

9 December 2009

Mr John Dixon  
Director of Children and Young People's Services  
West Sussex County Council  
2nd Floor The Grange  
County Hall  
West Street  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
PO19 1QT

Dear Mr Dixon

## 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

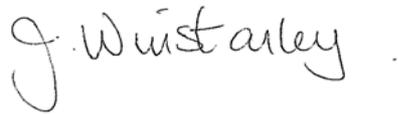
<b>Children's services rating</b>	<b>Performs adequately (2)</b>
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Children's services in West Sussex County Council perform adequately.

While the overall effectiveness of a large majority of inspected and regulated services is good or better, the area demonstrates considerable contrasts in performance. The 2008 annual performance assessment of children's services judged staying safe to be inadequate. Until performance evidence from inspection or against key safeguarding indicators show significant improvement, children's services can not be considered to perform better than adequately. Early years provision is good, with more than average good or better nurseries and day-care settings for young children. The proportion of good or better primary schools is also just above national and similar area averages. Contrastingly, fewer than average secondary schools are good or better by similar area levels, although none are inadequate. Despite the variable overall quality of secondary schools, sixth forms are mostly good. Provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable in special schools and pupil referral units is significantly poorer by comparator standards. The residential special schools are, however, good. Other provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is considerably better. Six out of seven children's homes are good or better and both the local authority's fostering agency and adoption agency are good. Private fostering arrangements however are inadequate.

Performance against the national indicators for children's services is mostly above or in line with similar areas or national values. Achievement at ages five, 11 and 16 is as seen nationally or in similar areas. However, the gap between the lowest achieving children and others at age five is wider than for similar areas. Likewise at age 16, the difference in achievement between those from low income families and their peers is significantly wider by national and similar area standards. The proportion of young offenders who are engaged in suitable education, training or employment is low. The 2008 annual performance assessment of children's services judged staying safe inadequate. The local authority and its partners have been working to bring about improvement, but with limited success so far. Numbers of referrals to children's services have increased and initial assessments of needs are now carried out on significantly more children and young people. There has been some improvement in the proportion of these assessments completed on time, but the rate remains much lower than seen in similar areas or the country overall. The numbers of more detailed assessments completed on time has reduced and is also much lower than that seen in similar areas. The local authority has appointed more qualified social workers but not all of the newly created posts have been filled.

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