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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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30 November 2022

Victoria Saville
Principal
Manor Green Primary Academy
Mancunian Road
Haughton Green
Denton
Manchester
M34 7NS

Dear Mrs Saville

Special measures monitoring inspection of Manor Green Primary Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 2 and 3 November 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in April 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other leaders, members of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO and the director of learning for Focus-Trust multi-academy trust the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, reviewed pupils' books and listened to pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a trusted adult. I spent time looking at a range of documentation, including safeguarding records and information about pupils' behaviour. I also talked with subject leaders, members of staff, parents and carers and a representative of the local authority. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Manor Green Primary Academy remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

The school should take further action to:

- improve pupils' attendance, especially for those pupils who do not attend school regularly enough, to help them to overcome the gaps in their learning.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection in April 2022, you took up post as principal. A new vice-principal, assistant principal and family support worker have also taken up post. The senior leadership team has been extended. New subject leaders are in place. A new chair of the local governing body has been appointed. A short-term provision, known as the Pearl Room, has been put in place to help pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour.

You and other leaders, including leaders from the trust, have taken decisive and effective action to tackle the considerable shortcomings identified at the previous inspection. This work is bearing fruit. You have established a solid foundation on which to secure further improvements to the quality of education for pupils. You have won the trust and confidence of the staff. They are willingly following your lead to bring about positive change. Morale is high because staff feel part of a united team. They appreciate the support that they are receiving to improve their practice, to safeguard their well-being and to help them manage their workload.

Your success to date is, in part, due to time and energy being spent where it is needed most. You are dealing with the most pressing issues and making sure that improvements are sustainable. You and the staff have avoided lamenting over the last inspection. Instead, you have drawn a line in the sand and moved on. This explains why so much has been accomplished in a relatively short amount of time.

Pupils no longer experience a jumbled education. Instead, there is now a well-thought-through curriculum. Subject content has been carefully organised to enable pupils to learn more as they move from year to year. Even so, the current curriculum does not go far enough in identifying the essential knowledge that pupils should learn. This means that, at times, teachers focus on stand-alone activities rather than designing learning that secures pupils' knowledge over a series of lessons.

Without exception, teachers are following the new curriculum diligently, but the impact of this positive change is varied. Some teachers have strong subject knowledge. This enables them to check carefully that pupils know all that they should before more complex ideas are introduced. These teachers think carefully about the small steps that pupils need to make to understand a new concept. They help pupils to understand new information through careful modelling and well-chosen questions. Elsewhere, teachers do not know enough about pupils' prior learning. They persist with new subject content without making sure that pupils are ready. This causes some pupils to lose interest. For others, the gaps in their learning widen rather than close.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is improving. Leaders of this area have successfully shared the tools and information that teachers need to ensure that these pupils can thrive. Teachers are increasingly thinking about the needs of these pupils when designing learning. That said, some teachers are less well equipped to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for the pupils with SEND in their class. At times, they rely too heavily on the additional adults who support these pupils. This inhibits pupils' independence and, occasionally, prevents them from benefiting from the main teaching sessions.

The reading curriculum has been revitalised. All staff have been suitably trained to deliver the new phonics scheme. This means that right from the start of the Reception Year, children learn the sounds that letters represent in a systematic manner. Pupils at the early stages of reading, including those in key stage 2, read books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. This enables these pupils to read with confidence and increasing fluency. You have invested heavily in a new approach to supporting pupils who struggle to read. This is helping them to access the curriculum more readily than was the case in the past. Older pupils now benefit from ambitious texts during their reading lessons. These quality books are fostering a love of reading. They are also expanding pupils' understanding of the diverse world in which we live.

Pupils are enjoying their learning. They are beginning to remember what they have been taught. However, the legacy of poor curriculum choices in the past means that many pupils in key stage 2 have gaps in their basic knowledge and understanding. While pupils are better able to read and talk, often very articulately, about the texts that they have enjoyed, they are less able to capture their thinking in their written work.

Eradicating the unacceptable behaviour that led to pupils and staff feeling unsafe in school has been your top priority. The school's records of poor behaviour and bullying incidents show that the new approach to managing behaviour, including the use of the Pearl Room, is making a positive difference. There are far fewer incidents of destructive or unkind behaviour than there were previously. Lessons are calm and pupils can usually learn without disruption. However, this is not replicated well enough during the key stage 2 social times. Teachers, and staff across the school, appreciate the consistent support that they receive if pupils exhibit unacceptable behaviour.

Pupils have also noticed the difference. Most of those who shared their views stated that they felt safe and that they were confident to report their concerns to staff. Leaders are taking effective action to deal with unkind behaviour, such as harmful name-calling and bullying. Even so, some older pupils remain a little anxious. For some, the memories of how it used to be are still at the forefront of their mind. Others know that behaviour is not as good as it should be. Added to this, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Their absence means that they are not able to benefit from leaders' and teachers' heightened expectations, nor are they able to overcome the gaps in their learning.

You have further improved the procedures to keep pupils safe. Staff know their roles and responsibilities and are able to share their concerns through a well-understood system. Record-keeping is thorough and safeguarding leaders are tenacious in ensuring that vulnerable pupils get the support that they need. Given the improvements in pupils' behaviour, safeguarding is now effective.

You have successfully built capacity within the senior leadership team and you are in the process of developing leadership roles and responsibilities more widely across the staff team. New subject leaders are enthusiastic about the challenge ahead of them. They are responding positively to the support and guidance that is in place to help to grow their expertise. Nonetheless, this work is at the earliest stages. Currently, these leaders have too little influence on the curriculum design or delivery.

Members of the local governing body have galvanised themselves following the previous inspection. With the support of the trust, they have increased their insight into leaders' work. They have also strengthened their oversight of the progress that is being made to make sure pupils are safe and better educated. Members of the trust board are keeping a close eye on the school's journey, asking probing questions and ensuring that you and other leaders are receiving the support that is needed.

While some parents have noted the improvements at the school, many are not convinced that this is making a big enough difference to their child's experience. Some parents continue to worry about bullying and behaviour. Many are not content with the communication channels. Rebuilding parents' trust and confidence is a top priority for you, governors and trust leaders.

You have used the support from the trust wisely to aid school improvement. For example, leaders have worked closely with trust leaders to shape the curriculum. You have also utilised expertise from outside of the trust wisely. For instance, you have used the knowledge of the local authority safeguarding officer to help to improve the systems to keep pupils and staff happy and safe at school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Focus-Trust multi-academy trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Tameside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Olsson
His Majesty's Inspector