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Mr Robert McCulloch-Graham
Director of Children's Services
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Dear Mr McCulloch-Graham

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in April 2011 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services 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 other published data.

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of inspection outcomes including the arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against similar authorities and/or 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 2010, 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 Barnet children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Barnet perform excellently. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. As in most areas changes are taking place to secondary provision and some schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment. The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and provision of high quality helps children and young people learn and stay safe. Areas of strength remain as last year and completion of statements of special educational needs, which was an area for improvement last year, is now timely.

An unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection carried out in 2010 found significant strengths with only two areas for development and no areas requiring immediate remedial action.

Strengths

- Provision for early years and childcare is good overall and more registered day-care settings than last year are now good or better. Five children's centres have been inspected and all were judged good.
- For children under five, provision in nurseries and primary schools has improved and the very large majority is now good or better with a quarter outstanding. Achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage rose markedly in 2010 and is consistently above the average for similar areas and much higher than average nationally. Children from families with low incomes show a better level of development than average for the country overall and the gap between them and others in the borough is narrowing well.
- Primary schools have improved in their overall effectiveness since the last assessment and the very large majority are good or better. Standards achieved by 11-year-olds in national tests are in line with similar areas and much better than the average for England.
- The quality of secondary schools has improved further, the very large majority are now good or better and half are outstanding. Standards at Key Stage 4 achieved by 16-year-olds improved well in 2010 and are consistently much higher than the national average. Young people of Asian, Black or mixed heritage also achieve higher standards than the averages for these groups in the country overall. For young people from families with low incomes attainment is higher than in similar areas and much higher than the national average for the same group. The gap between these young people and their peers in Barnet is closing.

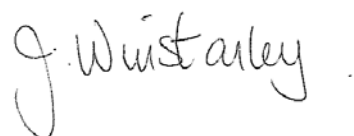
- The quality of school sixth forms has improved and the very large majority are now good or better, the general further education college is good and the sixth form college outstanding. Far more young people than elsewhere achieve level 2 or higher level qualification equivalent by the age of 19 and, similarly, so do those from families with low incomes. Gaps between young people from low-income families and their peers in the borough are narrowing steadily.
- Specialist provision has improved. All four special schools are now outstanding as is one pupil referral unit, with the other two good. Standards achieved by young people with special educational needs who follow the national curriculum are improving at the same rate as in similar areas and they are consistently above national and similar area averages.
- For looked after children, fostering and adoption services and children's homes are mostly good. Where the local authority commissions services the very large majority of children live in good or better children's homes or benefit from good or better fostering and adoption agencies.

Areas for further improvement

- Childminder settings have not improved since the last assessment with almost a third judged as only satisfactory at inspection.
- For looked after children, one of the two local authority children's homes is only satisfactory.

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 large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment