

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](mailto:Juliet.Winstanley@ofsted.gov.uk)



8 November 2011

Mr Matt Dunkley  
Director of Children's Services  
East Sussex County Council  
PO Box 4, County Hall  
St Anne's Crescent  
Lewes  
East Sussex BN7 1SG

Dear Mr Dunkley

## 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.

## East Sussex County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in East Sussex County Council perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and one school is now a sponsored academy. The previous inspection judgement for this school has been taken into account in this assessment. The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better overall and provision helps children and young people learn and stay safe. Areas of strength remain the same as last year and more provision is now good or outstanding. Progress has been made in the key areas for development in 2010, but the educational attainment of children and young people from low-income families has not shown the same improvement at the age of five, and for some 19-year-olds, as it has for 16-year-olds.

A recent announced full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children reported that safeguarding arrangements are good as is provision for looked after children. The local authority's capacity to improve safeguarding services is good and outstanding for services for looked after children.

### Strengths

- The large majority of early years and childcare settings are good or better although improvement since the last assessment has been modest. The five children's centres inspected are judged as good.
- For children under five, provision in nurseries and primary schools has improved and the very large majority are now good or better.
- The overall effectiveness of secondary schools has improved with the large majority now good or better. The number of 16-year-olds achieving five good GCSEs including English and mathematics improved significantly last year and are in line with similar areas. Attainment for young people from families with low incomes also improved well and these young people are catching up with their peers in the county.
- The majority of provision for young people aged 16 and over is good or better and shows improvement from last year. Two of the three general further education colleges are now good as is the sixth form college. Five of the eight secondary school sixth forms are good or better but three are only satisfactory.
- For children and young people requiring specialist provision, the very large majority is good or better. Local authority special schools show substantial improvement and the large majority are now good or better, although one is still inadequate.

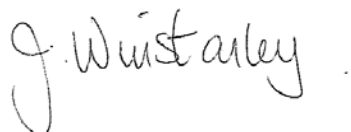
- Local authority fostering and adoption services are good or better, as are five out of six local authority children's homes and all children's homes that are independently run.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- Slightly more childcare is outstanding, but there has been no improvement in the proportion of registered childminder settings judged good or better since the last assessment. Although there has been some improvement in primary schools and the large majority are now good or better, more are inadequate and a third of schools are no better than satisfactory.
- Very young children's level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with national and similar area averages, but improved marginally in 2010 and has not improved overall since 2008. Although the achievements of young children from families with low incomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage reflect the average for similar areas, these children are not catching up with their peers in the county. Results of national tests for 11-year-olds have improved less than elsewhere in recent years but in 2010 they remained in line with the averages for both the country overall and similar areas. Provisional results for 11-year-olds in 2011 are below national figures.
- The number of young people achieving level 2 or equivalent qualifications or higher level qualifications by the age of 19 in East Sussex remain well below the averages for similar areas although in line with the country overall. Young people from families with low incomes also do less well than the same young people nationally in the extent to which they gain higher level qualifications although standards did improve in 2010 and attainment gaps with others in the county are closing, albeit slowly.

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