

8 November 2011

Ms Elaine McHale
Corporate Director Family Services
City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
County Hall, Bond Street
Wakefield
West Yorkshire WF1 2QW

Dear Ms McHale

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.

City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and the very large majority of provision supports children and young people well in learning and staying safe. Areas of strength and areas for development remain largely the same as last year. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary school provision are taking place and some schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in making this assessment.

A full announced inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children in December 2010 reported that safeguarding arrangements are adequate and that provision for looked after children is good. It noted significant progress in addressing some areas for development from the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection which took place in June 2010. However, other areas for development had not yet been fully addressed.

Strengths

- Almost two-thirds of early years and childcare provision is good or better. Eight of Wakefield's children's centres have now been inspected and seven of these are good.
- For children under five, there has been a slight improvement in the quality of provision and the very large majority of nursery and primary schools are at least good. Achievement at the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with similar areas and the national average but has made more than twice the rate of improvement than that found nationally over the last three years.
- The good standard of provision has been maintained in nursery and primary schools overall and the large majority remain good or better.
- Similarly, the large majority of secondary schools are good or better. The number of 16-year-olds gaining five or more GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics has improved, and results are in line with the national average and better than those found in similar areas. Provisional data for 2011 suggest a more modest improvement in 2011. Results for 16-year-olds from low-income families also improved and the gap in achievement between these two groups of pupils narrowed in 2010.

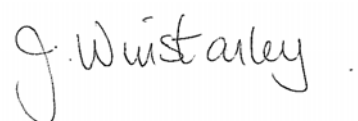
- Five of the six local authority special schools are good or better and four of these are outstanding. The school for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties which required significant improvement at its previous inspection is now satisfactory.
- There has been sustained improvement in the proportion of young people reaching the expected standards at level 3 by the age of 19 and this, and the number who achieve level 2 qualifications, is in line with similar areas and the national average. In addition, the gap between young people from low-income families and their peers is narrowing for both qualifications over time, although it widened for level 3 in 2010.
- The four local authority children's homes are at least good and the local fostering agency remains good. The children's home provision commissioned elsewhere is at least satisfactory.
- Overall there is very little inadequate provision in the local authority. Where schools are, or have been, in an Ofsted category of concern the local authority provides good support to bring about improvement.

Areas for further improvement

- Progression by two levels in both English and mathematics between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is below both similar areas and the national average. Results at Key Stage 2 have fluctuated over the last four years and, although there was a better level of improvement in 2010, provisional data for 2011 suggest a considerable decline in standards.
- Only half of post-16 provision is good and three of the five secondary sixth forms taken into account in this assessment are only adequate.
- Although achievement has improved well for all children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the gap between children from low-income families and their peers has widened considerably.
- At the time of the full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children several areas for development were outstanding from the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements which took place earlier in the year. These included improving the quality and timeliness of contacts, referrals and assessments and strengthening joint investigations between social care and the police.

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