

9 December 2010

Mr Duncan Clark
Strategic Director of Learning and Children's Services, Interim
Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames
Guildhall 2, St James Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT1 1SN

Dear Mr Clark

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 Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames children's services assessment 2010

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

The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding and very little is inadequate. Most provision is highly effective in helping children and young people learn and stay safe. The large majority of childcare and childminding settings are good or better and likewise almost all nurseries and early years education in primary schools. The very large majority of primary schools are good or better, as are seven of the 10 secondary schools with six being outstanding. Pupil referral units and special schools are at least good and two of the three special schools are outstanding. After the age of 16, provision is mostly good. The quality of sixth forms in some secondary schools is not as strong as the schools overall. The general further education college is satisfactory and is making reasonable progress in raising standards. While the local authority fostering agency is good, the adoption agency is satisfactory. The one children's home in the area, which is managed by the private and voluntary sector, has consistently been judged good.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found significant strengths with only one area for development and no areas for priority action.

National measures of performance show a very large majority of outcomes for children and young people to be in line or above comparators. Children and young people do very well in national tests at the age of 11 and 16 when compared to their peers in similar areas and are, likewise, much better qualified at the age of 19. Standards of behaviour in secondary schools are high and few young people have poor attendance. Children and young people from families with low incomes do better than similar children nationally both in national tests and in the qualifications they achieve by the age of 19. The gaps between these children and young people and their peers in Kingston have started to close. Children and young people with special educational needs do well. Few young people are not in education, work or training. All young people leaving care have suitable places to live and almost all continue in education or training or start work.

Key areas for further development

- Further improve provision for learning after the age of 16.
- Continue to close the attainment gap for children and young people from families with low incomes at age 11, 16 and 19.

Outcomes for children and young people

Inspected services are very effective in helping children and young people adopt healthy lifestyles. Local actions to encourage mothers to breast-feed their babies are very successful and rates are very high. Fewer young children than nationally are too overweight, although a further reduction was not achieved last year. High numbers of children and young people participate in sport and report that they are very satisfied with the parks and playgrounds in the area. Young people are sensible about the risks they take. The numbers of teenage girls who become pregnant are low and reducing. Fewer young people than elsewhere say they drink alcohol and misuse drugs. Services to support children when they are troubled are increasingly prompt in responding to needs and a specialist service is helping prioritise support for children and young people in care.

Arrangements for ensuring children and young people are safe work well. Concerns over safety and welfare are dealt with promptly by appropriately trained and experienced staff. Joint working between the local authority and partners such as the police, health services and schools results in effective support for children and families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Child protection plans rarely last more than two years and reducing numbers of children require further plans because of recurring concerns about their safety. Actions to keep children and young people safe in their communities are very effective. Numbers of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents are low as are hospital admissions due to injuries. Far fewer children than elsewhere report being bullied.

Schools, childcare settings and services are consistently good or better in helping children and young people learn. The further education college, however, is only satisfactory in this respect. Most five-year-olds achieve well and those not doing as well are catching up. Standards achieved by 11- and 16-year-olds in national tests are high. Those from families with low incomes do much better than the same groups nationally. Reducing the differences in standards between those from families with low income and others is a priority for the borough and the gaps have started to close. Children and young people with special educational needs generally do better than elsewhere. Almost all secondary schools have good or better standards of behaviour and very few young people have poor attendance.

Children and young people are encouraged very well to take an interest in their communities. This is not as effective, however, in one of the pupil referral units or the local authority adoption agency. Few children and young people are permanently excluded from school. Although numbers of young people who commit crimes have reduced steadily in recent years and are low, numbers who re-offend have increased and are higher than average. Almost all young offenders are helped to find a suitable place to live. Three quarters are working or involved in education or training, a reduction on previous years.

Young people are mostly helped well to prepare for working life and do very well in achieving qualifications by the age of 19. Numbers who are not in education, work or training are consistently low. Young people from families with low incomes do much

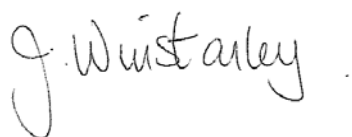
better than the same group nationally and achieve more qualifications than those in similar areas. Gaps between these young people and their peers in Kingston are beginning to close. There is still work to be done to encourage more young people from families with low incomes to progress to higher education.

Prospects for improvement

Clear progress has been made in improving good or better outcomes further in many areas over the past three years. Children and young people achieve very well and groups whose circumstances have made them vulnerable do better than elsewhere. The Children and Young People's Plan is meticulous in its analysis of needs. Very good use is made of the views of children and young people as well as those of the wider community for identifying priorities. Excellent use is made of data to track progress. The local authority has rightly identified in the Children and Young People's Plan that achieving further improvement requires careful targeting of support to relatively small groups of children and young people and, in some instances, their families. The local authority and its partners are well placed to work together to provide the necessary services. Partnerships are strong and committed to detecting needs and providing support early. The recent unannounced inspection of child protection services found working relationships between partner agencies highly effective resulting in appropriate and timely intervention to protect children and young people. Well developed performance management and audit arrangements are very effective in supporting social workers and in promoting good practice. The local authority is constantly striving for higher standards from an already strong base and well thought out strategies are in place for improving outcomes for children and young people from families with low incomes further. The youth offending service has good capacity to improve its performance and reducing re-offending is a key local priority.

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