

9 December 2009

Mr Peter Duxbury
Director of Children's Services
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices
Newland
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Dear Mr Duxbury

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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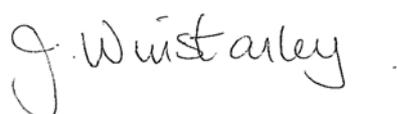
Children's services in Lincolnshire County Council perform well.

The overall effectiveness of a large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. A much higher than average proportion of secondary schools is good or better. None are inadequate. School sixth forms and local General Further Education and Tertiary Colleges are more often judged to be good than elsewhere in the country. However, too much nursery and primary school provision remains satisfactory. A number of primary schools have improved their grade in the last year, but currently, only just over half are judged good or better. Almost all provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is good or better; special schools and pupil referral units are almost always judged to be good.

Performance in all council children's homes is good and proportionately better than similar areas and that seen nationally. The local authority's one fostering agency is outstanding and the adoption agency good. A recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need identified many strengths in front line services and effective leadership and management with no priority actions. Three out of four serious case reviews have been conducted adequately.

Performance against a very large majority of indicators in the National Indicator Set, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with or above similar areas and national figures. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are efficient and a very high proportion of assessments are carried out within the required timescales. Provision for looked after children is good. Children and young people from low income families do not achieve as well as their peers and the gap widens as they get older. However, those from most minority ethnic groups often do very well by the age of 16.

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 council's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA