

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Sarah Ryder  
Headteacher  
Manadon Vale Primary School  
St Peter's Road  
Manadon  
Plymouth  
Devon  
PL5 3DL

Dear Mrs Ryder

### **Short inspection of Manadon Vale Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 April 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Senior leaders, including governors and the chief executive officer of the Connect Academy Trust, share an ambitious vision for the school. You understand the school's strengths and areas where further improvements can be made. For example, during joint scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, you demonstrated an accurate understanding of the quality of education throughout the school. The academy trust has provided high-quality training for teachers through strong collaboration, and this has led to a significant rise in the quality of collective leadership across the school. You are well supported by middle leaders, including the mathematics and English teams.

Governors are effective and know the school well. They are fully involved in the life of the school and are committed to ensuring that pupils' welfare is at the heart of all decision making. Governors have a deep understanding and knowledge of the progress of individual groups and challenge school leaders accordingly where there are variations in outcomes.

Parents and carers are welcomed and encouraged to become involved in the life of the school. They are complimentary about the school and the education their children receive. Positive relationships with parents help to break down barriers to learning and raise expectations of pupils. There was an overwhelmingly positive

response to the online inspection questionnaire, Parent View, gathered as part of the inspection. One parent summarised this with the comment, 'Academically and socially, my child has flourished at Manadon.'

The 2018 national curriculum assessments at key stage 2 show that most pupils made progress in reading, in writing and in mathematics at least in line with that of all pupils nationally by the time they left the school after Year 6. The progress of pupils in writing was particularly strong, being significantly above the national average. This prepared them well for the next stage of their education. However, you are aware that the small group of low prior attaining pupils made slightly less progress than the national average in reading.

You have secured strong provision in the early years. This has led to more children achieving a good level of development in their early years foundation stage profile. This is now in line with the national figure. This demonstrates that current children have a secure platform upon which to develop further when they reach key stage 1. In 2018, achievement was strong in key stage 1, with attainment at the expected standard higher than the national average. Pupils also consistently achieve well and most reach the expected standard in the key stage 1 phonics screening check.

Leaders recognise that the management of less able pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not sufficiently developed. Effective pastoral support is put in place. However, checks on the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' writing are not effective. Writing activities are not matched closely enough to the pupils' precise learning needs. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not make strong progress from their starting points.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding and care across the school. A nominated governor ensures that all safeguarding procedures are robust. All staff follow the school's rigorous recording and reporting systems. Leaders work well with other agencies and they take appropriate and timely action to keep vulnerable pupils safe. You and your governors ensure that staff complete all relevant training, including about the prevention of extremism, radicalisation, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Appropriate checks are made on all staff before they begin work at the school to ensure that they are fit and proper to work with children.

Pupils report that they feel safe in the school and Ofsted's online surveys show that parents and staff agree. Pupils say there is little bullying in the school. They are confident in the knowledge that staff deal promptly with any concerns they may have. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe, including from online bullying.

## Inspection findings

- We agreed the first line of enquiry would be to evaluate the impact of teachers' actions to ensure that low prior attaining pupils in key stage 2 make strong progress, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching assistants provide strong support to the low prior attaining pupils, including effective encouragement and well-chosen additional teaching programmes to support pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils are becoming keen and confident readers and mathematicians.
- Across key stage 2, pupils are making strong progress in mathematics. This is due to teachers' secure subject knowledge and improvements in the teaching of reasoning and problem solving. All learners, including the low prior attaining pupils, are able to use critical thinking skills in mathematics consistently. Pupils decide for themselves which strategies to use to improve their work. Consequently, most pupils are making good progress in mathematics this year.
- During our visits to key stage 2 classrooms, we looked for examples of low prior attaining pupils being challenged to reach high standards in reading. I talked with pupils and asked them to show me the progress that they are making over time, as shown in their workbooks. Pupils talked confidently about their improving reading skills, such as decoding sophisticated language and using their growing knowledge of vocabulary. However, leaders are aware that some of the low prior attaining pupils with SEND are not making the same rates of progress in writing as they are in reading. This is because teachers do not take the pupils' individual education plans into account when planning activities.
- My second line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders ensure that the curriculum allows pupils in key stage 1 to achieve the high standards of which they are capable. This was because, in the past, a lower proportion of pupils, especially girls, have reached the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics than the national average.
- The school's monitoring systems are precise and are focused on enabling leaders to rapidly identify, and address, rates of progress and attainment for specific groups of pupils, including girls and the most able. Teaching has been adapted to match the needs of girls more closely. As a result, the current most able pupils, including girls, are making strong progress in key stage 1 from their starting points. Pupils are provided with inspiring activities to develop their depth of understanding across the curriculum.
- Pupils, including the most able girls, make good progress in mathematics because their work is suitably challenging. They are able to articulate their ideas clearly and justify their responses, for example when choosing the most effective methods for adding and subtracting numbers. Additional mathematics workshops for the most able pupils are having a positive impact on attainment. The most able pupils in Year 2 count confidently, recognise fractions and use advanced mathematical vocabulary correctly.
- The profile of reading for the most able pupils has risen by the provision of a wide range of challenging books and texts. This ensures that they reach the

higher standards of which they are capable at the end of key stage 1. Most-able pupils make good use of teaching resources to make their writing more interesting. For example, in Year 1, pupils are routinely provided with additional resources such as 'word mats' to help them to select adventurous vocabulary independently. Pupils use phrases to add rich description to their stories. Work scrutiny shows that the most able pupils' imagination and composition has significantly improved over time.

- My final line of enquiry was to evaluate the impact of leaders' systems to ensure that pupils' attendance is improved. I explored why the most recently published attendance figures indicated that attendance was a weakness.
- Scrutiny of attendance information confirmed that a significant contributing factor to the high rate of absence was due to the large number of families taking unauthorised holidays in term time. Leaders from the Connect Academy Trust rigorously challenge this. You work hard, in partnership with the parent support adviser, to instil the importance of good attendance with parents and carers. In September 2018, you introduced a range of initiatives to motivate pupils to attend school regularly. The pupils I spoke with are inspired by the rewards system and talked about how proud they are when they receive the 'termly raffle ticket'. However, the actions to improve attendance are recent. Consequently, the impact of the rewards system on improving attendance is not evident in current attendance information.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff receive the training they need to accurately assess and plan writing activities for pupils with SEND.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Costello  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Together, we visited all classrooms to observe teaching and its impact on learning. We looked at a range of pupils' books, across a variety of subjects. I met with you and your governors and with other senior and middle leaders. I also held a discussion with the chief executive officer of the academy trust. I looked at the school's information about the safeguarding of pupils and examined behaviour,

attendance and bullying records. I also checked a range of other documentation, such as your self-evaluation, your school development plan and your assessment information. I held formal discussions with pupils and spoke informally to pupils during lessons. I also listened to pupils read. I considered parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke with several parents on the playground as they dropped their children off at school.