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Ms Ann Baxter
Director of Children, Schools and Families
London Borough of Camden
Crowndale Centre, 218–220 Eversholt Road
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Dear Ms Baxter

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 Camden children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Camden perform well. In 2009, a transitional year, children's services were judged to be performing excellently. However, in 2010 there is not enough good universal provision, especially secondary school and childminding provision, to meet the requirements for that grade.

In 2010 changes to the assessment process and performance profile hinder like with like comparison in some aspects. However, Camden's assessment of performs well does not mean that the quality of provision is deteriorating overall. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. Although the quality of childminding provision has improved overall in the last year, and there is little inadequate childminding, only just over half of childminding provision is now good or better. This is a lower proportion than found elsewhere. The overall quality of childcare provision on non-domestic premises is better, with the large majority being at least good. The overall effectiveness of the very large majority of primary school provision is at least good and only one primary school is currently inadequate. Although no secondary schools are inadequate, too many are satisfactory. Of the nine secondary schools, four are good or better, which is a significantly lower proportion than found elsewhere. However, the large majority of secondary school sixth form provision is good or better.

The three pupil referral units are good. Five of the six special schools, providing for children and young people in hospitals as well as those with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good or better. However, one special school is now inadequate. The local authority fostering agency is outstanding. The very large majority of all types of services and settings make a good or better contribution to helping children and young people stay safe. The large majority are good at ensuring children and young people enjoy their learning and achieve well.

The very recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services of November 2010 found areas of strength alongside many satisfactory features, with one area for development. There are no weaknesses requiring priority action. The areas of development identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in October 2009 have been addressed.

Performance is at least in line with the appropriate comparators for most national indicators. All performance measures for educational attainment are broadly in line with similar areas. Closing attainment gaps between groups whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable and their peers in the authority remains a challenge for the area and the gap widened for some groups in 2009. However, local data show gaps are narrowing again in 2010 for those from low-income families at the age of 11 and 16. The latest data also show a narrowing of the gap between the lowest achieving five-year-olds and their peers. The attainment of children and

young people from low-income families shows an improving trend at the age of five, 11, 16 and 19, with local data showing a notable improvement for White British pupils at the age of 16 in 2010.

Key areas for further development

- Improve secondary schools so that more are good or better.
- Improve childminding provision so that more is good or better.

Outcomes for children and young people

The very large majority of services and settings are good at encouraging children and young people to live healthily. Most health outcomes are in line with appropriate comparators. The number of babies being breast-fed six weeks after birth is significantly higher than the national average. Overall, childhood obesity levels are broadly in line with the average for similar areas. The number of children who are obese at the age of five has increased, but for 11-year-olds levels improved slightly. The latest data shows that Camden has a lower rate of teenage conceptions than the England average. Despite some increases in the last two years only three other inner London boroughs recorded a lower teenage conception rate than Camden and the rate of reduction in the last decade has been better than average for London.

Arrangements for helping children and young people to stay safe are good or better in the very large majority of services and settings. There is a strong focus on the safety of children in the community with comparatively low numbers of children and young people involved in road traffic accidents. This is also the case for hospital admissions of children and young people for accidental or deliberate injury. The very recent inspection of front-line child protection services identified strengths in strong partnership work across agencies and good arrangements for liaison between children's and adult services.

Overall the large majority of settings and services are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. Only one primary school is currently inadequate and it is making satisfactory progress towards improvement. However, a lower proportion of childminding provision and secondary schools are good at helping children enjoy and achieve than elsewhere. Up to 2009, there had been no clear trend of improvement in the number of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year at school, with performance in 2009 being broadly average. However, the latest data show a significant improvement in 2010. The four years up to 2009 show a positive trend in test results for 11-year-olds with performance in the top 25% for all local authorities. Provisional results for 2010 show a slight dip in performance for both boys and girls. By the age of 16, just over half of all young people gained five good GCSEs including English and mathematics, a significant improvement on the previous year's results and performance is in line with elsewhere. The number of young people with poor attendance at secondary school continues to fall and is broadly average. Effective strategies implemented by The Camden Academy, the local authority's virtual school

for looked after children, have significantly improved the attendance of children in care. The local authority's own review of progress identifies the need to continue to focus on narrowing the gap in attainment between children whose circumstances have made more vulnerable and other children in Camden. Despite a trend of improving results for those from low-income families at the age of five, 11 and 16, the achievement gap between them and others of the same age in Camden's schools widened in 2009. However, local data show gaps are narrowing again in 2010 for those from low-income families at the age of 11 and 16, and national data show the same for five-year-olds.

Most schools and settings provide good opportunities for children and young people to have a say in decision-making. The local authority continues to ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to shape the services they use, such as holiday activities for 11- to 13-year-olds. Reducing anti-social behaviour and youth crime is a priority for the local authority and their partners. The Camden youth offending service is performing adequately against the national indicators and has good capacity and capability to sustain and improve its performance. Despite a reduction in re-offending rates they remain higher than elsewhere.

The numbers of 16- to 18-year-olds that are not participating in work, education or training is broadly average and continuing to fall. However, the latest data show a lower proportion of young people leaving the local authority's care being in work, education or training than previously, although performance is in line with the national average. The numbers of young people gaining qualifications by the age of 19, including those from low-income backgrounds, continue to improve year-on-year and performance is in line with the average in similar areas. Latest data show the achievement gap at the age of 19 between those from low-income backgrounds getting two A levels and their peers in Camden has narrowed.

Prospects for improvement

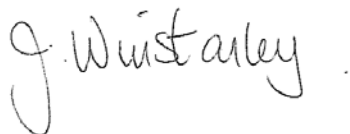
Although the large majority of provision is of good quality across the authority, the overall quality of childminding and secondary schools is not as good as in similar areas or England as a whole. Camden's Children and Young People's Plan 2009 -2012 sets out a clear vision for improving outcomes for all children, young people and families. Priorities, which focus appropriately on challenging areas such as health inequalities and families' economic well-being, are based on a sound analysis of need, which continues to be developed and updated with detailed information. A thorough review of the first year of the plan clearly outlines where targets have and have not been met and sets out where there is more to do. To tackle the impact of child poverty, a new family poverty plan has been developed which aims to improve outcomes for the high number of Camden children and young people from low-income families.

The local authority and its partners have reorganised the way they work together in the local area to improve effectiveness and ensure all appropriate agencies contribute to further improving outcomes for children and young people in Camden. Developments include the formation of a new management group, responsible for

performance management and making better use of resources. There is a strong focus on achieving good value-for-money across partners. Joint commissioning arrangements have been renewed and future financial pressures identified.

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