8 November 2011

Mr Alan Wood
Director of Children & Families
London Borough of Hackney
The Learning Trust
TLC Building, 1 Reading Lane
London
E8 1GQ

Dear Mr Wood

**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:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Performs excellently</td>
<td>An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Performs well</td>
<td>An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Performs adequately</td>
<td>An organisation that meets only minimum requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Performs poorly</td>
<td>An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements</td>
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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 Hackney children’s services assessment
2011

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<th>Children’s services assessment</th>
<th>Performs well (3)</th>
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Children’s services in the London Borough of Hackney perform well. Good performance has been maintained. The large majority of services, settings and institutions for children and young people are good or better and help children stay safe and enjoy their learning. Areas of strength and areas for development have not changed significantly since last year, but 2011 provisional and local data for educational outcomes show significant improvement at ages five, 11 and 16. As elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and some schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

The unannounced inspection of children’s social care contact, referral and assessment arrangements carried out in May 2011 identified four areas of strength and many areas of practice that met requirements with no areas for development or priority actions. The areas for development identified at the previous inspection in 2010 have been addressed.

**Strengths**

- Recently introduced inspections of children’s centres in the borough are demonstrating positive outcomes as two are outstanding, two good and one satisfactory.

- As last year, the large majority of nursery and Early Years Foundation Stage provision in primary schools is good or better. The local 2011 data shows another significant increase in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at age five.

- Test results for 11-year-olds are improving each year. From a low base in 2007, results have improved at a much faster pace than in similar areas and nationally, and provisional data for 2011 show a further improvement taking results above the national average for the first time.

- The majority of local authority maintained secondary schools and the large majority of academies are good or better. The proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics continues to improve year on year and is in line with performance in similar areas and nationally. Since 2007 the pace of improvement in results has been better than found elsewhere and provisional 2011 data show further improvement.

- Attainment is above the national average for the large cohorts of young people from low-income families. Although some achievement gaps between vulnerable groups of young people and their peers in Hackney did not narrow further in the last year, they remain comparatively small. For example, the attainment of 16-year-olds from families with low income has improved significantly over the last four years and performance is
above both national and similar area averages. The achievement gap between this group of young people and their peers in Hackney remains one of the smallest gaps in England.

- Three of the four local authority special schools are now good or better, which is an improvement since last year. Inspections of these schools show that effective partnership working to enhance children and young people’s learning and well-being is a common strength.

- The latest unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services was positive, finding no areas for development or areas for priority action. Strengths of the service include the highly motivated and enthusiastic staff who are supported by knowledgeable, experienced and accessible managers.

- The local authority’s adoption and fostering agencies are good, as they were last year. The local authority has no children’s homes of its own. The quality of the large majority of the children’s homes it uses is good or better, although one home is currently inadequate.

**Areas for further improvement**

- The proportion of young people achieving level 2 and level 3 qualifications by age 19 remains significantly below similar area and national averages. Although small improvements have been achieved in 2010, these have not been sufficient to make a significant impact on the gaps in performance between these young people in Hackney and elsewhere, which remain too wide.

- The quality of registered early years and childcare provision has improved since last year, but the proportion of good or better registered childminders, taking into account those with no children on roll, and registered day care remains adequate overall.

- The majority of primary schools are at least good, but a relatively high proportion of around a third of primary schools remains only satisfactory. The borough has a lower proportion of good or better primary schools than is found in similar areas and nationally, although none are now inadequate.

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