

9 December 2009

Mr John Christie
Director of Children and Families
London Borough of Brent
Chesterfield House
9 Park Lane
Wembley
Middlesex
HA9 7RW

Dear Mr Christie

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	Perform well (3)
-----------------------------------	-------------------------

Children's services in the London Borough of Brent perform well.

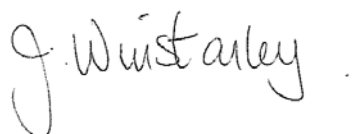
The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. The proportion of secondary and school sixth forms that is good or outstanding is greater than in similar areas and the national picture. This contributes to achievement at Key Stage 4 that is consistently well above similar areas and the national picture. Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 are well above the national average and in line with similar areas. Very high and increasing numbers of young people are in education or training after the age of 16. The number of secondary schools with good or outstanding standards of behaviour is very high and levels of persistent absence are very low. There has been good progress in reducing the rate of permanent exclusions from school. The general and further education and tertiary provider is good. An average proportion of primary schools are good or outstanding but one third is only satisfactory and two are subject to special measures; this shows performance below similar areas and that seen nationally. Nevertheless, achievement is in line with similar areas and national picture at Key Stage 2. The quality of provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is mostly good or better. Of the three pupil referral units inspected, one is outstanding and two are good. Four special schools are good or better but one is satisfactory. The number of young offenders in education, employment or training is very high and rising.

Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is average compared to similar areas and that found nationally and is improving. However, not all young children get a good enough start. Although the large majority of nurseries is good or better, almost one third are only satisfactory. The proportion of childcare settings and childminders that are good or better is below similar areas and national figure, as about half are only satisfactory. Both show weaknesses in each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. Provision for looked after children is mixed. The adoption agency and private fostering arrangements are good but the fostering agency is satisfactory. One children's home is good but the other is inadequate. Nevertheless, placement stability for looked after children has improved and the number of care leavers in employment, education or training has improved significantly.

Performance against the 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 or better than the national figure, although there are weaknesses in each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is mixed. Some gaps are closing, most noticeably for pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 2 and those eligible for free school meals at Key Stage 4. There has also been some success in reducing inequalities in achievement by the age of 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".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA