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Miss Fletcher  
Headteacher  
Manifold CofE (VC) Primary School  
Off Leek Road  
Warslow  
Buxton  
SK17 0JP

Dear Miss Fletcher

**Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Manifold CofE (VC) Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 November 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection.

The headteacher in post at the time of the previous inspection retired and was replaced by the current headteacher in September 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 21 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 inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

Teacher assessment, for the pupils that left Year 2 in July 2011, indicates that progress overall is satisfactory. However, the small group of boys and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities in this cohort made progress that was much slower than these groups nationally and also when compared to the girls in the cohort. An examination of pupils' work shows that the assessment of the progress and attainment of Year 2 girls is too generous. This inaccuracy in teacher assessment is a weakness throughout the school. Since the previous inspection, the progress made in writing in Key Stage 1 is slow. In reading and mathematics, progress is closer to the expected rate. Pupils behave well in lessons and

demonstrate an eagerness to learn. However, this is undermined in the lessons that do not sufficiently foster their independence, creativity or problem-solving skills because there is too much emphasis on directed activity by the teacher.

Since September, the headteacher and governing body, supported by the local authority, have worked hard to try to ensure that the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is maintained at the expected level. This has been done, for example, by sharing the responsibility for teaching and utilising additional specialist support. However, the progress made by pupils is fragile because local authority reports, school records and pupils' work show that, over time, the underlying weaknesses in teaching and learning remain.

Records show that, in lessons in Key Stage 1, the use of resources, classroom management and the quality of questioning have improved. However, assessment information is not used effectively to tailor work to challenge or support pupils effectively. Often, pupils carry out the same piece of work regardless of ability, particularly when writing. Assessment information is not used well enough to ensure that the activities presented to pupils are pitched at the correct level for them so that, sometimes, it is too hard and, at others, insufficiently challenging. Often, objectives for learning are unhelpful in enabling pupils to understand what it is they are learning about and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. When marking, teachers make few comments to advise pupils on the next steps they need to take to improve their work. These weaknesses are also apparent in the work of pupils in Years 3 and 4. The pupils spoken to reported that they enjoyed their lessons but they were unable to articulate how well they were doing or what they needed to do to further improve their work.

The curriculum has been enriched with visits to local towns, and links are established with schools that result in pupils having a better understanding of life in urban areas. For example, pupils visited Leek and Chester, and gave detailed reports about their experiences. Opportunities in lessons to develop this understanding, such as in English and history, are becoming embedded. Pupils understandably report that, while they prefer to live in the country, they appreciate the importance of towns and the facilities they offer.

Currently, the governing body, supported by the local authority, is following the necessary procedure to improve teaching and learning. The headteacher demonstrates a clear understanding of where developments to teaching and learning need to be made and how to make them. She has established procedures to regularly check the quality of lessons and has, rightly, identified that improvement to teaching and learning need to be made throughout the school and not just in Key Stage 1. However, she is hampered by a lack of established effective procedures to

support learning. For example, assessment and marking procedures are inaccurate or unhelpful and do not sufficiently hold teachers to account for pupil progress. The governing body demonstrates a growing understanding of the importance of holding the headteacher and others to account for their work. It is no longer the case that it will accept the word of school leaders without further checks.

The local authority has been effective in supporting the school to implement the procedures necessary to improve teaching and learning. Some of the expertise gained from local authority consultants, such as the support in the Early Years Foundation Stage, has resulted in improvements to provision. Support has been less successful in embedding improvements to teaching and learning in English and mathematics lessons. Partnerships with other local school leaders have been helpful in identifying where improvements in teaching and learning need to be made.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve progress in Years 1 and 2 to the good rate observed in the rest of the school by:
  - ensuring pupils spend less time listening to the teacher and more time actively learning
  - moving more quickly to group activities which challenge pupils according to their ability
  - expecting pupils to answer questions more fully in order to explain their thinking so that teachers can assess pupils' understanding and progress
  - using appropriate resources when demonstrating activities.
- Ensure priorities for development are focused sharply on the areas of the school that are in most need of improvement, with clear criteria for the expected outcomes of any planned actions.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to learn about life in urban areas.