

9 December 2009

Ms Jo Olsson  
Director of Children, Education and Families  
Thurrock Council  
Civic Offices  
New Road  
Grays  
Essex  
RM17 6SL

Dear Ms Olsson

## 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 Thurrock Council perform adequately.

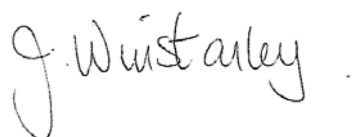
Overall effectiveness is good or better in a minority of inspected and regulated services and settings. Whilst more childcare settings are good or better than are found nationally, the proportion of good childminders and nursery provision is below the national figure. A very low proportion of primary schools are good and only one primary school in the borough is outstanding. The quality of provision in secondary schools overall is better than in primary schools, although the proportion of good or better schools is still below that found in similar areas and nationally. Post-16 provision in the borough is outstanding when provided by the sixth form college, but adequate in the further education college.

Specialist provision and services for children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are mostly adequate. Local authority fostering and adoption agencies and private fostering arrangements are adequate. Two serious case reviews have been undertaken in the period April 2007 to July 2009, the first was conducted inadequately and the second was adequate. Provision for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding in the borough's two special schools, but adequate in the pupil referral unit.

Performance in relation to national indicators is mixed. The local authority does well in some aspects of making a positive contribution, including the rate of reduction of teenage pregnancies so that the most recently recorded level equals the national average for the first time. However, it performs less well in other areas. For example: the high levels of obesity among children aged 5 and 11; the high proportion of children being made the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time; and the very low educational standards when children are aged 11 through to when they are aged 19, particularly for pupils of White heritage. An average proportion of young people continue in their learning when they are 16 but too many have discontinued by the time they are 17, where the percentage is consistently well below average. The difference in performance of children and young people whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is very variable. Pupils from lower income families do not achieve well when they are aged 11, so the difference in their achievement with their peers is much larger than found in similar areas and the national average. The gap when they are aged 16 is similar to that found nationally and smaller than in similar areas. Their achievement of level 2 qualifications is much lower than average, while for level 3 qualifications it is broadly average and more than average 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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, CAA