

9 December 2009

Ms Romi Bowen
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Southwark
160 Tooley Street
PO Box 64529
London
SE1 2TZ

Dear Ms Bowen

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 well (3)
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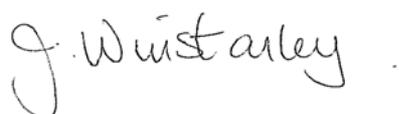
Children's services in the London Borough of Southwark perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected services and settings is good or outstanding and there is little inadequate provision. The proportion of childminding and childcare provision that is good or outstanding is higher than in similar areas. Almost all nursery school provision is good or outstanding. The proportion of good or outstanding secondary and sixth form schools is above the national average, with none being in Ofsted categories of concern. However, a lower than average proportion, only 39 of the 70, of primary schools are good or outstanding in comparison to both similar areas and the national average.

Provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is good overall. Seven of the nine special schools inspected were judged good or better for overall effectiveness and two are satisfactory. One children's home has been inspected and judged good and of the two pupil referral units, one is good and the other satisfactory. The fostering agency, private fostering arrangements and adoption agency are all good. The joint area review in 2008 judged safeguarding and services for looked after children as good. One serious case review has been conducted between 1 April 2007 and 15 July 2009 and this was evaluated as adequate. Judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving are good or better across a very large majority of inspected and regulated settings and services.

Performance against a very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with or above similar areas and the national average. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is generally smaller than the national figure. Good progress is being made in most areas, such as narrowing the gap in early years, the attainment of pupils entitled to free school meals and achievement of level 2 and 3 qualifications by the age of 19.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA