

9 December 2009

Mr Paul Clark
Corporate Director Children's Services
London Borough of Harrow
Civic Centre
Station Road
Harrow
London
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Dear Mr Clark

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 Harrow perform well.

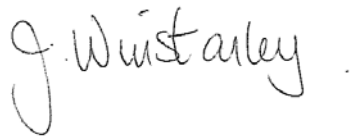
The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. The proportion of schools that are good or better is higher than in similar areas and national averages. Five secondary schools are good and five are outstanding. All have good or outstanding standards of behaviour. All four school sixth forms are good. The large majority of primary schools are good or better, although almost one quarter is only satisfactory. The sixth form college is outstanding. Both general further education and tertiary providers are only satisfactory, showing performance below similar areas and that found nationally. All provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is above similar area and national averages. Of four special schools, two are outstanding and two are good. The pupil referral unit is also good. This overall strong provision contributes to achievement at Key Stage 4 that is in line with similar areas, well above the national average and improving. Very high numbers continue in learning after the age of 16, and qualifications at levels 2 and 3 by the age of 19 are well above similar area and national averages and also improving.

Young children get a secure start and show achievement in line with similar areas and that found nationally in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A much higher proportion of nurseries is good or better than in similar areas and the proportion nationally. The proportion of childcare settings that is good or better is greater than in similar areas but below the national average. For childminders, the proportion that is good or better is greater than in similar areas and the proportion nationally. However, one third of provision is only satisfactory in both. Provision for looked after children is mostly satisfactory. Although private fostering arrangements are good, fostering and adoption agencies are only satisfactory, showing performance below similar area and national averages; this is due in part to weaknesses in staying safe. However, the rate of adoptions shows excellent improvement. One children's home is good and the other satisfactory, again showing performance below similar areas and that seen nationally. Nevertheless, placement stability for looked after children has improved.

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. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age varies. Gaps are closing most noticeably for pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 2 and there is reduced inequality in the achievement of a level 2 qualification by the age of 19.

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' and a trailing dot at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA