

Manor School

Lydalls Close, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 7LB

Inspection dates

22–23 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have too much to do on their own because leaders of important aspects of the school's work are not sufficiently senior to drive rapid improvement.
- Governance of the school has not provided enough strategic direction since the school converted to an academy in 2013. Governors do not have the necessary knowledge and expertise to challenge school leaders or promote the unique character of the school.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good throughout the school. Teaching is too variable and because of this, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, including the most able, those who are disadvantaged and those with lower starting points.
- Some key weaknesses identified in the predecessor school were not tackled effectively after the school became an academy and have only recently begun to improve, even after three years. Valuable time has been lost.
- The early years provision requires improvement. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception Year is below the national average. Children are not challenged sufficiently.
- Recent sensible and well-judged initiatives to improve the school have not had sufficient time to demonstrate an impact on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school's curriculum does not provide enough challenge for pupils, including opportunities for them to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

The school has the following strengths

- Since her appointment in September 2015, the deputy headteacher has made a huge impact on the quality of teaching, assessment.
- Recent appointments to the teaching staff have refreshed teaching and learning. Morale is high and pupils benefit from enthusiastic and committed teachers.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the site is good. They are respectful to their teachers and get along with each other extremely well.
- Positive values and an inclusive atmosphere permeate every aspect of the school and make it a welcoming place in which to work and learn.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels, including governance, senior and middle leaders, so that:
 - initiatives to improve the school, including improvements to the curriculum, are monitored more closely and their success measured by their impact on outcomes for pupils
 - teaching, learning and assessment lead to rapid progress for all pupils
 - governors quickly acquire a deep and accurate understanding of what makes the school unique, plan strategically for the future of the school and hold leaders strictly to account for improving outcomes for pupils, particularly, but not exclusively, disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are most able.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes, by:
 - ensuring that there is consistently good practice in each class, year group and key stage
 - assuring that the most-able pupils achieve all that they capable of, including in mathematics
 - precisely focusing on meeting pupils' needs and building on what they already know, understand and can do
 - checking progression through the curriculum and expectations of different key stages carefully, focusing on mastery and securing understanding, but without unnecessary repeating of work already covered
 - making sure that pupils know what their next steps are and that their steps of progress are coherently planned and linked to what is being assessed term by term.

- Improve the quality of learning and the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development in the early years, by:
 - planning more challenging activities and providing exactly the right amount of guidance to enhance children's experiences and promote rich acquisition of language
 - capturing evidence of children's progress when they are being assessed with more focus on what they are learning, particularly with number work.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The current senior leadership team is too small. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have too much to do which limits their capacity to drive improvement and assure good progress for all pupils. Middle leaders, including the inclusion leader and coordinator for special educational needs, have major responsibilities in a school of this size and type, but insufficient back-up because of the lack of dedicated senior leaders.
- Key aspects of the school's work, such as improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, have been seen as a 'project' for members of staff to work on for defined periods of time, rather than an integral part of the school's duties to assure good achievement for all. In the past this has resulted in a haphazard method of school improvement. The school has altered this approach now, but significant time has been lost.
- Some actions to improve the school, including systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and also the new curriculum and assessment system, have only been introduced recently and it is too soon to measure the impact.
- As a result of the shortfall in senior leadership, communication with parents is not as good as it should be. Some parents are concerned that the school is declining and are unclear about the rationale for changes being made.
- Pupils learn about a range of subjects in line with the requirements of the new national curriculum but not always in a way that enriches their experiences. School leaders recognise the need to broaden the curriculum, so that it more explicitly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils benefit from extra-curricular opportunities, including trips to the local railway centre, and a large range of after-school clubs linked to music, sports and languages.
- The deputy headteacher has made a significant impact on the school in a very short time. Since her appointment in September 2015, she has overhauled systems used to assess pupils' progress, established a sensible approach to monitoring teaching and learning, supported the large group of new staff who have recently started and brought a new impetus and drive to the school. She has wisely built upon the inclusive values and welcoming ethos established by the headteacher.
- Senior leaders have rightly eradicated inadequate teaching and they have put in appropriate plans and training to improve teaching that is not good enough. Newly qualified teachers are guided well and are making good progress. Teachers benefit from and value the support they receive. Their performance is evaluated through a newly improved appraisal system and all teachers and teaching assistants are set challenging targets to meet, based on school priorities.
- Leaders make effective use of the support offered by the academy trust network of schools. Staff are able to cross-moderate pupils' work, visit each other's schools and share good practice.
- Physical education and sports funding is used well by school leaders to provide high-quality experiences for pupils as part of their timetabled lessons, professional development for teachers and more opportunities for extra-curricular sport. Numbers of pupils participating in extra-curricular sport have already doubled in the first term.
- The school has now recognised that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is a key priority. Teachers make sure they plan for this group of pupils and are implementing creative approaches to raising their achievement and self-esteem. It is early days and the system to monitor the impact of the pupil premium funding is in its infancy, but the school can identify improved progress for disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors do not demonstrate a sufficiently deep and accurate understanding of the school. Previous governing bodies have not held the school to account strictly enough and have not worked strategically to prevent a decline in performance.
 - Governors have not examined the performance of pupils closely enough. While they have a good understanding of what the pupil premium funding is for, they have not monitored closely the impact of any interventions.
 - Long-term financial planning has not helped the school build up its leadership capacity. Decision making about the future direction of the school is not strategic and does not take enough account of what is best for the pupils.

