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Ms Joy Hollister
Director of Community and Children's Services
City of London Corporation
PO Box 270, Guildhall
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Dear Ms Hollister

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.

City of London Corporation children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the City of London Corporation continue to perform excellently.

The City has a small number of settings that are inspected by Ofsted. These are good or outstanding overall and better than elsewhere in the country. All are at least good in supporting learning and achievement. The City's primary school is outstanding, including in its provision for very young children and in keeping children safe. The very large majority of childcare is good and the rest is outstanding. Most childminding is also good but some is only satisfactory. The authority's adoption service is satisfactory.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found significant strengths and no areas in need of priority action. The joint area review in 2007 judged safeguarding services as outstanding. Arrangements for private fostering are good.

National measures of performance show outcomes mostly above those for similar areas or found nationally. This is the case for all measures of educational attainment and progress. Standards for five- and 11-year-olds, already very high, have improved faster than in similar areas. At the age of 19, young people are exceptionally well qualified. Gaps in attainment for key vulnerable groups shift from year to year because of small numbers. The gap for five-year-olds is bigger in 2009, having been smaller than in similar areas and found nationally in the past. At age 11, pupils from low-income families do better than those in similar areas and found nationally and there is a very small gap with other children of the same age. The numbers of pupils with special educational needs have increased year on year but the gap with other children of the same age is very small.

Key areas for further development

- Improve childminding and the adoption service to at least good.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are outstanding in the City's primary school and for childcare, but weaker for childminders. A full range of services are in place for children and young people with emotional or mental health difficulties and many more mothers breast-feed than nationally. Almost all primary school children have school lunches, all take part in sport regularly and the majority are satisfied with parks and playgrounds, in part because of outstanding new facilities.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are outstanding in the primary school, good for childcare but weaker for childminders. Within the community, fewer children are killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. In child protection services, average numbers of referrals are assessed by social workers. Inspection found that these were dealt with well and clear decisions were made on necessary action. Almost all initial assessments and all full assessments are carried out on time but while some assessments are good, others do not contain enough detail or analysis, although children and young people are involved well. All meetings to review plans for children in care continue to be held on time.

Inspection shows children and young people have mostly outstanding provision for their learning and do very well. The very high standards continue to improve; at age five, this is despite many more children being from low-income families than in similar areas and found nationally. In 2009, the attainment gap for five-year-olds got bigger due to a small number of children starting school with complex needs. Eleven-year-olds make outstanding progress and exceeded local targets. No pupils are permanently excluded from school

Arrangements for helping children and young people to contribute positively to their local area are mostly outstanding. Fewer young people than in similar authorities say they have been drunk or taken drugs recently and very few have chlamydia. Average numbers of young people take part in organised activities in their area. Re-offending by young people remains on a par with similar areas and far fewer are now sentenced to custody. More young people who offend are now in education, training or work and almost all have a suitable place to live.

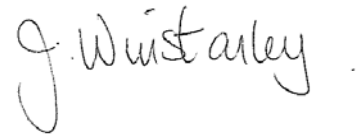
Inspection shows arrangements for the economic well-being of children and young people are outstanding and outcomes are mostly above comparators. Almost all young people are in education, work or training and, at age 19, they are increasingly much better qualified than elsewhere in the country.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes continue to improve and some, such as achievement at age 19, from an already very high base. Childminding and the adoption service remain relative weaknesses. The joint area review in 2007 found outstanding services for safeguarding and looked after children and the recent inspection of front-line child protection services found strong leadership at all levels, and a clear focus on review and evaluation that drives improvement. Areas for development, that included supervision, managerial oversight and staff training, are being addressed. The Children and Young People's Plan shows the right things are being tackled in the right way, with an in-depth understanding of the needs of children, young people and families. Partnerships are very strong. Data and other information are used very well to track progress and elected members are clear about what is going on. The City of London works very successfully with other local authorities that surround it, such as on preventing youth offending. This shared service performs excellently against national measures and has good capacity and capability to sustain and improve its 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 style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment