

9 December 2009

Mr Duncan Clark
Interim Director of Children's Services
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
Guildhall 2
St James Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey
KT1 1SN

Dear Mr Clark

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

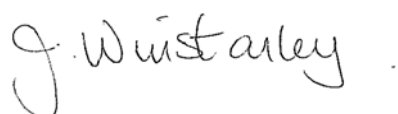
Children's services rating	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames perform excellently.

The overall effectiveness of a very large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. Performance in nurseries and primary schools is high and above that seen nationally or in similar areas. The overall effectiveness of childcare and childminder settings is also above average by both these comparisons. Most secondary schools and school sixth forms are good or better, none are inadequate and performance is high in relation to national and similar area comparators. Provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is more mixed. Whilst pupil referral units are outstanding and special schools and the local authority fostering agency are good, the adoption agency and private fostering arrangements are only satisfactory.

Performance against a very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is better than or in line with similar areas. Procedures for keeping children and vulnerable adults safe are implemented in a timely fashion and performance indicators are consistently strong. Two serious case reviews were conducted with one being judged adequate and one inadequate. Achievement at ages five, 11 and 16 is high and significantly more young people than average nationally or in similar areas achieve Level 2 or 3 qualifications by age 19. Although there are some relative weaknesses in the achievement gaps between children and young people from low income families and their peers at ages 11 and 16, children who are eligible for free school meals in Kingston-upon-Thames do better than the same group nationally. These young people also do better at age 19 in the extent to which they achieve Level 2 or 3 qualifications.

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