

9 December 2009

Mr Chris Spencer
Corporate Director of Education and Children's Services
London Borough of Hillingdon
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Dear Mr Spencer

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 Hillingdon perform well.

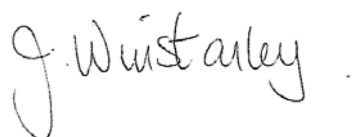
The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. The proportion of primary schools that is good or better is greater than in similar areas and found nationally. For secondary schools, half of those inspected are good or outstanding and half are satisfactory so performance overall is below similar areas and the national picture. A higher than average proportion of school sixth forms is at least good, and the general further education and tertiary provider is outstanding. Educational outcomes continue to improve. Achievement is in line with similar areas and that found nationally at Key Stage 2, and in line with the national average but below similar areas at Key stage 4. The achievement of Black groups has shown significant improvement. A far greater proportion of young people than in similar authorities and nationally continue in education or training at age 17. Achievement of level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 is in line with similar areas and the national picture and steadily increasing. Level 3 qualifications are in line with the national average but below similar areas. Provision for children and others whose circumstances make them vulnerable is mixed. Two special schools are outstanding and four are good, but the pupil referral unit is only satisfactory and the independent specialist college is inadequate. A very high proportion of young offenders are in employment, education or training.

Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with the national average, improving and above similar areas. The large majority of childcare settings are good or better, showing performance above similar areas and that found nationally. Overall, two thirds of nurseries inspected are good or better; however, with one third of nurseries and about half of all childminders judged no better than satisfactory, performance is below similar areas and the national picture. In all, childminders make only adequate provision for being healthy, staying safe and making a positive contribution. For looked after children, performance of the local authority's fostering and adoption agencies is good, as are private fostering arrangements. Three out of four children's homes are good or better but one is satisfactory. The recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need identified no areas for priority action.

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. A minority of performance indicators are below comparators in four 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 areas and the difference nationally. The gap is closing most noticeably for pupils eligible for free school meals at Key Stage 4 and for those with special educational needs at Key Stage 2.

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 "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA