

9 December 2010

Mr Chris Kiernan  
Executive Director, Children and Young People's Services  
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Dear Mr Kiernan

## Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes 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 data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against 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 2009, 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.

## The London Borough of Waltham Forest children's services assessment 2010

<b>Children's service assessment</b>	<b>Performs adequately (2)</b>
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Children's services in the London Borough of Waltham Forest continue to perform adequately.

Half of the types of inspected and regulated services and settings inspected by Ofsted are good or better. All nurseries, almost all secondary schools and a large majority of nursery provision are good or better. The residential family centre is good and special schools are mostly good or better. However, one was judged to be inadequate in a recent inspection because weaknesses in leadership and management had prevented necessary improvements being made. There are still not enough good childminders and childcare providers in the borough. The majority of primary schools are good; however, a year ago the standard of education was not good enough in four of them. One is now providing a satisfactory standard of education, another has been closed and joined with a secondary school and the other two are still inadequate. The two sixth form colleges have both been inspected in the last year; one is now good, the other remains satisfactory, as does the further education college. Only one of the four secondary school sixth forms is good. The local fostering and adoption agencies are adequate and the local authority's children's home is good. A large majority of private and voluntary children's homes and fostering and adoption agencies used by the local authority for children in their care are good or better.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found much that was satisfactory and several areas for development particularly relating to disabled children and young people. There are no areas for priority action that put children whose circumstances have made them vulnerable at risk of harm. One serious case review has been evaluated in the last year and was conducted well.

National performance measures show a very large majority are in line with, or above the averages for England or for similar areas. Although educational attainment and progress is mostly in line with similar local authorities there are some key challenges. The educational attainment of very young children continues to be very low; performance in Waltham Forest has been in the bottom 10 local authorities for four out of the last five years. Test results for 11-year-olds are consistently in line with similar areas. However, examination results for 16- and 19-year olds have fallen behind those in similar areas because their rate of improvement in the last two years has been slower. Re-offending rates have increased, as have the number of first-time offenders.

#### Key areas for further development

- Improve childcare provision so that more is good or better.
- Improve the educational attainment of very young children.
- Increase the rate of improvement of attainment among 16- and 19-year-olds.
- Reduce re-offending rates and the number of first-time offenders.

### **Outcomes for children and young people**

The majority of local services and settings are good at encouraging children and young people to live healthy lives. Nearly all schools and the local authority's fostering service are good at this, although childminders and childcare provision do not do as well. Local knowledge about whether babies aged six to eight weeks are still being breast-fed is similar to that in other areas. High numbers of mothers do continue with breast-feeding, reflecting the success of local initiatives to improve the low birth weights of babies and high levels of infant mortality in the borough. Strategies to tackle childhood obesity continue to be successful. Fewer children aged five and 11 are obese and for five-year-olds the figure is well below that in similar areas. Services for children and young people with emotional and mental health difficulties are well developed. However, in recent surveys children and young people have said their relationships with friends and families are not as good as in the rest of England.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are mostly good in the schools in the borough, the local authority's children's home, and private and voluntary children's homes and fostering and adoption agencies used by them. They are generally satisfactory in other services and settings. An unannounced inspection in July 2010 found good involvement by partner agencies in meetings to discuss how the needs of children whose circumstances have made them vulnerable were to be met. However, further work is needed to show how the views of children and young people are being taken into account when their well-being is assessed. The progress of the assessment of children's needs is well monitored and recent data show considerable improvement in the timeliness of completion of both initial and full assessments. However, there continues to be delays in completing assessments of disabled children and young people. Safeguarding concerns for disabled children are also not always sufficiently well recognised by partner agencies, which can lead to delays in referrals to social care. When they are referred, there is often insufficient detail about their needs. This also leads to delays in services being put in place while further information is obtained. The Local Safeguarding Children Board's self-assessment of the information it has about children who have run away from home or care and the policies and procedures in place to deal with them shows they are not as good as in other local authorities. The local authority and its partners know they need to be more effective at reducing the number of children who are killed or

seriously injured on the roads and recent data indicate they are beginning to be successful in this area.

Most schools, the children's home and local fostering and adoption agencies are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. The local authority knows that not enough of its settings for very young children are as good as they could be. It is also aware that the achievement of very young children is much lower than in similar areas and has not been improving fast enough in the last two years. Test results for 11-year-olds are in line with those in similar areas. However, in 2009 the number of primary schools not meeting the expected minimum standards rose, reversing an improving trend in the previous three years. Standards for 16-year-olds remain lower than in similar areas because their rate of improvement has slowed in the last two years. However, provisional data for 2010 indicate the increase in performance is larger than in previous years so the gap is likely to begin narrowing. Behaviour in secondary schools is not as good as elsewhere. Permanent exclusions from secondary schools are lower than average, but fixed-term exclusions remain very high. There has been a small rise in the number of secondary school aged pupils who are frequently absent from school, but performance remains better than in similar areas. Pupils from lower-income families do well in secondary schools, but not so well in primary schools. Sixteen-year-olds who are in the care of the local authority achieved well in 2009.

Most schools are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their community, but not enough other services and settings are good. Higher than average numbers of young women under the age of 18 become pregnant and the reduction in numbers has slowed in the last two years. The frequency of screening of young people for sexually transmitted diseases, such as chlamydia, is much higher than average. The number of young people taking part in sporting or arts activities or a youth group has fallen in the last year and is much lower than in similar areas or the rest of England. Rates of re-offending have increased and local services are having variable success in consistently reducing the number of young people who are offending for the first time. The proportion of young offenders who take part in education or training has significantly improved in recent years to be just above the national average. However, the number of young offenders who are found a suitable place to live remains well below average.

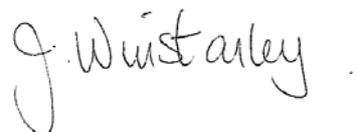
Settings have varying success in helping children and young people to prepare for the world of work. Almost all secondary schools and the children's home are good, but not enough other settings do this well. The number of 16- to 18-year-olds who take no part in education, training or work continues to fall and is much lower than in similar areas. Fewer 19-year-olds obtain qualifications than in similar areas or the rest of England and in 2009 the gap widened. This is because the rate of improvement in Waltham Forest is less consistent than elsewhere. Nevertheless 19-year-olds from lower-income families achieve relatively well.

## Prospects for improvement

While some outcomes for children and young people in Waltham Forest are improving a number of key educational ones are improving only slowly. The local authority in its Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates that it knows what it needs to improve. Local services have made good progress in reducing obesity levels among children and developing comprehensive mental health services for children and young people. They have been less successful in improving the quality of childminders and childcare provision, raising the achievement of young children and reducing rates of re-offending. The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found staff have access to a wide range of training and are well supported by their managers to attend. Ofsted monitoring visits to weaker schools identified strong partnerships between schools and local authority advisers. Schools value the support they receive. However, Ofsted records show it takes far longer than average for a school in special measures in Waltham Forest to improve to provide a satisfactory standard of education.

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