

9 December 2009

Ms Sharon Menghini
Director of Children's Services
Herefordshire Council
Brockington
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Dear Ms Menghini

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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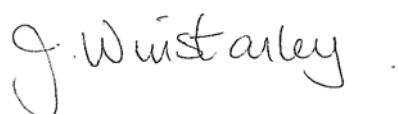
Children's services in Herefordshire Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better; performance in this area is better than in similar local authorities and the national picture. Children receive a good start to their care and education in early years childcare and nursery settings, although the quality of childminder settings is more variable. Two thirds of primary schools and secondary schools are good or better. Post-16 provision in schools and colleges is almost always good or outstanding. Compared with similar areas and the national picture, inspection judgements for enjoying and achieving are in line or better in the very large majority of settings and services; for staying safe this is the case in the majority of settings and services.

The quality of education provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is good. Three of four special schools are good or better and all three pupil referral units are outstanding. The quality of care services is, however, mixed; in their most recent inspections the fostering service was judged to be good, the adoption service adequate and private fostering arrangements inadequate.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line or better than in similar areas and the national figure. The gap in achievement between children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their peers is in line with similar areas and that found 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