

Herne Bay Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118359
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358325
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Jolly
Headteacher	Anne Hooker
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors looked at a wide range of evidence, which included seeing 15 teachers teach 20 lessons or part-lessons. Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work. They discussed pupils' progress with senior leaders, which also involved scrutinising assessment information. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and seven members of the governing body. Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, such as the school's improvement planning and evidence about lesson observations. Procedures and policies to protect and safeguard pupils were analysed. In total, 99 parents' and carers' questionnaires were analysed, along with staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The achievement of the current Year 2 pupils, in order to explore whether the school could demonstrate outstanding achievement for all groups of pupils, especially for those who speak English as an additional language, the oldest pupils in each year group and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well attendance has improved, to ensure that preparation for pupils' future economic well-being is as good as possible.
- The key qualities of teaching and learning that possibly contribute to pupils' very effective learning.
- The quality of leaders' self-evaluation and the impact of this on the school's capacity to improve.

Information about the school

Herne Bay Infant School is a large school. In the last two years, there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most pupils, however, come from White British heritage. A few pupils speak English as an additional language, some of whom join with little or no spoken English. The school has a Nursery, known as Seashells, and four Reception classes and these make up the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school provides an on-site breakfast club, which is managed by the governing body. Pupils can also attend an after-school club, which is run on the junior school site and as such was not part of this inspection. Just over a third of all pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is a higher proportion than is usually found nationally. Pupils' particular needs are most often linked to social, emotional or language and communication difficulties. A few pupils have behavioural difficulties.

The school has gained a number of awards, including Active Mark, Healthy Schools status, ECO Schools (silver award) and Extended Schools status. Seashells Nursery has achieved the Kent Quality Mark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Herne Bay Infant School is an outstanding school that offers very impressive value for money and a brilliant start to children's education. Pupils are very happy and parents and carers have immense confidence in the school. As one parent explained, 'Not a single day of schooling passes without a wonderful 'wow' feeling. We are so, so, so pleased.' The dedication and vision of the exceptional headteacher is at the heart of this highly successful school. She is extremely well supported by the deputy, other staff and by the outstanding work and commitment of the governing body.

The very highest quality of care, guidance and support is offered to pupils. This includes outstanding safeguarding procedures and very effective links with parents, carers and others. These features contribute significantly to why pupils thrive. This is an outstandingly inclusive school in which pupils confirm that staff are kind, helpful and encouraging. From the moment you walk into the school, there is a sense of this being a happy, calm and welcoming place to be.

Children make an outstanding start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Throughout Years 1 and 2, they continue to develop very well so that achievement for pupils by the end of Year 2 is outstanding. The school has maintained high attainment since 2008. The school's data indicate that there may be a slight dip for the current Year 2, due to the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in this year group. Attainment continues to be on track to be exceptionally high in Year 1.

Pupils also do very well in their all-round personal development. Their contribution to the community, awareness of how to be safe and their behaviour are all outstanding. They enjoy plenty of rigorous exercise and an exciting range of clubs and visits, which enrich their learning well. Taking all of these features into account, including the above average and improved rates of attendance, they are prepared exceptionally well for their future economic well-being.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. The combination of very high expectations, superb relationships, excellent resources and an extremely calm environment are amongst the key elements that explain why teaching is of such high quality. Added to these points, all teaching staff and teaching assistants are very well trained and have a strong understanding of how pupils learn in different ways; they provide an outstanding curriculum.

Exceptionally good teamwork has led to a successful drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result of this there has been a concerted and effective effort to improve performance since the last inspection. The school has improved from being a good school to become outstanding. It is correctly focused on improving global awareness, so that promoting community cohesion and cultural awareness can be improved from

