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Mr Ian Anderson
Director for Children and Young People
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Dear Mr Anderson

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.

Isle of Wight Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in the Isle of Wight Council perform adequately, as they did in 2010. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and provision helps children and young people learn and stay safe. The strengths and areas for development have not changed significantly from last year. This means that, while educational attainment is improving, it remains persistently below similar areas and the national average at most stages of children and young people's education and there is still much to do to tackle long-standing underachievement.

In 2010, an inspection of safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children and young people judged both areas as adequate. 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 two strengths, many satisfactory aspects and a number of areas for development. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention.

Strengths

- The large majority of childminding and the very large majority of childcare settings are good or better. For children under the age of five, three quarters of the provision in nurseries and primary schools is good or outstanding. The one children's centre inspected to date is also outstanding.
- The proportion of children achieving good levels of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage improved substantially in 2010 and is now in line with similar areas and the national average.
- Most specialist education provision, including the two pupil referral units, remains good or outstanding.
- Gaps in attainment between children and young people from lower-income families and the majority on the Isle of Wight are closing at the ages of five and 19. These groups do better than the average for their counterparts elsewhere.
- The further education college was not re-inspected in 2010 and, therefore, remains outstanding.
- Most aspects of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and those who may be in need of protection meet requirements. The use of the common assessment framework is a strength and is used routinely to support families who no longer need social work support as well as those whose needs do not reach thresholds for statutory services.

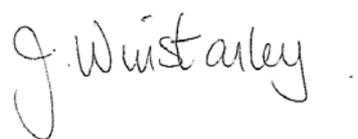
- The large majority of provision in children's homes commissioned by the local authority is good or better. The large majority of independent fostering and adoption agencies it uses are good or outstanding.
- The new youth offending team, set up in April 2011, has established firm foundations for continuous improvement in practice.

Areas for further improvement

- In 2011, provisional results for 11-year-olds indicate that they have fallen to their lowest point for some years and are the worst of all local authorities in England.
- A major reorganisation of middle and high schools is well underway with a focus on improving provision and raising standards, but this is yet to have a full impact. Three of the six secondary schools are only satisfactory. Although improving, the attainment of 16-year-olds at Key Stage 4 remains consistently below similar areas and the national average.
- Three of the five school sixth forms are only satisfactory. Achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 is also below the average for similar areas, but in line with national figures. Rates of improvement at both qualification levels are not keeping pace with trends seen elsewhere over the last four years.
- Safeguarding arrangements, services for looked after children and capacity to improve are only adequate. One of the two special schools was judged to be inadequate in 2011, with significant weaknesses that include safeguarding arrangements. The local authority's fostering and adoption services remain satisfactory, as they were in 2010. The most recent inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements identifies two areas for development that have not been resolved from the previous inspection: the quality of assessments remains variable and the electronic recording system makes it difficult to input and retrieve information.

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