

9 December 2009

Mr Andy Roberts
Strategic Director for Families
Surrey County Council
County Hall, Room 116
Penrhyn Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey
KT1 2DJ

Dear Mr Roberts

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 Surrey County Council perform adequately.

The joint area review in 2008 judged safeguarding, provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and capacity to improve as inadequate. Since then a recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment services discovered no areas for priority action in the small sample of provision seen. This shows some improvement from 2008 and children's services are now adequate overall.

The overall effectiveness of the very large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. The large majority of primary schools are good or better and only a small minority are satisfactory. Achievement is well above the national average at Key Stage 2, although in line with similar areas, and more primary schools are meeting floor targets. An average proportion of secondary schools is good or better, although one-third are only satisfactory; none now fall short of national floor targets. Achievement at Key Stage 4 has improved to well above the national average and is in line with similar areas. A large majority of school sixth forms are good or better but a quarter are only satisfactory. Two general further education and tertiary providers are good and two are satisfactory, showing performance below similar areas and that found nationally. Four sixth form colleges are at least good but two are satisfactory, also showing performance below similar areas and performance nationally. Average numbers are in education or training at age 17 when compared with similar areas and nationally. Very high achievement continues for qualifications at levels 2 and 3 by the age of 19, although in line with similar areas.

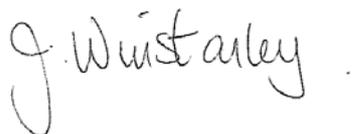
For children, young people and others whose circumstances make them vulnerable, an above average proportion of special schools are good or better, although with some satisfactory provision. The large majority of pupil referral units are good or better but a quarter are satisfactory, resulting in performance above the national average but below similar areas. One independent specialist college is good and two are inadequate, showing performance below similar areas and that found nationally. An above average proportion of residential special schools are good or better.

Young children get a good start and achievement is well above national and similar area averages in the Early Years Foundation Stage. An above average proportion of nurseries, childcare settings and childminders are good or better. Very few nurseries are only satisfactory, although a quarter of childcare settings and childminders perform at this level. For looked after children, eight children's homes are good or better but two are satisfactory, although performance is above similar areas and that found nationally. The fostering agency is good. For looked after children, achievement at Key Stage 2 is average against similar areas and achievement nationally and is improving.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is at least in line with similar authorities and broadly in line with or better than national figures. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is broadly in line with similar areas and the difference nationally. Gaps are reducing most noticeably in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA