

9 December 2009

Ms Gail Quinton
Director of Children's Services
Worcestershire County Council
County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester
Worcestershire
WR5 2YA

Dear Ms Quinton

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating 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, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Perform adequately (2)
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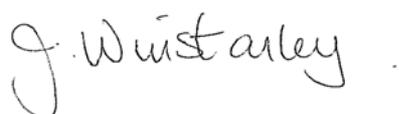
Children's services in Worcestershire County Council perform adequately.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected and regulated services and settings is adequate. Children receive a good start with the large majority of care and education settings being judged to be good or better. However, performance in schools is too variable and lower than in similar local authorities and that found nationally. Two thirds of primary schools and only just over half of secondary schools and school sixth forms are good or better. Four secondary schools are currently inadequate. The quality of provision in sixth form colleges and further education settings is better than in similar areas and that seen nationally. Judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving are at least in line with those in similar areas across almost all inspected and regulated services and settings.

The quality of care and education provision for vulnerable children and young people is variable. Two of the nine pupil referral units are outstanding, four are good and three are adequate. Half of special schools are good or better and one is inadequate. Half of the children's homes are good and none is inadequate. Both the local authority fostering and adoption services were judged to be good in their most recent inspection and the private fostering arrangements were judged to be adequate.

Performance against a large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with those in similar areas and the national figure. Performance against the national indicators for enjoying and achieving is, however, less strong, with nearly a half of indicators showing performing below similar areas. The gap in achievement between those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their peers is generally in line with similar areas.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.



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Divisional Manager, CAA