

9 December 2009

Ms Eleni Ioannides
Executive Director of Children's Services
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Athenaeum House
Market Street
Bury
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Dear Ms Ioannides

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 Bury Metropolitan Borough Council perform well.

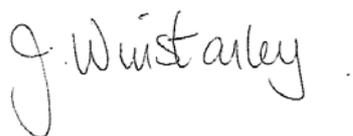
A higher than average proportion of both primary and nursery provision is good or outstanding. Despite this good overall performance there are relative weaknesses in the provision for very young children, as a fewer proportion of childminders and childcare is good or better than is found in similar areas or nationally. Too many of the secondary schools are only satisfactory and the proportion of good or outstanding provision is fewer than the national average. Local authority fostering and adoption services are satisfactory but the private fostering service is inadequate.

Judgements for enjoying and achieving are good or better across the large majority of inspected and regulated services and settings. However, there are some weaknesses under the staying safe outcomes in the pupil referral unit and in the fostering service. Provision for looked after children and safeguarding was judged as adequate in the 2008 joint area review. There have been no serious case reviews since December 2008.

Performance against a large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with similar areas and broadly in line with the national figure. Inspection evidence shows that a very large majority of secondary schools have good or outstanding behaviour, but the proportion of children and young people who are excluded from school is greater than that found in similar areas and nationally. Young people from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as the national average and sometimes their performance is better.

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



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA