

9 December 2009

Ms Helen Jenner
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Town Hall
1 Town Square
Barking
Essex
IG11 7LU

Dear Ms Jenner

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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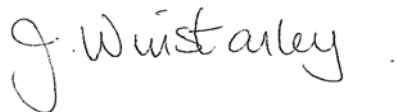
Children's Services in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is that it performs well.

The proportion of secondary schools that are good or better in the borough is higher than in similar areas, but below the national average. Four out of nine secondary schools in the borough are outstanding. An average proportion of childcare settings are good, but the proportion of good nurseries, primary schools, and school sixth forms is lower than in similar areas and found nationally. Post-16 education in the further education college is good. Childminders do not do as well as similar areas in helping young children to be safe and make a positive contribution.

Specialist provision and services for children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are mostly good, and the one special school in the borough and the local authority's fostering agency are outstanding. However, its private fostering arrangements are adequate. One serious case review has been conducted in the period April 2007 to July 2009 and was judged to have been conducted well.

Performance against a very large majority of national indicators is at least in line with similar areas and national figures. The local authority does well in some areas of being healthy, staying safe and enjoying and achieving, including the high take-up of school meals by primary and secondary pupils, improvements in the timeliness of initial assessments of children in need and in test results for pupils aged 11, which are all above similar areas. However, it performs less well in other areas. For example: the very high proportion of primary aged pupils who are obese at ages 5 and 11; very high levels of teenage pregnancy; the exceptionally low percentage of referrals of children in need to social care that go on to initial assessment; the very low examination results achieved by pupils of white heritage aged 16; and the low percentage of learners who achieve level 2 and level 3 qualifications. The difference in performance of children and young people whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is much smaller than in similar areas and that found nationally. For example, the achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications by young people from lower income families is closer to the achievement of their peers than in similar authorities and nationally.

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