

9 December 2009

Mr Roy Lockwood
Director for Children and Young People
Wolverhampton City Council
Civic Centre
St Peter's Square
Wolverhampton
West Midlands
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Dear Mr Lockwood

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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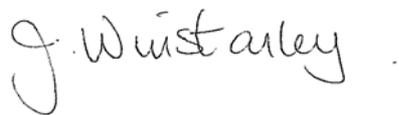
Children's services in Wolverhampton City Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of inspected services and settings is good. Children receive a good start to their care and education in the early years. The proportion of childminder and childcare settings that are good or better is greater than in similar areas and the national figure. The quality of primary schools is uneven with just half judged to be good or better, a smaller proportion than in similar local authorities and found nationally. Nearly two thirds of secondary schools are good or better which is better than in similar authorities and seen nationally. Post-16 provision in schools is adequate and the further education college was judged to be good at its most recent inspection. Inspection judgements for staying and safe and enjoying and achieving are in line with or better than similar authorities in the very large majority of settings and services.

The quality of education provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is good. At their most recent inspection six of seven special schools were judged to be good or better and two were judged to be outstanding. Three of the four pupil referral units were judged to be good. Care settings and services are more variable. At their most recent inspection one of the three children's homes was judged to be outstanding, another is good and one providing residential short breaks for young people with special needs is also good. The local authority's fostering service is good and the adoption service and private fostering arrangements are adequate. The recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in Wolverhampton identified no areas for priority action.

Performance against the large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with or above similar areas. However, nearly a third of the indicators for enjoying and achieving are below national performance, with high levels of persistent absence and standards at the age of 16 below average. The gap in achievement between children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their peers is in line with similar areas and the national picture.

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".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA