

9 December 2009

Mr Julian Wooster
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Dear Mr Wooster

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

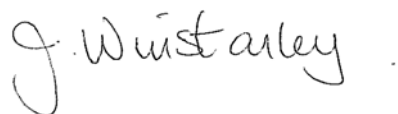
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Portsmouth City Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. Despite this, performance across education and social care is very mixed. For children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable, the local authority's fostering and adoption services and private fostering arrangements are all good. Four of the five special schools are good, as are five of the six children's homes. The joint area review in 2008 judged services for looked after children as good and safeguarding as adequate. All nursery provision and a large proportion of childcare are good. Childminder settings are satisfactory and below the average elsewhere. The weakest performance however is in the local authority's schools. The proportion of primary and secondary schools that are good or better is small when compared with the average in similar areas and the country as a whole. While none is inadequate, too many secondary schools are no better than satisfactory. In sharp contrast, all post-16 provision is good or better, with an outstanding school sixth form, a good sixth form college and a good general further education college.

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. However, the council does not perform well in all areas. Educational outcomes are still not good enough despite recent improvement. While most children make a good start in early years education, standards in primary and secondary school remain low and poorer still for some groups of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

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
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