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Mr Terry Parkin
Strategic Director People
Brighton and Hove City Council
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Dear Mr Parkin

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.

Brighton and Hove City Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Brighton and Hove City Council perform adequately as they did in 2010. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and one school is now a sponsored academy. The previous inspection judgement for this school was taken into account in this assessment. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and help children and young people learn and stay safe. Areas of strength remain as last year and the overall effectiveness of early years and childcare has improved as well as special education provision. Areas for improvement identified in 2010 have not changed significantly although there has been some progress. The overall effectiveness of secondary schools has improved but continues to be a key area for improvement.

A full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children in 2011 reported that safeguarding arrangements are adequate as is provision for looked after children. The local authority's capacity to improve these services is however good.

Strengths

- Early years and childcare provision has improved well and the very large majority of settings are now good or better. Registered day care is particularly strong and more settings than last year are now outstanding.
- For children under the age of five, the very large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools is good or better. Five-year-olds' level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage improved well last year and is consistently higher than in similar areas. Achievements also improved for very young children from families with low incomes and they are in line with their counterparts nationally and in similar areas.
- The large majority of primary schools are good or better and although there has been no further increase in this proportion since the last assessment, more are now outstanding rather than good.
- For young people aged 16 or over, the two sixth form colleges are good and the general further education college has improved and is now also good. The number of 19-year-olds gaining level 2 or higher level qualifications is improving and is in line with similar areas and national comparators. Educational attainment for young people of this age from families with low income is also improving in line with the averages for the same groups elsewhere.

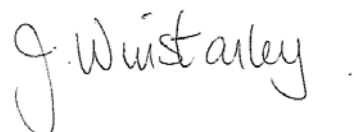
- For children and young people requiring special provision the very large majority of special schools and special school sixth forms in the city are good or better. The overall effectiveness of the six local authority special schools has improved and three are now outstanding with two good and none are inadequate. Fostering and adoption services and children's homes are good or better, with five out of six children's homes in the city, including both local authority children's homes, judged outstanding. Where the local authority commissions services, the very large majority of placements are with good or better fostering or adoption agencies or in good or better children's homes.

Areas for further improvement

- Despite the overall effectiveness of secondary schools having improved, less than half were judged good or better at their last inspection and one is inadequate although making satisfactory progress in addressing weaknesses. Only one of the four secondary school sixth forms is good with one inadequate.
- Provisional data for 2011 indicate that attainment in national tests for 11-year-olds are in line with similar areas but have not improved over the past four years.
- Despite Key Stage 4 results improving in 2010 and provisional results for 2011 showing further improvement, educational standards achieved by 16-year-olds continue to be below those in similar areas. Attainment for 16-year-olds from families with low incomes is also lower than in similar areas and the country overall and is not improving.
- Of the three aspects judged in the recent inspection of the youth offending team two required moderate improvement but substantial improvement in the case of the third.

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