

9 December 2009

Ms Margaret Goldie
Corporate Director for Children and Young People
West Berkshire Council
Avonbank House
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Dear Ms Goldie

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

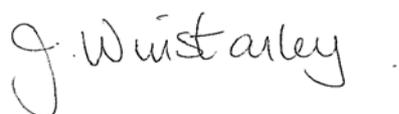
Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in West Berkshire Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. The local authority makes good provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The performance of the fostering service is outstanding. The adoption services, private fostering arrangements and the children's home are good. The joint area review in 2007 judged safeguarding and provision for looked after children as good. Many children get off to a good start in life and nursery education is particularly good. However, childminder and childcare settings are satisfactory overall but not as good as the average in similar areas. The performance of the local authority's schools is mixed. Special schools and pupil referral units are mostly good. However too many primary and secondary schools are no better than satisfactory and one secondary school is inadequate. Provision in school sixth forms and the General Further Education College is satisfactory overall, but not as good as that found in similar areas or that seen nationally.

Performance against the large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is above or in line with similar areas and the national figures. Most children and young people enjoy good health, and educational achievement is in line with the average for similar areas and England overall. However, the difference in the achievement of the majority and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is wide and not yet reducing fast enough.

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.



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA