

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 Andrew Christie
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Town Hall, King Street
Hammersmith
London W6 9JU

Dear Mr Christie

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 Hammersmith and Fulham children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham perform excellently. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding and few are inadequate. Settings are good at helping children and young people stay safe and provision of high quality supports them to learn well. Areas of strength remain largely as last year. Educational standards at the age of 5, 11, 16 and 19 are mostly above average and improving more quickly than nationally. Most measures of educational attainment and progress are above those in similar areas. Attainment for key vulnerable groups is well above average and progress has been made in the key areas for further development from 2010 in that most gaps have closed well.

Ofsted's unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, carried out in 2010, found significant strengths and no areas for priority action. In 2011, a full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children judged the overall effectiveness of both areas as good and the local authority's capacity for further improvement as outstanding.

Strengths

- Most early years provision in nursery and primary schools is good or outstanding and shows further improvement since last year. Achievement at the age of five is above average, improving quickly and rose significantly in 2010 following a dip in the previous year. Children from low-income families showing a good level of development rank second in the country and the gap with others of the same age has closed well.
- The large majority of primary schools are judged good or outstanding and show further improvement. Eleven-year-olds make above average and rapidly improving progress and the proportion achieving the expected Level 4 in both English and mathematics rose significantly in 2010. Provisional results for 2011 show improvement above national figures.
- All secondary schools are good or outstanding and much better than elsewhere. All have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and poor attendance by some young people is reducing steadily. At the age of 16, above average standards for young people achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, continue to improve. Young people from low-income families do very well, as do those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups. For the two former groups, gaps with their peers increased in 2010, following a good reduction.

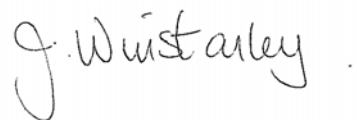
- All provision after the age of 16 is good or outstanding in school sixth forms and much better than elsewhere, but the further education college is now judged only satisfactory instead of good. More young people are now in education, employment or training, including average numbers of care leavers. Above average and increasing numbers of 19-year-olds gain higher level and other qualifications. Young people from low-income families do very well and the gap with their peers has closed quickly.
- The large majority of specialist provision in special schools and pupil referral units is good or better. Three of the four special schools are now outstanding, as is one of the two pupil referral units.
- For looked after children, the adoption service is good, as is the local authority's one children's home. Of the services that are commissioned, the large majority of providers are good or better, including children's homes.

Areas for further improvement

- Although the majority of provision for early years and childcare is good, over 40% of childminders are only satisfactory and remain a relative weakness in the local authority's performance overall. While one children's centre is outstanding and another is good, the third is inadequate because of weaknesses in its ability to evaluate and improve its services.
- The local authority's fostering agency and one pupil referral unit are only satisfactory.

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 cursive script that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment