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Mr Ian Curryer
Corporate Director for Children and Families
Nottingham City Council
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Nottingham
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Dear Mr Curryer

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.

Nottingham City Council children's services assessment 2011

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Children's services assessment | Performs adequately (2) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|

Children's services in Nottingham City Council perform adequately, as in 2010. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and very few are inadequate. Most provision supports children and young people to stay safe and a large majority helps them enjoy their learning. Improvements are shown in some areas, although education standards remain mostly below average for most age groups. Changes to secondary school provision continue and one more school has become an academy. Previous inspection judgements for academies have been taken into account in the assessment. Areas of strength and the areas for improvement have not changed significantly since last year.

A recent full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children found good safeguarding arrangements and good provision for looked after children. Leadership across the partnership to safeguard children and young people is good. In August 2011, an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection identified areas of strength and many areas of practice that met requirements, with five areas for development. There were no priority actions requiring urgent attention. The inspection shows recommendations from the safeguarding and services for looked after children inspection have been delivered or are on track to be completed within timescale.

Strengths

- Children's centres provide effective services for local communities. Eight have been inspected for the first time during the last year and seven are good or outstanding.
- For children under five, the very large majority of nurseries and primary schools continue to be good or outstanding and as last year, there is no inadequate provision. Achievement at the age of five shows a continuous trend of improvement and is in line with both similar areas and national figures.
- The proportion of 11-year-olds attaining the expected level in national tests for English and mathematics increased by 3% this year. This is better than the national average and although standards continue to be below national figures, the gap is closing slowly.
- Specialist provision continues to improve. Three of the five special schools are now outstanding as are both sixth forms in special schools. Provision in two of the four pupil referral units is good and another is outstanding. One, inadequate last year, is now good due in part to the positive impact of support from the local authority.

- Improvement across services for looked after children is making a significant difference to the quality of provision and outcomes for them. One of the three local authority children's homes is outstanding and another is good, as are the local authority's adoption and fostering agencies. Educational outcomes for looked after children are improving through well targeted support in schools. Their achievement is now similar to that of looked after children in similar areas.
- The gap in attainment between 16-year-olds from low-income families and other young people in Nottingham City was identified as an area for development last year. Most recent indicators show that although standards continue to be below national averages, the gap with their peers is reducing.

Areas for further improvement

- Although fewer childminders are now inadequate, the proportion of good or better provision continues to be below similar areas and national averages.
- There continue to be too few good or better secondary schools and sixth form provision. Although five of the 11 local authority secondary schools are good and two are outstanding there has been no improvement in the number of good or better secondary schools, with only one of four inspected judged to be good during the last academic year. Positively, Ofsted monitoring visits to the one inadequate secondary school show it is now satisfactory with good capacity to improve further. There are five secondary schools with academy status; two sponsored academies were formed following the amalgamations or closure of local authority secondary schools in 2009.
- Raising achievement continues to be an important area for further improvement. Although showing a four-year trend of improvement, educational standards continue to be below similar areas at the age of 11, 16 and 19. Achievement of young people from Black and minority ethnic groups is below both similar areas and national averages, although students from Asian communities continue to do better than their peers in Nottingham City. For students from mixed ethnic groups the gap in attainment remains static over time and is wider than that seen in similar areas, however the gap is reducing well for those from Black groups.
- Attainment of level 2 and level 3 qualifications at 19 years is below that found in similar areas and well below national figures.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

DPA

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment