

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



8 November 2011

Mr Andy Couldrick
General Manager of Children's Services
Wokingham Borough Council
PO Box 156
Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 1WQ

Dear Mr Couldrick

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.

Wokingham Borough Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
--------------------------------	-------------------

Children's services in Wokingham Borough Council perform well. This good performance has been maintained from 2010 to 2011. The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and provision helps children and young people stay safe and learn well. Strengths and areas for development remain largely the same as in 2010. A number of schools have become academies in the last year and their inspection grades have been taken into account in making this assessment.

In 2010, a full inspection of safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children judged these to be adequate. In 2011, an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found one strength, many aspects that meet requirements and a number of areas for development. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention. The two priority actions and some of the areas for development identified at the previous unannounced inspection, in 2009, have been addressed.

Strengths

- The large majority of childminding and childcare, as well as provision for the children under five in nurseries and primary schools, is good or better. All childminding is now at least satisfactory. Standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved significantly over the last four years and are now in line with similar areas and the national average.
- The large majority of primary schools and two-thirds of secondary schools remain good or better. Standards at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 have been consistently above similar areas and the national average for many years. Provisional GCSE results for 2011 show continuing improvement. The local authority has provided focused support to the two inadequate primary schools, enabling them to make satisfactory progress.
- The large majority of provision in special schools and pupil referral units remains good or better, as it was in 2010.
- The quality of provision in school sixth forms has improved overall and the very large majority are now good or better. Participation in education, training and work remains above average. Achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 matches the average for similar areas and the national figure and continues to improve. Young people from low-income backgrounds do better than their counterparts elsewhere. The gap in attainment between this group and the majority of 19-year-olds in Wokingham is closing.

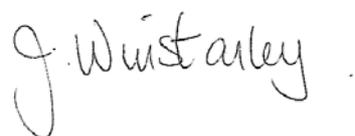
- The local authority has implemented an effective workforce development strategy that has improved significantly the stability of the social care workforce. This is helping to ensure that services to children and their families are delivered in a timely way by highly motivated and well-trained staff with good management direction.
- The local authority's children's home has been outstanding for many years and the very large majority of provision the local authority commissions in children's homes elsewhere is good or better. As in 2010, the fostering service is good. The adoption service was inspected in 2011 and judged to be good with some outstanding outcomes for children and young people.

Areas for further improvement

- Safeguarding arrangements, services for looked after children overall and capacity to improve are only satisfactory. Key areas for development identified in the most recent inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection remain from the previous inspection. These include the variable quality of assessments and the limited focus on taking account of the views of children and families.
- The gap in attainment between 16-year-olds from low-income backgrounds and the majority of the same age in Wokingham is wider than the average elsewhere and increasing. Over the last four years, the improvement in the proportion of young people achieving five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has matched the trend in similar areas, but is not as good as the national picture.
- In 2011, while provisional test results for 11-year-olds remain above the national average, they have fallen to their lowest point for five years.

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