

9 December 2010

Ms Annie Hudson  
Director of Children and Young People's Services  
Bristol City Council  
3rd Floor, Council House  
College Green  
Bristol BS1 5TR

Dear Ms Hudson

## 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.

## Bristol City Council children's services assessment 2010

<b>Children's services assessment</b>	<b>Performs adequately (2)</b>
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Children's services in Bristol City Council perform adequately, as they did in 2009.

The minority of groups of Ofsted inspection findings are good or better. Day care provision for very young children has improved over the last year and is adequate overall. Education for this age group is good. Since last year there has been an improvement in the proportion of good or better primary schools although the number of inadequate schools has increased. There has been a more significant improvement in secondary schools over the same period. Just under a half are now good or better and none are inadequate. Post-16 provision is adequate overall. Special schools maintained by the local authority are nearly all good or better. The local authority's fostering and adoption services and five out of its eight children's homes are good.

Provision for safeguarding and for children in care is good overall. Satisfactory steps are taken by the local authority to identify and monitor private fostering arrangements.

Performance measures show that a very large majority of outcomes for children and young people are broadly average or better. This includes a large majority of the main measures of educational attainment. In the last two years there have been substantially bigger improvements in test and exam results than the national average. In 2009 children's attainment at age 11 was close to the average for similar areas but for older young people, well below. Children and young people from low-income families do significantly less well than the average for this group elsewhere throughout their education.

### Key areas for further development

- Increase the proportion of primary and secondary schools which are good or better.
- Increase the proportion of young people achieving a qualification equal to five good GCSEs by ages 16 and 19.
- Improve the educational achievement of young people from low-income families.

### Outcomes for children and young people

The very large majority of services and settings give good encouragement and support to children and young people to lead healthy lives. A particular focus of local services is improving the emotional health and wellbeing of young people. This links very appropriately with a key local authority priority which is to develop young

people's self esteem, raise aspirations and promote learning. The proportion of children who are seriously overweight at age five and 11 is broadly average. However, the number of young people who say they have taken drugs or been drunk recently is significantly worse than average and has gone up recently. The number of young women aged under 18 who become pregnant is higher than the average for similar areas and much higher than nationally. There has been little success in reducing the pregnancy rate over recent years.

Local arrangements to help children and young people stay safe have improved over recent years and are good overall. The very large majority of individual services, for example schools, make a good contribution to this. There is also increasingly effective multi-agency action to identify problems early and provide support before they become very serious. Partnership working at all levels has improved and there is strong commitment at both political and senior manager level to delivering effective safeguarding provision. The local authority takes satisfactory steps to identify and monitor private fostering arrangements. Provision for children in care has improved and is good overall. This includes the steps taken to give early support where problems are developing and thereby avoid care being necessary. Agencies work well together to provide children in care with coordinated support. The local authority's fostering and adoption agencies are good and when it buys extra help of this kind from private and voluntary organisations this is also usually good. The majority of the local authority's children's homes are good, as are two out of the four private and voluntary homes it uses. Steady and substantial progress has been made over recent years in reducing the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. The number of children and young people who say they have been bullied is comparatively high.

Provision to help children and young people achieve more educationally is the area's main weakness. The overall quality of day care provision for very young children is adequate overall and below the national average, although education for this age group is good. The position is not as strong in primary and secondary schools. Less than half of the area's primary schools are good or better and eleven were judged inadequate in their last inspection. There were no inadequate schools when the 2009 children's services assessment was made. Although just under a half of secondary schools are good or better, there has been a significant improvement since last year and none are inadequate. There were substantially bigger improvements in test and exam results at ages 11 and 16 in 2009 than the national average and provisional figures for both ages show an improvement in 2010 which was also much better than average. At age 11 the results in 2009 were close to the average in similar areas and the amount children progressed between ages seven and 11 also compared quite well. However, at age 16 the results remained well below the average in similar areas. There has been a substantial improvement in secondary school attendance over recent years, albeit from a low starting point. It is now broadly average. Throughout their education children and young people from low-income families do less well than the average for such pupils in similar areas. This is particularly so at age 16, where the gap between these pupils and others has widened markedly over recent years. One welcome feature of recent performance by this group is that the rate of improvement at age 19 over recent years has been

significantly better than nationally. Young people with special educational needs do less well in national tests than elsewhere at age 16, although not at age 11. However, almost all the local authority's special schools and the majority of the non-maintained and independent schools in the area are good or better. These provide for most of the pupils with the highest levels of need, many of whom are unable to take national tests. One of the four pupil referral units in the area is outstanding, one is good and the other two are satisfactory.

A comparatively low proportion of children and young people participate in organised group activities outside school. Re-offending by young people is slightly higher than in similar areas, although by most measures the youth offending service works reasonably well. Good arrangements are in place within the very large majority of services to seek young people's views and involve them in decision making.

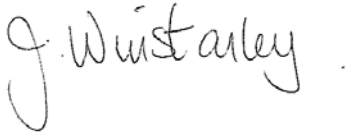
The support young people receive to help them do well in later life mainly reflects the overall effectiveness of the services involved. It is comparatively weak in both primary and secondary schools but better elsewhere. Provision for 16- to 19-year-olds is satisfactory in the local further education college and good in the sixth form college. These two colleges cater for almost 80% of the young people in the 16–19 age group who are in education and training. The overall standard of school sixth forms is adequate and close to the national average. The number of young people aged 16–18 involved in education, work or training is close to the average in similar areas. The proportion achieving qualifications equivalent to five good GCSEs by age 19 is well below the average for similar areas although the proportion achieving qualifications equal to two good A levels is much closer. The rate of improvement in such respects over recent years has been similar to nationally.

### **Prospects for improvement**

Overall the local authority and its partners have a good grasp of local needs and have delivered some significant improvements to provision over recent years. Improving safeguarding has been a major local priority which has been successfully delivered. Key driving factors behind this particular improvement have been strong leadership at political and senior management level and the development of better partnership-working amongst the key agencies involved. The local authority has also fully recognised the pressing need to improve the standard of its mainstream schools. It has made this a major priority and, rightly, has given the secondary sector its main attention. In doing so it has drawn considerably on both its own resources and help from outside. Overall, it has had some significant success. Whilst the proportion of primary and secondary schools judged good or better is still comparatively very low, the proportion has improved, significantly fewer schools are failing to meet minimum requirements, and test and exam results have gone up faster than nationally, both at age 11 and 16. More progress has been made in improving the quality of provision in the secondary sector than in primary, reflecting the focus of improvement activity.

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