

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



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Mr Chris Pratt
Director of Children's Services
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Floor 4, The Council House
College Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire DN1 3AD

Dear Mr Pratt

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.

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately. In 2009 and 2010 there were concerns about the quality of children's services and the consistency of front-line child protection services. As a result, the local authority was judged to be performing poorly. In April 2011, following a full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children, both these areas were judged to have made improvements and to be adequate. The inspection noted that significant progress had been made and that the local authority and its partners had adequate capacity to improve. This year's children's services assessment recognises the improvements made.

The majority of the settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and the very large majority of provision supports children and young people well in learning and staying safe. In addition to the improvements in safeguarding, there are also improvements in the quality of registered day-care provision and to local authority children's homes. Improving the quality of secondary schools, post-16 provision and outcomes for young people by the age of 19 were identified last year and remain areas for improvement.

Strengths

- The large majority of registered day-care providers make good or better provision, as do children's centres. These good improvements contribute to slightly better overall outcomes for early years and childcare.
- The large majority of provision for children under five in nursery and primary schools is good or better. Over the last four years there has been a steady improvement in achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and outcomes are in line with similar areas and the national average.
- Almost three-quarters of primary schools have been judged to be good or better when inspected by Ofsted and only a very small amount of provision is inadequate. Monitoring visits to schools in an Ofsted category of concern show that the local authority's support is having a positive impact and helping schools to improve. Standards reached at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with similar areas and the national average, and provisional results for 2011 continue to show improvement.
- The very large majority of performance indicators for educational attainment are at least in line with similar areas and the large majority are in line with the national average. Since the last assessment the rate of improvement in the proportion of young people gaining five GCSEs at A*

to C with English and mathematics is twice that made nationally. Provisional data for 2011 indicate results have continued to improve.

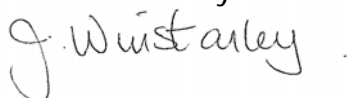
- As in the previous assessment, the large majority of special schools and pupil referral units are good or better and no provision is inadequate.
- Although one of the local authority's children's homes is inadequate, the overall quality of this provision has improved well and three children's homes are outstanding. These good inspection outcomes together with improvements in private and voluntary children's homes in the area mean that the large majority of this provision is at least good, compared with only a minority at the same point in 2010.

Areas for further improvement

- Despite safeguarding and services for looked after children being judged as adequate overall, the full inspection found a significant number of areas for improvement that need to be addressed. These are wide-ranging and include the attendance of Police and health professionals at child protection conferences, ensuring child protection conference reports are shared with families in a timely way and developing aspects of the work of the Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board. The local authority has begun a major development of services for looked after children. It has also established a multi-agency referral and assessment service which brings together the local authority, local police and health services.
- As in 2010, less than half of local authority secondary schools are good or better, although only one is inadequate, and less than half of secondary school sixth form provision is good or better. The persistent absence rate from secondary schools is too high when compared with similar areas but continues to reduce.
- Although the proportion of young people from low-income families who achieve at least five GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics has improved, this is not by as much as their peers. As a result the achievement gap has widened between these two groups.
- The proportion of young people gaining level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 is below that found elsewhere. This is the same for young people from low-income families and, as at age 16, the achievement gap is not reducing.

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