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Mr Peter Duxbury
Director of Children's Services
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Dear Mr Duxbury

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.

Lincolnshire County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in Lincolnshire County Council perform excellently. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding, and very few are inadequate. Almost all provision helps children and young people to learn and stay safe. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place with some schools forming federations and others becoming academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment. The key area for further development identified in last year's assessment remains.

The unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection carried out in February 2011 found areas of strength and much practice that met requirements. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention. The two areas of development identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements have been addressed and show satisfactory improvement.

Strengths

- Referrals to services for children in need are responded to effectively and case recording is completed within required timescales. A robust performance management culture is driving improvements in outcomes for children and young people. The diverse needs of families are dealt with sensitively and actively incorporated into plans for safeguarding.
- Provision for early years and childcare is mostly good with some that is outstanding. Five children's centres, inspected for the first time, are good or better. The proportion of regulated childcare settings that are good or better has increased. Although there has been a reduction in the number of childminders this year, overall provision has improved and almost none are now inadequate.
- For children under five, the large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools is good or outstanding. The proportion of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development rose much faster in the last year than found nationally and performance is above the national average for the first time in three years.
- Two-thirds of local authority secondary schools and almost all academies, including those becoming academies in the last year, are good or outstanding. Two of the four longer-established academies are at least good. Education standards in national tests for 16-year-olds continue to be above similar areas and national figures. Most secondary schools have

good or outstanding standards of behaviour and the poor attendance of some young people is reducing steadily.

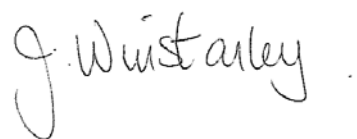
- The large majority of provision for learning after the age of 16, including sixth forms in secondary schools and four of the five colleges of further education, is good or outstanding. The proportion of 19-year-olds achieving both level 2 and level 3 qualifications is similar to elsewhere. The proportion attaining level 3 qualifications shows consistent improvement, but this has been slightly below the national rate. The gap in achievement between 19-year-olds from low-income families and their peers is reducing at a faster rate than nationally.
- Specialist provision is almost always good in special schools, special school sixth forms and pupil referral units. For looked after children provision is almost always at least good. All but one of the six local authority children's homes are good or better, with an outstanding fostering agency and a good adoption agency.

Areas for further improvement

- As last year, the proportion of good or better primary schools continues to be a relative weakness for Lincolnshire. The proportion of good or better primary schools is smaller than in similar areas and national averages. Of those primary schools inspected during the year, more have been satisfactory than good and a few are inadequate. Ofsted monitoring visits to schools requiring improvement report a good range of high quality support from the local authority to tackle identified weaknesses.

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