

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



8 November 2011

Ms Julia Morrison
Corporate Director, Children's Services
Cumbria County Council
5 Portland Square
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA1 1PU

Dear Ms Morrison

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.

Cumbria County Council children's services assessment 2011

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

Children's services in Cumbria County 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, and most provision helps children and young people to learn and stay safe effectively. During this academic year, four good or outstanding secondary schools with sixth forms have converted to academy status; these judgments have been taken into account in the 2011 assessment. The main strengths and areas for development have not changed significantly since 2010. The proportion of inadequate provision has reduced since last year. Three primary schools and one secondary school sixth form are no longer in categories of concern.

In 2011 Ofsted's annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection identified one main strength, a range of practice that meets requirements, three areas for development and no areas requiring priority actions. The two concerns identified in the previous inspection have been addressed. Of particular note in the most recent report is the highly effective front-line advice and access service, which is well resourced with skilled and experienced staff, ensuring that all referrals receive prompt and appropriate responses.

Strengths

- The large majority of nursery and primary schools are good or outstanding, as are all children's centres inspected for the first time. In 2010 standards in national tests at age 11 were above similar areas and national averages but provisional results for 2011 show a slight drop in performance. Looked after children achieve well in national tests at age 11 and in 2010 did much better than their peers in similar areas.
- In 2010 performance for most 16-year-olds achieving at least five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was sustained and it remained in line with similar areas and the national average. The authority indicates that there has been a further rise in 2011 of those achieving good GCSEs.
- More young people by the age of 19 are now achieving level 2 qualifications, that are equivalent to at least five A* to C grades at GCSE, or level 3 qualifications, which are equivalent to at least two A levels. However, this has improved more slowly over the last four years than in similar areas and nationally. There has been a sustained year on year reduction in the number of young people, including those leaving care, who are not in education, employment or training, and performance is better than in similar areas.

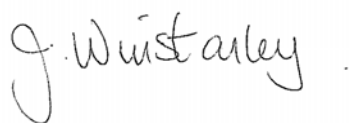
- Ofsted's monitoring visits show that support from the local authority for two primary schools in special measures and one secondary school with a notice to improve is effective and targeted. All three schools have been removed from a category of concern within the last academic year.
- Specialist provision for children and young people with additional and special educational needs is mostly good or better, with two local authority special schools improving from inadequate last year to good and satisfactory respectively.
- All but one of the local authority's children's homes is good or better, as are the majority of those homes which are commissioned by the local authority. There is no inadequate provision for looked after children. This shows improvement from last year. All fostering and adoption services are good.

Areas for further improvement

- Nine out of 28 maintained secondary sixth forms are satisfactory and this has improved only marginally since last year. One secondary school sixth form is now inadequate.
- Three of the four pupil referral units are satisfactory and this performance is not as good as in similar areas.
- At the age of 5, young children continue to achieve less well than young children elsewhere at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The gap between young children from low-income families and others of the same age in Cumbria has reduced slightly since last year but there is no consistent trend of improvement over time.
- At ages 16 years and 19 years young people from low-income families do less well than their peers in Cumbria. For example, at 16 years fewer are achieving at least five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, than their peers in similar areas and nationally. By the age of 19 fewer than elsewhere go on to achieve the equivalent level 2 qualifications or the higher level 3 qualifications equivalent to two A levels. Although some improvement in attainment has been made for this group since 2009, progress has been slow. Children at 16 years old with special educational needs also do less well and the gap has widened between this group and others of the same age in Cumbria.

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 large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment