

9 December 2009

Ms Gillian Palmer
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Greenwich
8th Floor, Riverside House West
Woolwich
London
SE18 6DF

Dear Ms Palmer

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 adequately (2)
-----------------------------------	--------------------------------

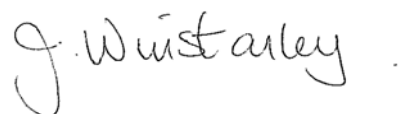
Children's services in the London Borough of Greenwich perform adequately.

The overall effectiveness of inspected services and settings shows mixed performance. Most, around 60%, of childminding and childcare provision is good or outstanding, which is a greater proportion than in similar areas, but smaller than the national average. Three quarters of nursery school provision is good or outstanding but this is below averages. Too much primary school provision, 28 of the 65 schools, is only satisfactory, and five primary schools are in Ofsted categories of concern. However, the proportion of good and outstanding secondary and sixth form schools is greater than the average found in similar areas and nationally.

The overall effectiveness of provision and services for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is variable. The one pupil referral unit is outstanding and the fostering agency and the adoption agency are both good. However, private fostering is only satisfactory and, of the two children's homes inspected, one is satisfactory and the other inadequate overall. Two of the four special schools are good, but two are only satisfactory. The unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in 2009 found no areas for priority action, but some areas for development alongside many positive areas.

Performance against a very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with or above similar areas and national averages. The local authority does well in some areas of staying safe, including the proportion of referrals that are leading to initial assessments and the timeliness of these assessments. Some significant improvements have been made in the enjoying and achieving outcome area such as achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2. However, achievement at Key Stage 4, although improving well, remains low and the attainment of White pupils is a concern for the local authority. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is still too wide, but the attainment of the large proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is improving and the achievement gap between the lowest achieving and their peers in the Early Years Foundation Stage is narrowing.

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 "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA