

9 December 2009

Mrs Lesley Heale
Corporate Director- Education and Children's Services
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
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Council House
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Dear Mrs Heale

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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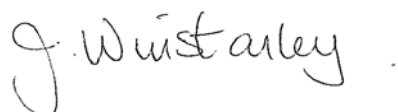
Children's services in Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected and regulated services and settings in Solihull is good. Children receive a good start in their care and education through high quality early years provision. However, the quality of education provision in primary and secondary schools is variable. While no schools are judged to be failing, the proportion of primary and secondary schools that is good or better is smaller than in similar areas and found nationally. Post-16 provision is variable in school sixth forms, ranging between outstanding in a third to adequate in the remainder; however, that in the sixth form and further education colleges is good. Judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving are good or better across most inspected and regulated services and settings.

The quality of provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable, though not inadequate, is not consistently good. Three of the five special schools and two of the three pupil referral units are good or better. The local authority fostering service is good.

Performance against the large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with or better than similar areas and the national figure. The gap in achievement between children and young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and their peers is narrowing and is in line with similar areas and that found nationally.

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 that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA