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Mr Ian Thomas  
Strategic Director for Children and Younger Adults  
Derbyshire County Council  
Children and Younger Adults Department  
County Hall  
Matlock  
Derbyshire DE4 3AG

Dear Mr Thomas

## 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.

## Derbyshire County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Derbyshire County Council perform well. This good performance has been sustained from 2010. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and the very large majority of provision is effective in supporting children and young people to learn and stay safe. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary school provision are taking place and some schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment. There have been no significant changes to universal services and both the areas of strength and those for development remain largely the same as last year.

A recent inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children reported that safeguarding arrangements are good, demonstrating clear improvement in service provision since the joint area review in 2007 with good capacity for further improvement. Most services, particularly those for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, show clear improvement. The provision for looked after children is also good.

### Strengths

- The large majority of early years and childcare provision, as last year, is good or better. There are now no inadequate childminders, which represents an improvement overall.
- For children under five, the large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools is good and some is outstanding, with none now inadequate. The proportion of children, who attain a good level of development by the age of five, including those from low-income families, continues to be higher than elsewhere.
- About the same proportion of primary schools as last year are good or better. Standards at the age of 11 continue to be higher than national averages, with the proportion of children achieving the expected Level 4 in both English and mathematics increasing by 2% this year. A large majority of primary schools are at least good and one has made sufficient progress to no longer be in an Ofsted category of concern.
- Local authority specialist provision is almost always effective. All 10 special schools are good as are almost all special school sixth forms, with special residential provision usually outstanding. Five of the eight pupil referral units are good. For looked after children, fostering services and private fostering arrangements are at least good. A half of the local authority's 12 children's homes continue to be good and there is no longer any inadequate provision. Just under two-thirds of the 22 private and voluntary run children's homes commissioned by the local authority are good or better and the remainder are satisfactory.

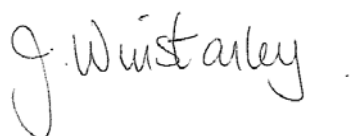
- The local authority continues to provide good support to both secondary and primary schools in need of improvement. One secondary school made sufficient progress during the year to be removed from an Ofsted category of concern.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- Although a large majority of provision for early years and childcare is good or better, a small number of registered childcare providers were judged inadequate during the year. The number of inadequate primary schools has increased. Although none of the 11 children's centres inspected for the first time are inadequate, only four are good and none outstanding.
- As last year, improving secondary schools continues to be an area for improvement. Only just over a half of secondary schools, including academies are good or better. Standards for 16- and 19-year-olds remain in line with the average.
- The proportion of 16- and 19-year-olds from low-income families attaining the expected level continues to be below average. For 16-year-olds the gap with their peers in Derbyshire is widening. For 19-year-olds the gaps at level 2 are reducing more slowly than elsewhere and remained static over time at level 3.
- The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds involved in education, training or employment is lower than is found nationally.

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