

9 December 2009

Mr Peter Morgan
Strategic Director of Children's Services
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
9th Floor
Merton House
Stanley Road
Bootle
Merseyside
L20 3JA

Dear Mr Morgan

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

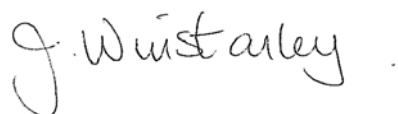
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council perform well.

A greater than average proportion of nearly all settings is good or outstanding. There is very little inadequate provision and all settings, including childcare, nursery, primary schools, secondary schools, the pupil referral units and post-16 provision, perform above that of both similar areas and the national picture. However, provision and services for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is more variable. There is outstanding provision in two thirds of the borough's special schools. Children's homes are judged to be good or better in three out of the five settings with adequate performance in the rest. Private fostering arrangements are good and above performance elsewhere but both the local authority's fostering and adoption agencies are only adequate, falling below performance of comparable services in similar areas and found nationally. Judgements for all Every Child Matters outcomes are good or better in a large majority of inspected services and settings, with the exception of the local authority's adoption and fostering services where performance is only satisfactory.

Performance against a very large majority of indicators, including those in staying safe and enjoying and achieving, are at least as good as those in similar areas and the national figure, although there is some weaker performance in staying safe and making a positive contribution. Latest data for staying safe show improvement in performance specifically regarding the stability of looked after children's placements. The gap in achievement outcomes between children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age are generally consistent with or narrower than similar areas and national averages. Performance is also strong in post-16 education and well demonstrated by the high numbers of young people who achieve level 2 and level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 years.

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.



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA