

9 December 2010

Mrs Judith Pettersen
Director of Children's Services and Lifelong Learning
London Borough of Hounslow
The Civic Centre
Lampton Road, Hounslow
Middlesex TW3 4DN

Dear Mrs Pettersen

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 London Borough of Hounslow children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Hounslow perform excellently. This shows improvement from 2009, when services performed well.

The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding and very few are inadequate. All support learning and achievement very well and most do very well at keeping children and young people safe. The large majority of nursery and primary schools are good or outstanding. Secondary schools show good improvement and are also of this high standard, as is provision for learning after the age of 16. For children and young people not in mainstream education, three of the four special schools are outstanding and pupil referral units are good. For children in care, arrangements for adoption and fostering are good and children's homes are now good or outstanding. Provision for early years and childcare is a relative weakness. Childminders are mostly good but too much childcare is only satisfactory, as is the recently inspected children's centre, so performance is not as strong as elsewhere.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found much was being done well and an area in need of urgent action was being addressed rapidly. A more recent inspection of safeguarding arrangements and provision for looked after children reported good services. Arrangements for private fostering are good.

National measures of performance show that the very large majority of outcomes are in line with those for similar areas and that found nationally. This is the case for all measures of educational attainment. Standards that are average continue to rise and attainment for children and young people from low-income families and for those with special educational needs shows consistent improvement. Gaps in educational attainment for key vulnerable groups that are mostly smaller than in similar authorities and found nationally are closing well, except for 11-year-olds with special educational needs where the gap has got consistently bigger. Too many five- and eleven-year-olds are still too overweight.

Key areas for further development

- Improve childcare so that more is good or better and the children's centre to at least good.
- Further reduce numbers of five-year-olds and reduce numbers of 11-year-olds who are too overweight.

Outcomes for children and young people

All services and settings are successful in encouraging children and young people to live healthy lifestyles. However, within the community, fewer services are now available for some children and young people with emotional or mental health difficulties. Despite some reduction for five-year-olds, too many five- and eleven-year-olds are still too overweight, although more have school lunches, more take part in sport regularly and more are satisfied with parks and playgrounds. Parents of disabled children are satisfied with services overall and children and young people, including those in care, voice no particular concerns about themselves or their relationships with others. Progress to reduce numbers of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant has not been as fast as expected but more teenage mothers are in education, training or work.

Services and settings are mostly good at keeping children and young people safe but early years and childcare providers are only satisfactory. Within the community, fewer children have been killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents, fewer are admitted to hospital because they are injured either accidentally or deliberately, fewer run away from home or care than nationally, and far fewer report being bullied. In front-line child protection services, fewer referrals are now assessed by social workers and average numbers of initial and full assessments are carried out on time. Thresholds for referrals are understood well, risk is managed well and analysis in assessments has improved. For children in need of protection, most plans last for the right amount of time but more children now need another plan after the first one has ended. All meetings to review these plans continue to be held on time. Families are found quickly for children who need to be adopted. Children in care now have to change placements more often, although these are of average length. Fewer meetings to review their plans are now held on time.

All services and settings are successful in helping children and young people to learn and achieve and almost all assessments of special educational needs are completed on time. The achievement of five-year-olds has improved more quickly than in similar areas and those not doing as well are catching up. Pupils in primary schools make the progress expected, test results have improved, including for children in care, and only one school, instead of four, does not meet the minimum standards for pupil performance. Pupils from low-income families are making better progress than elsewhere in the country, but those with special educational needs are not catching up fast enough. At age 16, higher grade examination results have improved and pupils from low-income families are making good progress. All secondary schools now meet minimum standards, almost all continue to have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and fewer young people have poor attendance.

Almost all services and settings are at least good at helping children and young people make a positive contribution to their communities. Average numbers continue to take part in organised activities; and far fewer young people are now caught breaking the law for the first time, re-offend or are sentenced to custody. Numbers

of young people who offend in education, training or work have improved significantly but remain below average, and almost all now have a suitable place to live. However, more young people now say they have recently been drunk or taken drugs and, although reducing, permanent exclusions from school are high.

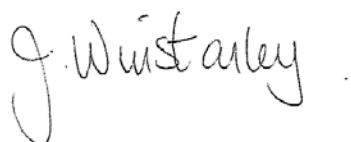
Services and settings provide strong support for economic well-being. Fewer young people are not in education, work or training than in similar areas, and 19-year-olds are now better qualified and becoming so faster than in similar areas and nationally. Average numbers of care leavers are in education, training or work and in suitable accommodation. Fewer families on low income take up funding available for childcare than nationally.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes are improving well. Educational standards, and qualifications by the age of 19, continue to improve and gaps for key vulnerable groups are closing. The authority is very clear about its priorities and what needs to be improved further. Strong leadership and management, many successful partnerships and good actions tackle weaknesses well. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services shows managers are aware of and actively addressing areas for development. The inspection of safeguarding and looked after children reported outstanding work on equality, good management of performance, good services and good capacity for further improvement. In safeguarding, a long history of excellent work with other agencies is rapidly bringing about improvements. Services for looked after children give good value for money, good support for education so that they make good progress, and safeguard them well. The extremely thorough review of the Children and Young People's Plan shows much good work underway with groups whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, and the important part played by children and young people in improving services. The youth offending service works well. It is performing well against national measures and has good capacity and capability to sustain this and to improve further.

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