

9 December 2009

Mr David Lund
Executive Director of Children's Services
Blackpool Borough Council
Progress House
Clifton Road
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Dear Mr Lund

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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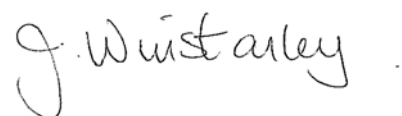
Children's services in Blackpool Borough Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services, settings and institutions is good or better. In nearly all settings performance is above that found in similar areas and nationally. These include childcare provision, nursery and primary education where children get off to a good start. However, too much secondary school provision is only satisfactory, as is the pupil referral unit. In both settings performance is below similar areas and that found nationally. Both under perform substantially in aspects of enjoying and achieving.

Provision for those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable, specifically the Children's Homes and the local authority adoption and fostering agencies, is good or better than in similar areas and found nationally. In contrast however the arrangements for private fostering are only satisfactory. There is no provision judged to be inadequate. However, the recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Education and Children's Services identified two strengths and a number of areas for development, including poor performance regarding the timeliness of initial and core assessments.

Performance against the large majority of national indicators including staying safe and enjoying and achieving is in line with similar areas and national figures, although there are comparative weaknesses in most aspects. The differences in performance for those children whose circumstances make them vulnerable are improving and the gap in outcomes is closing, with most performance inline with similar areas and the national figure. For example, the rate of young people not in education, employment or training has reduced at a slow but steady rate year on year and is now just above the national average and below similar authorities. However, the numbers of pupils achieving five at GCSEs A* to C including English and mathematics remain well below similar areas and those from minority ethnic groups do not do as well as their peers.

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