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**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 6 December 2011  
**Subject:** 2011 Annual Assessment of Children's Services  
**Report of:** Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services  
**Summary:** The report presents the 2011 annual performance rating for Central Bedfordshire Children's Services

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**Advising Officer:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services

**Contact Officer:** Sylvia Gibson, Head of Learning

**Public/Exempt:** Public

**Wards Affected:** All

**Function of:** Executive

**Key Decision** Yes

**Reason for urgency/  
exemption from call-in  
(if appropriate)** Not applicable

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The proposal supports the delivery of the following Council Priority:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

### **Financial:**

1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The improvement strategy is funded from existing resources. Any other financial implications related to the improvement strategy will be assessed as strategies are implemented.

### **Legal:**

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

### **Risk Management:**

3. None.

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

4. Not Applicable.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. The improvement strategy described in this report takes particular account of the needs of vulnerable groups. The Council's approach to supporting these groups was judged by the inspectors to be an appropriate priority for action in the Children and Young People's Plan.

**Community Safety:**

6. Not Applicable.

**Sustainability:**

7. Not Applicable.

**Procurement:**

8. Not Applicable.

**Overview and Scrutiny:**

9. This matter has not been considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:****The Executive is asked to:**

- 1. receive the 2011 annual performance rating for Central Bedfordshire Children's Services; and**
- 2. agree the action to be taken to improve future assessment outcomes.**

*Reason for Recommendations: To meet the requirement that this performance rating is reported formally to the Council's Executive.*

*To ensure that Central Bedfordshire Council meets its statutory duty as set out in the Children Act 2004 to improve outcomes for children and young people.*

**Executive Summary**

10. The 2011 annual performance assessment for Central Bedfordshire Children's Services was published by Ofsted on 8 November 2011. The assessment for Children's Services in Central Bedfordshire Council is "performs adequately". The Executive is asked to note the 2011 assessment of Children's Services and endorse the action to improve future assessment outcomes.

**Background**

11. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Ofsted to provide an annual rating of performance for the Council's Children's Services. The Council has a lead role in providing services for children, and works with its partners, other agencies and the private and voluntary sectors to improve outcomes for children and young people.

12. To arrive at the performance rating, Ofsted draws together evidence from all inspections of regulated services for children and young people for which the Council has responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others. In addition, national data is collected and is considered alongside Ofsted's interpretation of the local context. Further Education colleges, academies and services provided to children in the geographical area of the Council by the private, voluntary and independent sector are all included in the assessment.

13. The annual rating uses the joint inspectorate four point scale:

14.

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

15. The Council's Children's Services rating was published on 8 November 2011 on the Ofsted website.

### **The 2011 Assessment**

16. The assessment for Central Bedfordshire Children's Services is "performs adequately". This is the same as the 2010 assessment. Ofsted concluded that the majority of services, settings and institutions are good or better. The report noted that the strengths identified in 2010 remain, for example, the Children and Young People's Plan and strategic partnerships.

17. In 2009, the assessment for Central Bedfordshire was "performs adequately". It should be noted that the assessment in 2009 was not as complete as 2010 and 11. This was due to the short time period after the creation of Central Bedfordshire so certain annual inspections and Performance Indicators were not available for the new area.

18. An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services carried out in March 2011 identified an area of strength, practice that met requirements and five areas for development. There were no priority actions. The report noted the significant improvements made since the previous unannounced inspection.

19. Positive judgements were made about early years and childcare settings, nursery, lower and special schools. The further improvement in the proportion of effective early years and childcare provision was noted. Specialist provision was judged to be of good quality. Improvements in educational attainment at 16 and 19 years were also identified.

20. For looked after children, private and voluntary fostering and adoption arrangements were judged to be outstanding. The local authority's adoption agency was judged to be good with some outstanding features.

### **Areas for Improvement**

21. The report makes clear that the overall judgement of "performs adequately" for Children's Services is mainly attributable to the under performance of middle schools, upper schools and school sixth forms. Inspectors judged that there is a need to increase the number of good or better middle and upper schools. However, this judgement does not include academies, which in Central Bedfordshire are either good or outstanding.
22. The report states that there has been no improvement in the standards achieved by five- and eleven-year-olds based on the 2010 results. The report also points to a further fall in Key Stage 2 standards in 2011. In this context, it should be noted that the assessment report does not reflect the improvement in results for five year olds in 2011.
23. Inspectors also noted that the gap between 19-year-olds and their peers in Central Bedfordshire is getting wider at level 2, but also noted that the gap is closing more quickly than in similar areas for the higher level 3 qualifications.

### **Improvement Strategy**

24. A key focus within the Council's improvement strategy is to improve the use of achievement data as children move from one key stage to the next or from one school to the next in order to remove barriers to progress and improvement. Work is also taking place with schools to support children who need extra help to achieve their progress targets.
25. In order to accelerate the improvement of Council maintained schools that have been judged 'satisfactory', a support programme is in place at each school focused on the key areas of leadership, teaching and learning. (Academy Ofsted judgements are not counted in this assessment. Academies are responsible for seeking such support themselves). Additional support for the above will be commissioned from outstanding schools, from the new teaching schools, and from school trusts, networks, clusters or other agencies. Those schools, groups or agencies commissioned to deliver support for improvement will operate against clear and agreed targets designed to secure the requisite improvement needed to ensure the school meets the Ofsted criteria required to be judged 'good' and, where appropriate, achieves Government floor standards.

26. The Council is promoting Academies. Academies have a duty to support improvement in other schools. More widely the Council is actively commissioning support from strong leaders and strong schools of all designations and targeting this support at underperforming schools. The Council is also facilitating the sharing and transfer of effective practice. Where schools fail to provide satisfactory educational outcomes the Council intervenes through its school intervention strategy in order to secure urgent improvements.

The Council is working closely with schools to support high quality training and development for teaching and leadership. This includes a close strategic partnership role supporting prospective 'Teaching Schools'. When established, Teaching Schools will deliver support for teaching, learning, leadership and school improvement.

27. Ofsted's rating and explanatory narrative are attached at Appendix A.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Central Bedfordshire Children's Services Assessment 2011

### **Background Papers:** (open to public inspection)

Children's services assessment for 2011: Arrangements and guidance for local authorities and their partners on Ofsted's annual assessment of children's services – Ofsted

2010 Annual Assessment of Children's Services - Ofsted