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Ms Ann Baxter
Director of Children, Schools and Families
London Borough of Camden
Children, Schools and Families Directorate
Crowndale Centre
218–220 Eversholt Road
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Dear Ms Baxter

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 Camden children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Camden perform excellently. The large majority of services, settings and institutions for children and young people in the area are good or better. Almost all are good at helping children to stay safe and to enjoy their learning. Both of the areas for further development identified in the 2010 children's services assessment are showing improvement. More registered childminders are good or outstanding than last year and the overall quality of secondary schools has improved, with five of the nine schools in the borough being good or better, which is one more than last year.

The unannounced inspection of children's social care contact, referral and assessment arrangements published in December 2010 identified two strengths, many areas of practice that met requirements and one area for development. The areas for development and the area for priority action identified at the previous inspection in October 2009 had been addressed.

Strengths

- The quality of early years and childcare provision has improved over the last year and two thirds of settings are now good or better overall. Over three quarters of registered day care is now of good quality. The proportion of registered childminders that are good or better is now in line with similar areas, although it remains below the national average. The one children's centre that has been inspected so far is satisfactory.
- There has been further improvement in the overall effectiveness of primary schools. No primary school is now inadequate. In 2010 there was a significant improvement in the proportion of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Test results for 11-year-olds are in line with similar area and national averages and 2011 provisional data show further improvement, taking performance above the national average this year.
- Young people access post-16 provision which is of good quality overall. The large majority of secondary school sixth forms were judged to be good or outstanding at their last inspection. In 2010 the proportion of young people achieving level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 was in line with similar area and national averages and a higher proportion than elsewhere gained level 3 qualifications.
- The attainment of the high proportion of children and young people from low-income families is at least in line with similar areas and much higher than the national average at age five, 16 and by age 19.

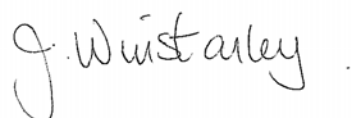
- The local authority's fostering agency is outstanding, as it was last year. The recently inspected adoption agency is good, fully inclusive and demonstrates a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all children waiting for adoption. The local authority has no children's homes of its own. The quality of the children's homes it uses is good overall, although one home is currently inadequate.
- Provision for children and young people excluded from mainstream school or at risk of exclusion is good. Recent inspections of services for 11- to 14-year-olds and 14- to 16-year-olds have found both to be of good quality overall, with the care, guidance and support that students receive being outstanding.

Areas for further improvement

- The overall effectiveness of secondary schools, although improved, remains below that found in similar areas and nationally. In 2010 the numbers of 16-year-olds gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics remained broadly in line with the national average, but performance fell behind that in similar areas. However, provisional 2011 data show good improvement this year.
- Although four out of the six local authority maintained special schools in the borough are at least good, two are only satisfactory and therefore the proportion of good or better provision for children and young people with additional needs is lower than found in similar areas and the national average. The special school providing education for children and young people with severe learning difficulties, autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties that was inadequate last year is now satisfactory. The school will be closing in September 2012 and its children and young people transferring to another extended special school within the borough, which is currently judged to be outstanding.

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