

9 December 2010

Mr Andrew Christie
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Town Hall, King Street
Hammersmith
London W6 9JU

Dear Mr Christie

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.

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------

Children's services in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham perform excellently. This shows improvement from 2009, when services performed well.

The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding and educational settings are particularly strong. Most provision supports learning and achievement very well and keeps children and young people safe. For young children, most nursery and primary schools are good or outstanding and childcare is mostly good. Although just over half of childminders are also good, the remainder are only satisfactory and a relative weakness in the local authority's performance overall. Most secondary schools are outstanding and provision after the age of 16 is either good or outstanding. Special schools are good. One pupil referral unit is now outstanding and the other is satisfactory. For children in care, children's homes are good but the local authority's fostering agency is satisfactory.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found significant strengths and no areas for priority action. The joint area review in 2008 found adequate safeguarding.

National measures of performance show most outcomes and all measures of educational attainment in line with or above those for similar areas or nationally. Standards are rising, significantly so at the age of 16, including for young people from low-income families and for those with special educational needs. The achievement of five- and 11-year-olds is average but by the age of 16, young people do better than in similar local authorities and did significantly better in 2009. By the age of 19, young people are increasingly better qualified than those elsewhere. Gaps in educational attainment for key vulnerable groups that are larger than in similar local authorities, although smaller than nationally, have closed well. However, the gap for 16-year-olds from low-income families and that for higher level qualifications at the age of 19 are now twice as big as in similar areas.

Key areas for further development

- Improve childminders so that more are good or better and the local authority's fostering agency to at least good.
- Further close gaps in educational attainment, in particular for 16-year-olds from low-income families and for higher level qualifications at the age of 19.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements strongly encourage children and young people to live healthy lives, although childminding is weaker. Improvements include many more mothers

breast-feeding due to increased targeted support. More young people take part in sport regularly, although numbers remain comparatively low, and the majority are satisfied with parks and playgrounds. Children and young people who are looked after are very positive about their placements. Good progress has been made in reducing the number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant and fewer than average young people have chlamydia.

Arrangements to keep children and young people safe work well in most services and settings, although are just satisfactory for half of childminders. Within the community, fewer children are now killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents and numbers admitted to hospital because of accidental or deliberate injury remain about the same. Young people are not overly concerned about bullying and the number who run away from home is about the same as elsewhere. The inspection of front-line child protection services found cases managed well. These were handled without delay, documented thoroughly, consistently assessed for risks to children's safety and included the views of children, young people and their families well. In children's social care services, high numbers of referrals are assessed by social workers and high numbers of initial and full assessments are carried out on time. Fewer child protection plans now last for longer than they should, although more children than nationally still need more than one plan. Almost all meetings to review these plans continue to be held on time. Children in care change their placements about the same number of times as those elsewhere but these are not lasting quite as long as they were. Meetings to review their plans are held regularly.

Most services and settings contribute very well to educational achievement although childminders and children's homes are only satisfactory. Most special educational needs assessments are completed on time. Despite a fall in the achievement of five-year-olds in 2009, performance remains average and the gap for those children not doing as well as the majority, has closed well. Pupils in primary schools make the progress expected, but in 2009 did not do as well in tests at the age of 11 as the local authority expected. One more primary school than in the previous year did not meet minimum standards for pupil performance. Children in care do well in primary schools, as do those from low-income families. However, children with special educational needs are not doing as well as those in similar areas and the gap in their attainment has recently increased. Young people do well in secondary schools at the age of 16. They make better progress than 16-year-olds in similar local authorities and met a challenging local target in 2009. All secondary schools continue to meet minimum standards, more have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and more young people take up learning diplomas as a qualification than in other local authorities. Although learners with special educational needs at the age of 16 are now also doing better, those from low-income families do less well than in similar local authorities. A local target to reduce the number of pupils with poor attendance in secondary schools has been exceeded and action is underway to improve attendance in primary schools.

Almost all services and settings are particularly strong at helping children and young people make a positive contribution to their communities and much has been done to hear their views on how services need to improve. The number who have been

drunk or taken drugs recently is about the same as elsewhere. Far fewer young people now break the law for the first time, or do so more than once, and average numbers are sentenced to custody. Many more young people who offend are now in education, training or work and, although showing significant decline, average numbers have a suitable place to live. Permanent exclusions from school are high.

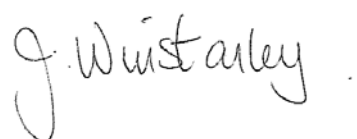
The large majority of services and settings give strong support to children and young people to achieve economic well-being, but primary schools, pupil referral units and children's homes are weaker. More low-income working families than nationally are helped with funding for childcare. The number of young people not in education, training or work are lower than in similar areas, helped by the local authority's success in finding apprenticeships. Young people are increasingly better qualified by the age of 19 than in similar areas, but at higher qualification levels the gap for those from low-income families, although now closing quickly, remains twice as large. Average numbers of young people leaving care continue to stay in education, training or work but almost all are now in suitable accommodation.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people are improving and notably so for educational achievement at ages 16 and 19. In 2010, provisional data for tests for 11-year-olds also show improvement. The local authority's review of its Children and Young People's Plan, shows thorough analysis, good progress in important areas and strong and successful partnerships. This is due in part to: the right priorities; well considered and carefully targeted action; and challenging targets and the allocation of resources to support them, such as to improve weak schools and to front-line child protection services. The plan is also very clear about what still needs to be done, such as the sharing of good practice. The one primary school that has recently been inadequate has made rapid progress, in part because of excellent support from the local authority. In front-line child protection services, inspection found effective planning, strong management supporting a strong staff team very well, and good attention given to the differing needs of children and young people, but some routine checks are not yet fully in place. Inspection also found that the views of those using services are not used as well as they could be to help improvement. The youth offending service works well and shows good capacity and capability to sustain and improve its strong 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 black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment