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9 December 2010

Mr Nick Whitfield
Director of Education and Children's Services
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
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Dear Mr Whitfield

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.

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames perform excellently.

The very large majority of inspected services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. More early years and childcare settings are good or better than in similar areas. Almost all primary schools are good or better as are all nurseries and early years education in primary schools. One special school is good and the other outstanding. The quality of secondary schools however is weaker; of eight schools, four are good or better, three are satisfactory and one, which was inspected this year, was judged inadequate. The general further education college is good. The local authority fostering agency is outstanding and the adoption agency good.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services identified clear strengths and some areas for development but none requiring priority action.

National measures of performance show outcomes to be in line or better than comparator areas. Young children do very well in their early years and the gap between the lowest achieving children and others in the borough is closing. Results in national tests for 11-year-olds are well above the average for similar parts of the country and are improving rapidly at the age of 16. High numbers of 16- to 18-year-olds work or participate in education or training, and qualifications gained by the age of 19 are the same as in similar areas. Standards achieved by children and young people from families with low income are mostly higher than elsewhere and similar at the age of 16. Children and young people with special educational needs do better than elsewhere.

Key areas for further development

- Improve the overall effectiveness of secondary schools and standards for 16-year-olds further.

Outcomes for children and young people

Institutions and settings are consistently strong in encouraging children and young people to adopt healthy lifestyles. Local actions to promote breast-feeding to mothers have been very successful and rates are much higher than average. Average but increasing numbers of children participate in sports and far more than average enjoy using the parks and playgrounds provided for them. Numbers of children who are too overweight are much lower than average and reducing. The number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is very low

although there was an increase last year. The extent to which young people say they drink alcohol and have misused drugs is similar to elsewhere in the county. Emotional and mental health services are increasingly responsive to the needs of children and young people who may be troubled.

Services and institutions are consistently good or better in keeping children and young people safe. The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found effective partnership working across agencies and timely action taken to protect children and young people. Assessments of need are carried out promptly. Last year, children and young people who are looked after by the local authority moved home more frequently than average although plans for their care were reviewed regularly. Activities to ensure children and young people are safe in their communities are effective. Numbers killed or seriously injured in road accidents are low. Admissions to hospital due to unintentional injuries are lower than elsewhere and reduced further last year. Children and young people report levels of bullying to be the same as in similar parts of the country and lower than for England overall.

Inspections have reported most child carers, schools and colleges to be very good in helping children and young people learn although secondary schools are weaker in this respect. There are no schools however which do not achieve the minimum standards for pupil performance. Young children do very well in their early years. Primary schools are very effective: children make excellent progress and results in national tests for 11-year-olds are well above those in similar parts of the country. National test results for 16-year-olds are improving quickly and are better than for England overall and now in line with similar parts of the country. Children from families with low incomes do better in national tests than elsewhere at the age of 11 and they are catching up with others in the borough. Standards achieved by 16-year-olds from low-income families in 2008/09 were broadly average. Children and young people with special educational needs do better than elsewhere. Attendance in secondary schools is improving although more young people than in similar areas still miss school regularly.

Inspections have reported consistently very strong encouragement for children and young people to become involved in activities in their communities and to take part in decision-making processes. Considerably fewer young people than average are permanently excluded. Numbers of young people taking part in organised activities in their areas fell sharply last year having previously been very high. A new commissioning panel involving young people has however been established to develop other opportunities. Numbers of young people who commit offences are broadly average but numbers who re-offend have reduced and are much lower than in similar areas. The local authority is very effective in encouraging those who have offended to find work or continue with their education or training, and in ensuring they have suitable places to live.

Young people are helped very well to prepare for working life. The numbers of 17-year-olds in education or training are consistently high. Qualifications gained by young people by the age of 19 are in line with similar areas but improving, and much better than for the country overall. Those from low-income families do better than

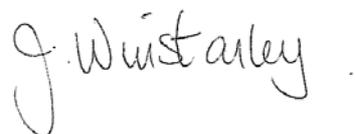
elsewhere and for higher level qualifications are catching up with their peers in the borough.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes are improving in most areas. Analyses of local needs are highly detailed and result in clearly defined annual priorities for improvement. Well thought out plans are being implemented for improving the overall effectiveness of secondary schools. The practice of working to a small number of well-defined priorities optimises the use of resources. Institutions and services have common priorities to improve outcomes for vulnerable and underachieving groups. Care is taken to involve children, young people and local communities in clarifying needs. Improvement strategies are well thought out, for example in improving the well-being of families. Reviews of progress in bringing about improvement are detailed and self-critical. The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found effective partnership working across agencies. The youth offending service works well with good capacity to improve its performance.

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 cursive script that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment