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Mr Michael Jameson
Assistant Executive Director Children and Young People (Director of Children's Services)
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Level 10 Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham OL1 1XJ

Dear Mr Jameson

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.

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council perform excellently. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of providers are good or better and help children and young people to stay safe and enjoy learning. The strengths and areas for further improvement are similar to last year. 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 recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection identified several strengths and no areas for priority action.

Strengths

- As in 2010, the very large majority of provision for children under five in nurseries and primary schools is good or better. There are no inadequate settings. This is an improvement on last year.
- The large majority of primary schools continue to be good or better. Almost a quarter are outstanding. With good support from the local authority, the one school that was inadequate last year has improved and is now good. For the last five years, the attainment of 11-year-olds has been in line with averages nationally and for similar areas. Provisional figures for 2011 indicate that this level of performance has been maintained.
- As in 2010, the large majority of secondary schools are good or better and none of them is inadequate. Since last year, five schools have closed and been reorganised into three academies. The schools which closed included three that had been judged good and two that were satisfactory. Over the last five years, results for 16-year-olds achieving five A* to C, including English and mathematics, have improved in line with the averages for similar areas and across the country.
- Of the six providers of post-16 education inspected, three are outstanding, two are good and one is satisfactory - a very similar situation to last year. The proportion of 19-year-olds who gain the equivalent of two A level passes continues to be in line with the averages for similar areas and nationally. As in previous years, fewer of Oldham's 16- to 18-year-olds are out of work or not in education or training than elsewhere in the country.

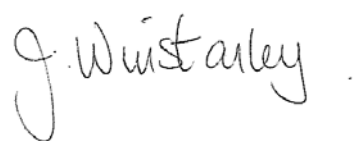
- Last year, one of the three special schools run by the local authority was outstanding and the other two were good. This year there has been an improvement, with two of the schools now being outstanding and both also having outstanding capacity to continue to improve.
- The pupil referral unit has not been re-inspected since last year. When it was last inspected, it was judged to have improved from good to outstanding.
- A recent inspection of the local authority's fostering services reported that it continues to be outstanding.
- The 11 children's homes in the area are all good or better and, since last year, the number of outstanding providers has increased from four to five.
- The very large majority of educational outcomes are at least in line with those in similar areas and nationally. Over the last two years, the attainment gaps between young people from low-income families and others of the same age have narrowed. The same is true when the performance of young people with an Asian heritage is compared with that of their contemporaries.

Areas for further improvement

- Since last year, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of early years and childcare providers that are good or better. However, as in 2010, over a third of providers are still no better than satisfactory. The achievement of five-year-olds in the local authority is below the averages nationally and for similar areas.

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