

9 December 2009

Mr Jim Crook
Interim Director of Children, Young People and Families
Oxfordshire County Council
Macclesfield House
New Road
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Dear Mr Crook

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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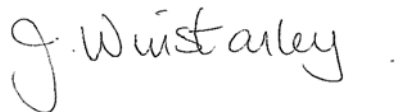
Children's services in Oxfordshire County Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. This shows improvement from 2008, when performance was adequate. Although improving, raising achievement remains a key challenge. A higher than average proportion of both secondary and sixth form schools is good or outstanding, although a quarter of school sixth forms and almost one third of secondary schools are only satisfactory. The number of secondary schools falling below national targets has reduced from four to two. The majority of primary schools are good or better. This shows performance below similar areas and nationally because one third is only satisfactory and two require special measures. Two general further education and tertiary providers are good and one is satisfactory. For children, young people and others whose circumstances make them vulnerable, a high proportion of special schools are good or better and the pupil referral unit is good. Both residential special schools are good or better and the boarding school is satisfactory.

The quality of provision for young children is below national and similar area averages. A very large proportion of nurseries are good or better but a few are only satisfactory and one is inadequate. The large majority of childcare settings and the majority of childminders are good or better; one third of the provision in each is satisfactory although, given very large numbers, very little is inadequate. The joint area review in 2008 judged safeguarding to be adequate and found good services for looked after children. For the latter, provision is mostly above average against similar areas and the national picture. All three children's homes are good, as are fostering and adoption agencies. Private fostering arrangements are only satisfactory, partly through a weakness in staying safe. Looked after children achieve in line with their peers in similar areas and nationally at Key Stage 2 and increasing numbers of care leavers are in education, employment or training.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is at least in line with similar areas and broadly in line with or better than the national figure, although there are weaknesses in each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is mostly in line with similar authorities and that found nationally. Some gaps are closing but not yet fast enough.

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