

9 December 2009

Mr Chris Kiernan
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest
2nd Floor, Uplands Business Park
Silver Birch House
Blackhorse Lane
Walthamstow
London
E17 5SD

Dear Mr Kiernan

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	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Waltham Forest performs adequately.

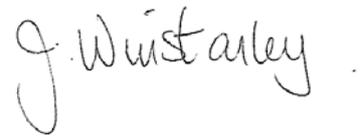
Overall effectiveness is good or better in a minority of inspected and regulated services and settings. A higher than average proportion of secondary and special schools is good or outstanding. The proportion of good nursery provision is broadly average and for primary schools it is in line with similar areas, but below the national average. A smaller proportion of childcare settings and childminders are good than found in similar areas and nationally. The proportion of good post-16 provision is lower than average in school sixth forms and is adequate in the further education college and two sixth form colleges. Childcare in Waltham Forest does not do as well as similar areas in making a good contribution to very young children being healthy or in helping young children to feel safe although performance in helping them to prepare for future life is good.

Specialist provision and services for children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are variable in quality. Four special schools in the borough are good and one is outstanding. The 2008 joint area review judged safeguarding and services for children and young people in care as good. The local authority's fostering agency is adequate and the one children's home in the borough was found to be inadequate in three out of four inspections in the last two years. However a fifth more recent inspection of this provision has judged it to be good. One serious case review has been undertaken between April 2007 and July 2009 and was conducted adequately.

Performance against most national indicators is in line with similar authorities and national averages. The local authority does well in some areas of enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. These include low levels of persistent absence in secondary schools, low rates of permanent exclusions from schools and a lower percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 who do not take part in education, employment or training. However, while there has been an improvement in performance against the trend in similar areas and nationally, obesity levels are still high for children aged 11. The percentage of initial assessments of children in need carried out within the recommended timescales has improved but remains below that in similar areas, and the timeliness of core assessments also remains below average. Pupils from lower income families achieve very well at age 11 when the difference in their performance is much smaller than found in similar areas and the national average. When they are aged 16 their achievement is in line with similar areas, but still much lower than the national average. Pupils who are identified as having special educational needs show a similar good pattern of performance.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA