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Ms Jennie Stevens  
Director of Children's Services  
Devon County Council  
Room 126, County Hall  
Topsham Road  
Exeter  
Devon  
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Dear Ms Stevens

## 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.

## Devon County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Devon County Council perform well. This good performance has been maintained from 2010 to 2011. The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and provision helps children and young people learn well and stay safe. The strengths and areas for development have not changed significantly from last year. The overall quality of primary and secondary schools continues to improve. A number of schools have now become academies. Almost all were judged to be good or outstanding at their last inspection and these judgements have been taken into account in making this assessment.

A full inspection, in 2009, judged safeguarding arrangements to be adequate and services for looked after children to be good. In 2011, an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found three strengths, many satisfactory aspects and a number of areas for development. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention. Areas for development identified at the previous inspection, in July 2010, have been addressed.

### Strengths

- The large majority of childminding and childcare settings, and the very large majority of provision for children under five in nurseries and primary schools, are good or outstanding. The proportion of all types of early years providers judged to be good or better has increased this year. Five of the seven children's centres inspected to date are good, one is outstanding and one is satisfactory.
- There are now more good and outstanding primary schools than in 2010, with almost three quarters judged to be good or better at their last inspection.
- The large majority of secondary schools remain good or better. Inspections in the current assessment year show further improvements in grades for overall effectiveness. One of the two inadequate schools was judged as satisfactory with good capacity to improve when it was re-inspected. The other continues to receive good support and challenge from the local authority and is making satisfactory progress.
- Attainment is at least in with similar areas and the national average for children and young people at every stage of their education. National test and examination results continue to improve and, in 2010, children made better than average progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. Sixteen- and 19-year-olds from low-income backgrounds achieve above the average for their counterparts in similar areas. Attainment gaps at level 2 and level 3 between the low-income group and the majority of young

people at the age of 19 in Devon are closing, but this is not yet the case at Key Stage 4 between the different groups of 16-year-olds.

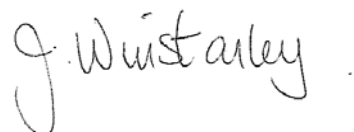
- Services and outcomes for looked after children and young people are good. The local authority and its partners have good capacity to improve. All local authority children's homes are good or better. The very large majority of the commissioned services are also good or better. The local authority adoption service is outstanding and the fostering service is good.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- Safeguarding arrangements overall are only satisfactory, although capacity to improve is good. Areas for development identified in the most recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection include the quality of assessments and the timeliness of case recording and case closures.
- Young people at the age of 19 achieve in line with similar areas and the national average, but achievement over the last four years has not improved as fast as the national trend. The quality of post-16 education and training provision remains mixed. Despite good inspection outcomes for the three school sixth forms inspected during the year, more than a half of the remaining provision is only satisfactory.
- Although there has been improvement in maintained special and residential special schools, the overall quality of specialist education provision across the county remains uneven, with too much that is only satisfactory. This includes two of the four pupil referral units and more than a half of the independent special schools.

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 cursive script that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment