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8 November 2011

Mr Gareth Williams  
Director, Children and Young People's Service  
Leicestershire County Council  
Children and Young People's Service  
Room 115, County Hall  
Glenfield  
Leicestershire LE3 8RF

Dear Mr Williams

## 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.

## Leicestershire County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Leicestershire County Council perform well. This good performance has been sustained from 2010. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding, and very few are inadequate. Published indicators show strong performance across a range of activity and education standards that are in line with similar areas. Almost all providers are good at helping children and young people learn and stay safe. As found elsewhere, changes to school provision are taking place and some schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment. Strengths remain the same as last year and areas identified for improvement have not changed significantly.

An unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection in June 2011 identified areas of strength, including effective multi-agency working with the police, much practice that meets guidance with few areas for development and no priority actions requiring urgent attention. Almost all issues from a previous inspection in August 2010 have been addressed.

### Strengths

- Children and young people identified as at risk of significant harm receive a prompt and focused child protection response from a highly effective centralised team.
- The proportion of good or better early years and childcare provision has increased over the last year. For children under five, the very large majority of provision in nurseries and primary schools is good and some is outstanding. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at five years of age is in line with similar areas and national figures and continues to rise over time, although not as quickly as found nationally.
- A large majority of primary schools are good or better and the proportion of effective primary schools continues to rise. The very large majority of children make the expected progress in primary schools and by 11 years of age standards are in line with similar areas and national averages.
- More than three-quarters of secondary schools perform well. The large majority of the 18 schools inspected during the year are at least good and four of them are outstanding. The four schools that became academies were all good or outstanding. Almost all secondary schools have good or outstanding behaviour and the poor attendance of some young people is reducing steadily. Effective and robust support from the local authority and the school improvement partner contributed to one previously

inadequate secondary school making good progress and it is now satisfactory.

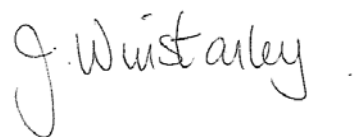
- Almost all provision for children and young people with special educational needs is good or outstanding. This includes the six local authority special schools and their sixth form provision. Both local authority residential special schools are now outstanding. The pupil referral unit, previously reported as inadequate, was judged satisfactory before its closure in November 2010.
- For looked after children, one of the two local authority children's homes is good, the other outstanding. The large majority of voluntary and privately run children's homes commissioned by the local authority are good or better, as are two-thirds of the independent fostering agencies, although the local authority fostering agency is only adequate.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- Issues are emerging in the quality of provision in children's centres. Of the three inspected for the first time during the year, none are good and two are inadequate. Ofsted inspections identify weaknesses in the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the impact of local services and in the use of data to strategically plan and target resources.
- The proportion of 16-year-olds attaining at least five GCSE grades A\* to C including English and mathematics continues to improve, but not at the same rate over time as found nationally. Consequently attainment is now in line with similar areas and national averages, not above as in previous years. The proportion of 16-year-olds from low-income families who achieve at least five GCSE grades A\* to C including English and mathematics is below average and the gap with all young people in Leicestershire is getting wider.
- The proportion of good or better secondary sixth forms has not improved during the last year. Three of the five recent inspections are only satisfactory; two of these had previously been good. Another, outstanding at a previous inspection, is now good.

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