

9 December 2009

Ms Gill Rollings
Executive Director, Children's Families and Learning
Middlesbrough Borough Council
PO Box 69
Vancouver House
Gurney Street
Middlesbrough
North Yorkshire, TS1 1EL

Dear Ms Rollings

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

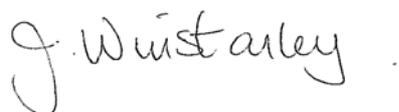
Children's services rating	Performs Adequately (2)
-----------------------------------	--------------------------------

Children's services in Middlesbrough Borough Council perform adequately.

The performance of the local authority's schools is mixed. Children get off to a good start at school because an above average proportion of nurseries and primary schools are good or better compared with similar areas and nationally. However, the secondary education position is less strong, with too much provision judged as adequate. Although none are inadequate, only four of the authority's nine secondary schools were judged to be good or better. Three of the four special schools are good or better and one is adequate. The proportion of pupil referral units that is good or better is below average, with three being satisfactory and one good. The inspection judgement of the local authority's fostering agency is that it is good. One of the authority's two children's homes is good and one is satisfactory.

Performance against most indicators is in line with or above similar areas and national averages. The local authority does well in some areas of staying safe and enjoying and achieving, including the timely response given to children in need and the improved achievements at age 16. The proportion of children in care with stable placements matched similar areas in 2007/08 but recent data for 2008/09 show a less positive picture. A higher than average proportion of children become subject to a child protection plan for a second time. Overall, educational performance has improved. Results are just below similar areas at ages 11 and 16 but they are still well below the national figures. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is closing, especially post-16. Outcomes in qualifications at levels 2 and 3 by age 19 match similar areas. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training has reduced significantly and now matches similar areas, but it remains above the national figure.

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