

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 020 7421 6666
Direct F 020 7421 5633
Juliet.Winstanley@ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr Mike Livingstone
Director of Children's Services
Manchester City Council
PO Box 536
Town Hall Extension
Manchester
M60 2AF

Dear Mr Livingstone

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.

Manchester City Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Manchester City Council perform adequately. This level of performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The majority of provision is good or better and helps children and young people to stay safe and enjoy learning. The strengths and areas for improvement have not changed significantly since last year. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and more schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

A full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services took place in November 2010. The report showed that safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children are adequate and that, in both cases, there is good capacity to improve.

Strengths

- For children under five, the large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools is good or better. This is very similar to the situation last year, although a small proportion of providers are now inadequate whereas previously they were all at least satisfactory. The achievement of five-year-olds at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with the averages nationally and for similar areas. Over the last two years for which figures are available, the gap between the achievement of five-year-olds from low-income families and others of the same age widened slightly. However, it is narrower than the national average and in line with similar areas.
- As in 2010, the large majority of primary schools are good or better and around a fifth are outstanding. With the support of the local authority, one school was removed from special measures in June of this year. The local authority is continuing to work closely with the two schools that remain inadequate.
- In its recent inspection, one secondary sixth form improved from good to outstanding. The two sixth form colleges continue to be outstanding. However, provision in the further education sector has declined. One college that was good has closed. The other, which had been outstanding, was rated as only satisfactory when inspected in May of this year.
- As in 2010, of the 14 special schools maintained by the local authority, 11 are good or better and six are outstanding. Of the two schools that were inadequate last year, one has been removed from special measures and is now satisfactory. A recent re-inspection found that the second school is still inadequate.

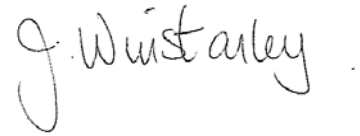
- Almost all the children's homes in the area are now good or better and, as in 2010, none of the provision is inadequate. However, of the homes run by the local authority, three are now only satisfactory compared with two last year. The very large majority of the children's homes commissioned from other agencies or local authorities are good or better. However, two of them are inadequate.
- The gap between the achievement of 16-year-olds who receive free school meals and others of the same age has narrowed and is smaller than the average in similar areas and across the country.
- The proportion of 19-year-olds gaining the equivalent of two A level passes continues to be in line with the averages nationally and across the country. The achievement gap between 19-year-olds from low-income families and others of the same age has narrowed and is smaller than the averages nationally and for similar areas.

Areas for further improvement

- Despite recent improvements, half the providers of early years and childcare continue to be no better than adequate. To date, 11 of the local authority's 40 children's centres have been inspected. Of these, only four are good or better. The one centre that was inadequate last year has improved to adequate.
- As in 2010, there are no inadequate secondary schools but over a half are only satisfactory. Although they have fallen, rates of persistent absence have been consistently worse than in similar areas for the last five years. One secondary school that was satisfactory has become an academy since last year. This has not yet been inspected.
- Since last year, the local authority's adoption agency has improved from satisfactory to good. However, its fostering agency is only satisfactory.
- The attainment of 11-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with similar areas but below the national average. Provisional figures for 2011 indicate that this situation has not changed.
- The attainment of 16-year-olds gaining five A* to C, including English and mathematics, at GCSE has been lower than the national averages for the last four years. However, the gap has narrowed in the last two years. Apart from a slight improvement in 2008/09, the gap between the achievement of 16-year-olds with special educational needs and others of the same age has been widening for the last five years.
- More 16- to 18-year-olds are out of work or not in education or training in Manchester than in similar areas. This has been the case for the last two years.

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 large initial 'J' and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment