

9 December 2010

Ms Anne Newton
Director of Children's Services
Borough of Poole
Civic Centre, Poole
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Dear Ms Newton

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.

Borough of Poole children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the Borough of Poole perform well, as they did in 2009.

The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall. Within this, a very large majority and large majority respectively make a good or better contribution to helping children and young people stay safe and achieve well educationally. The quality of day care provision for very young children is good and education for this age group is outstanding. Primary, secondary and special schools are good, but the one pupil referral unit is only satisfactory. School sixth forms are outstanding and the one local further education college is good. The local authority's fostering and adoption services are outstanding.

Provision for safeguarding and for looked after children is good overall. However, a very recent inspection of the local authority's front-line child protection services revealed considerably fewer strengths than aspects of provision which needed improvement.

Performance measures show that a large majority of outcomes for children and young people are broadly average or better. This includes almost all the main measures of educational attainment. Test and examination results at most ages are much better than the average in similar areas. However, the rate of improvement over recent years has mainly been less than the national average. The number of primary schools failing to meet minimum requirements for pupil attainment went up last year, although for secondary schools, the number went down. The educational achievement of young people from low-income families is significantly worse at the ages of 11 and 19 than the average for this group elsewhere. At the age of 11, the achievement in national tests of those with special educational needs is well below the average for this group elsewhere. However, at the age of 16, it is much higher.

Key areas for further development

- Improve front-line child protection services.
- Improve the educational achievement of young people from low-income families.

Outcomes for children and young people

The very large majority of services give good encouragement and support to children and young people to lead healthy lives. The proportions of children who are seriously overweight at the ages of five and 11 are very close to the average in similar areas. The number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is higher than the average for similar areas, but progress over the last decade in reducing this figure has been better than the national average. When inspected in 2008, provision

for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities was judged to be good. However, parents of disabled children have more recently reported relatively negatively on their dealings with local services.

Provision for safeguarding is good overall. The very large majority of individual services, such as schools make a good contribution to helping children and young people stay safe and partnership working between all the main agencies is good. There is a clear focus on identifying problems early and providing support before they become very serious. However, a very recent inspection of the local authority's front-line child protection services revealed considerably fewer strengths than aspects of provision which needed improvement. Provision for young people in care is also good overall, with similarly effective partnership working. The local authority's fostering and adoption services are outstanding. The number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents has fluctuated considerably, but with some good recent improvement. However, the number of serious injuries to young people more generally is comparatively high and has gone down only a little in recent years. The number of children and young people who say they have been bullied is broadly in line with the average in similar areas.

The quality of day care provision for very young children has improved over the last year. It is good overall and broadly in line with the national average. Education for this age group is outstanding and significantly better than the national average. Primary and secondary schools are good and also much better than the national average. The proportion of good or better primary schools has improved over the last year. However, the one pupil referral unit remains only satisfactory. Pupil achievement at the age of five is much better than the average in similar areas. At the age of 11 it is broadly in line, but at the age of 16 it is again much better. However, the rate of improvement over recent years has been less than the national average at all the three ages. The number of primary schools failing to meet minimum requirements for pupil attainment went up last year, but the number of secondary schools went down. Attendance in secondary schools is worse than the average in similar areas, as is behaviour. However, the number of young people excluded permanently from school is broadly average. At the age of 11 young people from low-income families achieve significantly worse than the average for this group elsewhere. However, they do better than average by the age of 16. No progress has been made over recent years in narrowing the gap between the performance of these young people and other pupils. At the age of 11, the achievement in national tests of those with special educational needs is well below the average for this group than elsewhere, but it is much higher at the age of 16. Special schools are good overall, but below the average standard nationally. These schools provide for most of the pupils with the highest levels of need, many of whom are unable to take national tests.

The proportion of young people involved in organised group activities outside school is close to the average in similar areas, but the number who say they have taken drugs or been drunk recently is significantly higher. Re-offending by young people is slightly lower than in similar areas. However, whilst performing well against national indicators, the youth offending team has been subject to an improvement

programme from the Youth Justice Board to tackle its underperformance. Good arrangements are in place within the very large majority of services to seek children and young people's views and involve them in decision-making.

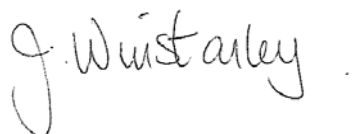
The very large majority of services give good support to young people to help them do well in later life. The quality of school sixth forms is outstanding and significantly better than the national average. The one further education college is good and this caters for nearly 70% of the 16- to 19-year-olds in education and training in the area. The number of young people staying on in education or training when they reach school leaving age is significantly below the average in similar areas and has changed little over recent years. However, the number of 16- to 18-year-olds involved in education, work or training is broadly in line. By the age of 19 the proportion of young people achieving qualifications equal to five good GCSEs is broadly in line with the average in similar areas. However, for qualifications equal to two good A levels, it is significantly better. The rate of improvement over recent years has been lower than nationally, particularly for young people achieving five good GCSEs. Young people from low-income families do much worse than the average for the same group elsewhere on the five GCSE measure and also less well in terms of two good A levels. There has been a significant decline in both respects over recent years and the gap between these young people and others in the area has widened.

Prospects for improvement

Provision for safeguarding overall and for looked after children are examples of where local leadership has been strong and where an effective commitment to partnership working has been developed. However, although the current local figures for educational attainment still compare well overall with those in similar areas, the recent track record of improvement in such respects is not strong. The Children and Young People's Plan reflects a reasonable grasp of local needs. However, the need to improve both primary schools and front-line child protection services would benefit from being recognised in more comprehensive and integrated programmes of activity than currently outlined.

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