

9 December 2009

Mr Chris Hilliard
Executive Director of Children's Services, Schools and Families
Bedford Borough Council
Borough Hall
Cauldwell Street
Bedford
MK42 9AP

Dear Mr Hilliard

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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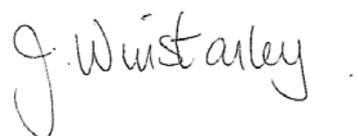
Children's services in Bedford Borough Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of all inspected services and settings is good, showing performance which is often above similar areas and that found nationally. A large majority of childminder and childcare settings are good or better, performing above similar areas and the national picture. Almost all nursery schools and a higher than average proportion of primary schools are good or outstanding and there is almost no reported inadequate provision across all providers. A half of secondary schools and just over a half of school sixth forms are good. This is below both similar areas and national figures. The local General Further Education and Tertiary College is outstanding. Provision for children and young people with special educational needs is good in special schools, with two of the three schools judged outstanding and the third good. Provision at the pupil referral unit is good.

Bedford Borough is a new local authority and no inspection outcomes are available for children's homes, fostering and adoption agencies. It is too soon to judge performance against national performance indicators.

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 period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA