

Investing in Children Membership Award™

Re-evaluation of Nettlesworth Primary School



Introduction



Nettlesworth Primary School is based in a small village within County Durham they offer a place where inclusion, pupil voice and respect are valued.

The school aims to provide all children with a well-planned and balanced education taking full account of National Curriculum Statutory requirements. They are an Inclusion Quality Mark School, which focuses on the pursuit of outstanding teaching and learning and creating an environment in which every student, those who have and do not have disabilities, has the opportunity to flourish.

Nettlesworth Primary are also a National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) accredited school (an award in recognition of school-wide high-quality provision for more able learners within a context of challenge for all) and ensure there is a whole school commitment and a clear focus to providing for More Able Gifted and Talented pupils. A wide range of experiences and opportunities individualised to children's personal needs and interests are offered.

Nettlesworth Primary School is also a UNICEF Rights Respecting Gold School, and children are empowered to become active citizens and learners. Children are given opportunities to broaden experience, listen and talk about what they explore and investigate, develop skills and practice them.

There are currently 112 children registered at the school.

For the purpose of this membership I met with various children. I'd like to thank Maisie (5 years old), Tilly (4 years old), Teddy (5 years old), Hester (5 years old), Archer (6 years old), Alexis (7 years old), Skye (8 years old), Karen (7 years old), Jake (8 years old), all of Class 3 and Mrs Lee for taking time to meet with me and share their views and experiences, which enabled me to gather evidence for this report.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change

There were no recommendations from the previous report in March 2016.

Evidence of Dialogue resulting in Change from Children and Young People

Fundraising

The children have requested a new sound system within school, Karen said ***"The old one just isn't very good anymore."*** The art ambassadors have recently assisted with

a coffee morning to raise funds for this. The young people told me that they made posters to promote the coffee morning and Mrs Burton made cookies to sell. Parents came into school, cookies and drinks were sold to raise money. Hester said **“We got to go if we had adults with us or not.”**

Hester said **“Everyone is involved in raising money. We raise money for our jobs.”**

Some children were excited to tell me about another event which is held annually, a big party on the field in summer. Archer said **“This raises money too.”**

The money raised is used to buy new equipment for the school. Jake told me **“They [staff] ask us how we want to spend money on new toys.”**

Some suggestions from children as how they’d like to spend funds were:

- Climbing wall
- Dance sessions

Climate Control



One class were focusing on Climate Control as a topic. Archer told me **“someone [an external visitor] came to talk to us about climate change and we have decided to plant some trees at school.”** The children explained to me where they were. Alexis said **“We planted them last summer.”**

A climate control council has been set up and they plan to work with the Re-Fuse Café in Chester le Street. After the Easter holidays staff from the Refuse café are visiting the school to monitor waste over a lunchtime and discuss how this can be improved. The children will then have the opportunity to become waste monitors to continue to implement reducing food waste in school.

Local Parks

Class 3 were undertaking a project about metal and decided to visit the local park, which is situated next to school. During this visit they noticed:

- a lot of graffiti on the equipment
- a broken seat
- lots of dog faeces
- broken and damaged equipment

Autumn, aged 7 **“I felt annoyed.”**

Rosie, aged 7 **“The words written weren’t very nice.”**

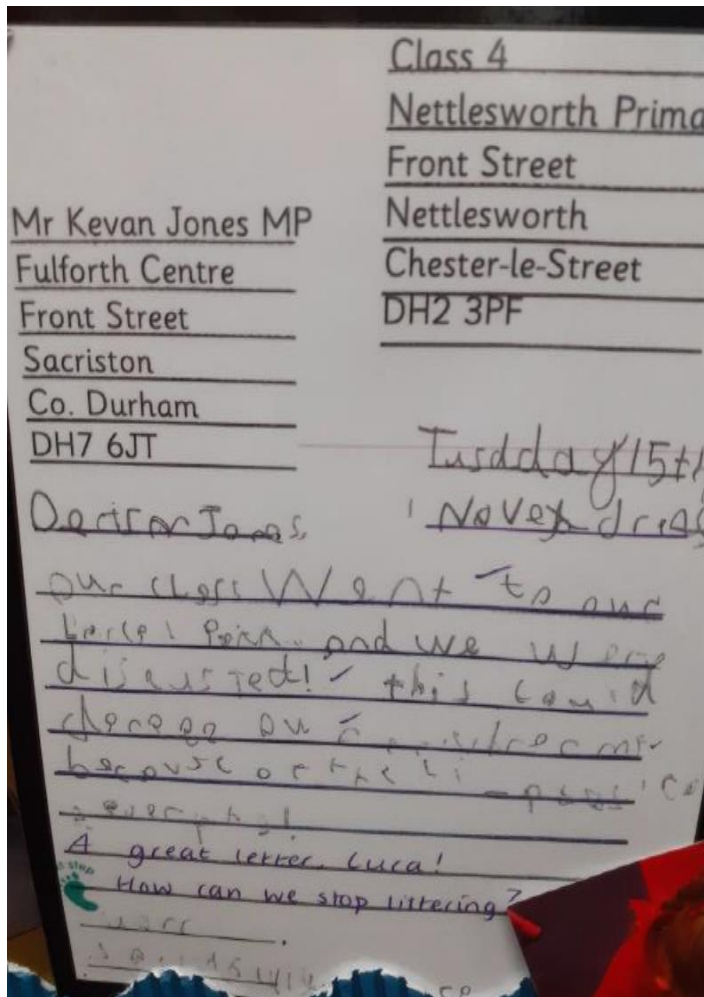
Dallas, aged 7 **“We decided we wanted better stuff.”**

What the children would like to see is:

- safe equipment
- graffiti removed or painted over

It was decided that the children from Years 2 & 3 would take a collaborative approach and write to their local MP, Kevan Jones.

Below is an example of what the children wrote to Kevan about.



Since the letters were sent there have been some changes made:

- A dog poo bin is now in place and there has been noticeably less dog fouling near school. Jake said "There is less around the park, but some on other paths." The children would like to continue with their campaign by sending out messages to parents and creating posters to display in the local area.
- Kevan Jones agreed to fix the broken seat. The children said the broken seat has now been removed.

Kevan Jones visited Class 3 on 02.02.24. He told the children he has a team working on the cleaning of the graffiti in the park. There is currently no specific timeframe and Kevan said it may take some time.

Class 3 also approached the Head Teacher, Mrs Lee, about the issues with graffiti on the play equipment and asked if the police could do something about it. The Police were contacted and they agreed to visit school. Everyone in school was involved with discussions about graffiti. Following this session one young person told me **“We talked about why we shouldn’t graffiti.”**

The children’s concerns have also been shared with the Local Authority Clean and Green Team. Littering picking is going to be arranged in the village which children can get involved in. The students told me they think this is a good idea have been involved with litter picking within school grounds. Archer said “We used special stick things.” Jake also said **“Me and Karen have picked stuff up in the park.”** This was in their own time.

The whole school have also been involved in choosing what type of equipment they’d like to see in 3 parks locally in Kimblesworth, Nettlesworth and Edmondsley. This was with Durham County Council and the children have confirmed that Kimblesworth and Nettlesworth parks have had new equipment added. Priam told me **“We had to choose three things for each park. There were different options for different parks.”**

This is a really good example of how a simple class visit to the local park has led to the students being involved in conversations with different decision makers that will make the local area nicer for everyone!

Traffic Control

Local traffic issues are addressed via various campaigns with school, the local community and police. Young people told me road safety is important because:

“So people can cross safely.”
“Less car crashes.”

Local Police visited school as the area outside of school is a targeted area for speed control. The children assisted with a safety campaign. They told me they wore high visibility jackets and used speed checkers to check speeds when cars drove passed. One quote from a young person was **“Some cars were stopped and she [Police Officer] went and talked to them [the drivers].”**

After this activity the Police Officers discussed with the children what they would like to happen next. Archer said **“We wanted lights. I can’t remember why we couldn’t.”** This is due to the road not being deemed dangerous enough by the Police.

The children said that signs have since been put up on the road.

The children also addressed this issue with Kevan Jones when he visited school. Karen said the issues were **“Cars driving too fast and where they park.”** Over time

Kevan has done a lot of work with the school which has included supporting campaigns to have dragon teeth road markings and slow down lights put in place near school.

Children's Voice

We talked about other ways that children at Nettlesworth have a say.

Jake told me ***"They [staff] ask us every term what we want to do in PE, for example dodgeball etc. I have suggested Scout Practice. It hasn't happened yet. I hope it will because teachers will make a good job of it. There's still time"***

Skye has suggested a karate session and said ***"I don't know if it'll happen."***

Skye said ***"We are asked how we [the school] can improve."***

Staff also completed an evidence sheet with some children prior to my visit. This was their feedback:

What ways have you had your say?

- Parliamentary week
- Coffee morning
- Assemblies
- Discussing our pupil improvement plan
- Writing letters to the local MP
- Setting up events for climate friendly award

What changes have happened based on your voice

- We do different PE activities
- Poster competition – climate change
- Helping understand how autistic people may communicate – sensory needs

So what do you think of the changes that have been made?

- The teachers listen to us really well and always do their best to get things sorted for us children.

Additional evidence of Dialogue resulting in Change provided by the organisation

Early Years

Mrs Morton, Early Years teacher, informed me that the children get to choose what topic is represented in the role play area each half term. Tilly told me ***"I helped decide the jungle area last time."*** Maisie said ***"I chose the dinosaur area because I like dinosaurs."***

There was a selection of reading books available for the children to access. Mrs Morton explained that when the children start school staff ask parents for ideas of what books they (parents and children) like and they are often chosen to encourage children to look at them as they may be familiar and may encourage parents to read a familiar story with children at home.

Sensory Areas

Maisie and Tilly showed me the sensory area within the early year's classroom. Maisie said ***"If people are feeling sad they can come here."***

The art ambassadors have recently assisted with a coffee morning to raise funds for a sensory area in each classroom, this was in addition to the sound system, as mentioned earlier. Alexis said ***"I think it's a good idea because some people have autism."***

I look forward to seeing how the children are involved in assisting with choosing resources develop the sensory areas for their classes.



UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award

Leanne, Year 4 teacher, was a pupil at Nettlesworth Primary when the award was first introduced. She said ***"It's nice to see what started 20 years ago has developed and continued. It's a golden thread through school."***

The young people told me they have a Rights Respecting Team which Karen, Jake and Skye are part of. I asked the children to explain what the award means to them.

Here are some of their responses:

Jake told me that they have a say in the events that they celebrate in school.

“We celebrate events like World Book Day. Everyone is included.”

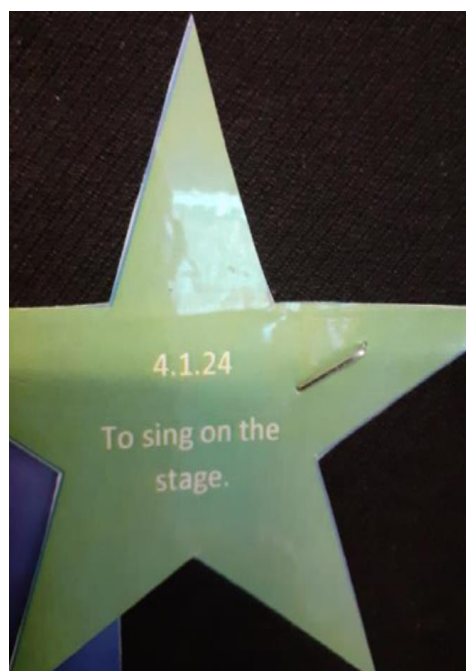
Karen told me that deciding on fundraising activities is what it means to her, ***“Raise money for charities.”***

Individual Classroom Information

In each classroom all children have personal targets. These are on display and are written by the children themselves. Therefore, they are not always academically focussed. I like that the children are able to have personal targets which do not have to be academically linked. I feel this allows the children to identify their personal qualities and something to aim for in their skills for life.

