

9 December 2010

Mr Terry Parkin
Strategic Director People
Brighton And Hove City Council
Kings House, Grand Avenue
Hove BN3 2SR

Dear Mr Parkin

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.

Brighton and Hove City Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Brighton and Hove City Council perform adequately. In 2009 they performed well and although there continue to be many strong features the overall effectiveness of secondary schools no longer justifies that grade

The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. Day care for young children has improved since the last assessment. The large majority of nursery and early years provision in primary schools is good or better. More primary schools than in similar areas are good or better and almost a quarter are outstanding. In contrast, the overall effectiveness of secondary schools is weaker than at the last assessment and is well below the national and similar area averages with only three of the nine schools good or better and one inadequate. The quality of Post-16 provision is mixed. Although both sixth form colleges are good and the general further education college satisfactory, only one of the four secondary school sixth forms is good and one is inadequate. Children's homes are good or better as are fostering and adoption arrangements and most special schools and pupil referral units.

The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found some strengths but also key areas for development although none requiring priority action.

Performance against the very large majority of national measures is in line with or better than comparators. Although national test results for 11-year-olds and the qualifications gained by young people at the age of 19 are just above those for similar areas, the standards achieved by 16-year-olds are well below. However, the provisional data for 2009/10 show an improvement in GCSE results. Children and young people from families with low incomes mostly do better than in similar areas at the ages of 11 and 19 but not at 16 and neither are they catching up with others in the city to any significant extent at this age. Eleven-year-olds with special educational needs also do better in national tests than in similar areas but at 16 the standards they achieve are broadly similar. Few pupils are permanently excluded from secondary school.

Key areas for further improvement

- Improve secondary schools including sixth forms so that more are good or better.
- Improve standards for 16-year-olds.

Outcomes for children and young people

Arrangements to help children and young people live healthy lives are implemented well. All schools have achieved the National Healthy Schools standard. Breast-feeding rates are high. The number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is now reducing well. Fewer children than average are too overweight although numbers are not reducing. Children are increasingly taking part in physical activities and sport regularly. Many more young people than elsewhere report misusing drugs and alcohol however, and the authority is targeting support to those most at risk. Good progress has been made in developing services for children and young people with emotional or mental health difficulties. These offer prompt support with specific services for children in care and those with special educational needs.

Procedures for keeping children and young people safe are implemented well and secondary schools and childminders have improved in this respect. Children in care now have fewer changes of placements and plans for their care are reviewed regularly. Actions to help keep children and young people safe within their communities are mostly successful. Good progress is being made in reducing road accidents which cause deaths or seriously injuries. Admissions of children to hospital as a result of injuries are similar to elsewhere, having reduced recently following a steady increase in previous years. Young people report schools are good at tackling bullying and a range of measures are having an impact.

Support to help children and young people learn is mostly good across schools, services and settings but far fewer secondary schools are similarly good. Children do well in their early years and provisional data show that the gap between those who do least well in their learning and their peers is narrowing. Although results in national tests for 11-year-olds are just above the average for similar areas, the number of primary schools not achieving the minimum standards for pupil performance increased in 2009. Children with special educational needs do better than in similar areas at this age as do children from families with low incomes. The overall effectiveness of secondary schools is well below average, young people do not make enough progress and standards at age 16 are well below those of similar areas. Provisional data for 2009/10 however show improvement after no change in the two previous years. Although standards achieved by those with special educational needs at this age are improving, they are lower than elsewhere and the attainment gap in Brighton has not narrowed over the last three years. Results for 16-year-olds from families with low incomes are the same as for similar areas but, despite improvement, are below the average for England and the attainment gap in this respect is also not closing. All secondary schools have at least satisfactory standards of behaviour, actions to reduce permanent exclusions have been very successful and numbers excluded are low. Pupils with poor attendance have also reduced significantly over the last three years.

Ofsted inspection shows services, settings and institutions to be mostly good in helping children and young people contribute to decision making about things which

affect their lives. Numbers of young people who break the law for the first time, as well as those who re-offend, have reduced significantly and are much lower than average. Far fewer young offenders than average however have a suitable place to live and too few are helped find work or continue in education or training.

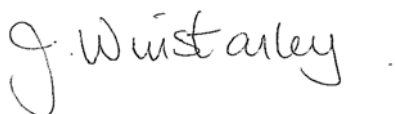
Institutions and services mostly prepare children and young people well for working life, although secondary schools are not as effective. Numbers of young people who are not working or continuing with their education have increased and are now above the average for similar areas, having reduced steadily in previous years. Young people leaving care are supported well. Most find work or continue with education or training and almost all are helped find suitable places to live. More 19-year-olds than in similar areas achieve qualifications, although there was no further improvement last year. Young people from families with low incomes do better at the age of 19 than in similar areas and some recent improvement shows them catching up with others in the city. Progression to higher education by young people from low-income backgrounds is good.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes continue to improve in many areas but the overall effectiveness of secondary schools is lower than at the time of the last assessment and standards at the age of 16 had not improved, although provisional data for 2010 are more positive. Joint working between agencies is effective, for example in reducing health inequalities. The Children and Young People's Plan provides a good analysis of progress and clarifies areas for further improvement. The authority continues to pay close attention to the views of children and young people to establish priorities for action. There is a clear emphasis on supporting families through work with parents and vulnerable young people. The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found the authority to have been very successful in recruiting permanent social workers and in reducing their caseloads. Although there has been improvement in the way agencies work together to assess children, these procedures do not yet ensure that children always receive support quickly enough. Improving secondary schools continues to be a key challenge and the authority is progressing with its programme of establishing academies. Support provided by the authority is having an impact in raising standards in some secondary schools, but not enough overall. Ofsted monitoring visits to weaker schools show appropriate support from the authority, although schools do not always pay enough attention to the advice given.

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