

8 November 2011

Ms Catherine Doran
Corporate Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Harrow
Civic Centre
Station Road
Harrow
London
HA1 2XF

Dear Ms Doran

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.

London Borough of Harrow children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
--------------------------------	--------------------------

Children's services in the London Borough of Harrow perform excellently. This shows improvement from 2010, when services performed well. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding and few are inadequate. Most are good at helping children and young people to learn and stay safe. Areas of strength remain as last year, good progress has been made in the key areas for further development and considerably more provision is now good or better. Educational attainment that is average at the age of five, 11 and 16 has improved steadily. Attainment for key vulnerable groups is mostly above average and most gaps are closing, addressing an area for improvement in 2010.

Ofsted's annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, carried out in 2010, found two areas of strength, many satisfactory areas of practice and no areas for priority action. The four areas for development include one from a previous inspection in 2009 that had not yet been met although plans were in place to do so. This has now been addressed as part of the current restructuring of services.

Strengths

- Almost all early years education in nursery and primary schools is good or outstanding and shows more good provision since last year. At the age of five, average achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to improve. Achievement for children from low-income families is below similar areas and that found nationally, although it is improving and the gap with others of the same age is closing.
- Most primary schools are good or better with improvement in outstanding provision. Most 11-year-olds make the progress expected from the age of seven and standards at the age of 11 that are average continue to rise more quickly than nationally over the last four years. Provisional results for 2011 show improvement above national figures.
- All secondary schools remain good or outstanding, showing better performance than that found elsewhere. All have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and poor attendance by some young people is reducing steadily. Standards for 16-year-olds achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics are average and improving, although not as fast as nationally. Young people from low-income families achieve well, as do those with special educational needs, and gaps with their peers have closed.
- Almost all provision after the age of 16 is good or better. The sixth form college is outstanding and all four sixth forms in schools are good. One college of further education is now good and the other is satisfactory.

Many more young people than nationally are in education, training or employment, including average numbers of care leavers. Above average and steadily increasing numbers of 19-year-olds gain higher level and other qualifications. Young people from low-income families do very well and the gap with their peers has closed well.

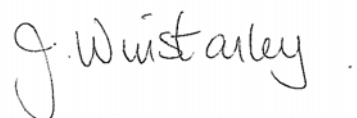
- All specialist provision in special schools and the pupil referral unit remains good or better and more is now outstanding.
- For looked after children, the local authority's adoption and fostering agencies have improved and are now good, addressing an area for development from last year. One independent adoption and fostering provider is good and another is now outstanding, but the third is only satisfactory. For the latter, new placements are on hold while the necessary improvements take place.
- Children's homes run by the local authority have improved and both are now good or outstanding. The large majority of children's homes that are commissioned by the local authority are good or better.

Areas for further improvement

- While the majority of provision for early years and childcare is good and some is outstanding, 40% of childminders remain only satisfactory and a relative weakness in the local authority's performance overall, as last year. Robust action has secured additional support for providers and more recent inspections show some positive impact. The one children's centre that has been inspected is also satisfactory and plans for improvement are underway.
- Of the children's homes that are independently run, one remains good but the other is now inadequate.

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".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment