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Mr David Taylor  
Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services  
Shropshire Council  
Guildhall  
Frankwell Quay  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire SY3 8HQ

Dear Mr Taylor

## 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.

## Shropshire Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Shropshire Council perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and provision helps children and young people to learn and stay safe. There have been some changes in the strengths and areas for development since last year. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and one school has recently become an academy. The previous inspection judgement for that school has been taken into account in the assessment.

In March 2011, an announced full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children took place. This found that services for looked after children are good overall, with good capacity to improve, while safeguarding arrangements are adequate on both accounts. A subsequent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection identified strengths and areas for improvement. There were no areas for priority action.

### Strengths

- As in 2010, the large majority of childminders and the very large majority of day care providers are good or better. There have been small improvements in each case. Since last year, a further two of the local authority's 18 children's centres have been inspected. One is outstanding and the other good.
- For children under five, the large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools continues to be good or better. An improvement on last year is that no settings are now inadequate. For the last three years, the achievement of five-year-olds at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been above the averages nationally and in similar areas.
- As in 2010, the large majority of secondary schools are good or better. Since last year, one outstanding secondary school has closed and become an academy. With good support, well-planned training and expert guidance from the local authority, the school that was inadequate last year has improved and is now satisfactory.
- There has been very little change in the quality of specialist provision and the large majority of settings are good or better, as in 2010.
- Fostering and adoption services have improved since last year. Previously, two out of four services were good or better. Now five out of six services perform at this level. In their most recent inspections, the local authority's fostering agency improved to good while the adoption agency remained satisfactory.

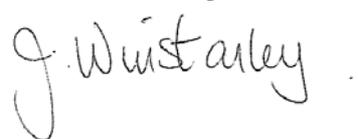
- The most recent inspections on the children's homes run by the local authority show that all three of them continue to be good.
- The attainment of 11-year-olds is in line with the averages for similar areas and across the country. The proportion of 16-year-olds gaining A\* to C grades in five GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics, matches the averages nationally and for similar areas. The same is true for 19-year-olds gaining the equivalent of two A level passes. In each case, the rate of progress over four years has been slower than nationally.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- There is a continuing need to increase the proportion of primary schools that are good or better. As in 2010, well over a third of them are no better than satisfactory. One primary school is inadequate and, with the support of the local authority, is making satisfactory progress.
- The lack of consistency in the quality of post-16 education remains. Although none of the provision is inadequate, less than half of it is now good or better. In October 2010, one sixth form college that had been good was judged to be satisfactory in terms of its overall effectiveness. Its capacity to improve was inadequate. The recent monitoring report shows that it is making reasonable progress.
- The achievement gaps between five- and 16-year-olds from low-income families and their contemporaries have widened over the last four years.

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 large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment