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Ms Isobel Cattermole
Corporate Director, Children, Schools and Families
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
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Dear Ms Cattermole

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 Tower Hamlets children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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As in 2010, children's services in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets perform well. The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding and the large majority are good at helping children and young people stay safe and supporting them to learn. Areas of strength remain largely the same as last year and very little remains inadequate. Achievement gaps are small for some, but not all, key vulnerable groups. The areas identified for improvement have also not changed significantly.

In 2011, Ofsted's unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection, found two areas of strength, many satisfactory aspects of practice and five areas for development. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention.

Strengths

- For early years and childcare, the one children's centre inspected is judged as good.
- Most early years education in nursery and primary schools is good or better with more provision this year that is outstanding.
- More primary schools are now good and one no longer requires significant improvement. Another that was judged by Ofsted in November 2010 as requiring special measures to improve is making satisfactory progress with suitable support from the local authority. Eleven-year-olds make the progress expected from the age of seven and the large majority achieve the expected levels in English and mathematics in national tests at the age of 11. Provisional results for 2011 are broadly in line with the national average.
- At the age of 16, the proportion of young people gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has improved more quickly than nationally over the past four years. The 2011 provisional results show substantial further improvement with 60.4 % of pupils gaining higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics which is above the national average for the first time. The achievement of looked after children is also above the national average for this group. Young people from low-income families achieve consistently well. The attainment gap is now much smaller than in similar areas and nationally and the gap with their peers in Tower Hamlets closed significantly in 2010. Young people with special educational needs also achieve well compared with their peers nationally. Provisional data for 2011 show further improvement. However, the gap is gradually increasing compared with

others of the same age in Tower Hamlets. Most secondary schools have good or outstanding standards of behaviour and previous poor attendance by some young people that is below the national average, is reducing quickly.

- After the age of 16, the majority of provision is good or better. Three of the six school sixth forms are good and one is now outstanding, but two are only satisfactory, as is the college of further education. The proportion of young people in education, training and employment is increasing and includes most care leavers. Average and increasing numbers of 19-year-olds gain level 2 qualifications. A higher proportion of young people from low-income families gain qualifications at levels 2 and 3 than nationally, although about the same proportion as in similar areas. At both levels, gaps with their peers are small.
- For young people not in mainstream education, almost all special schools are good or outstanding and the pupil referral unit is good.
- For looked after children, all arrangements for adoption and fostering are good or outstanding. Of the services commissioned by the local authority, the large majority of providers are good or better, including children's homes.

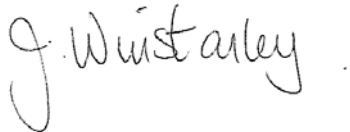
Areas for further improvement

- In early years and childcare, although there is improvement in the proportion of provision that is good or better, almost 40% remains satisfactory. Similarly, while the majority of secondary schools are good or better and none are now inadequate, 40% remain satisfactory.
- At the age of five, achievement shows some improvement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage but remains below that found in similar areas and nationally. More five-year-olds from low-income families have a good level of development but this proportion has not increased as quickly as in similar areas and nationally over the last four years. The achievement gap with others of the same age in Tower Hamlets shows little sign of closing.
- For minority ethnic groups at the age of 16, attainment for the Asian group is above that of their peers in Tower Hamlets, although below that found in similar areas and nationally. Attainment for the Black ethnic group is below that in similar areas. Young people from the White ethnic group achieve well below others in similar areas and nationally. For the White group, the achievement gap is increasing against others of the same age in Tower Hamlets and remains much bigger than in similar areas and nationally.
- At the age of 19, fewer young people than in similar areas and substantially fewer than nationally gain level 3 qualifications. The gap between 19-year-olds in Tower Hamlets and their counterparts nationally increased in 2010, having shown little improvement in previous years. The

gap with similar areas has also increased. However, those from low-income families do as well as their peers in similar areas and better than nationally.

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