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Mr Nigel Richardson
Director of Leeds Children's Services
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Dear Mr Richardson

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.

Leeds City Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Leeds City Council perform adequately. A full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children in December 2009 found safeguarding services to be inadequate. As a result of this inspection, children's services were judged to be inadequate in 2010. In January 2011, an unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found one strength and four areas for development. There were no areas for priority action and all areas for priority action identified at the previous inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements had been addressed. A follow up inspection of safeguarding took place in September 2011 and the overall effectiveness of safeguarding services in Leeds was judged to be adequate. Capacity for improvement was judged to be good. This year's children's services assessment recognises the improvements made.

The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The very large majority of provision supports children and young people well in staying safe and the large majority helps them to enjoy their learning. Areas of strength and areas for development remain largely similar to last year. Previous judgements for secondary schools that have become academies have been taken into account in making this assessment.

Strengths

- The follow up inspection of safeguarding found that arrangements to ensure children are safeguarded are now secure. It also noted that almost all areas for development from previous inspections had been addressed. Leadership and management were judged to be good. This positive outcome builds on the considerable improvement in front-line child protection services reported in the unannounced inspection of January 2011.
- The large majority of early years and childcare provision is good or better overall, showing improvement from the previous assessment. There has been a good improvement in the quality of registered day-care provision and none is inadequate. In addition, the large majority of the 15 children's centres inspected over the last year are good or better.
- The quality of provision for children under five in nursery and primary schools has been maintained, with the large majority judged to be good or better on inspection. Similarly, the large majority of primary schools continue to make good provision for all children.
- Monitoring visits to schools in an Ofsted category of concern show that the local authority has been effective in helping to bring about improvement. These improvements include to two secondary schools, a

number of primary schools and a pupil referral unit. Behaviour in secondary schools continues to improve well.

- A previously inadequate further education college has improved and is satisfactory, and the sixth form college remains outstanding.
- As last year, the very large majority of special schools are good or better and the local fostering and adoption agencies are good. The large majority of the provision that Leeds commissions in children's homes outside its own settings is good or better.
- The most recent published results show that the number of young people from low-income families achieving qualifications at the age of 16 and by the age of 19 has improved well. This was an area for development in the previous assessment. In addition, the published results show that gaps in attainment have narrowed by the age of 19.
- A recent inspection of the youth offending service noted very strong outcomes in the key areas for performance.

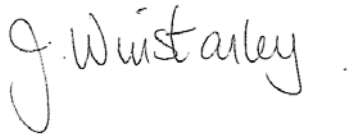
Areas for further improvement

- A number of areas for improvement have been identified in the recent follow up inspection of safeguarding. These include improving: the arrangements for sharing information about domestic violence between the police and the social care service; the quality of assessments; the timescales for initial child protection conferences; and increasing the use of the common assessment framework to provide coordinated early intervention to children and families who need this support.
- Only around half the local authority's secondary schools and sixth forms are good or better and this was an area for development last year. Although the secondary school persistent absence rate continues to improve, it is still higher than that in similar areas. Only two of the five further education colleges are good.
- Although almost all published educational attainment indicators are in line with similar areas and the national average, the trend of improvement is slower than that found elsewhere. After a rise last year the provisional Key Stage 2 results for 2011 show a decline in performance. For Key Stage 4, provisional data suggest that results have improved at around the same rate as in 2010. The gaps in attainment between children from low-income families and their peers in Leeds at both the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 4 reduced slightly this year but have not reduced over time.
- The quality of provision in local authority children's homes is not as strong as last year. Only half are good and two are inadequate.

- One special school for children with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties has recently been found to require significant improvement. The local authority was aware of the school's performance and the Director of Children's Services had issued a warning notice several months before the inspection.

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