

9 December 2009

Mr John Gilbert
Group Director of Children's Services
Swindon Borough Council
Sanford House
Sanford Street
Swindon
Wiltshire
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Dear Mr Gilbert

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

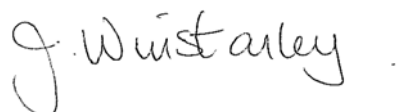
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Swindon Borough Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. With the notable exception of primary schools, the proportion of good or better provision is above average for similar areas in all settings and services and above the national average in the vast majority. All nursery provision, the pupil referral unit, school sixth forms and the fostering agency are good or better. Secondary schools and special schools are good overall, however one of the 10 secondary schools is inadequate. In childminder settings and primary schools, over one third of provision is no better than satisfactory. The quality of post-16 provision is mixed, with one good and one adequate college. The recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements identified excellent partnership work and good support for children and families, among the key strengths contributing to safeguarding. The inspection identified four areas for development, including the time taken to write up initial assessments and gain formal management approval.

Performance against the large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with or above similar areas and the national figures. However, there is marked variation in outcomes as children and young people progress through their education. By the ages of 16 and 19, achievement falls below the average of similar areas and too many of young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable do not do as well as they should.

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". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA