

Knuzden St Oswald's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119450
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313298
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Christine Hughes
Headteacher	Mrs Andrea Gray
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
School address	Mount St James Stanhill Road Knuzden Blackburn Lancashire BB1 2DR
Telephone number	01254 667222
Fax number	01254 699992

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Inspection number	313298

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves a residential district on the outskirts of Blackburn, with some pupils coming from further afield. There is some social and economic disadvantage locally, although the number pupils eligible for free school meals is currently below average. Most pupils come from White British families; a few come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, mainly Indian and Pakistani. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average. Over recent years, the school has had significant staffing changes.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. The school has recently undergone a period of instability caused by staffing and other issues. It has taken some time to resolve these and, as a result, the quality of teaching has suffered and standards have slipped. However, following a successful drive to improve staff morale and pupils' attitudes, and strengthen the skills of senior leaders, the school shows that it has the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Pupils' achievement is inadequate at present. This has been caused mainly by a lack of consistency stemming from staffing instability. There is some good teaching in the school, but most is satisfactory; some is unsatisfactory. Less effective teaching is typified by planning that does not take enough account of pupils' prior learning. Consequently, the match of work is not skilful and pupils are not challenged enough. The school accepts that its monitoring of teaching has not been rigorous enough to check these weaknesses and promote improvements.

Standards have declined in the past two years, and are below average by Year 6. In Key Stage 1, standards have been only just average and are unlikely to be better this year, mainly because of disrupted learning in preceding years. Key Stage 2 national test results have been falling and were below average in 2007. The trend of decline has now been halted. Standards are not likely to fall further in 2008 and there are signs of some small improvements in English and mathematics for most pupils.

Pupils' personal development is good. They are responsible, sensible and courteous around school. They get on well with one another and the adults in school so that the atmosphere in lessons is positive and concentration is good. Consistently good attendance and pupils' keenness to take part in activities show how much they enjoy school. They lead increasingly healthy lives, although they find it hard to adopt a wholly healthy diet. They play a good part in the school and beyond, including close links with the church. The deeply spiritual nature of assemblies is uplifting. Overall, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school takes good care of its pupils. Good links with other agencies combine well to support the more vulnerable pupils. However, the satisfactory systems to monitor pupils' progress are not used by teachers to set pupils targets to improve their work. Similarly, marking is not helpful or rigorous enough. The curriculum is satisfactory and, through links between subjects, special topic weeks and specialist visitors, it is becoming more diverse and interesting.

The headteacher has done well to keep the school moving in the right direction. She has had a heavy burden to shoulder since she took up the post, and has not always had the support she needed, especially from the governing body. The school has a clear and honest understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and plans for improvement are appropriate and comprehensive. New appointments, including the deputy headteacher, have strengthened the staff team. The work of the senior management team has improved and procedures through the school have been made more effective. However, the pace of change has been slow and has not yet boosted standards significantly: the signs are more promising for the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Reception class is satisfactory and improving. The new leadership of the Foundation Stage is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning through better assessment. Children make satisfactory progress from starting points that are below average and, increasingly, even lower especially in language development. By the end of the Reception year, they do not reach the expected levels for five-year-olds, except in their physical development which tends to be better. Children enjoy school because learning is fun, they are well looked after and there is a suitable variety of activities. However, these are restricted by the lack of a suitable outdoor learning area and the small size of the classroom. Parents feel well supported through nursery visits and appreciate the helpfulness of staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in all subjects, especially writing and science.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about how they can improve their work.
- Ensure that improvements to the school are carried out more rigorously and with a greater sense of urgency.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The inspection team agrees with the school's own view that pupils' achievement through the school is inadequate. Standards have been slipping in recent years because of the staffing issues. Until 2005, standards in Key Stage 1 tended to be above average with writing better than reading and mathematics. Since then, standards have been average, although only just in 2007. The school's data shows that the standards of pupils in the current Year 2 may be below average this year.

Pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has been weak for the past three years, particularly in 2007 and pupils' earlier gains have been lost. Standards have been falling and were below average in two of the past three years. The school data suggests that Year 6 standards will be no higher overall in 2008 but results may approach average in English and mathematics. The school has correctly identified the underlying causes as weaknesses in writing and in investigative work in mathematics and science and is beginning to address these. Not enough of the more able pupils reach the higher level in the national tests. Elsewhere, however, there are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Their good attendance shows that they enjoy coming to school. This is also evident from their eagerness to be involved in the school's activities and productions, their good behaviour and positive attitudes in lessons. They look after each other well in and out of class; the playground is a lively but safe place to be. Pupils relish physical activity but have not yet acquired a mature approach to eating; crisps and chocolate bars are still quite common in lunch boxes.

