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8 November 2011

Miss Cynthia Welbourn
Corporate Director of Children's Services
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
Northallerton
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Dear Miss Welbourn

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.

North Yorkshire County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in North Yorkshire County Council perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of provision is good or better overall and helps children and young people to stay safe and enjoy learning. The strengths and areas for development are similar to last year, although there have been some changes. 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.

In 2009, the full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children found that safeguarding services were adequate and services for looked after children were good. A recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection identified several strengths. These included strong working relationships with the Army Welfare Services, excellent support for staff and good management oversight. It also identified significant improvements in the timeliness of initial and core assessments, a trend that has been maintained according to the most recent provisional figures. There were no areas for priority action.

Strengths

- As in 2010, the large majority of providers of early years and childcare continue to be good or better. Childcarers and day carers, in particular, make very good provision to help children learn and stay safe. Since last year, three of the local authority's 37 children's centres have been inspected. Two are good and one is satisfactory. All three inspection reports refer to the need to provide greater help for adults to raise their aspirations and gain work.
- For children under five, the very large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools is good or better and almost a fifth is outstanding. This high performance has been sustained since last year. The achievement of five-year-olds at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with the averages in similar areas and across the country. However, it has not improved as quickly as elsewhere. The achievement gap between five-year-olds from low-income families and others of the same age has narrowed over the last four years. The most recent figures show that it is in line with similar areas but wider than the average nationally.
- The large majority of primary schools continue to be good or better, although two schools are inadequate. One of these is making satisfactory progress and the other good progress. Both schools have benefited from the effective support provided by the local authority. The attainment of

11-year-olds is in line with the averages nationally and for similar areas but has risen at a slower rate than elsewhere. Provisional figures for 2011 indicate that it continues to be in line with the national average.

- Since last year, five secondary schools have become academies. At their last inspections, four of these were outstanding and one was good. When these judgements are taken into account, the large majority of secondary schools continue to be good or better, as they were last year. One school continues to be inadequate but is receiving additional support from the local authority. For the last five years, the proportion of 16-year-olds gaining A* to C grades in five GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics, has been in line with similar areas and above the averages across the country.
- When the inspection grades for the secondary sixth forms that now belong to academies are taken into account, the quality of provision for learners beyond the age of 16 remains very similar to last year, with the large majority of providers being good or better. The proportion of 19-year-olds achieving the equivalent of two A level passes is in line with similar areas and above the average nationally.
- Provision for children with special educational needs in the local authority continues to be very good overall, although there have been some changes. Four of the 11 special schools run by the local authority are outstanding. Since 2010, three schools that were good have been re-inspected. Two of them remain good but the third is now satisfactory.
- In 2009, the local authority established two new pupil referral units, in addition to the two outstanding units that already existed. The new units have both received their first inspections and both are good overall and have good capacity for sustained improvement.
- Of the six children's homes run by the local authority, five are good and one is outstanding.
- The inspection of May 2011 found that the local authority's adoption agency had improved from good to outstanding in all the areas on which it was examined.

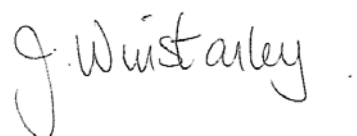
Areas for further improvement

- The local authority's fostering agency has not been re-inspected since 2009 and therefore continues to be rated as satisfactory. Last year, both the fostering and adoption services run by private and voluntary agencies were good or better. This year, one of them is outstanding but the other is only satisfactory. Of the children's homes commissioned from other agencies during the period covered by the assessment, five were good, four were satisfactory and one was inadequate. Since then, the inadequate provider has improved to good.

- At the age of 16, young people who are entitled to free school meals achieve less well than others of the same age. The gap in performance in the local authority has changed little over the last three years while, in similar areas, it has narrowed. Therefore, there is a continuing need to raise the attainment of young people from low-income families.
- The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training is in line with similar areas. However, the proportion of 17-year-olds in education or training is lower than in similar areas, as it has been 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, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment