

9 December 2009

Dr Maggie Atkinson  
Group Director Learning and Children and Director for Children's Services  
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Regent Street  
Gateshead  
NE8 1HH

Dear Dr Atkinson

## 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

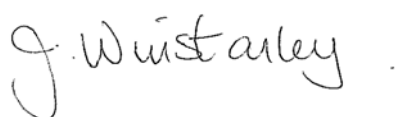
<b>Children's services rating</b>	<b>Performs well (3)</b>
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Children's services in Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council perform well.

A higher than average proportion of primary and secondary schools is good or outstanding and none have been judged to be inadequate. A high proportion of nurseries are also good or better. Childminder and childcare settings are satisfactory overall. They do not do as well as similar areas or as seen nationally in being healthy and staying safe. There are no inadequate school sixth forms, although fewer are good or outstanding compared with similar areas and nationally. The pupil referral unit is good. Performance of the local authority's fostering agency is good and private fostering arrangements are adequate. The adoption agency is also adequate. The proportion of children's homes that are good is smaller than in similar areas.

Performance against a 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 the national figure. Achievement at age 16 matches the national figure and minority ethnic groups do better than in similar areas. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is narrowing and the gap is closing more rapidly than in similar areas and the national picture. This is particularly noticeable in the higher numbers of young people who achieve level 2 qualifications by the age of 19. Despite these improvements, the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training remains above the national average.

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