

9 December 2010

Ms Gillian Palmer
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Greenwich
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Dear Ms Palmer

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 Greenwich children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Greenwich perform adequately.

The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. There is very little inadequate provision. The overall effectiveness of early years and childcare provision has improved over the last year and the majority of provision is good or better. The large majority of nursery and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools is good or better. The majority of primary schools are good or better; however, the proportion of primary schools that are good or better, although improving, is not as high as found elsewhere, but none is inadequate. The large majority of secondary school provision is at least good, as is the large majority of sixth form provision in schools and there is a higher proportion of good provision than found elsewhere. The general further education college is satisfactory.

The local authority's adoption and fostering agencies are both good. The pupil referral unit is outstanding. Two of the four local authority maintained special schools are good and two are satisfactory. The residential special school is outstanding. The local authority's children home is satisfactory.

The inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services that took place in July 2010 judged the overall effectiveness of both services to be adequate. Capacity to improve was adequate for safeguarding and good for looked after children. Private fostering arrangements are satisfactory.

Outcomes for children and young people are at least in line with appropriate comparators for the very large majority of performance measures. However, the high teenage conception rate remains a concern for the borough. The large majority of performance measures for educational achievement are at least in line with appropriate comparators. Children's achievement at the age of five is now above average and results at the age of 11 are in line with the average for similar areas. Provisional data show a further improvement in GCSE results for 2010. The number of young people getting five good GCSEs or two A level or equivalent qualifications by the age of 19 is also improving, but remains below average. The difference in educational outcomes between key vulnerable groups, such as those from low-income families, and their peers has generally narrowed in recent years and the attainment of these children and young people is improving.

Key areas for further development

- Address the recommendations in the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services.

- Improve the educational attainment of young people by age 19.
- Further improve the overall effectiveness of primary schools so that more are good or better.
- Sustain recent improvements in reducing teenage pregnancies.

Outcomes for children and young people

The large majority of settings and services are good at encouraging children and young people to live healthily. Most health outcomes for children and young people are in line with elsewhere. The number of babies being breast-fed after six weeks is above the national average. Levels of childhood obesity continue to rise among both five- and 11-year-old children but are in line with averages for similar areas. In 2009, more children and young people took part in sport regularly than previously. The teenage pregnancy rate is high and well above the average for London and England. However, the latest data show that strategies to reduce the rate are beginning to make an impact. Pregnancy rates among young women in care show year-on-year reduction. The numbers of young people being screened for chlamydia to improve their sexual health is higher than average.

The recent inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services found that services were adequate overall. There are strengths within services, such as the strong partnership working between agencies. Lessons learned from well-conducted serious case reviews have been implemented effectively. However, there are a large number of important areas for development in safeguarding services which include completing the planned changes to the out-of-hours emergency duty team and ensuring that front line social work staff have access to routine high quality professional staff supervision which is rigorously recorded.

The very large majority of settings and services are good at helping children and young people to enjoy their learning and achieve well. There has been a significant improvement, at a fast pace, in the number of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year at school and performance is above the average for similar areas. For 11-year-olds, school test results were in line with the average for similar areas in 2009 and provisional 2010 data show further improvement. There has been a further reduction in the number of primary schools not meeting the required standards in these tests. In 2009, five primary schools were inadequate, but in 2010 none are in this category. GCSE results, although improving and broadly in line with similar areas, were in the bottom 25% in the country in 2009, but provisional data show further good improvement in 2010. Strategies to reduce the number of children and young people with poor school attendance are working well. Educational outcomes for children in care are adequate overall and the latest provisional data show a significant improvement in test results for 11-year-olds in 2010.

The local authority recognises the need to develop more structured opportunities for children and young people, including those from groups whose circumstances have

made them vulnerable such as children in care, to be involved in shaping local services. A national charity has recently been commissioned to take this work forward. School councils and youth forums are well developed and they provide good opportunities for children and young people to have their say about local issues which concern them. By most measures the youth offending service works well and the numbers of young people re-offending is lower than in similar areas. Good support from the Support Through Early Intervention Panel has effectively diverted young people away from crime.

The numbers of 16- to 18-year-olds that are not in work, education or training continues to fall and improved significantly over the last year. Performance is now in line with the average for similar areas. However, despite a trend of improvement, by age 19 a lower proportion of young people are getting qualifications at both the lower and higher level than elsewhere. Improving the range and quality of provision for young people and increasing the numbers accessing further learning is a priority for the local authority and their partners and young people now have access to a broader range of choices including diplomas courses.

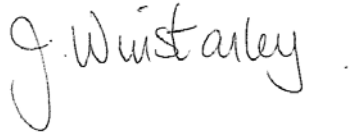
Prospects for improvement

The vision for children and young people in Greenwich is clearly outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan 2008–2011. The annual review of the plan for 2009–2010 is clearly focused on how effectively the local authority and its partners have tackled its priorities for children and young people. Raising school standards for children of all ages is a priority in Greenwich. There has been further improvement in educational outcomes, including results for children and young people from low-income families. However, more work is needed to raise the attainment of Greenwich's young people by age 19, which is amongst the lowest in the country. The overall effectiveness of both primary and secondary schools has improved since last year and the local authority provides good support to schools causing concern. The number of primary schools not meeting expected standards in tests at the age of 11 has reduced significantly to only one in 2010, but the overall effectiveness of primary schools is not as high as found elsewhere. The long-standing concern regarding the high rate of teenage pregnancy remains, although the most recent data show improvement. Developments in sex and relationship education in schools and the new sexual health website for young people are beginning to have an impact.

The full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services judged capacity for further improvement as good for services for looked after children and adequate for safeguarding services. The local authority has a good understanding of further improvements that are needed to strengthen child protection services, but the growing demand for services has slowed progress. Social work caseloads are manageable and there are some examples of good quality practice in front-line child protection services, but practice in some areas, such as supervision, is inconsistent. Staff shortages in children's social care have been matched by additional resources to ensure the local authority can meet its statutory responsibilities.

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, reading "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment