

9 December 2009

Ms Jo Davidson
Group Director - Children and Young People
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
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Dear Ms Davidson

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

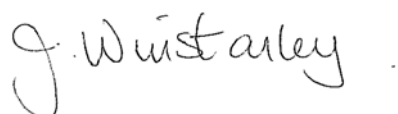
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Gloucestershire County Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. The proportion of good or better provision is above similar area and national averages in all areas of education and is particularly high in nursery settings, General Further Education Colleges and independent specialist colleges. Although nine of the 12 special schools are also good, one was judged inadequate at its last inspection. Childminder and childcare settings are only satisfactory overall. Their contribution to being healthy and staying safe is not as good as that found in similar areas or that seen nationally. The local authority's three children's home are good, but the fostering service is only satisfactory. The joint area review in 2008 judged safeguarding arrangements and provision for looked after children and young people as adequate.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with, or above similar areas and the national figures. Educational outcomes for most children and young people are good and improving. The difference between the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and the majority is wide, but the gap is closing. The local authority has been particularly successful in reducing the rate of persistent school absence and is working effectively with partners to ensure a consistently high proportion of young people are in education, employment or training, despite the challenging economic circumstances.

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