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Ms Pat Reynolds
Director of Children's Services
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Dear Ms Reynolds

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 Redbridge children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Redbridge perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding and few are inadequate. The large majority are good at helping children and young people to stay safe and most are good at supporting them to learn. Educational standards at the age of five, 11 and 16 are mostly above average, including those for key vulnerable groups and continue to improve. Gaps in educational attainment between vulnerable groups and their peers narrowed in 2010. Areas of strength remain largely the same as last year. Weaknesses are systematically addressed in key plans, provision shows further improvement and progress has been made in the key areas identified for further development in 2010. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and more schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

A full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children in 2010 judged the overall effectiveness of both as adequate. Ofsted's most recent annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, also carried out in 2010, found two areas of strength, many satisfactory aspects of practice and three areas for development. There are no priority actions requiring urgent attention.

Strengths

- The majority of early years and childcare provision is good and some is outstanding. The large majority of childcare is now good or better, showing good improvement from last year.
- The large majority of provision for early years education in nursery and primary schools is good or outstanding, although showing some reduction from 2010. Average achievement for children aged five at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving steadily and improved significantly in 2010. Above average numbers of children from low-income families show a good level of development and the gap with others of the same age closed significantly in 2010.
- The large majority of primary schools are good or outstanding. One school that was inadequate last year is now satisfactory although another is in need of special measures. Eleven-year-olds make increasingly good progress from the age of seven and the proportion of children achieving the expected level in English and mathematics at the age of 11 rose in 2010, having not done so for three years. Provisional results for 2011 are at the

national average but below those in the local authority for previous years, showing a dip in performance.

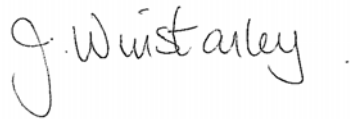
- Most secondary schools are good or outstanding, although one is inadequate. One outstanding school has recently become an academy. Monitoring visits to the inadequate school report it is making satisfactory progress with suitable support from the local authority. Almost all secondary schools have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and poor attendance by some pupils is reducing steadily. The proportion of 16-year-olds achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics continues to improve steadily, addressing an area for improvement in 2010. Young people from low-income families do very well and the gap with others of the same age is closing well. Attainment for young people with special educational needs is above average and the gap with their peers closed well in 2010, after showing little sign of doing so in previous years. For minority ethnic groups, attainment is at least above average and gaps with their peers are small or closing.
- Most provision for learning after the age of 16 is now good or outstanding. The further education college is now good, having been only satisfactory last year. Average and gradually increasing numbers of young people are in education, training or employment, including care leavers. Above average and increasing numbers of 19-year-olds gain higher level and other qualifications and include well above average numbers from low-income families. At level 3, the gap with their peers shows little sign of closing in recent years but at level 2, the gap has closed well.
- For young people not in mainstream education, all special schools and pupil referral units remain good or outstanding.
- For looked after children, the large majority of children's homes remain good or outstanding, but while the local authority's one children's home is now good and five of the eight independent children's homes are good or outstanding, three are only satisfactory.

Areas for further improvement

- Despite improvement from last year, almost half of childminders are only satisfactory.
- As in 2010, one secondary school sixth form is inadequate.
- For looked after children, provision for adoption and fostering is the weakest area of the local authority's performance overall. The local authority's adoption and fostering services are only satisfactory, as are half of independent arrangements.

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" and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment