

9 December 2009

Mrs Sue Imbriano  
Director of Children's Services  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Room 20E  
County Hall  
Walton Street  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire  
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Dear Mrs Imbriano

## 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 well (3)</b>
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Children's services in Buckinghamshire County Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. Achievement at Key Stages 2 and 4 is well above similar areas and that seen nationally and GCSE results continue to rise. A large proportion of primary schools are good or outstanding, showing performance above similar areas and that found nationally. However, for secondary and sixth form schools the proportion of provision that is good or better is average as one third are satisfactory. While performance is above comparators for secondary schools, where wide variation in performance is levelling rapidly, it is below similar areas and national averages for school sixth forms. One of two general further education and tertiary providers is good, the other is satisfactory. Numbers of young people that are not in education, training or employment at age 18 are very low and achievement of level 2 and 3 qualifications has improved to well above the national average and similar areas.

Provision for children and others whose circumstances make them vulnerable is mixed. Eight of twelve special schools are good or better but four are satisfactory, showing performance below similar areas and that seen nationally. All five pupil referral units are at least good, showing performance above similar areas and performance nationally. The boarding school is outstanding but four residential special schools range from outstanding to inadequate, showing overall performance in line with similar areas and that seen nationally.

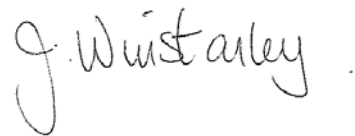
In the Early Years Foundation Stage, achievement is in line with similar areas and that found nationally. A very large proportion of nurseries are good or better, showing performance above similar areas and that seen nationally. The large majority of childcare settings and childminders are also good or better although almost one third are satisfactory in both. Nevertheless, for childminders, performance is above similar areas and that found nationally. For looked after children, the four children's homes are good as are the fostering and adoption agencies. Private fostering arrangements are satisfactory. For looked after children, achievement at Key Stage 2 is consistently above similar areas and in line with the national average. The recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need found no areas for priority action, although generally very high quality assessments to some degree affected completion to timescales.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is at least in line with similar areas and broadly in line with or better than the national figure, although there are weaknesses in four of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and others of the same age is mostly in line with similar areas and that found nationally. While

very high attainment overall continues to improve, gaps are closing most noticeably for: pupils eligible for free school meals; those with special educational needs; minority ethnic groups; and qualifications achieved by the age of 19.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, CAA