

9 December 2009

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Dear Dr Birnbaum

## 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

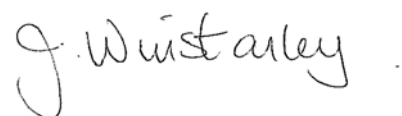
<b>Children's services rating</b>	<b>Performs well (3)</b>
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Children's services in the London Borough of Sutton perform well.

The overall effectiveness of nursery provision is strong with a higher proportion judged good or better than seen nationally or in similar areas. Whilst childcare provision is mostly good, childminder settings are satisfactory overall. Childminders are also only satisfactory in the extent to which they help children stay safe. The area has fewer than average good or better primary schools by both national and similar area standards, although none are inadequate. Contrastingly, the area has more secondary schools which are good or better relative to these comparators. This high standard is not however reflected in the overall effectiveness of school sixth forms, which are satisfactory, with a lower proportion judged good or better being lower in comparison to national and similar area averages. The joint area review of November 2008 found safeguarding arrangements and services for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be good and provision for looked after children to be satisfactory. Both the serious case reviews that have been completed were judged to be inadequate. Provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is consistently good across special schools, pupil referral units and the local authority fostering agency.

Performance against national indicators, including those for staying safe, is in line with or above national or similar area averages, although there has been some recent decline in the completion of initial and core assessments within stipulated timescales. For enjoying and achieving outcomes, however, performance is very strong and children and young people achieve very well at ages five, 11 and 16. They also do well in the extent to which they achieve level 2 or 3 qualification by age 19. Although the achievement gaps between those from low income families and their peers are wider than seen nationally or in similar areas at ages 11, 16 and 19, these children and young people do better than the same groups nationally. The inequality gap is also wider in the extent to which young people from low income families progress to higher education.

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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