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Ms Anne Newton
Director of Children's Services
Borough of Poole
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Dear Ms Newton

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.

Borough of Poole children's services assessment 2011

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Children's services assessment | Performs well (3) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|

Children's services in the Borough of Poole perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary school provision are taking place and four secondary schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in this assessment. The very large majority of services, institutions and settings inspected by Ofsted are good or better and help children and young people stay safe. Areas of strength remain as last year. Although early years and special education has improved there has been a decline in the overall effectiveness of primary and secondary schools.

A recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found one strength, mostly satisfactory practice and nothing requiring priority action. Two areas for further development identified by the previous inspection in 2010 had not yet been remedied fully and were again specified as areas for improvement in this year's inspection.

Strengths

- Early years and childcare provision has improved from last year, the large majority is good or better and no settings are inadequate. Childminding provision is particularly strong with the very large majority of settings good or better and almost a quarter now outstanding.
- For children under five, the very large majority of provision in nurseries and in primary schools is good or outstanding and has improved since the last assessment. The level of development of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with national and similar area averages and provisional data for 2011 indicate a good level of improvement following a decline in 2010.
- The large majority of primary schools are good or better, although there has been a slight reduction in this proportion since last year's assessment. Good progress has been made in improving test results for 11-year-olds over the past four years and attainment is in line with similar areas and the country overall.
- Numbers of 16-year-olds from families with low incomes in achieving five good GCSEs including English and mathematics improved well in 2010 are in line with similar parts of the country. These young people are beginning to catch up with others in the borough.
- The large majority of provision for learning after the age of 16 in secondary school sixth forms and in the college of further education is good or better. Educational standards achieved by 19-year-olds at level 2

or level 3 have improved since the last assessment and are just above those in similar areas.

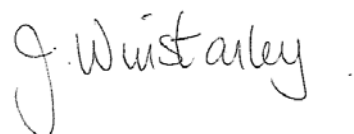
- For those requiring special education, provision is almost all good or better. Special schools and the pupil referral unit have improved and all are now good or outstanding, and the two local authority special school sixth forms are outstanding.
- For looked after children, the local authority fostering and adoption services are outstanding as they were last year and the very large majority of commissioned placements are with good or better fostering or adoption agencies. Few children are in commissioned placements in children's homes but, while none are inadequate, only half are in good or better homes.

Areas for further improvement

- The quality of secondary schools has declined since the last assessment. Two schools have been judged inadequate and a previously judged good school is now only satisfactory. The local authority is however providing good support to help the inadequate schools improve. Despite the reduction in the quality of secondary schools, outcomes for 16-year-olds are in line with similar areas and the national average. Provisional results at Key Stage 4 for 2011 indicate a rise in standards following a four-year period where there was little improvement.
- For young children from families with low incomes, the level of development achieved by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage declined in 2010 and was much lower than elsewhere but provisional data for 2011 indicate significant improvement. At the age of 19, young people from families with low incomes do not do as well as the same group of young people nationally and gaps between them and their peers in Poole are not narrowing consistently
- All three aspects judged in the recent inspection of the youth offending team are weak and require significant improvement.

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