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Mr Adrian Loades  
Executive Director, Children and Young People's Services  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
CC1001, Shire Hall  
Cambridge  
Cambridgeshire CB3 0AP

Dear Mr Loades

## 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.

## Cambridgeshire County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Cambridge County Council perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and effectively support children and young people to learn and stay safe. Areas of strength remain the same as last year with further improvements to some. As found elsewhere, changes to school provision are taking place and some primary and secondary schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

A recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found some strengths, areas of satisfactory provision with some areas for development but no priority actions requiring urgent attention. Most areas for development identified at the previous inspection have been addressed.

### Strengths

- The unannounced inspection found considerable and effective action has been taken to improve the recruitment and retention of staff, resulting in a stable and appropriately qualified workforce and increased capacity within the service. The inspection found this had resulted in good staff morale with staff feeling well supported by managers.
- There has been some improvement in the quality of early years and childcare provision with an increase in the proportion of good or better childminders and regulated childcare settings. More childminders are good or better than found elsewhere and there is no longer any inadequate provision. Three of the five children's centres, inspected for the first time, are good.
- For children under five, the very large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools is good and some is outstanding. Most recent performance indicators show an increase in the proportion of five-year-olds reaching a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and performance is in line with similar areas and national averages.
- Improving secondary schools so that more are good or better was identified as an area for improvement last year. Of the 11 secondary schools inspected during the academic year, seven are good and five of these improved from satisfactory. One school has made satisfactory progress and is no longer inadequate. Most recent performance indicators show the proportion of 16-year-olds achieving five A\* to C at GCSE

including English and mathematics continues to rise. Standards are in line with both similar areas and national averages.

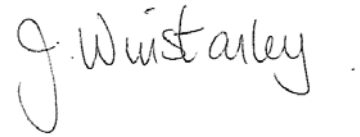
- For learning after the age of 16, sixth form college provision is good at one college and outstanding at the other and one of the two colleges of education is good. However, a relative weakness is seen in that only a third of secondary sixth forms are good or better. Standards at the age of 19 continue to be in line with national averages and similar areas, but did not rise as quickly as elsewhere last year.
- Most specialist provision performs well. The large majority of special schools, including those with secondary sixth forms are good or better. Two of the three pupil referral units are outstanding and one is good. A fourth, reported as inadequate in last year's assessment, has now closed. For looked after children, the local authority fostering and private fostering arrangements are good. A recent inspection of the adoption agency reported a good service with outstanding features. The number of local authority children's homes has reduced from seven to four and two of these are outstanding. The large majority of private and voluntary-run children's homes used for children in the care of the local authority are good or better. At the age of 11, more looked after children achieve the expected Level 4 in both English and mathematics than those living in similar areas.
- The local authority's strategic plan appropriately identifies the need to close the gap in health and education outcomes for vulnerable groups. The proportion of children and young people from low-income families achieving the expected level at the age of 16 and 19 is improving and the gap with their peers in Cambridgeshire is reducing. However, the proportion of five-, 16- and 19-year-olds from low-income families achieving the expected standard for their age is below average.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- There has been a decline in the proportion of good or better primary schools over time and five primary schools inspected during the year are identified as requiring significant improvement. Three require special measures and two have been issued with a notice to improve. However, two schools previously inadequate are now satisfactory.
- Education standards that are average for five- and 11-year-olds are not rising as quickly as found nationally over time. However, the 1% improvement in the proportion of 11-year-olds achieving the expected Level 4 in both English and mathematics this year is better than national averages where there was no increase.

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