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Mrs Smith  
Headteacher  
Oswaldtwistle St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Union Road  
Oswaldtwistle  
Accrington  
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BB5 3DD

Dear Mrs Smith

**Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Oswaldtwistle St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 December 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. I am grateful to the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority for sparing the time to talk with me. It was a pleasure to speak to pupils, so please pass on my thanks to them also.

Since the last inspection, an associate headteacher and associate deputy headteacher have been appointed on a temporary basis. There has been an increase in the number of pupils who attend the school. Three members of staff are currently off work and replaced by temporary appointments. Four new governors have been appointed to strengthen the governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 24 and 25 March 2011, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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.

Unvalidated results of the national assessments and tests in 2011 indicate that attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 remains low. At the end of Key Stage 1 too few pupils reach age-related expectations, especially so in reading. However, the school has given priority to improving reading and has supported teachers in developing it. Governor and parent volunteers now listen to pupils read on a weekly basis. No pupils achieved the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing or mathematics. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attained better in mathematics but overall their attainment remains low. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not attain well when compared to what is expected nationally. However, the school has recently introduced interventions to help these

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pupils catch up, which are monitored by the headteacher. At the end of Key Stage 2, there was an improvement in attainment in English and mathematics, with boys doing better than girls. This demonstrates that the school is beginning to close the gap on the school's performance of what is expected of pupils nationally in English and mathematics. The school's results however remain below the government's expected minimum. Recent improvements to tracking procedures are enabling a greater awareness of pupils' achievement. As a result leaders are intervening at an earlier stage to provide pupils with much needed support. Progress in 2011 was inadequate with too few pupils making the progress expected of them. Approximately half the pupils did not make the progress expected in English and a third in mathematics. However, current data held by the school show that rates of progress are now improving across the school. The school tracks rates of progress for all pupils and groups and evidence shows that, in some cases, pupils are making accelerated progress. The school acknowledges that achievement needs to improve further.

Improving the quality of provision has been a priority for the school and leaders are working closely with the local authority. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Effective learning was seen where pupils were clear about teachers' expectations and success criteria supported their improved progress. Opportunities for pupils to learn collaboratively were used well and pupils were keen to succeed. Pupils report that teaching is 'more fun'. However, this is not consistent across the school and in some lessons pupils made less progress due to activities not fully matching their needs. In these less successful lessons teachers' subject knowledge was not secure, leading to confusion with tasks set. Marking of pupils' work is variable. The better marking can be seen in literacy, where most pupils understand if they have met the learning intention and are generally informed on how to improve. Some marking guides pupils well towards their next stages in learning. However, this is not consistently applied across all classes and some work remains unmarked and does not help pupils improve.

Pupils' behaviour and their attitude to learning remain good. Attendance has improved due to a concerted effort by leaders to check and monitor pupil absence. Pupils are encouraged to come to school on a regular basis and good attendance is rewarded. Furthermore, fixed-term exclusions have reduced by half due to a greater understanding of what is acceptable in school by pupils.

Developments to the curriculum are evident through an increase in the number of educational visits to support learning. More visitors are invited into school, which pupils say make lessons and learning more interesting. Themed weeks have been introduced, such as science weeks and weeks devoted to multicultural learning. Cross-curricular links however, remain underdeveloped as too much learning is taught in discrete areas. The school has not developed learning through a progression of skills, and not enough emphasis is given to developing writing and mathematical skills in topic work. There remains insufficient work in pupils' books. The school has developed a whole-school curriculum plan, but evidence shows the plan does not always accurately reflect what is actually taught.

The associate headteacher holds an accurate view of the overall progress the school is making including raising the quality of teaching and learning and improving achievement. She is aware of strengths and weaknesses and has implemented a robust monitoring programme to provide support, challenge and training. The associate headteacher is aware that provision needs to improve further across the school and she uses appropriate measures to judge the quality of teaching. A greater focus has been given on what constitutes good teaching and learning and bespoke training has been delivered to teachers to improve their practice with success. The rigorous monitoring cycle is now linked to teachers' performance management. Monitoring includes: half-termly lesson observations; the impact of interventions; pupil progress meetings; and regular analysis of assessments. Subject leaders are monitoring teachers' planning and marking of pupils' books. However, there is not enough monitoring undertaken beyond English and mathematics. Subject leaders are beginning to monitor lessons, although this is in its early stages of development. Senior leaders carry out learning walks, although they currently lack a specific focus. The governing body has been strengthened and has established a strategic monitoring group which meets regularly to evaluate the school's progress. Governors are providing increased levels of challenge to the school's leaders.

Work to improve community cohesion is evident across the school, including the appointment of a nominated governor. An audit is now in place which reflects a better understanding of pupils' religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics. Plans clearly state the school's actions and the outcomes effectively evaluated. Policies have been updated, for example, equal opportunities and race equality. There is a greater acceptance by pupils of different cultures and racism incidents have been reduced by half. The school recently dedicated a week's learning to 'our school community' focusing on different cultures within school. More visits have taken place to the local community and visitors are encouraged into school to broaden pupils understanding of diversity. Increased links with the church are evident, with regular visits to a local church. Plans to improve global links with a school in Sri Lanka are in place.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. Satisfactory support has been provided through training to help improve the quality of teaching and learning. Local authority officers are involved in regular reviews of the school and hold an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses.

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

Mrs Jane Millward  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011.**

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress securely and rapidly by:
  - improving teaching so that it is consistently good
  - ensuring that lessons are lively and dynamic with levels of challenge matched closely to the needs of all groups of pupils
  - making sure that the curriculum provides pupils with a wider range of exciting opportunities to stimulate their learning and accelerate the development of their skills in writing, speaking and mathematics.
  
- Promote community cohesion more effectively by:
  - planning a wider range of coordinated activities to develop pupils' understanding and appreciation of local, national and global diversity
  - developing procedures to evaluate the school's effectiveness in promoting community cohesion.