

9 December 2010

Mr Chris Spencer
Corporate Director of Education and Children's Services
London Borough of Hillingdon
Civic Centre 4E/01
High Road, Uxbridge
London
UB8 1JL

Dear Mr Spencer

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 Hillingdon children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
---------------------------------------	--------------------------

Children's services in the London Borough of Hillingdon continue to perform well.

The large majority of settings, services and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and few are inadequate. Most do very well at supporting learning and achievement and in keeping children and young people safe. For the youngest children, childcare and childminders are mostly good, but too many childminders are only satisfactory and so performance is weaker than elsewhere. Nursery and primary schools are also mostly good, although one primary school needs improving. Secondary schools have improved and the large majority of those maintained by the authority are good or outstanding; the two academies are only satisfactory. For young people after the age of 16, school sixth forms have also improved and most are good or better. Further education is outstanding. Special schools are mostly good or better but the pupil referral unit is only satisfactory. For children in care, arrangements for fostering and adoption are good and all four of the authority's children's homes are now good or better. The one independent children's home is inadequate.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found many strengths and no areas in need of urgent action. A more recent inspection of safeguarding arrangements and provision for looked after children reported good services. Arrangements for private fostering are also good.

National measures of performance show most outcomes at least in line with those in similar areas or found nationally; this is the case for the large majority of indicators for educational attainment. Compared with similar areas, standards that are above average for five-year-olds, average at age 11 and just below average for 16- and 19-year-olds show consistent improvement. The attainment of children and young people from low-income families and of those with special educational needs has also improved consistently. Gaps in educational attainment for key vulnerable groups are smaller than in similar authorities and mostly smaller than those found nationally. Most have closed consistently, but the gap for 16-year-olds with special educational needs has continued to get bigger. Numbers of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant show recent reduction but the target set has not yet been met.

Key areas for further development

- Improve childminders and the pupil referral unit so that more provision is good or better.
- Close the gap in educational attainment for 16-year-olds with special educational needs.

- Accelerate the reduction in numbers of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant.

Outcomes for children and young people

Services and settings strongly encourage children and young people to live healthy lifestyles, although childminders and the pupil referral unit are weaker. A full range of services for young people with emotional or mental health difficulties are now in place and mothers who breast-feed have shown marked increase. More young people now take part in sport regularly, more are satisfied with parks and playgrounds and more have school lunches. Children in care report fewer concerns about themselves and their friends than elsewhere and parents with disabled children are satisfied with services overall. Average numbers of young women under the age of 18 become pregnant but progress to reduce numbers has not reached the target set.

Services and settings are at least good at keeping children and young people safe, although childminders are weaker. Within the community, fewer children are killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents but those admitted to hospital because they are injured either accidentally or deliberately have shown a slight increase. Fewer children and young people are now bullied and fewer run away from home or care than in the rest of the country. Inspection identified specific and effective arrangements for those who do go missing and particularly strong arrangements for children who could be involved in child trafficking and exploitation. In front-line child protection services, children and young people in need of safeguarding are identified well. Almost all referrals are assessed by social workers, although not all agencies are clear enough about when to refer. Average numbers of well-analysed and good quality initial and full assessments are carried out on time. Most meetings to review plans that protect children from harm are held on time and involve children and families very well. Very few plans last for longer than they should and fewer are needed after the first has ended because of successful action. Families are found quickly for children who need to be adopted. Almost all meetings to review plans for children in care are also held on time. Children change placements much less often than elsewhere and their placements last for much longer.

Services and settings are at least good in supporting children and young people to learn and achieve and almost all special educational needs assessments are completed on time. The achievement of young children has improved, but the gap for those who do not do as well has closed more slowly. Pupils in primary schools make expected progress but in 2009, test results, although improved, fell short of the authority's target. The gap for 11-year-olds from low-income families and for those with special educational needs has closed more quickly than elsewhere. All primary schools now meet the minimum standard for pupil performance. In secondary schools, examination results for 16-year-olds have improved further, all schools now meet minimum standards, showing marked improvement, and more now have good or outstanding standards of behaviour. Pupils from low-income families are catching up but those with special educational needs are falling behind,

due in part to good improvement for all pupils. The authority knows this and has set a target for improvement. Fewer pupils now have poor attendance.

Services and settings give strong support for children and young people to make a positive contribution to their communities but childminders and the pupil referral unit are weaker. Far more young people now take part in organised activities. Fewer now break the law for the first time, fewer re-offend and fewer are sentenced to custody. Most young people who have offended are in education, training or work and almost all have a suitable place to live.

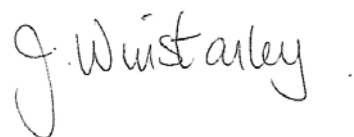
Services and settings help children and young people to achieve economic well-being particularly well but most outcomes are in line with or below comparators. Average numbers are in education, training or work. More young people are gaining qualifications by the age of 19 and at higher levels the attainment gap for those from low-income families closed in 2009, having remained the same for a few years. Average numbers of care leavers are in education, training or work and most are now in suitable accommodation.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes are improving overall. For example: childminders show improvement in the past two years; educational standards are rising; and gaps for most key vulnerable groups are closing well. Provisional data from tests and examinations in 2010 show further improvement for 11- and 16-year-olds. Ofsted's monitoring visits to weaker schools show satisfactory or good support from the local authority and satisfactory schools are making at least satisfactory progress. The inspection of safeguarding arrangements and looked after children services found good leadership, a good track record of consistent improvement, effective services, good planning for individual children and young people that meets their needs well, good partnerships with all agencies and good capacity for improvement. However, more involvement in improving services from those who use them needed strengthening. Good political and officer leadership and very strong work with partners results in exemplary services for asylum-seeking children and young people, as a group whose circumstances have made them particularly vulnerable. The youth offending service is performing excellently against national measures and has good capacity and capability to sustain and improve this 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 dark ink, appearing to read "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment