

PROTECT - INSPECTION

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Mrs Andrea Gray Headteacher
Knuzden St Oswald's CE Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gray

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you, your staff, the pupils, the governors and the school improvement partner gave when I inspected your school on 21 November 2008. Many thanks for the time you and your local authority adviser gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

Since the inspection in March 2008 there have been significant changes in staffing and some changes in leadership. Staffing is more stable this term, providing a greater consistency of teaching for most classes. Three teachers have left the school. A teacher with responsibility for inclusion has been appointed and is due to start in January 2009. Three teaching posts are currently covered by supply teachers, two of which have been covered by the same supply teacher over a period of time. The senior leadership team has been reduced from four to three leaders following the departure of a teacher at the end of the summer term. Leadership of mathematics has changed, with a teacher taking on the role in April 2008.

There have been some changes in the characteristics of the pupil population. There is a higher proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, and a higher proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, although none of these pupils are known to be at the early stages of learning English. Overall, the level of attainment of pupils when they start school in the Reception class is declining.

As a result of the inspection in March 2008, the school was asked to:

- 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Results in the unvalidated 2008 Key Stage 1 national assessments for reading, writing and mathematics have remained similar to the previous year and were below average. In all three subjects, pupils achieved satisfactorily when compared to pupils of similar backgrounds. However, boys remain much further behind than girls. The school's analysis of these assessments shows that not enough of the more able pupils reached the higher Level 3.

The 2008 unvalidated results of Key Stage 2 national tests remain below average. They show a slight improvement in English and science, but a decline in mathematics. The school's analysis of these results shows that most pupils made satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, although progress was better in English and science than in mathematics, and not enough of the more able pupils made the progress expected of them. School targets were narrowly missed in English but more so in mathematics and science.

The school's assessment information on pupils currently in school shows that progress is accelerating and standards are improving in reading and science especially, but less so in mathematics and writing. Guided reading lessons are particularly well planned; tasks are well matched to pupils' needs and prior learning; pupils enjoy the tasks and progress in reading is accelerating. Standards in writing are improving but there is still not enough high quality writing. Spelling and punctuation are a weakness, even among some higher attaining pupils. The school is aware of this and further staff training to tackle weaknesses in writing is planned. Pupils are beginning to use their writing skills to write about work they are doing in different subjects and this is improving their interest and enthusiasm for writing. However, there are still too few opportunities for pupils to write at length. Pupils' investigative skills have improved notably since the previous inspection. Progress in the Reception class has improved. The classroom has been moved to enable better access to the outdoors. The full range of activities is planned more securely in line with children's needs and the requirements of the curriculum.

The quality of learning and teaching is improving. No inadequate lessons were seen and most observed were good. The school has worked hard to develop a more consistent approach to learning and teaching and has made good use of local authority support and training to do so. Classrooms are well managed. Relationships are good and pupils are developing into confident learners. The school's policy on presentation has been taken on consistently well. There are higher expectations of presentation that pupils respond to very well. They are particularly eager to gain a 'Licence to Quill' awarded to pupils when handwriting is of a suitable standard to merit writing in pen. Their attitudes to work are improving. Teacher's planning is more consistent. Learning objectives and 'steps to success' are set out and shared with pupils in all lessons. Pupils are clear about what they should do but not always

clear on how they can judge their own success. This is because the 'steps to success' do not always set out clearly enough what they should know, understand and be able to do by the end of a lesson, and the final parts of lessons are not always used effectively to help pupils review their achievements. Teachers' planning identifies different activities to match ability groups. There are, however, times when there is not enough challenge for more able pupils and they do the same tasks as everyone else before being given a more demanding task. The school has recognised this weakness and has further training planned to tackle it.

Pupils are much clearer about how they can improve their work. The implementation of the marking and feedback policy across the school is helping to ensure that pupils receive encouragement and useful guidance when their work is marked. Pupils are taking greater responsibility for the presentation and improvement of their work in response to teachers' marking. The school is aware of the need to develop a consistent approach to how and when pupils respond to teachers' comments. Pupils in Key Stage 2 find the new 'Working Walls' a very useful reminder of what they have learned already. The use of targets to guide learning for individuals, whole classes and groups within classes in literacy and numeracy is developing and helping pupils to know what they are aiming to achieve.

Improvements to the school are being carried out with more rigour and a greater sense of urgency. There is strong determination and enthusiasm among leaders, staff and governors to bring about improvements. Disruptions to staffing that delayed the consistent implementation of some actions have now been overcome. The role of senior leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching has developed well. Performance management is closely linked to school improvement priorities. Senior leaders are identifying areas that need to be improved and taking decisive action to bring about improvements: for example, the need to ensure more extended writing opportunities across the curriculum and provide even more challenge for the more able.

The role of subject leaders has developed. They are now actively involved in monitoring and evaluating standards and provision: they are gaining confidence and taking on a more pro-active role in bringing about improvement. Following their analysis of national tests, class targets for numeracy, and more recently literacy, were identified and are consequently helping to fill gaps in learning more effectively.

The headteacher discusses every pupil's progress with class teachers each term. As the school's system of assessment and recording of pupils' progress develops, these discussions are increasingly informed by closer analysis of pupils' progress. Possible underachievement is identified, programmes of support are put in place and checked to ensure they are effective.

The role and effectiveness of governors has improved. New governors have brought increased expertise and experience. Training by the local authority has helped to develop a better awareness of their role. Governors are better informed of the school's performance by both senior and middle leaders, enabling them to ask more

demanding questions of the school's leaders. They are more pro-active in supporting and monitoring improvement.

The local authority statement of action fulfils the Ofsted requirements and is fit for purpose. The school has benefited from a well planned and sensibly paced programme of support and improvement. Consultants, the school improvement partner and monitoring and improvement adviser have worked effectively to build the skills and confidence of staff and leaders. The monitoring and improvement team have kept a close eye on progress and involved governors particularly well in improving their role and understanding of the school. Senior leaders have gained confidence and are capable of planning and supporting improvements with decreasing levels of support from the local authority.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G Salter-Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a trailing flourish.

Gill Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector