

9 December 2009

Ms Carolyn Godfrey  
Director for Children and Education  
Wiltshire County Council  
County Hall  
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Dear Ms Godfrey

## 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

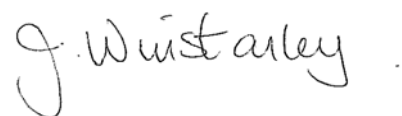
<b>Children's services rating</b>	<b>Performs well (3)</b>
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Children's services in Wiltshire County Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected settings and services is good or better. A high proportion of nursery and childcare settings are good or better. Although childminding provision is satisfactory overall, it is not as good as the average found in similar areas. A large majority of the local authority's primary, secondary and special schools are good or better. The overall effectiveness of secondary schools and school sixth forms compares well with the average in similar areas and that found nationally. However, a high proportion of primary schools are no better than satisfactory and a small number are inadequate. The pupil referral unit and the two General Further Education Colleges are satisfactory. The children's home and the fostering service are good. The joint area review in November 2008 judged safeguarding arrangements and provision for looked after children as adequate. A serious case review was judged inadequate in January 2009. It raised concerns about the failure to address some key issues together with an insufficiently clear action plan and variability in the quality of independent management reviews, including that provided by the local authority.

Performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is above or in line with similar areas and the national figures. Most children make a good start in life, enjoy good health and achieve well in education and training. The gap between the majority of children and young people and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is closing in some areas, but the picture is inconsistent for different groups. For example, at age 16, young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those eligible for free schools meals achieve well below average and the gap is widening.

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.



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