

9 December 2009

Mr John Stephens
Director of Children and Young People's Services
Cheshire West and Chester Council
County Hall
Chester
CH1 1SQ

Dear Mr Stephens

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

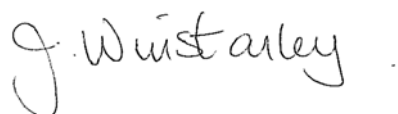
Children's services rating	Performs Well (3)
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Children's services in Cheshire West and Chester Council perform well.

Children's services in Cheshire West and Chester unitary authority perform well. The overall effectiveness of a majority of regulated and inspected services and settings is good or better. There is a very small minority of inadequate provision in childcare settings and one secondary school was judged to be inadequate at its last inspection. Fewer nursery schools and secondary schools are as good as in similar areas and found nationally, although sixth form schools perform well overall. Provision for those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is good. The pupil referral unit is outstanding and special schools, both day and residential, perform better than in similar areas and found nationally. Children's homes are less effective, however, with only two out of four homes judged to be good or better. Judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving are good in a large majority of inspected and regulated services and settings, and all settings perform very well in the areas of making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being.

Chester and Cheshire West is a new unitary local authority and no inspection outcomes are available for fostering and adoption arrangements. It is too early to judge performance against national indicators

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