

9 December 2009

Mr Roger Crouch
Executive Director for Children and Young People's Services
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
PO Box 41
Shaftesbury House
402 High Street
West Bromwich
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Dear Mr Crouch

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 adequately (2)
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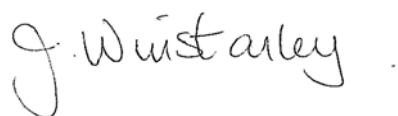
Children's services in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected and regulated services and settings in Sandwell is adequate. The quality of early years provision is variable, with good provision by childminders and in nurseries but only adequate provision in non-domestic childcare settings. Although very few primary and secondary schools are inadequate, the proportion judged as good or better is smaller than found in similar authorities and nationally. Judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving are in line or better compared to similar authorities in just under two thirds of inspected or regulated services.

The quality of provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is mixed. Performance in special schools is good, with three of the four special schools judged to be good or outstanding. Four of the seven pupil referral units are good or outstanding and one inadequate. One of the two children's homes in Sandwell was judged to be inadequate at its most recent inspection and has subsequently closed. The local authority's fostering and adoption services are adequate and the private fostering service is inadequate. The recent unannounced inspection of contact, assessment and referral arrangements in Sandwell identified no priority actions.

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

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