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Mrs Pauline Johnstone
Headteacher
St Andrew's CE VA First School
Albion Way
Blyth
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NE24 5BL

Dear Mrs Johnstone

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 30 September 2009 and for the information which you provided during my visit.

As a result of the inspection on 27 and 28 January 2009, the school was asked to take immediate action to comply with current safeguarding regulations, ensure pupils' safety and security on the school site, improve the consistency of teaching by ensuring that teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is accurate, provide pupils with clear advice on how to improve their work, and implement more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Since the inspection, two governors have been appointed. A teacher has left and a full time replacement is being made this term.

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

Arrangements for guaranteeing pupils' safety on site have improved and comply with current regulations. New perimeter fencing at the front of the school and gates with bolts have made the site secure. Temporary two metre high fencing has been installed along the boundary with the building site adjacent to the school and provides an effective barrier to keep pupils safe and secure. All staff have been updated on the schools central database of health and safety, child protection, safeguarding and welfare procedures. As a result, the recording of accidents is more effective and all supply staff receive appropriate safeguarding information.

The consistency of teaching has improved. Teachers' assessment of learning is more accurate and the information is being used well to plan the next steps in learning. The quality of marking has improved. Work is marked more regularly and teachers use positive feedback to help pupils improve their work. This is the result of a new marking policy introduced in June 2009, more rigorous scrutiny of work, and better understanding of learning needs. The school is aware more needs to be done and is taking the right action to ensure the quality of marking is consistent across all classes.

The monitoring of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is more rigorous. It identifies individual strengths and areas for development, and helps managers target support more effectively. Since the last inspection, twelve lessons have been observed by senior staff including three joint observations with the school improvement partner. The school is working closely with the local authority consultants to improve progress files for individual children and knows it is important to raise achievement and help pupils learn more quickly. The local authority's statement of action, action plan, and support for the school have made a good impact. For example, the safeguarding weaknesses were made a high priority and resolved by the time of the monitoring inspection.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector