

9 December 2010

Mr Ian Curryer
Corporate Director of Children's Services
Nottingham City Council
Loxley House, Station Street
Nottingham
Nottinghamshire NG2 3NG

Dear Mr Curryer

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.

Nottingham City Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Nottingham City Council perform adequately. In 2009, a transitional year, Nottingham City was assessed as performing well. However, in 2010 there is not enough good provision to meet the minimum requirements for this grade.

A large majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. For example, the further education and sixth form colleges are both good as is much of childcare in non-domestic settings, nursery, primary and special school provision. However, childminders, secondary schools and sixth forms are not doing as well as too much of this provision is only adequate. Inspection by Ofsted shows that six of the 11 secondary schools in Nottingham City are good or better. These schools include one Academy that is satisfactory. Just over a half of post-16 provision is good. However, two secondary school sixth forms are outstanding and both the general further education college and sixth form college are good. The local fostering and adoption agencies and three of the four children's homes are good. There is almost no inadequate provision, although inspection identifies one primary school, a secondary school and one pupil referral unit not performing well enough.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found some strengths and a number of areas for development. There were no areas for priority action and the local authority responded robustly and promptly to address an area of concern.

National performance measures are usually in line with similar areas or the averages for England. Educational outcomes for the youngest children improve each year and those who were not doing as well when first assessed are catching up with their peers by the age of five. The gap in achievement between children from low-income families and their peers is closing at a faster rate than in similar areas at the Early Years Foundation Stage and at the age of 11. Although achievement in national tests is still below national averages more 11- and 16-year-olds are achieving the expected levels over time. Improvement in the proportion of 16-year-olds achieving the expected levels in GCSEs in 2009 was at a faster rate than found elsewhere. However, those from low-income families do not do as well in national tests and examinations as their peers. There is continued low performance by the age of 19 with fewer young people from all backgrounds achieving good qualifications than found elsewhere.

Key areas for further development

- Improve secondary schools and school sixth forms so that more are good or better.
- Improve the attainment of young people aged 16 years and over from low-income families.

Outcomes for children and young people

Early intervention and support to parents and carers underpins the approach for improving children's health in Nottingham City. Nearly all schools and colleges promote healthy lifestyles well, but less than two-thirds of childcare settings and childminders are good at this. More children say they have good relationships with friends and family than found nationally. This supports their emotional well-being. However, more children are too overweight at the age of 11 than found elsewhere and fewer participate in the recommended amount of high quality physical education and sport each week than children nationally. The number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is high, but most recent figures show this is falling at a faster rate than elsewhere.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are secure. Inspection by Ofsted of safeguarding arrangements in children's homes, schools, colleges and the local authority fostering and adoption agencies confirm this. Local services work well together to protect children at risk of harm with particular strengths in the arrangements for children with physical disabilities. However, recording of action taken to support families is not always good enough and it can take too long to complete assessments of children at potential risk. There are on-going improvements in the number of looked after children reviews being carried out on time, but more children are becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time. There are some strengths in the arrangements for ensuring that children are safe within the community. For example, reducing numbers of children are killed or seriously injured on the roads and the level of bullying is no higher than reported elsewhere. Locally collected information shows children think good progress has been made in reducing bullying in schools.

Most child carers, nursery, primary and special schools, and colleges are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. However, too few childminders, secondary schools, school sixth forms and pupil referral units do this well. The Local Education Partnership successfully built three new academies during the last year but it is too soon to see the impact of this change on the quality of provision. Overtime, standards are rising in both primary and secondary schools. Most children make the expected progress in primary school, however, the 2010 results for 11-year-olds have shown no improvement since 2009. By the age of 16, the number of young people achieving five or more good GCSEs is the same as that

found in similar areas. However, those from low-income families and some minority ethnic groups are not making the same progress and they are getting further behind their peers. Those with special educational needs do not do as well as similar groups elsewhere. Although improving, behaviour is not always good enough in secondary schools and the number of pupils who are often absent from school is higher than the national average.

Arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services are well established and continue to be a local priority for further development. A recent review of the Children and Young People's Plan illustrates areas where young people have influenced strategy and future actions. Most schools and other settings are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities although this is not always the case in children's homes and pupil referral units. Although increasing opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities is a local priority, the proportion of young people saying they get involved is less than elsewhere and reduced between 2008 and 2009. The number of young people offending for the first time is reducing quickly but continues to be above national figures.

The local authority knows that not all young people do as well as they can at the age of 19. Attainment is below that found elsewhere although there has been a consistent trend of improvement over time. This is a key priority for improvement. Local colleges offer good support in helping young people to gain the skills and qualifications needed for future jobs but not all secondary schools are as effective. Local advice and guidance on options after school are effective. Participation by 17-year-olds in education or work-based learning has increased over time and is high and there are fewer young people not in education, employment or training than in similar areas. The rate in reducing these figures has been consistent over time and faster than elsewhere. Outcomes for those from low-income groups are improving, although the gap in achievement with their peers is getting wider.

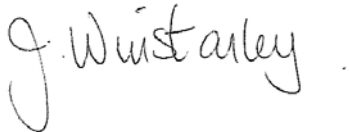
Prospects for improvement

Although outcomes are not always as good as found nationally, most outcomes for children and young people are improving. The local authority's review of its Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates good progress in important areas; it is also clear about what action is going to bring about the greatest improvement. For example, early intervention and prevention is underpinning approaches to empower families to support the all-round development of their children. The Children and Young People's Plan is fully incorporated into the local authority's key strategic plans for the future and there is a shared commitment to achieve the ambitious targets for improvement. Tackling the right priorities and good partnership working is demonstrated through improvements in the educational attainment of 16-year-olds

and reducing numbers of young offenders. There are clear procedures for regular monitoring of performance and a recent inspection of front-line child protection services highlighted effective arrangements for developing staff skills.

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