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8 November 2011

Ms Helen Jenner
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Children's Services
Town Hall, 1 Town Square
Barking, IG11 7LU

Dear Ms Jenner

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 Barking and Dagenham children's services assessment 2011

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Children's services assessment | Performs well (3) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|

Children's services in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham perform well. Last year services were performing adequately, but improvements since then mean there is now enough good or better universal provision to meet the requirements for the higher grade. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall. Specialist services for vulnerable children and young people remain an important strength within the borough. The large majority of all types of provision help children and young people enjoy their learning and achieve well, while the very large majority are good at helping them to stay safe. The local authority continues to prioritise teenage pregnancy and childhood obesity rates that remain high. Progress can be seen in many areas, such as GCSE results.

The January 2011 inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in children's social care found that early intervention services are effective and provide prompt support to children and their families. Two areas for development were identified, but no areas for priority action. Significant progress has been made since the previous inspection in 2009; the area for priority action has been addressed and clear action planning is in place regarding any outstanding areas for development.

Strengths

- All three children's centres that have been inspected in the local authority area have been judged to be outstanding and almost three quarters of registered childcare in non-domestic settings are good or better.
- The number of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development continues to improve year on year, and the rate of improvement over the last four years has been faster than elsewhere, although starting from a low base. Performance is broadly in line with similar areas.
- A higher proportion of secondary schools and secondary sixth forms in the borough are good or better than last year. Recent inspections outline improvement and the overall quality of secondary provision in the borough is now better than found in similar areas and nationally. There has been a further reduction in persistent absence and performance is now better than in similar areas.
- In 2010 a higher proportion of young people gained five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics than in similar areas and provisional 2011 data show another good improvement this year. The proportion of young people from Black and Asian backgrounds achieving at this level is higher than in similar areas and across the country as a whole.

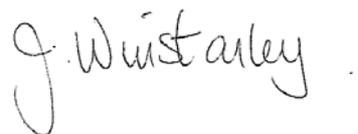
- Specialist provision for children and young people in the area is of good quality overall. The local authority's special school for those with additional needs is outstanding, as it was last year. The pupil referral unit caters for students who have been, or are at risk of being, permanently excluded from their school as well as those entitled to education during periods of fixed term exclusion. The recent inspection shows that overall effectiveness remains good, with care, guidance and support being outstanding. The local authority adoption agency is good and the fostering agency's very recent inspection shows very good performance has been maintained, being judged outstanding in all aspects.
- The local authority has no children's homes of its own. The quality of the children's homes used by the local authority is good overall, with none being inadequate.
- The attainment of children and young people from low-income families is better than found in similar areas and nationally at ages five, 16 and by age 19.

Areas for further improvement

- The local authority continues to prioritise the need to improve universal provision, especially childminding and primary schools in its planning. The overall effectiveness of primary schools has improved and there are three fewer inadequate primary schools than this time last year. However, over 40% remain only satisfactory. Test results for 11-year-olds, although in line with similar areas, are below the national average and provisional data for 2011 do not indicate further improvement.
- Although the majority of educational indicators for attainment and progress are in line with similar areas, performance is lower than found nationally. For example, despite a rate of improvement that is better than average across the country, the proportion of young people achieving level 2 and level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 remains significantly below the national average.

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