

9 December 2010

Mr Jim Taylor  
Executive Director for Services for Children and Young People  
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council  
Council Offices, Room 2.5  
Wellington Road, Ashton-under-Lyne  
Tameside OL6 6DL

Dear Mr Taylor

## 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.

## Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council's children services assessment 2010

<b>Children's services assessment</b>	<b>Performs adequately (2)</b>
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Children's services in Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately. In 2010, there is not enough good provision, particularly universal provision, to meet the minimum requirements for the grade performs well.

Ofsted inspection reports show that most of the provision in nursery and primary schools is good or better, as is that in special schools, pupil referral units and children's homes. Half the secondary schools and post-16 providers are good or better. Of the three fostering and adoption agencies inspected, only one is good and nearly a half of early years and child care providers are only satisfactory.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show that the very large majority of outcomes are in line with the averages for England and for similar areas. Eleven-year-olds achieve as well as their peers elsewhere. The proportion of 16-year-olds gaining good GCSE grades in five or more subjects, including mathematics and English, is also in line with similar areas. Young people who have special educational needs do increasingly less well than others of the same age. However, the gap between the performance of 16-year-olds who receive free schools and others of that age is narrowing.

### Key areas for further development

- Improve secondary schools so that more are good or better.
- Improve early years and child care provision so that more of it is good or better.
- Improve provision in the fostering and adoption agencies so that more of it is better than satisfactory.
- Improve provision at post-16 level so that most of it is at least good.

### Outcomes for children and young people

The large majority of settings are good or better at encouraging children and young people to live healthy lives. However, childminders and providers of child care are only satisfactory. Almost all outcomes are in line with averages elsewhere. In terms of children's emotional health, performance is in the top 25% for local authorities nationally. The same is true for the take-up of secondary school lunches. However, children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas is lower than the average nationally.

Schools, children's homes, pupil referral units and the local authority adoption agency are good or better at keeping children and young people safe. However, childminders and providers of child care have more satisfactory provision. The local authority's own fostering agency and the fostering and adoption provision made by the private and voluntary sector are satisfactory in this respect. A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services highlighted the significant improvements made to the out-of-hours provision: the quality of reports for initial child protection conferences and the performance management systems. In addition, it reported that social workers were well supported by managers who were accessible and ensured that prompt decisions were made where necessary. However, it also identified the significant delays in completion of core assessments, the limited learning from case file audits and the high workload within teams. The most recent figures show that the proportion of initial assessments completed on time is in line with the national average. There has been a fall in the proportion of children who become the subject of a child protection plan more than once. In 2008/09, the number of injured children admitted to hospital was lower than the national average.

The services, settings and institutions inspected, generally make good provision to encourage children and young people to do well and to enjoy learning. Childminders are only adequate in this respect and the sixth form college inspected is satisfactory. However, provision in non-domestic childcare has improved from satisfactory to good in the last year. The provision in too many schools, particularly secondary schools, is only satisfactory. Inspection reports show that attainment and progress are common areas for further improvement in these schools. Three- to five-year-olds achieve as well as their peers in similar local authorities. The large majority of children make the progress expected of them during primary school and, in national tests, 11-year-olds achievement is in line with the average for similar areas. Children in care achieve as well as those across the country. In 2009, the number of 16-year-olds gaining good GCSE grades in five or more subjects, including English and mathematics, was in line with similar local authorities. The most recent unvalidated data, show that results have improved further since then. At both primary and secondary level, those who receive free schools meals do less well in national tests than others of the same age and the gap in performance between the two groups is widening. The same is true when the performance of pupils who have special educational needs is compared with that of their contemporaries. Behaviour is good or better in the large majority of secondary schools and persistent absence rates have fallen, in line with those in similar areas.

Most settings make good or better provision to encourage children and young people to take part in activities that will be of benefit to themselves and the community. These include a range of weekend youth activities and enterprise projects. Through acting as representatives, for example on consultative groups within schools and locally, children and young people are able to influence the decisions that affect them. Outcomes are generally in line with those elsewhere. However, there has been a slight increase in the number of young people who say they have taken drugs or been drunk and performance in this area is now worse than in similar local authorities. The number of young people caught breaking the law more than once is

close to that in similar areas and, in most respects, the youth offending service works well.

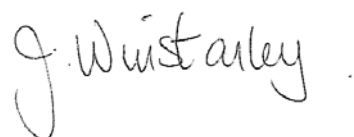
Overall, primary and secondary schools are only satisfactory at enabling young people to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to gain a job. Two of the pupil referral units inspected are also satisfactory in this respect. The proportion of low-income families who take-up their entitlement to childcare so that they can work has increased to over a fifth which is above the average nationally. The number of 17-year-olds continuing with their education also shows a slight increase but the figure is still below the average for similar areas. On the other hand, the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training has fallen. The percentage of 19-year-olds who achieved five good GCSE passes, or the equivalent, has risen in line with the averages for similar areas. The same is true for 19-year-olds with the equivalent of two A level qualifications.

### **Prospects for improvement**

The very large majority of outcomes are in line with averages for England and similar areas. The figures presented in the local authority's end of year summary for 2009-10, indicate that 80% of the measures that it uses to assess its own performance have improved. Further progress has been made most recently in several areas, including the proportions of pupils participating in physical activities and sport, aspects of safeguarding including the timeliness of core assessments, results at GCSE level and the number of young people not in education, employment or training. The local authority has invested heavily in improving and extending the range of sports and leisure facilities and increasing provision for youth activities. It has also taken robust action to improve educational provision through the decision to close six high schools, to open two academies and establish a trust school. These developments, together with the local authority's extensive Building Schools for the Future programme also provide a firm basis for further positive development. The Children and Young People's Plan for 2010-13 includes a clear analysis of where further improvement is needed and identifies the right priorities for the future.

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' and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment