

9 December 2009

Ms Yvette Stanley
Director of Children, Schools and Families
London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
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SM4 5DX

Dear Ms Stanley

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

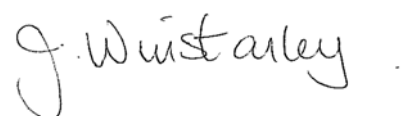
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Merton perform well.

Significantly more nurseries are good or better in comparison to the position in similar areas or nationally. Day-care provision for young children, however, is only satisfactory, with fewer good or better childminder settings by national or similar area comparisons. Most primary schools are good or better as is the case with secondary schools. However, the overall proportion of good or better secondary schools is lower than seen nationally or in similar areas, but none are inadequate. School sixth forms are strong and all were judged outstanding in recent inspections. Provision for children and young people whose circumstances makes them vulnerable is mostly good. The children's home is outstanding and the local authority fostering agency and private fostering arrangements are good. Both the pupil referral unit and the local authority adoption agency are satisfactory. Special schools are mostly good or better.

Overall performance against national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is above or in line with similar areas and the position nationally. Performance against staying safe indicators is mostly good and almost all initial assessment of needs is completed promptly. However, the proportion of referrals of children in need that underwent an initial assessment by children's social care is lower than comparators. The stability of foster care placements is lower than average relative to similar area and national comparators. Achievement at age five is above similar area averages and at age 11 it is in line and improving. At age 16, whilst achievement is improving, it remains below that of similar areas. Achievement gaps between children and young people from low income families and their peers, or between those with special educational needs and others, are mostly the same as or narrower than seen in similar areas or nationally. The inequality gap with regards to young people from low income families who progress to higher education is significantly narrower than seen in similar areas or nationally.

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