

9 December 2009

Mr John Coughlan
Director of Children's Services
Hampshire County Council
2nd Floor, Ashburton Court
The Castle
Winchester
Hampshire
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Dear Mr Coughlan

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

2009 Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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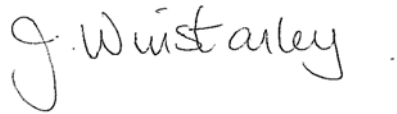
Children's services in Hampshire County Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. Performance in social care settings and services is consistently above the national average and above, or in line, with similar areas, while the picture in early years and education is more mixed. Fostering and adoption services and private fostering arrangements are good. Eight of the council's 10 children's homes are good. The recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements highlighted a number of strengths and confirmed child protection thresholds are well understood and appropriately applied. However, the inspection also identified unacceptably high caseloads in one area of the county as a priority action, together with a number of areas for development. While three of the four serious case reviews completed since December 2008 were adequate or better, one was judged inadequate.

The proportion of good or better childminder and childcare settings is below the average of similar areas, but above national levels. The large majority of the county's schools are good or better. The proportion of good primary schools is higher than the national average, but below the average for similar areas. Five of the seven pupil referral units are good or better, higher than in similar areas and the national average, but one is inadequate. Post-16 provision is good in almost all sixth form colleges and approximately two thirds of school sixth forms and further education colleges are also good or better.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, are above or in line with similar areas and the national figures. Most children have a good start in life and achieve well at school. The gap in attainment between the majority and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is closing in some areas. However, the picture is inconsistent for different groups of children and young people, for example the attainment of children in care is low at the end of primary school and a high proportion of care leavers are not in education, employment or training.

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