The spiritual dimension of school life is striking in assemblies but less obvious around the school and in lessons. Some cultural aspects are good but not all; singing in assemblies was enchanting and moving but pupils' multi-cultural awareness is weaker. Through the work of the school council and links with the community, pupils develop a good sense of social responsibility. With the current level of basic skills, they are satisfactorily prepared for life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching is inadequate. Although much current teaching is satisfactory and some is good, it has not been good enough over time to improve pupils' learning and, in turn, raise standards in the main subjects. There are common strengths in teaching that give classrooms a positive atmosphere. These include the good rapport between staff and pupils, the clarity of the learning objectives and use of resources such as interactive whiteboards.

The systems to assess pupils' learning are satisfactory but, unfortunately, teachers do not use this information adeptly enough to set work that meets the needs of all groups of pupils. More effective teaching ensures all pupils have a high degree of challenge. Too often, however, the work is the same for all pupils in a class, or only slightly different, and so learning is slow or patchy. In addition, teachers' marking of pupils' work is ineffective. When teachers do give helpful advice, and not all do, they do not check whether pupils have responded to it.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. National guidelines are followed with sufficient focus on key skills in literacy and numeracy. There is an increasing linking of subjects that puts learning in context, notably in writing, and this heightens pupils' interest. There is some good enrichment through visitors and 'Super Learning' weeks. A story teller, for example, inspired pupils in Year 5 to write fantasy tales, like 'The Feathered Ogre'. However, there is not enough scope for pupils to develop investigative skills, especially in mathematics and science. The timetable provides a suitable range of subjects but the school does not maximise the time allocated to learning each week.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes good care of its pupils. Formal procedures to safeguard pupils are in place and meet requirements. For example, all adults who work in the school are thoroughly vetted and risk assessments are routinely carried out. Teachers know their pupils very well and so respond to their individual needs and concerns promptly and supportively. Pupils with physical disabilities receive a high level of care, play a full part in the school's activities and are also fully supported by other pupils. Parents recognise the positive qualities of the school and are supportive.

Systems to track pupils' progress are adequate and help teachers to place pupils in ability groups and monitor any possible underachievement. However, these systems have not been used efficiently enough to set targets or give clear guidance to pupils in their learning. As a result, pupils are not clear how they can improve their work in English, mathematics and science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher has had some serious issues to manage since her appointment, and it is to her credit that she has kept the school on an even keel. Since then, she has strengthened staff morale and pupils' attitudes to learning. She has sustained the good level of care and appointed new staff who are beginning to have a positive impact, including the deputy headteacher who is strengthening provision in the Foundation Stage. There is a clear sense of direction shared by staff.

The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate. Senior staff recognise the school's strengths and shortcomings, and the action plans for improvement are pertinent and well structured. Subject leaders are beginning to monitor and develop their subjects more effectively. However, staffing and other issues have slowed the school's development and many systems are too new to have had sufficient impact.

Inspection report:Knuzden St Oswald's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, 11–12 March 20085 of 11 Document reference number: HMI 250701 September 2007Inspection report:Knuzden St Oswald's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, 11–12 March 20084 of 11 Document reference number: HMI 250701 September 2007The governing body is not effective enough. Governors do not hold the school to account with sufficient rigour nor find solutions to support the headteacher. They have not ensured that the school has made sufficient progress since the last inspection. Elements have improved, such as its computer facilities, but key aspects, like writing and other standards, are still not good enough. Therefore, at present, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money. However, the determination of staff, new procedures and the effective way that external support has been identified and introduced show that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 March 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Knuzden St Oswald's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, Lancashire, BBI 2DR

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. You made us very welcome. We were grateful for all your comments that helped us gather a clear picture of your school.

We know that you enjoy school because your attendance is good and you respond so well in lessons and assemblies. We were very impressed and, indeed, moved by your singing. We think you develop well as young people; your behaviour is mostly good, you look after one another well and you learn how to be good citizens through the school council and links with community. You rightly feel safe at school because the adults take good care of you. We were particularly pleased because we know the school has been through a difficult time recently.

However, at present, the school is not doing as well as it might for you. The standards of your work have been slipping and are now below average. We believe that, although most lessons are fine, teachers could do more to make sure you have work that really challenges you, whatever your ability. We are sure that you would want to rise to any new challenge and so improve the standards of your work. In addition, teachers do not regularly tell you how to improve your work. We have asked that this change and hope you will do your best to follow their suggestions.

We think that your school, despite its problems, is heading in the right direction. Mrs Gray, supported by staff, has the right plans to improve your school. In the past, such plans have not always been carried out quickly enough, and the governors need to help more. However, we are confident that the school is now in a position to improve. We are sure you will want to help the staff to make your school more successful.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector