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Ms Annie Hudson
Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Skills
Bristol City Council
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Dear Ms Hudson

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.

Bristol City Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Bristol City Council perform adequately. This is the same as in 2009 and 2010. Most services, settings and institutions are good or better at helping children and young people to stay safe and enjoy their learning, but the overall effectiveness of many types of provision in the area is not as good as that found in similar areas and nationally. There are some new areas of strength this year, but areas for further development have not changed significantly from last year. As found elsewhere changes to secondary provision are taking place and some schools have become academies. The previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in this assessment.

The May 2010 inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children judged both services as good. The very recent unannounced inspection of children's social care contact, referral and assessment services found a stable and experienced social work workforce and many areas of practice that met requirements. There were no areas requiring urgent action, although work is continuing to address some of the issues identified at the previous unannounced inspection of September 2009 and these remain areas for development in 2011.

Strengths

- The quality of registered day-care provision has improved overall since last year. More provision is good or better than in 2010, although the number of inadequate providers has also increased slightly. Seven children's centres have been inspected and of these five are good or better and two are satisfactory. The number of childminders that are good or better remains about the same as last year.
- The overall effectiveness of nursery school and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools remains good, with the large majority of providers being good or better. The proportion of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development continues to improve and is in line with the similar area and national averages.
- The local authority fostering agency is good, as it was last year. Ofsted's October 2010 inspection judged the local authority adoption agency as outstanding. The comprehensive systems in place and the hard work of those in the service ensure that vulnerable children are placed in highly suitable and well prepared households, which are well supported to create a bonded and nurturing household for them.
- Three of the four pupil referral units are good or better and one is satisfactory. A recent inspection of the hospital education service for children and young people who are unable to attend school because of their medical needs judged the overall effectiveness of the provision as

good, with excellent transition arrangements in place for children moving in and out of the service.

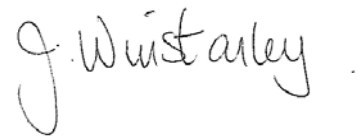
- The large majority of children's homes, both those run by the local authority and those it uses within the private and voluntary sector, are good or better and none are inadequate.
- The proportion of five-year-old children from low-income backgrounds who achieved a good level of development by the end of their reception year at school in 2010 was higher than found in similar areas and nationally. The gap between these children and their peers in Bristol has narrowed significantly since 2007 and is now smaller than found elsewhere.

Areas for further improvement

- Despite some improvement over the last year too many primary schools remain only satisfactory. There has been a reduction in the number of inadequate primary schools from nine in 2010 to five in 2011. Ofsted monitoring visits show that the large majority of schools that are currently in an Ofsted category of concern are now making at least satisfactory progress towards improvement and support from the local authority is satisfactory overall. Test results for 11-year-olds have improved significantly over the last four years and are broadly in line with the national average, but provisional data show no further improvement in 2011.
- The overall quality of secondary schools is adequate and almost half are satisfactory, although none is inadequate. The proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2010 remains below the similar area and national averages, but improvement since 2007 has been at a faster pace than found elsewhere and the gap with the national average is reducing.
- Although six of the local authority's special schools are at least good, one is satisfactory and two, both providing education for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, are currently inadequate.
- Post-16 provision is no better than adequate overall. The proportion of young people achieving qualifications by age 19 continues to be lower than the average in similar areas and nationally, although improving. The local further education college is one of the largest in the country and caters for over 5000 young people; outcomes for 16- to 18-year-olds are satisfactory overall.
- The attainment of young people from low-income families, at both age 16 and by age 19, remains below the similar area and national averages.

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 style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment