

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](mailto:Juliet.Winstanley@ofsted.gov.uk)



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Ms Jo Olsson  
Director of Children, Education and Families  
Thurrock Council  
Civic Offices, New Road  
Grays  
Essex  
RM17 6SL

Dear Ms Olsson

## **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.

## Thurrock Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Thurrock Council perform adequately, as in 2010. This is because only the minority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better, although few are inadequate. The large majority of provision is good at keeping children and young people safe and helping them to learn. Educational attainment at age five and 16 is in line with that found nationally, but below the national average at age 11 and for 19-year-olds. Apart from at age 16, attainment is below that found in similar areas. Most key vulnerable groups show average attainment, but gaps are not closing consistently. Areas of strength remain largely as last year, some provision has improved and standards continue to rise. Progress has been made in the key areas for further development, but these have not changed significantly. 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 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 found three strengths, many areas of satisfactory practice and four areas for development. One from the previous inspection in 2009, is only partly resolved. There are no priority actions requiring urgent attention.

### Strengths

- Early years and childcare show good improvement from last year and the large majority is now good or better overall.
- For five-year-olds, achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved further, addressing an area for development from last year.
- The large majority of secondary schools are good or better and two that are outstanding are now academies. The long-standing academy is satisfactory. Most schools have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and poor attendance from some young people is reducing. At age 16, results for young people achieving five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, improved significantly in 2010 to match the national average. This also shows more rapid improvement than nationally over the last four years, which was an area for development in 2010. For minority ethnic groups, attainment is at least average and young people from the Black ethnic group continue to show achievement that is well above their peers.
- Provision from the sixth form college is outstanding. Steadily increasing, although below average numbers of 17-year-olds are in education or training, and more young people are now in education, training or employment, including the majority of care leavers.

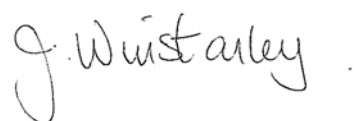
- As in 2010, for young people not in mainstream education, the two special schools and their sixth forms are outstanding.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- For universal provision, the majority of early years education in nursery and primary schools is good and none is now inadequate. However, almost half is only satisfactory. Primary schools show some improvement since last year, addressing in part an area for development. Although over one third are good and one school no longer requires significant improvement, the majority are only satisfactory. The one inadequate primary school is making good progress with strong support from the local authority. Eleven-year-olds make the progress expected from age seven and the proportion achieving the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics, although below average, is improving slightly faster than nationally. Provisional results for 2011 show further improvement.
- For specialist services, the pupil referral unit is inadequate, as in 2010. Monitoring by Ofsted shows satisfactory progress with strong support from the local authority, where a fundamental review of provision in pupil referral units is underway. For looked after children, the local authority's adoption and fostering agencies are only satisfactory.
- At age five, average numbers of children from low-income families show a good level of development, but the gap with others of the same age has increased. At age 16, young people from low-income families and those with special educational needs show broadly average attainment, but the gap with others of the same age has widened. At age 19, although numbers are increasing, too few young people, including those from low-income families, achieve qualifications.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment