

9 December 2010

Ms Carol Chambers
Director of Children's Services
Rutland County Council
Catmose, Oakham
Rutland LE15 6HP

Dear Ms Chambers

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 along does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

Rutland County Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Rutland County Council perform well.

The very large majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. For example, one of the three secondary schools is outstanding and the other two are good. So too is the local authority's special school. Childminders do not do quite as well because less than two-thirds are good. Much of the primary school provision is good with four of the 17 schools outstanding, two more than in 2009. However, one primary school has been identified as needing significant improvement. The only other inspected local authority services are the outstanding local authority fostering agency and adequate adoption agency. Rutland continues to work in partnership with other local areas or private organisations to provide post-16 provision and children's homes. A private children's home and a residential special school situated in Rutland are outstanding.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services identified that children at risk of or suffering significant harm are identified promptly and dealt with appropriately. Partnerships arrangements, especially those with the police were identified as strengths. However, the rate of repeat referrals is too high and record-keeping is not consistently good enough.

National performance measures show outcomes are usually in line with or above the averages for England or similar areas. However, the progress some children make between the ages of six and 11 is not as swift as expected or as that found in similar areas. Although there was a dip in performance, results for 11-year-olds in 2009 national tests remained above similar areas and national averages. Sixteen-year-olds do better in national examinations than elsewhere. Recent results for all 19-year-olds show more attain higher level qualifications than found elsewhere. Although attainment is high overall, those from low-income families do not do as well as their peers at the age of 16 and 19 years. The proportion of 17-year-olds not in education or training is below both national and similar area averages.

Key areas for further development

- Improve the support to childminders so that more are good or better.
- Continue to increase the number of young people from low-income families who gain the expected attainment level at the ages of 11, 16 and 19 years.
- Increase the proportion of 17-year-olds in education or training.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are usually successful. All schools are good at this, although childminders do not do as well. Not all children take part in enough high quality physical education and sport each week and the number getting involved are declining. Despite this, fewer children are overweight at the ages of five and 11 than found elsewhere. Improving outcomes include higher numbers of children who say they have good access to parks and play areas. The number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is low and falling at a faster rate than nationally. However, fewer young people have accessed health screening for chlamydia than elsewhere.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are almost always good in schools and childcare providers. However, a recent inspection of front-line child protection services highlighted that common approaches to assessment are not used consistently by local services. Targets have been set to address this to further improve the way local services work together to protect children at risk of harm. The local authority reports increasing numbers of referrals to social care are having a negative impact on the time taken to assess the support a child or family needs. Recent data illustrates this in the decline in the number of referrals going on to initial assessment and the completion of initial assessments within the expected timescales. However, more core assessments are being completed within recommended time limits. Strengths in the arrangements for ensuring children and young people are safe within the community are reflected in the low number of children killed or seriously injured on the roads and reducing admissions to hospital as a result of deliberate or accidental injuries.

Child carers, nursery and secondary schools are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. This is reflected in higher than average attainment at the ages of five, 11 and 16, and good behaviour and attendance in secondary schools. Provision in the local authority special school is good. More five-year-olds achieve the expected level in personal and social development than elsewhere and gain good communication, language and literacy skills. Provision supports the lowest achievers to catch up with their peers. In 2010, most primary schools did not enter children for the national tests. However, the previous year's results, although better than elsewhere, showed that children were not making sufficient progress as they moved through primary school. The local authority has set targets to improve the performance of boys who do not do as well as girls. Standards in secondary schools continue to be better than elsewhere and by the age of 16, more than half of young people gain five or more good GCSEs. In both primary and secondary schools, those from low-income families do not do as well as similar groups nationally. Young people with special educational needs do less well at the age of 16 than others of the same age nationally.

Successful arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services have been in place for some time. Almost all schools and other settings are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities. However, fewer young people reported in 2010 that they were

involved in positive activities than the previous year and the number of young people misusing drink or drugs is increasing. Figures for young people offending for the first time have dropped dramatically and are now well below elsewhere.

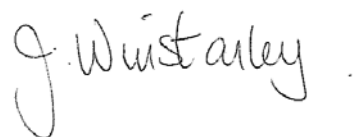
Many young people do well at the age of 19 with higher than average numbers achieving good qualifications, although this is not the case for those from low-income families. Most young people receive good support to gain the skills and qualifications needed for future jobs, with more 16- to 18-year-olds in education, work or training than in similar areas. However, those starting courses do not always complete them and the number of 17-year-olds involved in education or training continues to be lower than elsewhere. Strengths include the high number of teenage mothers and young offenders in education, work or training.

Prospects for improvement

Most outcomes for children and young people are above national averages and similar areas. The review of the Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates some good progress in important areas and identifies clearly where performance has declined or local targets have not been met. However, targets for future improvements are not always challenging enough. For example, targets set for 2009/10 are below that already achieved in areas such as child protection assessments and reducing obesity. Tackling the right priorities and effective partnership working is demonstrated through the flexible, joint arrangements with other local authorities in providing adoption services and clear improvements such as reducing the number of young people committing a crime for the first time. Ofsted inspection of front-line child protection services reported effective partnership arrangements in relation to the work of the duty team. However, recruitment and retention issues place pressure on social care staff and supervision arrangements are not always fully effective. The local authority offers good support to improve weaker schools.

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