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Ms Frankie Sulke
Executive Director for Children and Young People
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Dear Ms Sulke

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.

London Borough of Lewisham children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Lewisham continue to perform excellently as they did in 2009 and 2010. The very large majority of all types of services, settings and institutions are good or better at helping children and young people to stay safe and enjoy their learning. National data and the local authority's review of the Children and Young People's Plan 2011 show that progress has been made in the two key areas for further development identified in last year's assessment. There has been a good rate of improvement in reducing the teenage conception rate and there is a trend of gradual improvement in the numbers of young people persistently absent from secondary school although this remains higher than in similar areas.

The unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection in December 2010 identified two areas of strength, many areas of practice that met requirements and two areas for development. The area of development identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in March 2010 regarding families receiving copies of assessments has been fully addressed.

Strengths

- The three children's centres that have been inspected in the last year are all good. Common strengths are found within the centres' arrangements for the safeguarding of children.
- The very large majority of nursery schools and Early Years Foundation Stage provision within primary schools are good or better, which is an improvement on last year. There has been a significant increase in the number of five-year-olds achieving a good level of development. The gap between Lewisham's performance and the national average that existed in 2007 has closed and local data for 2011 indicate further improvement this year.
- The large majority of primary schools, local authority maintained secondary schools and academies in the borough are of good or better quality overall. Inspection monitoring letters report that the small numbers in an Ofsted category of concern receive effective support from the local authority to help them improve.
- Post-16 provision in the area is good overall, as it was last year. The proportion of young people gaining level 2 and level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 is now in line with similar areas and the national average. The pace of improvement has been faster in Lewisham than elsewhere over the last four years.

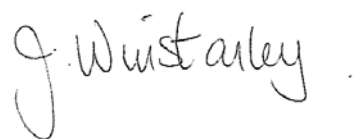
- Specialist provision across the borough remains very good overall. All six of the local authority's special schools for children and young people with additional needs are good or outstanding and the pupil referral unit is good. The local authority's adoption and fostering agencies are both good. These inspection judgements have not changed since last year.
- The local authority has no children's homes of its own, but the large majority of the children's homes used by the local authority are good or better and none are inadequate.
- Almost all published indicators for educational attainment and progress are at least in line with similar areas and the national average. In 2010, the attainment of the larger than average cohorts of children and young people from low-income families was better than found nationally for all age groups. The attainment gaps between these children and young people and their peers in the borough narrowed well between 2009 and 2010.

Areas for further improvement

- Although the proportion of 16-year-olds getting five good GCSEs including English and mathematics continues to rise year on year, in 2010 performance was below similar areas and the national average. The slower pace of improvement in the borough since 2007 meant that the gap between Lewisham's performance and performance elsewhere had widened. However, local 2011 data show a significant improvement in results this year

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