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8 November 2011

Ms Helen Watson  
Director of Children's Services  
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council  
Town Hall and Civic Offices  
Westoe Road  
South Shields  
Tyne and Wear NE33 2RL

Dear Ms Watson

## 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.

## South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately, as they did in 2010. The quality of secondary schools and post-16 education provision remains mixed. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall. Most provision helps children and young people stay safe and enjoy their learning. Areas of strength and those identified for improvement remain largely the same as last year. The quality of provision in registered day care, nurseries and primary schools has improved. The most recent inspection of the school that became an academy has been taken into account in this assessment.

Ofsted's last inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection took place in September 2010 when three strengths, many satisfactory aspects of practice and a number of areas for development were identified. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention.

### Strengths

- The overall quality of early years and childcare provision has improved since 2010. The children's centres inspected are mostly good and provide effective support to children, parents or carers.
- For children under five, the local authority has maintained the good quality of its provision and the large majority is good or better. Over the past four years, achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved at twice the rate of improvement found nationally. Levels of development for children from low-income backgrounds have also improved.
- The proportion of good primary schools has increased and the local authority's support to the two primary schools in an Ofsted category of concern has been effective so that none are now inadequate. Key Stage 2 results match performance in similar areas and the provisional results for 2011 show a slight increase of one per cent this year. Progress is particularly strong in English.
- Almost all provision in special schools is good or outstanding, as it was in 2010. One special school sixth form is good and the other is satisfactory.
- For looked after children and young people, provision is consistently good or better, as it was in 2010. The adoption agency remains outstanding and the fostering agency is good. The two local authority children's homes remain good. For services commissioned by the local authority, the large majority of providers are good or better.

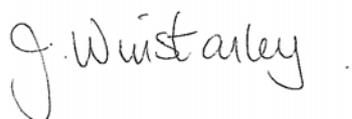
- There was a significant increase in the number of 16-year-olds gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2010. Provisional results for 2011 show further improvement. GCSE results have improved at a faster pace than found elsewhere over the past four years and, in 2010, they were above similar areas. This is also the case at the age of 19 and more young people gain level 2 qualifications than in similar areas. Young people from low-income backgrounds also do well and the attainment gap between them and the majority of young people in South Tyneside is closing.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- The pupil referral unit has deteriorated from good to inadequate. Ofsted's monitoring visit in May 2011 reports that the unit is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and raising students' achievement.
- Provision in secondary schools remains mixed. One school improved from satisfactory to good and one inadequate school became satisfactory over the past year. However, a different one is now in an Ofsted category of concern and four of the eight local authority secondary schools are only satisfactory. The local authority is monitoring these schools closely and the recent provisional results at Key Stage 4 show an improving trend.
- Post-16 education provision varies from outstanding to satisfactory. Despite some good school sixth forms, the large majority of young people access only satisfactory provision.

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' and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment