

9 December 2009

Mr Peter Traves
Corporate Director of Children and Lifelong Learning
Staffordshire County Council
County Buildings
Tipping Street
Stafford
Staffordshire
ST16 2DH

Dear Mr Traves

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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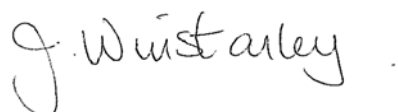
Children's services in Staffordshire County Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected and regulated services and settings is good. Early years provision provides children with a strong start through good childcare. The quality of primary and secondary schools is more variable with under two thirds being judged good or better in inspection, but very few are inadequate. The quality of educational provision after the age of 16 is inconsistent. While only one school sixth form is inadequate, less than half are good or better. One further education provider was judged to be good and the other adequate at their most recent inspections. Judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving are in line with those in similar areas and found nationally.

The quality of provision for children and young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable is good overall. The quality of provision in two thirds of the county's 23 special schools and six pupil referral units is good or better and inadequate in none. At their most recent inspection two of the seven children's homes were judged to be outstanding, three good and two adequate. The local authority fostering service was judged to be outstanding.

Performance against a large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with that in similar areas and found nationally. The gap in achievement between those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their peers is in line with similar areas and shows an improving trend.

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