or two A-levels, is broadly average and improving over the last three years. However, this is not the case for those from low-income families and the gap between them and the majority at age 19 is widening. The number of young people who are not in education, training or work is well above average and reducing it remains a key local priority. Outcomes for care leavers deteriorated markedly over the last year: fewer than half are in a job or in learning and only two thirds with a place to live that meets their needs.

### **Prospects for improvement**

Children's services were adequate in 2009 and remain so. The local authority and its partners have a clear focus on improving outcomes and tackling inequality across the city. However, the impact of action to date is mixed and major challenges remain, not least in continuing to raise attainment and improving the quality of secondary schools. The local authority's review of progress against the Children and Young People's Plan is a well-evidenced and accurate appraisal of what is going well and what still needs to be done. For example, the integration of information systems between partners is a top priority for the coming year and action is being taken to improve the way the local authority carries out its statutory responsibilities for children in care. New priorities agreed by the local authority and its partners take good account of performance information and inspection findings. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services identified that strong management has resulted in a clear, well-phased strategy for development and has secured additional funding to improve provision in key areas of children's social care.

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