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Mr Trevor Doughty  
Director of Children, Young People and Families  
Cornwall Council  
Services for Children, Young People and Families  
County Hall  
Treyew Road  
Truro, Cornwall  
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Dear Mr Doughty

## 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.

## Cornwall Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs poorly (1)
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Children's services in Cornwall Council perform poorly. In September 2009, a full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children identified serious weaknesses resulting in inadequate judgements for both safeguarding and looked after children services and a performs poorly judgement for the children's services assessment. A re-inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services was carried out in January 2011 and found that while services for looked after children had improved and were now adequate, safeguarding remained inadequate. The publication of the 2010 children's services assessment letter for Cornwall was deferred until March 2011 pending the outcome of the re-inspection and with safeguarding services still inadequate, Cornwall children's services for 2010 were again assessed as performs poorly overall. Until further safeguarding inspection evidence is available the children's services assessment for 2011 remains performs poorly.

The weaknesses in safeguarding services are significant. However, the very large majority of settings and institutions, such as children's day-care provision and schools inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and very few are inadequate. As in 2010, most institutions, settings and services are good at helping children and young people to learn and stay safe. As is the case elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and some schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

### Strengths

- Education and day-care provision for very young children is good and has improved since the last assessment. Very young children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile are improving and are now higher than in similar areas. For very young children from families with low incomes achievements are also higher than in similar areas and the gap between them and other children in Cornwall is closing faster.
- The overall effectiveness of primary schools has improved since last year and the large majority are now good or better. Standards achieved by 11-year-olds are also improving and are in line with similar areas.
- The large majority of secondary schools are good or outstanding although this proportion has reduced since last year. At Key Stage 4 standards achieved by 16-year-olds have improved well since the last assessment and are in line with similar areas. Attainment for young people from families with low incomes has also improved steadily over the past three years and is the same as in similar areas although these young people are not yet catching up with their peers in Cornwall.

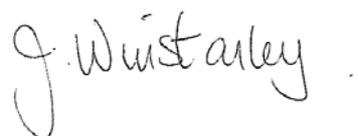
- For children and young people requiring special provision, almost all special schools and pupil referral units in the area are good or outstanding as they were in 2010. For looked after children, local authority fostering and adoption services are good as are private fostering arrangements. The overall effectiveness of the local authority's children's homes has improved since the last assessment and all are good or better.
- The large majority of colleges and school sixth forms for young people over the age of 16 are good or outstanding and have improved since last year. The number achieving qualifications at level 2 and level 3 by the age of 19 are improving and are the same as in similar areas. Young people from families with low incomes however do better than in similar areas and are broadly in line with the picture nationally. Gaps between these young people and their peers in Cornwall have narrowed in recent years.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- There are serious weaknesses in services to safeguard children and young people. The local authority recognises the importance of strengthening safeguarding arrangements and this continues to be a major area of development in Cornwall.
- Services for looked after children and young people have improved since 2009 and are now adequate. While educational outcomes for looked after children have improved the quality of provision and the consistency of practice need further improvement.

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