

9 December 2010

Ms Jane Portman  
Executive Director, Children and Families Services  
Bournemouth Borough Council  
The Town Hall, Bourne Avenue  
Bournemouth, BH2 6DY

Dear Ms Portman

## 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.

## Bournemouth Borough Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Bournemouth Borough Council perform well, as they did in 2009.

Overall, the majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The quality of day care for very young children is good and educational provision for this age group is outstanding. However, both primary and secondary schools are only adequate overall. The four school sixth forms are all good and special school and pupil referral unit provision is all good or better. The local authority's adoption agency is good, but its fostering agency is only satisfactory. The children's home run by the local authority itself is good.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services identified a broad balance of strengths and areas needing development but no very serious weaknesses requiring priority action.

Performance measures show that a very large majority of outcomes for children and young people are broadly average or better. This includes a very large majority of the main measures of educational attainment. Test and examination results at all ages are broadly in line with the average in similar areas. However, children and young people from low-income families do much less well in terms of achieving qualifications equal to five good GCSEs by age 19 than the average in similar areas.

### Key areas for further development

- Improve the quality of primary and secondary schools.
- Increase the proportion of young people from low-income families who achieve a qualification equal to five good GCSEs by the age of 19.

### Outcomes for children and young people

The very large majority of services give good encouragement and support to children and young people in living healthy lives. A particular focus of local services is improving the emotional health and well-being of young people and, in particular, raising their self-esteem and aspirations. The proportion of young people overall who relate well to their friends and family is significantly lower than average, but local data suggest that there has been some success at least in reducing the number of young people with severe mental health problems. The number of children who are seriously overweight at the age of five and 11 is comparatively very low and there has been good recent improvement in such respects. There has also been a major recent improvement in the number of children and young people who regularly take part in sport. The number of young women aged under 18 who become pregnant is

lower than the average in similar areas and has gone down faster than average over recent years. Also, the rate of screening for chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease, is much better than the national 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 very large majority of individual services like schools are good at helping children and young people to stay safe. The local authority's front-line child protection services have a broad balance of strengths and areas which need development, and it takes satisfactory steps to identify and monitor private fostering arrangements. There are well-developed arrangements to coordinate the work of the key agencies involved in identifying and supporting those at risk. There is an appropriate emphasis on identifying problems early and giving support before they become very serious. Partnership working generally is becoming well-established and multi-agency assessments of family needs are usually of good quality. However, communication between the police and social workers is unsatisfactory on too many occasions. The local authority's adoption agency is good, but its fostering agency only satisfactory. However, when it buys extra help of this kind from private and voluntary organisations this is nearly always good. The average length of care placement compares well with the average nationally. The one children's home run by the local authority itself is good, but the private and voluntary sector home it uses in the area is only satisfactory. No progress has been made in the last two years in reducing the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. In fact the rate has gone up. The number of children and young people who say they have been bullied is about average.

The quality of day care for very young children is good overall and comparable to the national average. Educational provision for this age group is outstanding. However, both primary and secondary schools are only adequate overall and two primary schools were judged to be inadequate in their most recent inspections, a worsening of the local position since last year. Also, one secondary school was judged to be inadequate during the year and this has now been closed. Test results overall at age 11 are very close to the average for similar areas and at age 16 they are above. The rate of improvement in recent years has been close to the national average at age 16 but slower at 11. Children and young people from low-income families and those with special educational needs do slightly less well than the average in similar areas, both at ages 11 and 16. However, one of the two special schools is outstanding and the other is good. These schools provide for most of the pupils with the highest levels of need, many of whom are unable to take national tests. The one pupil referral unit is also good.

Comparatively few children and young people participate in organised group activities outside school. Re-offending by young people is slightly higher than in similar areas. However, whilst performing well against national indicators, the youth offending team has been subject to an improvement programme from the Youth Justice Board to tackle its underperformance. Good arrangements are in place within the very large majority of services to seek young people's views and involve them in decision making.

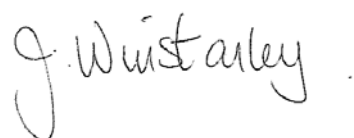
The support young people receive to help them do well in later life closely reflects the overall effectiveness of the services involved. It is comparatively weak in both primary and secondary schools but much better in school sixth forms, special schools and the pupil referral unit. All of the four school sixth forms are good. The number of young people who stay on in education or training when they reach school leaving age and the number of young people aged 16 to 18 involved in education, work or training are very close to the average in similar areas. The proportion achieving qualifications equivalent to five good GCSEs by age 19 is close to the average in similar areas but the proportion achieving qualifications equal to two good A levels is better. However, the improvement rates over recent years have been significantly slower than the national average. By age 19 young people from low-income families do significantly less well than the average in similar areas in terms of qualifications equal to five good GCSEs, but better on the two good A levels measure. The local authority is aware of the need to improve the provision made, including the availability of vocational education.

### **Prospects for improvement**

The local authority and its partners have a good grasp of local needs and effective steps are taken to obtain the views of both children and young people themselves and their parents. The Children and Young People's Plan reflects this sound knowledge of need and sets appropriate priorities for improvement. Steps taken to restructure service delivery to improve multi-agency working are broadly in line with developments nationally and there is reasonable evidence that these are bedding down and improving partnership working. There has been a recent increase in the number of inadequate schools, despite the local authority having identified the developing problems in each case and issued notices to improve. Recent letters from Ofsted monitoring visits indicate that satisfactory progress is being made in the two primary schools involved. The secondary school has been closed. The local authority is currently pursuing a substantial restructuring of secondary education as a key element of its improvement programme. Improving both the range of education and training provision post-16, and the individual support provided to young people is, rightly, a local priority. The focus on raising young people's self-esteem and aspirations is particularly appropriate given the relatively poor educational performance of key groups like young people from low-income families. Overall, whilst the recent track record of improvement includes some significant successes, much remains to be achieved.

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 cursive script that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment