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Ms Meera Spillett
Director for Children, Young People and Families
Oxfordshire County Council
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Dear Ms Spillett

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.

Oxfordshire County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Oxfordshire County Council perform well. This performance has been maintained from 2010 to 2011. Most services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding and few are inadequate. Almost all are good at helping children and young people to learn and stay safe. Average standards at the age of five, 11 and 16 continue to improve steadily, but there are weaknesses in achievement for some key vulnerable groups. Areas of strength remain as last year, more provision is good or better and less is inadequate. Progress has been made in the key areas for further development. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and more schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

Ofsted's most recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found three areas of strength, many areas of satisfactory practice and five areas for development, one from the previous inspection in 2009. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention. In 2011, a full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children judged the overall effectiveness of both as good. Inspection shows good safeguarding in youth offending work.

Strengths

- The majority of provision for early years and childcare is good or better. More childminders and childcare is judged good or outstanding and none of the latter are now inadequate, addressing an area for development in 2010. Five of the seven children's centres are good or outstanding but two are only satisfactory.
- Most provision for early years education in nursery and primary schools is good or outstanding and average achievement for five-year-olds at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved faster than nationally.
- Eleven-year-olds make increasingly better progress from the age of seven and standards at the age of 11 are improving steadily. Provisional results for 2011 are just above the national average and show a continuing positive trend.
- The majority of maintained secondary schools are good or better and none are now inadequate. However, more are now only satisfactory. One satisfactory secondary school has gained academy status. The two long-standing academies are also only satisfactory. The majority of 16-year-olds reach average standards for five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, and numbers show steady improvement. The large majority of secondary schools show good or

outstanding standards of behaviour, and poor attendance by some young people is reducing steadily.

- The large majority of provision after the age of 16 is good or outstanding and none is now inadequate. Average and steadily increasing numbers of 17-year-olds continue in learning, including care leavers, and average and increasing numbers of 19-year-olds achieve higher level and other qualifications.
- For young people not in mainstream education, most specialist provision in special schools and the pupil referral unit is good or outstanding. The one special school that is judged inadequate is making good progress, with good support from the local authority.
- For looked after children, all arrangements for adoption and fostering are good. Children's homes show significant improvement from last year, addressing a key area for further development. Both those run by the local authority are now good and seven of the eight that are independently run are good or outstanding. Of the services commissioned by the local authority, the very large majority of providers are good or better, including children's homes.
- The full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children found outstanding opportunities for looked after children and young people to contribute to the improvement of services and excellent support for them to speak out on issues that affect their lives.

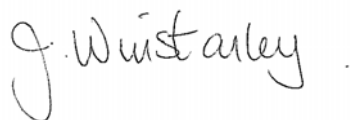
Areas for further improvement

- The majority of primary schools are judged good and some are outstanding but one-third is only satisfactory and seven are inadequate, showing performance below that found elsewhere. Ofsted's monitoring visits show inadequate schools making at least satisfactory progress with strong support from the local authority.
- The achievement of some key vulnerable groups is below average and gaps are not closing consistently. More five-year-olds from low-income families now show a good level of development but the gap with others of the same age in Oxfordshire shows little sign of closing. At the age of 16, young people from low-income families and those with special educational needs do less well than in similar areas and nationally and the larger than average gaps with their peers are increasing. Attainment for minority ethnic groups ranges from well below average to average and gaps for some groups are getting bigger. At the age of 19, well below average numbers of young people from low-income families gain level 2 qualifications and the gap with their peers is bigger than elsewhere. At level 3, young people in this group achieve as well as those in similar areas but less well when compared to their peers nationally.

- The full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children found only adequate educational outcomes for looked after children and a need to increase the pace of improvement in their attainment.

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 "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment