

9 December 2009

Ms Debbie Jones  
Corporate Director Children and Learning  
Luton Borough Council  
3rd Floor, Unity House  
111 Stuart Street  
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Dear Ms Jones

## 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 Well (3)</b>
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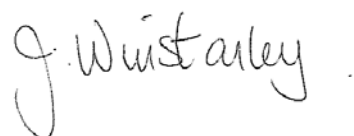
Children's services in Luton Borough Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of almost all inspected services, settings and agencies is good or better, showing performance above that of similar areas and that seen nationally. Most secondary schools and a large majority of primary schools are good or outstanding. This is also the case for local General Further Education and school sixth forms. Provision in special schools and pupil referral units is good or better in all cases. Almost all nursery schools are good as are a high proportion of childcare settings. However, only a half of childminders are good. Proportionally, this is below the national picture, and the quality of children's homes is only satisfactory. The local authority adoption agency and private fostering arrangements are good, although the fostering agency is only satisfactory. A recent joint area review identified good arrangements for safeguarding and effective provision for looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Performance against the large majority of indicators in the National Indicator Set, including against those for staying safe and enjoy and achieving, is in line with or above similar areas and above national figures. There has been recent good improvement in the time children's social care services take to complete initial and core assessments, although there are some continuing weaknesses in educational achievement at the age of 11, which is below average. The performance of most groups of children and young people who are in circumstances that make them vulnerable is improving. In most aspects, the gap between their performance and that of their peers is narrower than in similar areas and across the country at the ages of 11, 16 and 19. However, the proportion of looked after children at the age of 11 achieving the expected level in national tests is below similar authorities and the national picture.

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 authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, CAA