

9 December 2009

Ms Bronwen Lacey  
Director of Children's Services  
Plymouth City Council  
Civic Centre  
Plymouth  
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Dear Ms Lacey

## 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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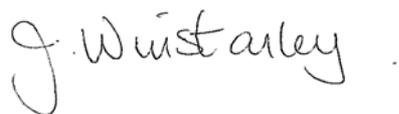
Children's services in Plymouth City Council perform adequately.

The recent unannounced inspection of its contact, referral and assessment arrangements noted three areas for priority action which were of sufficient concern that the safety of children could not be assured. Whilst one of these weaknesses has since been satisfactorily addressed, the remaining two have played a pivotal role in determining the children's service rating.

The overall effectiveness of a large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. Within this, provision in early years education and day care settings and in secondary schools is a comparative strength. The quality of provision in nursery and primary schools is similar to the national average but that in special schools and pupil referral units is significantly below. However, the local authority's fostering and adoption agencies are good and measures to identify and monitor private fostering arrangements are outstanding. Also, the very large majority of inspected services and settings has been judged to make a good or better contribution to keeping children and young people safe and helping them to achieve educationally.

In terms of performance indicators, the very large majority of the local authority's figures is at least in line with both the statistical neighbour and national averages. The same applies to those indicators in the staying safe and enjoying and achieving groupings. For five of the six indicators which measure the gap in outcomes for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable the gap narrowed between the current year and the last.

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