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good to outstanding. Even so, self-evaluation is not yet rigorous enough to ensure that it is consistently accurate. For example, not all leaders and managers analyse and use data with a high enough level of sophistication. The school's capacity to improve is therefore good rather than outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that self-evaluation processes are rigorous and contributions by leaders at all levels are of consistently high quality.
- Lift the promotion of community cohesion and cultural development to become outstanding in the future by:
 - widening opportunities for global awareness and by helping pupils to learn and understand even more about the multicultural world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are very successful learners because they are nurtured, supported and encouraged to work hard. They enjoy learning. As one pupil explained, 'I like learning a lot and doing hard things to learn even more.' The lessons, work and assessment information seen confirm that pupils' achievement is outstanding. They acquire knowledge, develop understanding, learn and practise skills in a concerted way. As a result, they are very confident when reading, writing and when doing mathematical and scientific investigations. Their art work is of a high standard. In all that they do, they show great independence and concentration. For example, in a lesson on measuring, pupils were totally absorbed and excited when rolling balloons filled with different amounts of water to compare how far they travelled. When editing and improving their written work, there was a sense of determination as they endeavoured to produce interesting stories about a wishing well.

All groups of pupils do exceptionally well from their wide-ranging starting points, including the oldest pupils in each year group (autumn born). The school has been especially successful in ensuring that pupils who speak English as an additional language are helped to accelerate their skills. This group, like all other pupils, benefit from the excellent emphasis on developing their speaking and thinking skills. They learn how to ask questions and negotiate with others in a purposeful way. Pupils in Year 1, for example, asked a very good range of questions to find out about stick insects. In all year groups, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do very well. This is because of the careful attention to their individual needs and provision for challenging and suitable work. This enables this group to overcome barriers to learning so that they often reach or exceed average levels of attainment.

Pupils from a wide range of groups have a strong voice in decisions relating to their learning and well-being. They keenly raise funds for charity and enjoy taking part in such things as the 'Herne Bay In Bloom' gardening project. They have an excellent understanding about how to be safe, including the dangers of fire and electricity, as well as how to be safe on the road. Pupils are taught to swim well. They all love the daily energetic dance sessions, which help them to be fit and healthy. Pupils enjoy learning about different cultures and the school is now focused on providing more first-hand experiences to show similarities and differences between their own and others' cultures.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers ensure that lessons are thoroughly planned so that the needs of all groups are very well met. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subjects that they teach and show high expectations so that basic skills are extremely well developed. They make learning meaningful and fun. For example, Year 2 pupils had great fun outdoors searching for hidden 'connective' words, such as 'so', 'because' and 'then'. Following this, pupils learnt how to use these words to write longer sentences. Teachers stress the importance of very good handwriting and work very well to promote early philosophical thinking. In lessons, and when marking and checking pupils' progress, adults thoroughly assess pupils' learning. They use this information extremely well to plan the next steps of this learning. Teachers skilfully alter lessons as they go, to ensure that pupils understand new things very well. For example, when adding three numbers together, a teacher helped pupils to act out key words, such as 'adding' and 'total'. Extra reading sessions, known as 'Reading Recovery', are excellent as they help to reinforce basic skills by using highly skilled assessment and teaching techniques.

The extensive range of visits and clubs help children to benefit from real-life experiences; these help to enthuse pupils to learn more. The school uses professional artists, musicians, sportspeople and other specialists to enrich and extend pupils' skills and

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knowledge. The very effective curriculum is reflected in the way that the school has gained the Active Mark, Healthy Schools status and ECO Schools awards.

Links with other professionals, as well as the superb promotion of emotional well-being, are the significant factors in why the quality of care, guidance and support are so impressive. The work of the administrative staff and family liaison officer also contributes immensely to the care provided. The school's outstanding work with vulnerable children, as well as those facing challenging circumstances, enables them to overcome significant barriers to learning. The breakfast club provides a nurturing start to the day, with plenty to do and a healthy meal.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Inspection findings endorse the staff and governors' views that the headteacher drives the school in the right direction because she knows exactly what is right for young children. She motivates the staff very skilfully, so that they share ideas and do the very best for the pupils. The headteacher is highly dedicated and gives constant attention to additional training of her staff. As a result, staff are highly qualified and able to share best practice. All leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and provision in the subjects for which they are responsible, although some are more skilled at evaluating the findings than others. Nonetheless, the evaluations about pupils' achievements are accurate, ensuring that pupils quickly receive extra help, if they do not make the progress expected, to meet their challenging targets. Staff questionnaires show that they are extremely proud to be part of this school.

