



Robert Goodwill MP
Minister of State for Children and Families

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Councillor Stephen Alambritis
Leader of the Council
London Borough of Merton
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September 2017

 Dear Stephen

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON: OFSTED SINGLE INSPECTION (25 AUGUST 2017)

I am writing following Ofsted's publication of its report on Merton's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, and the review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding board. Ofsted has judged services overall to be 'good', and the local safeguarding board (MSCB) is judged to be 'outstanding'.

Firstly, I would like to thank you and all those at Merton council who helped to facilitate my fascinating and informative visit on 3 July during Ofsted's inspection. It was particularly helpful to meet you and Yvette to discuss what an Ofsted inspection feels like for a local authority.

I recognise that local authorities face significant challenges in delivering really effective children's social care services, but the fact that they are so important to the most vulnerable children means that it is essential that they are delivered to a high standard. That Merton has achieved a 'good' rating overall and 'outstanding' for leadership and the MSCB demonstrates what can be achieved.

It is clear from Ofsted's report that the services vulnerable children in Merton receive are often impressive and in some cases outstanding. The quality of leadership has been crucial to this and has helped to create a learning environment where good social work can thrive. I was particularly impressed to read about the awareness staff have of the risks children can face today such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, gang affiliation and radicalisation. I was also pleased to hear about the outstanding adoption service, which the

report shows is successfully providing timely and stable placements for children, and the MSCB, which Ofsted praised for being highly effective with a high level of engagement across the partnership.

I would like to congratulate everyone at the council involved in achieving this very positive outcome and hope you will continue to drive improvements in what is already a very successful service.

Finally, I am keen to encourage effective local authorities to share their learning on improving and delivering good quality services with other authorities facing similar challenges. The Department for Education contracts with high-performing local authorities that have been rated good or outstanding by Ofsted to provide expert advice to councils in intervention for their children's social care services. Should you be interested in finding out more about this, please contact Angela Windle (angela.windle@education.gov.uk) – she would be delighted to hear from you.

I am copying this letter to: Katy Neep (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Ged Curran (Chief Executive), Yvette Stanley (Director of Children, Schools and Families), Siobhain McDonagh MP and Stephen Hammond MP.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R Goodwill', written over a large, faint circular watermark or stamp.

Robert Goodwill MP
Minister of State for Children and Families

Congratulations to all concerned!
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