

9 December 2009

Ms Rose Collinson
Director of Children's Services
Medway Council
Gun Wharf
Dock Road
Chatham
Kent
ME4 4TR

Dear Ms Collinson

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

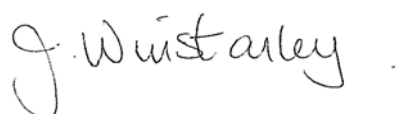
Children's services rating	Performs Adequately (2)
-----------------------------------	--------------------------------

Children's services in Medway Council perform adequately.

Performance across schools and day-care settings is mixed. Nurseries mostly perform well although fewer are good or better than seen nationally or in similar areas. The quality of childcare is below similar and national averages and particularly poor for childminder settings, where less than half are good or better. Performance is also below national and similar area averages across primary schools, where only half are good or better. The proportion of good or better schools is satisfactory overall, relative to the position nationally and in similar areas, with three judged outstanding and three inadequate. The overall effectiveness of school sixth forms is better than seen nationally or in similar areas. Provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is successful. All special schools and the pupil referral units are good. One children's home is satisfactory, and one is good with outstanding features. The local authority fostering and adoption agencies are good as are private fostering arrangements.

Performance against national indicators for children's services, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with similar areas and national values. Children's achievement at the end of the foundation stage has improved and was in line with the position nationally and in similar areas in 2007/08. Achievement at age 11 however, is significantly lower than average by similar area and national standards, and significantly fewer young people gain two or more good GCSEs in science subjects at age 16. The proportion of young people who are not in education training or employment is high. Fewer young people from low income families than seen nationally achieve a level 2 qualification by age 19. For level 3 qualifications however, the inequality gap is the same as for comparators.

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