

9 December 2009

Ms Pauline Pilkington  
Executive Director for Children's Services  
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council  
Room 39, The Council House  
Lichfield Street  
Walsall  
WS1 1TW

Dear Ms Pilkington

## 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 adequately (2)</b>
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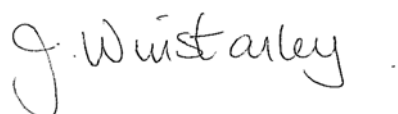
Children's services in Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected and regulated services and settings in Walsall is adequate. Inspection outcomes are good or better in too few services. Children receive a good start to their care and education in childminder and nursery settings but that trend does not continue as they enter school. Provision in primary and secondary schools is variable with a smaller proportion being judged good or outstanding than in similar areas and found nationally. One of the two secondary schools judged to be inadequate by Ofsted has recently re-opened as an academy. Judgements for staying safe and enjoy and achieve are in line with or above those in similar areas across the majority of inspected and regulated services or settings.

The quality of provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is mixed and adequate overall. Provision in the local authority's seven special schools is good, all having been judged to be at least good in their most recent inspection. While one of the three pupil referral units is outstanding, another is inadequate, as are the private fostering arrangements. The local authority fostering and adoption services are adequate. All five children's homes have improved in the last two years, with three homes now judged to be good and none inadequate.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving is in line with similar areas and performance 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. Children and young people responding report higher levels of good emotional health than in similar areas or 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