In each class children volunteer to be monitors who take on responsibility for tasks in the classroom. Monitor duties can include:

- Numeracy monitor e.g. giving out and collecting in calculators
- Pencil monitor – making sure everyone has the right pencils for the task
- Keeping tables clean
- Milk monitor (reception)
- Water bottle monitor



The children explained that teachers will ask who would like to be a monitor for a particular task and they can volunteer. These roles last the academic year. If a child no longer wanted to be a monitor, they could ask to stop or change duties. However, the children I met with were not aware if this has ever happened.

All children have their own 'useful resources file'. This is to assist with learning and enables everyone to feel unique and not to make anyone feel different if they have any particular learning needs. These files will move from class to class with the children and be altered as their needs change. Jake said ***"If there was something we needed to help us learn we can ask."***

During my time in the early years class the teacher commented that they have a 'stage not age' philosophy. I particularly like this concept as it demonstrates that staff have a knowledge of the children attending and their needs regardless of academic focuses.

Fund Raising

The school also raise money for a wider range of charities, such as:

- Heel and Toe
- Tumour Research
- CRISIS
- Cancer Research
- Barnardo's
- MIND

These charities are identified and decided via the Pupil Improvement Plans and the Rights Respecting Council.

Some of the activities the children have taken part in to raise money have included:

- A school sleepover – to raise awareness of homelessness
- Wear a hat day – to raise awareness of brain tumours
- Wear yellow and complete random acts of kindness – to raise awareness of mental health

Annual Pupil Improvement Plan

There has been an annual pupil improvement plan created to engage the children in strategic thinking and enable them to see a direct improvement from what they feel is important. These plans are on display within school. The paperwork includes:

- Identifying an issue
- What the children want to happen
- Who will complete what tasks
- Completion date
- Positive impact it will have

liC recommendations

At this point in time there are no recommendations to be made from Investing in Children.

Conclusion

I feel there is a lot of evidence provided by children and staff to show how dialogue and change happen as standard throughout the school on various issues, on day to day basis as well as larger decision making. The concerns from the children following a park visit which resulted in a discussion with police and a visit from the local MP is a really strong example of this. Being involved in these conversations gives children confidence that their views and opinions are important and taken seriously.

All of the children I spoke with were aware that their school have the UNICEF Gold award and every one of them had some sort of role to play in school whether that be an Ambassador, a monitor or a peer mentor. I feel these are significant indicators that each child is valued and their views considered within school life.

For these reasons I'd like to recommend that the Nettlesworth Primary School receive the Investing in Children Membership Award™.

At the next membership renewal visit I'd like to hear about:

- The park improvements following Kevan Jones visit to school.
- The work with the Refuse Café.

Endorsement by Young People

During my initial visit Teddy, Hester, Archer, Alexis, Skye, Karen and Jake all agreed that Nettlesworth Primary school listen to the children here and they should be given the Investing in Children Membership Award™.

I particularly liked when Tilly said ***“Yes adults listen to us. If you were sad, tell a teacher.” “We are lucky ducks because we get to go outside lots.”***

I returned to Nettlesworth Primary on 07th March 2024 and met with the original group of children and Priam. Nine of them agreed that their school should receive the Investing in Children Membership Award™. Tilly wasn't sure, but she did however, agree that staff listen to her.

Well done!!

***Louise Frost
Project Worker
May 2024***

Investing in Children CIC

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