

9 December 2010

Mr Pete Dwyer
Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services
City of York Council
Mill House, North Street
York
North Yorkshire YO1 6JD

Dear Mr Dwyer

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes 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 data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against 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 2009, 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.

City of York Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the City of York Council continue to perform excellently.

The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The local authority's adoption and fostering agencies and its children's homes are good, as are the specialist sixth form and pupil referral unit. Of the two further education colleges inspected, one is good and the other adequate, a similar picture to that for special schools. The very great majority of nurseries and secondary schools are good or better. Primary schools are not doing quite so well. Inspection reports show that the large majority are good or better but almost a third are only satisfactory and one is inadequate.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services identified several areas of satisfactory practice and some areas for development but there were no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show that the large majority of outcomes are in line with, or above, the averages for England and for similar areas. Results in national tests for 11- and 16-year-olds are above those for similar areas. However, there is a widening gap between the achievement of those from low-income families and others of the same age. The same is the case when young people with special educational needs are compared with their peers.

Key areas for further development

- Reduce the gaps in achievement between young people from low-income families, and those who have special educational needs, and others of the same age.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are very successful and all services are good or very good at this. Most outcomes are in line with those elsewhere. There has been a reduction in the number of five-year-olds who are very overweight and an increase in the number of children and young people taking part in physical activity and sport. However, take-up of school lunches at primary and secondary level is below the average for similar areas. Compared with the situation across the country, children and young people, including those in care, when asked say that they get on less well with their friends and families.

The very large majority of services are good or very good at keeping children and young people safe. The report on the recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services highlights the quality of the arrangements for referrals but also identifies inconsistencies in the quality of assessments. The most recent figures

show that almost all outcomes are in line with or above the averages elsewhere. However, the proportion of children who become the subject of a protection plan more than once has risen above the national average. On the other hand, every child who is to be adopted is quickly placed with a family, and the proportion of children in care who have been with the same family for two or more years is higher than the national average.

All the services inspected are good or better at helping children and young people do well and enjoy their learning. Almost all outcomes are in line with or better than elsewhere. Three to five-year-olds achieve as well as their peers in similar areas. The very large majority of children make the progress expected of them and, at the age of 11, their performance in national tests matches that of their contemporaries in similar local authorities. Achievement in secondary schools has improved steadily over the last five years. The number of 16-year-olds achieving good GCSE grades in five or more subjects, including English and mathematics, is higher than in similar areas. The number gaining two or more good grades in science has changed little in recent years and remains in line with similar local authorities. The number of 16- to 18-year-olds studying physics at A level has risen. At both primary and secondary levels, there is a widening gap between the performance of pupils from low-income families and others of the same age. The situation is the same when the achievements of pupils with special educational needs are compared with those of their contemporaries. Behaviour is good or better in the large majority of secondary schools. Persistent absence has fallen but at a slower rate than elsewhere, so that it is now worse than in similar areas.

Apart from the pupil referral unit, which is satisfactory in this respect, all providers are good or better at encouraging young people to take part in activities which will benefit themselves and their communities. On the majority of the national performance indicators that relate to 'making a positive contribution', the local authority's performance is in line with averages nationally or for similar areas. Despite recent improvements, the proportion of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time is higher than in similar local authorities. The proportion of young offenders in suitable education, employment or training is lower than the national average. In a recent inspection, the youth offending service was judged to be a high performing one.

Almost all providers give good or better support to young people to develop the knowledge, skills and qualifications needed to gain a job. One children's home and more than half of the boarding schools are only satisfactory at this. The proportion of working families on low income taking up their entitlement to childcare has risen to over a fifth. More young people are continuing in education and training beyond the age of 16. Another positive outcome is that, as in previous years, there are fewer 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training than in similar areas. However, only half of those leaving care continue in education and training or go into work. As in similar areas, the proportion of young people gaining five good GCSEs or the equivalent by the age of 19 has risen. However, 19-year-olds from low-income families do less well than others of the same age and their counterparts in similar areas. The proportion of all 19-year-olds in the local authority who have gained Level

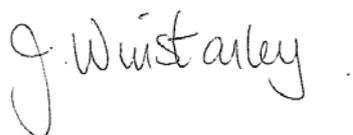
3 qualifications (two A levels or the equivalent) is in line with the average for similar local authorities.

Prospects for improvement

The local authority has succeeded in maintaining the excellent performance of its services and has conducted a clear analysis of strengths and areas for further improvement. There is a clear commitment to 'narrowing the gap between pupils who are vulnerable to underachievement because of their circumstances' and the local authority is tackling this in a number of ways, including its Learning City initiative. Schools have been provided with specific guidance, including teaching and learning strategies and advice on school and classroom management and sharing of information, in order to improve the situation. A recent Ofsted inspection showed how these approaches are also being used to support children of armed services families during their time in the city's schools.

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