

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 020 7421 6666
Direct F 020 7421 5633
Juliet.Winstanley@ofsted.gov.uk



9 December 2010

Mrs Edna Sutton
Director for Children, Young People and Families
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
PO Box 609
Barnsley, South Yorkshire
S70 9FH

Dear Mrs Sutton

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.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
---------------------------------------	--------------------------------

Children's services in Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately. In 2009, a transitional year, Barnsley was assessed as performing well. However, in 2010 there is not enough good provision, particularly in universal services, to meet the minimum requirements for that grade.

The majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. There are some strengths in non-domestic childcare, in the pupil referral unit and special schools and in the special school sixth form. The majority of primary schools are good or better. However, inspections show that only around a quarter of secondary schools and a third of post-16 settings are good or better. The local adoption agency is good and the fostering agency is satisfactory. All four local authority children's homes and the residential family centre are good or better, as are the private and voluntary children's homes located in the area.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found some strengths and no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show the large majority of outcomes are in line with or above the averages for England or for similar areas. Outcomes are not as strong for indicators of educational attainment and economic well-being. Following a big improvement in 2009, results in national tests are in line with similar areas for children at the end of the Reception Year. The gap between those who are not doing as well and their peers at this age remains too wide but has narrowed over time. Achievement is below similar areas for 11-year-olds, although there was a small improvement last year against a falling trend elsewhere and good improvement over time. Gaps in the achievement of pupils from low-income families and those with special educational needs at this key stage remain too wide. Although 16-year-olds continue to perform at a level below similar areas, the rate of improvement in the number gaining higher grade GCSE results improved more than that found elsewhere. The achievement gap for those from low-income families at this key stage has narrowed but the gap for those with special educational needs has widened. Nineteen-year-olds in Barnsley do not gain as many qualifications as those from similar areas but the latest results show good improvement in the numbers who gain five good GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.

Key areas for further development

- Improve the attainment for children and young people of all ages.
- Improve secondary schools so that more are good or better and behaviour improves.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are successful in many settings. Special schools, the pupil referral unit, the local fostering agency, children's homes and the residential family centre are particularly good at this, although childminders and secondary schools do not do as well. There is good local knowledge of how many mothers are still breast-feeding their babies after six weeks, although fewer mothers than found nationally are continuing to do so. An average number of children take part in physical education and sport and the number of children who are too overweight at the ages of five and 11 is also in line with that of similar areas. The proportion of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is falling at a faster rate than nationally, although numbers have actually increased. This year, fewer 16-year-olds report that they have recently been drunk or taken drugs but levels remain too high. Services for children and young people with emotional and mental health difficulties have not improved this year.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are almost always good. Ofsted's inspections of services and settings confirm this. The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection arrangements found assessments were generally of a good quality. Evidence showed rigorous and high quality auditing of case files which identified areas for development and action plans. The inspection also found there was a very low turnover of staff, with stable and well experienced assessment teams carrying manageable and carefully monitored caseloads. Recent data show better performance than found nationally in the length of time that children in care are able to stay in the same placement. There are some weaknesses in the arrangements for ensuring that children are safe within the community, for example, the numbers of children killed or seriously injured on the roads are not decreasing fast enough and too many children feel bullied.

Special schools and the pupil referral unit, as well as children's homes and the local fostering agency are particularly good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. Secondary schools and the local adoption agency do not do as well. The local authority works hard to help all schools get better. The number not reaching the expected standards is reducing steadily, but slowly, over time with a good reduction in secondary schools. Inspection shows that primary schools promote enjoying and achieving well but at the end of primary school, pupils do not do as well in national tests as their peers elsewhere. However, there have been improvements, which provisional data for 2010 continue to demonstrate. The number of young people who by the age of 16 gain five or more good GCSEs rose much more than in similar areas in 2009 but attainment is still too low. Behaviour in secondary schools is a particular concern, and persistent absence is not improving fast enough.

Successful arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services have been in place for a long time. There are a wide range of ways in which children and young people, including those from groups whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, can take part by volunteering, being mentors and influencing local decisions. Secondary schools are not as good as other

settings and services at involving young people in decision making and activity in their communities. Re-offending by young people in Barnsley is comparable with similar areas and by most measures the youth offending service works reasonably well. Fewer young people are offending for the first time. There has also been a very good reduction in the number of young people who get a custodial sentence. The number of young people who have offended who are in education, training or work is not showing improvement. However, all young people who offend are found a suitable place to live and there has been a very good improvement over time.

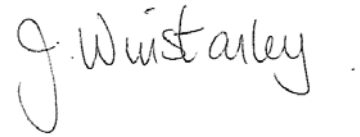
The local authority knows that, although attainment at the age of 19 is improving well over time, not all young people do as well as they can, including those from low-income families. Raising aspirations is a key priority for improvement in the Children and Young People's Plan. Inspection shows secondary schools are not successful enough in promoting this. Reducing the number of young people not in education, work or training is a key priority for the local area. The number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, work or training stayed the same this year after very good year-on-year improvement since 2006 and the local area reports very recent good improvements. A survey looking at young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in work, education or training found a number of strengths in the work of the local area, particularly around work between different organisations and the involvement of members of the council. In another survey, the work of the local further education college to promote the achievement of girls and young women was described as good, with some outstanding features. Although the number of young people aged 17 who stay in education or are being trained remains too low, it has risen at the same rate as similar areas. However, too few care leavers are in education, work or training and the number who are given a suitable place to live when they leave care has fallen.

Prospects for improvement

Leadership of children's services is continuing to improve the attainment of children and young people in Barnsley from a low starting point. The local area's review of its Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates good progress in important areas and shows careful analysis and a clear understanding of the local area's strengths and current and future challenges. The local area has identified the right priorities and good partnership working is shown both in the review of its work and by Ofsted's inspections of services. The recent inspection of front-line child protection services found that managers provided good quality support to staff and that investment in performance management systems had helped bring about improvement in service delivery. Ofsted's monitoring visits to weaker schools show that the local authority provides good challenge and support to help them get better. However, the decline in the performance of secondary schools since last year shows that it needs to strengthen its focus on school improvement. Work to improve the number of young people from low-income families who gain a qualification at the age of 19 has shown some success.

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