

9 December 2009

Ms Helen Watson
Director of Children's Services
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall and Civic Offices
Westoe Road
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
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Dear Ms Watson

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

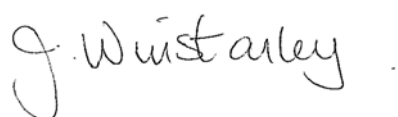
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of most inspected schools and settings is good. No school is inadequate although the proportion of primary and secondary schools judged good or outstanding is smaller than in similar areas and the national picture. Two schools' sixth forms are good and one is outstanding. Most nurseries are also good or better. Childminder and childcare settings are only satisfactory overall. They do not do as well as similar areas or as seen nationally in being healthy and staying safe. Five special schools are good and one is satisfactory. The pupil referral unit is good. Performance of the local authority's fostering agency is good and the two children's homes are also good.

Performance against a very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with similar areas and the national figures. There are still differences in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age, although these inequalities are reducing. For example, care leavers access suitable accommodation and more are engaged in education, employment or training. Achievement of a level 2 qualification by the age of 19 is in line with similar areas with good progress on reducing inequalities for young people from low income backgrounds. However, overall, a smaller proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds than found nationally are in education, employment or training, and achievement of a level 3 qualification by age 19 is below average.

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