

9 December 2009

Mr Clive Webster  
Executive Director for Children's Services and Learning  
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Dear Mr Webster

## 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

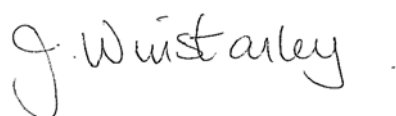
<b>Children's services rating</b>	<b>Performs adequately (2)</b>
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Children's services in Southampton City Council perform adequately.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. This overall picture masks continuing variation in the quality of provision across early years, education and social care. Very young children get off to a good start. The overall effectiveness of childcare and childminder settings is good and better than the average found in similar areas. By contrast, the performance of the local authority's schools is mixed. The proportion of primary and secondary schools that are good or better is above average for similar areas; however, four of the ten secondary schools are no better than satisfactory. Special schools are mostly good, but one of the two pupil referral units is inadequate. Post-16 provision is also variable, including two good sixth form colleges and an adequate General Further Education College. The quality of social care provision is variable; the children's home and the adoption service are good, but private fostering arrangements are inadequate. The joint area review in 2007 judged safeguarding and provision for looked after children and young people as adequate. One of the four serious case reviews completed since December 2008 was inadequate.

Performance against the large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is above or in line with similar areas and the national figures. However, the local authority does not perform well in all areas. Standards are very low in primary schools and a stubbornly high proportion of young people aged 16 to 19 is not in education, employment or training. The gap in educational outcomes between the majority and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable remains wide and is not reducing fast enough. Staying safe indicators also show areas of weak performance, such as the proportion of initial assessments for children in need that are completed on time.

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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