

9 December 2010

Mrs Gillian Pearson
Director of Children and Young People's Services
London Borough of Bromley
Civic Centre, Stockwell Close
Bromley
London BR1 3UH

Dear Mrs Pearson

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.

The London Borough of Bromley children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Bromley perform well.

The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The large majority of early years and childcare provision is of good quality overall, a higher proportion than found elsewhere. The large majority of primary schools are also good or better, but five are now inadequate. Most secondary schools, a higher proportion than found elsewhere, are also at least good. Provision for young people aged 16 years and over is satisfactory in the two further education colleges, and at least good in most school sixth forms. Three of the four local authority special schools are outstanding and one is satisfactory. The three special school sixth forms are all at least good. The local authority's fostering and adoption agencies are both good. The pupil referral unit is satisfactory.

The inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services which took place in April 2010 judged both services as adequate with adequate capacity to improve.

The children's services assessment judgement is supported by outcomes for children and young people that are at least in line with the appropriate comparator for the large majority of national performance measures. All performance measures for educational attainment are at least in line with the appropriate comparators. Strategies to narrow the gap in outcomes between children and young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, such as those from low-income families and their peers, are having mixed success, but school test results at the age of five, 11 and 16 do show a trend of improvement for these children and young people.

Key areas for further development

- Address the areas for improvement in safeguarding and looked after children's services.
- Reduce the number of inadequate primary schools.

Outcomes for children and young people

Arrangements for encouraging children and young people to live healthily are good in the very large majority of settings and services for children and young people in Bromley. Health outcomes are generally in line with similar areas. Partner agencies work well together to promote good outcomes for children in care and to tackle inequalities. Levels of childhood obesity are broadly average, but strategies are not yet bringing about reductions. The rate of teenage pregnancy in Bromley is slightly below the average for outer London and England. However, it has increased by more than 20% over the decade to 2008. Although the local authority and partners have not been successful in reducing the pregnancy rate among under 18-year-olds, local

data suggests small improvements in the under 16-year-olds rate. The rate of teenage conception among young women in the care of the local authority is low. A greater proportion of young people are being screened to improve their sexual health than nationally, which is good.

The recent inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services judged both services to be adequate overall with adequate capacity for improvement. There are many areas for improvement across the two services, including the need to improve both the quality and timeliness of assessments. Latest data shows that the proportion of initial and core assessments of children in need carried out within agreed timescales have dropped significantly and are below the national average. The proportion of child protection cases that are being reviewed has also fallen. Surveys undertaken in schools indicate that the majority of children feel safe. Inspection judgements show that schools, early years providers and other settings have generally good arrangements to help children and young people stay safe. Outcomes for children and young people in the care of the local authority are adequate but recent data suggests that they are experiencing more changes of placement than in previous years, and performance on the timeliness of adoptions is below the national average

Overall Bromley schools are very good at helping children and young people to enjoy their learning and do well. The number of five-year-olds who achieve a good level of development by the end of their Reception year at school has improved significantly and is now broadly in line with the average in similar areas. The local authority is having some success in helping five-year-olds who are not doing very well in their learning to achieve as well as others of the same age. Results in national tests for 11-year-olds are broadly in line with the average for similar areas, but in the top 25% of all local authorities. The 2010 provisional test results show improvement, with girls doing much better. However, five primary schools have failed their last inspections and more are now inadequate than last year. The local authority is aware that achievement varies widely across primary schools and provides effective support to help targeted schools improve. GCSE results are very positive, with the number of 16-year-olds achieving five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics continuing to improve. Performance is better than in similar areas and over the last five years has improved at a faster than average pace. Educational outcomes for children in care are adequate.

Schools provide good opportunities to enable children and young people to be involved in decision-making. There is an increasing emphasis on the involvement of children and young people in service development within children's social care. The local authority and its partners continue to appropriately prioritise reducing youth crime; the proportion of young people re-offending remains stable but is significantly higher than in similar areas. Bromley Youth Offending Service is actively involved in the London-wide re-offending project and has developed an action plan which is being implemented.

Strategies to ensure young people are well-prepared for adult life are showing success. The number of young people aged 16 to 18 not in work, education or training has reduced year-on-year and levels are comparatively low. The number of young people gaining qualifications by the age of 19 has increased and there is a trend of improvement at both the lower and higher level. Higher numbers of Bromley's young people from low-income backgrounds gained two A levels or equivalent qualifications by the age of 19 than in previous years. The local authority provides good support to children in care and care leavers to help them do well in adult life.

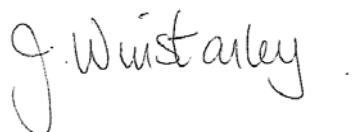
Prospects for improvement

The effectiveness of the large majority of services and settings for children and young people is at least good and is having a positive impact on outcomes in Bromley. A high proportion of early years and school provision is good or better. This is reflected in overall results which continue to improve for both 11- and 16-year-olds and there has been a significant improvement in achievement for five-year-olds. However, recent inspections and an increase in the number of primary schools not meeting the expected standards in tests for 11-year-olds show that more remains to be done to ensure that all primary schools across the borough are of good quality.

Local plans provide a good basis on which improvements to safeguarding services can be made. Safeguarding services have seen recent large increases in workload. The strategy for recruitment and retention of staff within parts of children's social care has the potential to improve capacity. The local authority and its partners have a good understanding of the costs of services and a longstanding focus on value-for-money in the area. Children's services have also consistently been effective in delivering efficiency savings in accordance with local requirements.

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 cursive script that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment