

9 December 2009

Mr Bruce Buckley
Strategic Director - Children and Younger Adults
Derbyshire County Council
County Hall
Matlock
Derbyshire
DE4 3AG

Dear Mr Buckley

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 Derbyshire County Council perform well.

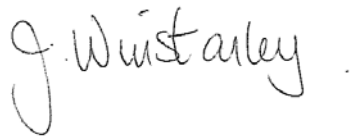
Children get off to a good start, with a very large proportion of childminders and childcare settings that are good or better. The quality of nursery provision is particularly good and approximately one third is outstanding. However, the performance of the local authority's schools is varied with too much provision in both primary and secondary schools judged no better than adequate. More than half the secondary schools are good or better which is above average for similar areas, but not as good as the national picture. The proportion of good or better school sixth forms is above the average for similar areas, however the quality of post-16 provision overall, including General Further Education Colleges, is not as good as the national average. Provision in education and social care for those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable is variable. There is good provision in all 10 of the local authority's special schools and six of the eight pupil referral units. The local authority's fostering service is good, but the adoption agency and private fostering arrangements are adequate and not as good as that found in similar areas. The overall effectiveness of children's homes is mixed. While most are good or better, four are adequate.

A recent joint area review identified good provision for safeguarding and for looked after children. A serious case review completed in January 2009 was judged inadequate with weaknesses in the rigour of decision-making and the quality of assessments during the period under consideration.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators is in line with similar areas and national averages. There is almost no performance below average for staying safe and enjoying and achieving. Equally, there is only one indicator where the local authority performs better than the national average in these areas. Recent performance data illustrates a slight decline in the number of social care assessments that are completed within the required timescales. However, there is continuing good performance in the low number of child protection plans lasting two years or more. The proportion of young people who achieve five or more higher grade GCSEs is in line with similar areas and just above national averages. The difference in educational attainment of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is not as wide as in similar areas. The gap in achievement is closing at both the ages of 11 and 16 for young people with special educational needs. However, it is getting wider for young people from low income families at both the ages of 16 and 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 period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA