

9 December 2009

Dr Deborah Absalom
Director for Children's and Young People's Services
London Borough of Bexley Council
Hillview
Welling
Kent
DA16 3RY

Dear Dr Absalom

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

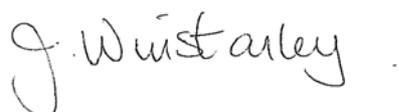
Children's services rating	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Bexley perform adequately.

The proportion of nursery, primary and secondary schools rated good or outstanding for overall effectiveness is lower than in similar areas and across the country. Children make a good start in life, with a higher than average proportion of childminders and childcare settings being good or outstanding. Although the number of schools in an Ofsted category of concern has reduced, some provision is inadequate and too many schools are only satisfactory overall. Provision for pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable is good in four of the five special schools, the other being satisfactory. The fostering agency is good. Two serious case reviews have been evaluated. One was adequate and one was good.

A very large majority of indicators are in line with or above similar areas and national averages. Performance in relation to the indicators in staying safe, enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution is good. Strengths include the review of child protection cases within timescale and the proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. From a low base, performance on the number of referrals going on to initial assessment has improved but remains below the England average. The difference in the performance of children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is reducing, especially for the lowest performing children in their early years and for pupils receiving free school meals at age 16. However, the difference is still too wide for pupils from a low income background at age 11. By age 19, the proportion of young people from a low income background achieving level 3 qualifications is below similar areas. The attainment of minority ethnic pupils at age 11 is good with notable improvements made by Black pupils in 2008. There has been a further reduction in the proportion of young people not in education, employment and training and performance matches the average of similar areas and England.

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