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25 November 2011

Mrs Rose Collinson
Director of Children's Services
Medway Council
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Dear Mrs Collinson

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.

Medway Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Medway Council perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. As found 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. Areas of strength remain the same as last year. Areas identified for improvement have also not changed significantly, although good progress has been made in improving level 2 attainment at the age of 19. The overall effectiveness of registered childminders has not improved significantly, and although there has been some improvement in the proportion of primary schools judged to be good or better, too many continue to be only satisfactory.

The recent inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children reported that safeguarding arrangements are adequate, as are services for looked after children. Capacity to improve these services is also adequate.

Strengths

- For children under the age of five the large majority of provision in nurseries and in primary schools is good or better. Young children's achievements at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved well over the last four years and are the same as in similar areas and in line with the average for the country overall. Achievements have also improved for young children from families with low incomes and are in line with the same group of children in similar areas and elsewhere.
- The large majority of secondary schools are good or better and the two schools which were inadequate last year have improved and are now satisfactory. Educational standards achieved by 16-year-olds are improving and are in line with similar area and national averages, although the rate of improvement has decreased and is now slower than the rate seen nationally. Attainment for young people of this age from families with low incomes is improving and is in line with the averages for similar areas and England overall. The gap between these young people and others in Medway is narrowing and is narrower than in similar areas. Attainment for Black and Asian young people is higher than the national average.
- The extent to which children and young people looked after by the local authority enjoy their learning and achieve is good and they have good opportunities to contribute to decisions about their lives.
- The large majority of provision for learning after the age of 16 is good or better, including at the general further education college. Numbers of young people achieving level 2 or level 3 qualifications by the age of 19

improved well last year and are now in line with the averages in similar areas and elsewhere.

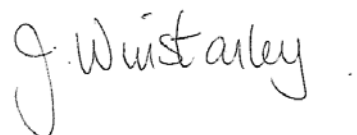
- For children and young people requiring specialist provision the very large majority of special schools are good or outstanding but while one of the two pupil referral units is good the other is now only satisfactory, having previously been good. For looked after children, fostering and adoption services are good and children's homes are good or better. Where the local authority commissions services, the very large majority of placements are with good or better fostering or adoption agencies or in good or better children's homes.

Areas for further improvement

- The recent inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children identified a number of areas for development for the local authority and its partners.
- Early years and childcare provision continues to be only satisfactory overall. Although there has been some improvement in registered day care, only half of childminders are good or better. This is much lower than the average elsewhere and there has been little improvement since the last assessment.
- Although the overall effectiveness of primary schools has improved since the last assessment, only just over half are good or better. This is much lower than in similar areas and the country overall. Standards achieved by 11-year-olds in national tests are much lower than elsewhere and have not improved over the last five years.
- Despite good recent improvement, fewer 19-year-olds from families with low incomes achieve level 3 qualifications than seen nationally and they are not catching up with others in Medway.

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