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Mr Julian Wooster
Strategic Director - Children, Families and Learning
Portsmouth City Council
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Dear Mr Wooster

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.

Portsmouth City Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Portsmouth City Council perform adequately, as they did in 2010. The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and provision helps children and young people learn and stay safe. Strengths and the areas for development have not changed significantly since 2010. Although improving, educational achievement by young people at the age of 16 is persistently well below similar areas and the national average. Inspection grades for secondary schools over the last year confirm that the quality of provision remains uneven, with too much that is only satisfactory.

A recent announced inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children judged safeguarding arrangements to be adequate and services for looked after children to be good. The local authority's capacity to improve these services is also good.

Strengths

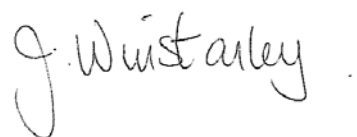
- The large majority of childminding and the very large majority of childcare provision remain good or better. The number of outstanding childcare providers has increased over the last year.
- For children under five, the proportion of good and outstanding provision in nurseries and primary schools has increased. The very large majority of settings are now good or better. Standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage improved substantially last year and are now above the average for similar areas. Children from low-income families do better than the average performance of their counterparts elsewhere and the attainment gap in the city is closing.
- Provision in special schools has improved. Two of the five schools are now outstanding, two are good and one is satisfactory. The special school sixth form is outstanding.
- The general further education college is outstanding, but the quality of post-16 education provision overall remains mixed. Achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications at the age of 19 is in line with similar areas and the national average and improving. Attainment gaps between young people from low-income backgrounds and the majority of the same age are smaller than average and have been closing over the last four years.
- Outcomes for looked after children and young people are good in all areas, including health and education. The large majority of provision in children's homes that are managed or commissioned by the local authority is good or better. The local authority fostering service is outstanding and the adoption service is good.

Areas for further improvement

- More than half of the secondary schools remain no better than satisfactory and persistent school absence is consistently above the average for similar areas. Although improving, attainment at Key Stage 4 is well below similar areas and the national average. In addition, attainment by young people from low-income backgrounds and by those from Black, Asian and mixed heritage backgrounds is below the average for such groups elsewhere, as well as the average for their peers in the city as a whole.
- The number of primary schools that are good or outstanding increased over the last year; however, more than one in three schools remain satisfactory. Key Stage 2 results are in line with similar areas, but below the national average. Provisional results for 2011 show a marked increase. However, improvements achieved over the last four years overall are not as good as the trend seen nationally; as a result, the gap between the city's children and performance nationally remains substantial.
- Half of the children's centres that have been inspected are only satisfactory and this is not as good as the quality of provision found nationally.
- The performance of the Wessex Youth Offending Service, which serves Portsmouth and two other local authorities, is inconsistent across the area. Some teams and offices produce work of a much higher standard than others and overall performance is below average.

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