

9 December 2009

Ms Rachel Dickinson
Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services
Leicester City Council
2 Floor, B Block
New Walk Centre
Leicester
Leicestershire
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Dear Ms Dickinson

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)
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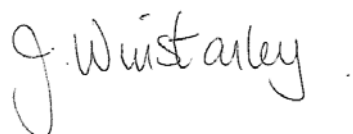
Children's services in Leicester City Council perform adequately.

The performance of the local authority's schools and settings is mixed. Most children get off to a good start with a large majority of nursery schools and a higher than average proportion of childcare settings being good. However, less than a half of childminders are good and this is below similar areas and the national picture. School provision is variable with too much provision in primary and secondary schools and school sixth forms only adequate. The number of inadequate schools is reducing rapidly, but a small number of primary schools and one secondary school remain in this category. Provision for young people attending the local General Further Education and Tertiary College and almost all sixth form colleges, is good. One sixth form college is outstanding. Provision for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is usually good; inspection judgements show no inadequate special school provision with six of the eight special schools and one of two pupil referral units judged to be good. All of the local authority's five children's homes are good and the local authority's fostering agency is outstanding. This is better performance than similar authorities and that seen nationally. A recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need, identified some areas for development including a lack of consistency in practice, but highlighted a number of strengths such as the direct work with children and the consideration given to the diverse and individual needs of families.

Performance in national indicators is mixed, with a large majority being in line with similar areas and national averages. The local authority does well in most areas of staying safe, with good performance in the number of core assessment completed within the expected timescales and fewer children with child protection plans lasting two or more years. There is a trend of improvement against almost all indicators for enjoying and achieving. However, attainment continues to be low at the ages of 11 and 16. The proportion of young people who achieve five or more higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics, is below both similar areas and national averages. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others, is closing and not as wide as in similar areas and the national picture. Achievement of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications at the age of 19 is in line with 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 local 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