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8 November 2011

Mr Stuart Gallimore
Director of Children and Young People's Services
West Sussex County Council
Room 100, 1st Floor
County Hall
West Street
Chichester, West Sussex
PO19 1RQ

Dear Mr Gallimore

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.

West Sussex County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs poorly (1)
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Children's services in West Sussex County Council perform poorly. In November 2010 a full inspection of safeguarding judged services to be inadequate. The local authority's capacity to improve safeguarding arrangements was also judged to be inadequate. In the light of this evidence, children's services were assessed as performing poorly overall. The recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found that the areas for development identified in the previous unannounced inspection of the same services have been addressed. However until further safeguarding inspection evidence is available the children's services assessment for 2011 remains performs poorly.

Despite weaknesses identified in safeguarding services, the very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. As in 2010, most contribute well to helping children and young people learn and stay safe and now, in 2011, there are more schools and settings which are good or better. As is the case 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 this assessment.

Strengths

- Early years and childcare provision is good and improving. Children's centres are mostly good and support parents well.
- The large majority of provision in nurseries and in primary schools for children under five are good or better and their level of development has improved since last year's assessment and is now in line with similar areas.
- The overall effectiveness of primary schools has improved and the large majority are good or better with few inadequate.
- There is no inadequate provision in colleges and school sixth forms and the large majority are good or better although two general further education colleges are now only satisfactory compared to one last year. Standards achieved by 19-year-olds are improving and reflect those in similar areas.
- For children and young people requiring specialist provision, education in special schools, including those that have sixth forms, is very effective. Local authority special schools have improved and the very large majority are good or outstanding with none now inadequate. The overall effectiveness of pupil referral units has also improved and two are now outstanding with one satisfactory. Standards achieved by 16-year-olds

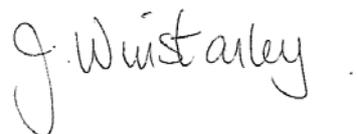
with special educational needs who are following the national curriculum have continued to improve and the gap between these young people and others in West Sussex has remained relatively constant compared to a widening gap nationally.

Areas for further improvement

- The local authority recognises the importance of strengthening safeguarding arrangements and this continues to be a major area of development for West Sussex.
- Services for looked after children and young people are adequate overall but work remains to be done to implement the necessary changes to improve outcomes for this group.
- Although the overall effectiveness of secondary schools is improving, over a third are only satisfactory.
- Standards achieved by 11- and 16-year-olds are in line with those in similar areas. However, these have not improved over the last five years in the case of 11-year-olds and the rate of improvement has not been as high as in similar parts of the country or nationally at age 16.
- Children and young people from families with low incomes do not do as well as the same group nationally. Despite recent improvements in the standards achieved at ages five and 16, attainment gaps between these children and young people and their peers in the county are not narrowing to any significant extent at ages five and 19 with only very recent progress at age 16.

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, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment