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Ms Rachel Dickinson
Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services
Leicester City Council
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Dear Ms Dickinson

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.

Leicester City Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Leicester City Council perform adequately, as in 2010. Improvement is seen in many local services and settings and very few are inadequate. However, a large minority of provision inspected by Ofsted remains only adequate. Most providers support children and young people well in staying safe and almost all are effective in helping them to learn. The local authority shows performance in line with similar areas against a range of published indicators and those for educational standards are improving over time. Areas of strength remain the same as last year and progress has been made in most key areas for further development.

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 December 2010 found several areas of strength, including the priority given to the views, wishes and feelings of children in the assessment process, five areas for development and no priority actions requiring urgent action. Progress has been made with all issues identified in a previous inspection and most have been effectively addressed.

Strengths

- The proportion of effective childcare providers in registered settings continues to rise with more than three-quarters of provision now good or better. Four of the five children's centres inspected during the year are good.
- For those under five, the proportion of good providers continues to rise. Almost 80% of nursery and early years provision in primary schools is now good or better. Over time, the proportion of five-year-olds reaching a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has risen faster than elsewhere. Local authority provisional results for 2011 highlight further improvement and a reduction in the gap with national averages.
- Primary school provision continues to improve and over the last year there has been a 10% increase in the proportion of good or better primary schools. This was an area for improvement in the previous assessment. The very large majority of children make good progress in English and mathematics between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Standards in national tests for 11-year-olds continue to be below the national average, but are improving at a faster rate over time and the gap is closing. After a dip in performance in 2010, the proportion achieving the expected level in both English and mathematics increased this year by over 3%.

- The large majority of local authority secondary schools are good or better with one well established sponsored academy that is satisfactory. Local authority data illustrate continuing improvement this year in the proportion of 16-year-olds attaining five A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. Although standards at the age of 16 years continue to be below national averages they are in line with similar local authorities. Standards achieved by young people from Asian groups continue to rise and are higher than both their peers in Leicester City and national averages. Standards of those from Black groups show consistent improvement over time. Although their attainment remains just below similar areas, the gap with their peers in Leicester City is closing.
- Local authority specialist provision is almost always good or better. Four of the eight special schools are good and three are outstanding. Special school sixth form provision is also at least good. For looked after children, the local authority fostering agency is outstanding and all local authority children's homes are at least good, with three of the five outstanding. The large majority of private and voluntary run children's homes and almost all independent fostering agencies commissioned by the local authority are good or better.
- Performance indicators illustrate continuous improvement over time in the proportion of 19-year-olds attaining level 3 qualifications. However, the rate of improvement is not as great as that found nationally. The proportion of young people from low-income families achieving the expected level at the age of 16 and 19, is above average and the gap between all young people of the same age group in Leicester City is reducing.

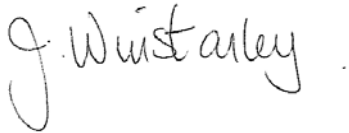
Areas for further improvement

- Overall, too much provision is only satisfactory; this includes childminders, primary schools, two sixth form colleges and the two pupil referral units. The proportion of good or better childminders has reduced further and both local pupil referral units are now only adequate, whereas last year one was good. Ofsted monitoring visits to the few primary schools previously assessed as inadequate show they are making satisfactory progress. One is now satisfactory. However, during the year two more have been identified as requiring special measures. For looked after children, the local authority adoption agency is only satisfactory.
- Attainment at the age of 16 for young people from mixed ethnic groups is below similar areas and national averages, with the gap in standards with their peers in Leicester getting wider overtime.
- Sixteen-year-olds with special educational needs do not do as well in achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics as others with the same range of needs across the country. Over time, the gap with their peers in Leicester is getting wider.

- The proportion of 19-year-olds attaining level 2 qualifications is below similar areas.

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