- Previous governing bodies have not done enough to promote the unique character of the school among parents or taken enough active interest in the school’s day-to-day work. Nor have they looked to review their practices systematically by learning about good governance in other schools in the trust or further afield. As a result, support and challenge for senior leaders are lacking, leaving the school in a vulnerable position.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils and children are kept safe because staff and leaders take prompt action to report concerns and there are good relationships with local authority children’s services, social workers and families. The Didcot Area Partnership of Schools provides home-school link workers who work across all five schools, supporting families and children. School staff know exactly what to do if they have a concern and have had recent training, following the guidance from the Secretary of State. The inclusion leader, who, together with the headteacher, is the designated leader for safeguarding and child protection, has time to perform her duties and has had up-to-date training. All required vetting checks on adults working in the school have been carried out and recorded according to statutory guidance.
- During the inspection, minor shortfalls in some procedures were identified by the inspection team, related to record keeping and the school’s safeguarding policy. For example, the child protection and safeguarding policy had just been updated and approved by the governing body but was not on the website. All weaknesses were immediately tackled by the school and rectified before the end of the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good in all year groups and classes. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they should to make rapid progress.
- Weaker teaching in the school does not take into sufficient account what pupils already know, understand and can do. There is not enough challenge and stretch for the most able.
- In learning observed during the inspection and some pupils’ books, it was clear that expectations are not high enough, including of pupils who have lower starting points. Some work is too easy for these pupils and they do not have enough opportunity to catch up because limits are placed on what they could learn.
- Too many pupils do not really know what they have to do next to make progress to the next level of learning. They have clear guidance about looking back at work they have just completed. Habits of editing and taking responsibility for improving individual pieces of work are well established in pupils and they respond well to their teachers’ feedback. Pupils told the inspectors that they felt this was very helpful. However, pupils do not have a clear enough idea of how they will apply their new skills to the next topic.
- Links between what is being formally assessed and what pupils are actually learning day to day are not clear, so it is difficult for teachers and leaders to evaluate progress as accurately as they should.
- Homework is not used effectively to consolidate learning or build up good habits for the future. Parents and pupils told inspectors that the school sets homework and that it is part of the school’s expectations, but the policy is not always clearly applied. There is an inconsistent approach which some pupils and parents find confusing.
- Pupils do not always present their work neatly. Some expectations are not high so pupils do not take enough pride in their work.
- Teachers have created a vibrant and stimulating classroom environment. Displays of pupils’ work and helpful ‘work in progress’ support learning and celebrate achievement. Resources are well organised and accessible.
- Teachers generally have sound subject knowledge. They clearly enjoy planning interesting activities for pupils and make use of helpful practical materials to motivate pupils.
- Relationships between adults and pupils in lessons are a real strength of the school. Pupils really value their teachers and their knowledge. They know staff are there to help them succeed.
- Teachers’ feedback on pupils’ work is effective and valued by pupils and parents. Teachers adhere to the school marking and feedback policy and their approach is consistent. Attention paid to spelling, punctuation and grammar is leading to greater accuracy in pupils’ writing, particularly in the older year groups.
- The high number of new teaching staff in the school have settled in well, as have their classes. School leaders are pleased with the injection of energy and dynamism that new staff have brought to the school. Inspectors agreed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school rightly prides itself on its inclusive and welcoming atmosphere. There is good provision for those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils get along well together and look out for each other. Values such as cooperation and trust are imbued throughout the school and help to create its distinctive ethos.
- Pupils feel they are known well and cared for. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' physical and emotional health in the school. Pupils really appreciate the good relationships they have with their teachers and other staff. Pupils told inspectors about the trust they had in the adults who are there to help them.
- Pupils are thoughtful, considerate and honest. They are friendly and confident, enjoy being part of the school and talking about their work. Bullying, including use of derogatory or racist language, is rare and pupils are confident that any incidents of this kind would be dealt with well by teachers and leaders.
- Pupils take good care of the school and follow the rules about moving around the site or crossing the road from one site to another with maturity and common sense.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to take responsibility, such as a reading buddy scheme between older and younger pupils. School leaders correctly recognise that pupils would benefit from even more opportunities to broaden their horizons and stretch their experience through better provision for cultural development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils respond promptly to instructions from adults and show respect. Low-level disruption to learning is rare. Pupils understand the importance of being studious and courteous.
- Pupils behave well at break and lunchtime. Younger pupils enjoy playing together and do so safely, even though there is little equipment available while plans are underway for some refurbishment of play areas. Older pupils enjoy breaks and lunchtime in a lively but civilised way.
- Some parents raised concerns with the inspection team about the school's management of behaviour, which was followed up closely by inspectors. However, the inspection found that the school has a wide range of effective strategies to instil good conduct, maintain an orderly environment and reward those who always behave well.
- Leaders and teachers have developed effective strategies to support better behaviour for those pupils who have difficulties regulating their emotions because of their special educational needs. The school's nurture and inclusion room, 'The Burrow', is a welcoming and calming environment to help pupils get back into a frame of mind where they can learn well.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with national figures. School leaders track absence of individuals and particular groups. While there are signs that the school's work to reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability is having a positive impact, numbers are still too high. Not all parents support excellent attendance as well as they should and some take unauthorised holidays during term time.
- The school rarely needs to exclude pupils. However, there has been a recent increase in exclusions following a tougher line on managing challenging behaviour. School leaders are able to point to resulting improvements in behaviour for individuals.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because in some lessons, usually when the teaching is less effective or expectations are not high enough, pupils sometimes lose concentration and stop working with their usual diligence and purpose. For a few younger pupils, good habits of attentiveness and listening are not yet established.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The most-able pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics. Pupils who attained the highest levels at the end of Key Stage 1 are not sufficiently challenged to continue their good progress.
- Pupils with low starting points, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs do not all make expected progress in reading, writing or mathematics. Rates of progress for those pupils who have special educational needs or disability are sometimes too slow because expectations of what they can achieve are too low and the work they are set is too easy.

- The progress gap at the end of Key Stage 2 between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils narrowed in 2014, but widened again in 2015, indicating that the school's work to accelerate progress of disadvantaged pupils is not yet effective in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' results in the phonics screening check, based on pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds that they make, are below the national average figures at the end of Year 1. Pupils catch up by the end of Year 2, but early teaching of reading and letters is not promoting rapid progress, particularly for those pupils who have difficulties with speech and language.
- Through a detailed work scrutiny of pupils' mathematics, English and topic work in all year groups, the inspection team noted that sometimes pupils do not apply their writing skills well in topic work. For example, some work seen was untidy and inaccurate, which had not been checked by the teacher. In other cases, pupils had completed the same exercises to practise particular grammar or punctuation skills, even when they had clearly demonstrated that they have mastered these in previous pieces of work.
- However, the inspection team also noted some growing strengths in pupils' books, particularly when expectations were consistently high:
 - Many pupils make good progress in writing. There were marked improvements in most pupils' extended creative writing from September 2015 to March 2016 in all year groups.
 - Progress in mathematics for the most-able pupils, particularly in Year 6, was accelerating and these pupils are on track to reach their target levels.
 - Pupils are acquiring better grammatical knowledge and are able to punctuate and spell more accurately because they follow up their teachers' feedback and practise their corrections.
- The school introduced a new assessment system and software package based on the newly revised curriculum in September 2015. Leaders have rightly focused closely on ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate and that their evaluation of standards is reliable. There are indications that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than in previous years, particularly in mathematics. However, it is early days and too soon to judge whether disadvantaged pupils will catch up with other pupils' attainment.
- Pupils enjoy reading and most continue their reading at home. However, a few pupils do not use their knowledge of letters and sounds to help them with reading unfamiliar vocabulary.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Teaching in the Reception Year requires improvement. There are similar inconsistencies in expectations and the quality of assessment to those found in the rest of the school. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is below the national average, particularly for boys and disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes in reading, writing and number are weaker than those found nationally for these groups.
- Although the early years leader has a good grasp how to manage staff and develop their skills, planned activities are not sufficiently challenging. As a result, children do not make rapid enough progress from their lower than average starting points.
- The balance between child-initiated learning and teacher-led activities is not well thought out. Child-initiated activities are very little different from playtime and do not stimulate children's curiosity enough.
- Adults' interventions are not always well judged. Opportunities are missed to enrich children's language and imagination, whereas at other times, adults unnecessarily interrupt children's own experiments in play, construction or exploration.
- Work and evidence of learning in children's books does not include enough first-hand evaluation of their achievements: instead, adults record brief comments related to the areas of learning which are far removed from the actual moment of progress. As a result, planning does not build precisely on children's previous experiences and their progress is limited.
- Curriculum planning does not provide enough exciting and new activities for children. Staff told inspectors that they took into account children's interests and built activities around them. However, work around a central theme was not evident during the inspection or in children's books. Inspectors observed work and play areas that did not attract children's interest. In some cases children were not sure what they were supposed to be doing. There were limited opportunities for pupils to explore and learn about number, which was also reflected in their books.

- Early phonics teaching, designed to introduce children to letters and the sounds they make, does not get children off to a flying start. As a result, they are not as well prepared for Year 1 as they should be.
- Behaviour and personal development are strengths of the early years provision. Children form strong relationships with each other and adults. They quickly acquire and consolidate good manners and friendly confidence. Routines are well established and expectations of conduct are high.
- There are good relationships with families and staff know children very well.
- The outdoor learning areas and classrooms are spacious and full of equipment and toys. Children are able to explore these resources with minimal adult direction. They are able to organise their own games, interact with each other and try out experiences.
- Children have opportunities to attend the on-site Forest School, which further develops a sense of teamwork and their social skills.
- Children are safe and the provision meets all statutory requirements for the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	139755
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10011105

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	497
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Paine
Headteacher	John Hawkins
Telephone number	01235 812762
Website	http://9312597-public.sharepoint.com/
Email address	office.2597@manor-didcot.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Manor School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The predecessor school, which was also called Manor School, converted to academy status in June 2013 as part of the Oxford Primary Education Network, which is an academy trust with four other primary schools.
- Nearly one quarter of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability, including those with a statement or an education, health and care plan, is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides full-time, early years provision in three Reception classes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons, including 10 observed jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, two groups of staff and a group of pupils selected by the inspection team.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- Inspectors carried out a work scrutiny with leaders for literacy, mathematics and the early years.
- The inspection team took into account the 97 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, and the 60 written comments made by parents. One parent contacted Ofsted to make comments and the lead inspector received one letter from a parent. These communications were considered alongside other evidence, including conversations with parents who were dropping off their children at the school gate.
- There were 20 responses to the staff survey which were taken into consideration by the inspection team.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including safeguarding records, information about pupils’ progress, behaviour and attendance and the school’s evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ work in lessons and spoke to them informally in lessons and at breaktimes. An inspector heard pupils in Years 2 and 6 reading.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher from the Willowcroft Community School, which is part of the Oxford Primary Education Network academy trust.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Kathryn Moles	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Barbara Chevis	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Walshe	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Barnes	Ofsted Inspector

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