

9 December 2009

Ms Nicola Bailey
Director of Children's Services
Hartlepool Borough Council
Civic Centre
Hartlepool
Durham
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Dear Ms Bailey

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

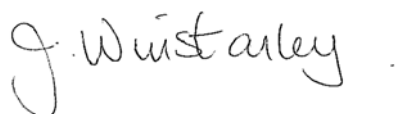
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Hartlepool Borough Council perform well.

A higher than average proportion of childcare, nurseries and primary schools is good or outstanding and none have been judged to be inadequate. The two special schools are good, but the pupil referral unit is only adequate. The children's home in Hartlepool is good. The proportion of good or better secondary schools, including the sixth forms, is higher than in similar areas. Schools are particularly strong in ensuring that pupils are safe and are well prepared for learning post-16. Performance of the council's fostering agency is good and private fostering arrangements are adequate. The adoption agency is also adequate.

Performance against a large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with similar areas and broadly in line with the national figure. School achievements at age 11 are above those of similar areas and above the national average. At age 16, results match those in similar areas but they remain below the national average. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is reducing and children and young people with special educational needs do well at school. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds also do well but results at five or more GCSEs at A* to C grades including English and maths for Asian students were low in 2008. Outcomes in levels 2 and 3 qualifications by age 19 match those of similar areas and nationally. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training is lower than in similar areas.

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.



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA