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Ms Eleanor Schooling
Corporate Director of Children's Services
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Children's Services
222 Upper Street
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Dear Ms Schooling

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 Islington children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Islington perform excellently. In 2010 children's services performed well. Since last year there have been further improvements in the overall effectiveness of provision, especially within universal services. The large majority of all types of services, settings and institutions for children and young people in the borough are now good or better. Almost all help children to stay safe, enjoy their learning and achieve well. Progress has been made in all three key areas for further development identified in the 2010 assessment.

The unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection published in December 2010 found areas of strength alongside many satisfactory features, with some areas for development. There are no weaknesses requiring urgent action.

Strengths

- Almost all nursery school and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools is judged to be at least good; no provision is inadequate and there has been further improvement in the overall effectiveness since last year. The most recent validated data and provisional data for 2011 show a rapid improvement in the number of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year at school.
- Most primary and secondary schools are good or outstanding. There are currently no schools in an Ofsted category of concern and the local authority provides good support to enable schools to improve. Recent inspections of local authority secondary schools show that high grades are being maintained and safeguarding in these schools is at least good, and sometimes outstanding.
- The overall effectiveness of post-16 provision has improved further since last year. One recently inspected school received a judgement of outstanding for its sixth form provision, which is an improvement on the previous satisfactory grade. Four of the five secondary sixth forms are now good or better and the local college is outstanding as it was last year.
- The quality of the local authority's specialist provision for more vulnerable children and young people is of good quality overall. As last year, two of the three special schools for pupils with additional needs are judged to be outstanding and the other one is good. All four of the pupil referral units are at least good, which shows improvement from 2010. Recent inspections show that these settings are especially good at working in partnerships with schools and other agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people.

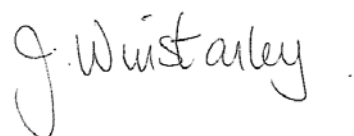
- The local authority's fostering service, adoption service and private fostering arrangements have recently been inspected and judged to be good; some outcome areas are outstanding. The one children's home run by the local authority is good, but the quality of the children's homes used by the local authority is satisfactory overall.
- Achievement gaps between the above average numbers of young people from low-income families and their peers in the borough are very small. Attainment for these groups is above the national average at age 16 and by the age of 19.

Areas for further improvement

- The proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics has improved significantly over the last two years. However, performance remains lower than in similar areas and nationally. The local authority identifies the need to continue to reduce the gap as a priority, but local data are not showing further improvement in 2011.
- Despite improvement in 2010, the proportion of young people getting level 2 and level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 was significantly below both similar areas and the national average. Securing improved attainment at level 2 by age 19 is a key priority reflected in the local authority's 14-19 plan and in the work of the 11-19 advisory group.
- The very recent inspection of the youth offending service, conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, found that substantial improvement is required in its safeguarding work, in its work in reducing risk of harm and in preventing reoffending by young people. Moderate improvement is required in achieving and sustaining outcomes.

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