The governing body is made up of a wide range of enthusiastic people who bring a diverse range of skills and professional expertise to the school. They are very well trained, for example having attended 22 training events in the last year. They, like all staff, promote safeguarding very well. There is a high degree of expertise in this area in the school as a whole. Notably, the headteacher shares best practice with other headteachers locally. A case study of a vulnerable child showed exemplary support and exceptionally diligent attention to detail. Governors challenge and support the school well and have played an immense part, with the headteacher, in improving the school buildings.

Staff do not tolerate discrimination. Leaders are ensuring that boys and girls are doing equally well and that pupils who speak English as an additional language are fully included in school life. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is exceptionally good, reflecting the superb leadership. As one governor explained, 'Everyone is gifted in something and adults work very hard to unlock pupils' potential.'

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There are some excellent links with the local community. Leaders are working hard to help pupils to understand that other communities can be different from Herne Bay. As such, they have developed links with a school in Gravesend. Links have recently been made with a school in Africa and initial plans are under way to link with a school in Holland. An audit of provision has highlighted the need to further raise pupils' global awareness; planning is under way for this but remains a focus for the future.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Adults know the children very well and have created a very welcoming and stimulating learning environment. They have very high expectations and provide thoughtful challenges for the children. The range of activities provided is exceptionally exciting. As a result, children are inspired to investigate things for themselves and develop concentration, perseverance and enthusiasm for learning. Opportunities to learn using their senses are exemplary. The care given to children is very sensitive, showing exceptionally close links with parents and carers. Links are further promoted by parents' and carers' very good involvement in their children's learning, as is evident in their comments about learning at home, as noted in their 'Learning Journeys'.

Teaching and learning are very high quality. Adults seize the moment to talk about what the children are doing and assess and extend their progress, for example when Reception children began to explain to each other, and an adult, how bubbles floated. This was also evident when children in the Nursery were being helped to make pizzas and shop for vegetables. Creative development is impressive, as is the promotion of physical agility. Very firm foundations are laid for reading and mathematical skills. Children's achievement is outstanding. This is especially so in personal and language development. As a result, children are independent, behave very well and socialise with others in a mature way.

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The leadership team is reflective and forward thinking; they have taken very firm action to improve. In consequence, the Seashells Nursery has achieved the Kent Quality Mark. Leaders have improved planning and the whole environment, especially the garden. They have also worked on helping boys to do better. As a result of this, boys have more opportunities to write when working on construction and investigation activities; this is helping to raise attainment.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The response rate to the questionnaire was lower than average. However, inspectors also looked at a recent questionnaire, conducted by the school, to further support the evidence base.

All evidence showed that parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, as evident in the many positive comments also received on the questionnaires, for example 'Teachers and support staff are fantastic. They keep my children engaged and make school fun' or 'I have nothing but praise for the running of and teaching at this school' and 'A superb education'. They strongly agree that the school keeps pupils safe and almost all said that their children enjoy school and that the school is well led and managed. Almost all also confirm that pupils' behaviour is well managed, and the school meets pupils' particular needs. Inspection findings endorse parents' and carers' positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Herne Bay Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 392 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	77	22	22	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	86	87	12	12	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	67	68	31	31	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	63	64	34	34	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	71	72	26	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	65	63	33	33	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	67	33	33	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	67	68	30	30	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	66	67	30	30	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	57	37	37	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	60	37	37	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	76	77	22	22	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	75	76	22	22	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Herne Bay Infant School, Herne Bay CT6 5SH

It was a great pleasure to meet you when we visited your school recently. Thank you for telling us so much about your school. We found that you go to an excellent school where you do plenty of exciting things; we call this 'outstanding'. You are helped to learn new things quickly and you are very well cared for. All adults are doing everything that they can to make sure that you do as well as possible. It was so pleasing for us to see you working hard and having fun. Congratulations on behaving amazingly well and on doing so many things to help in school and for your community.

We are impressed by almost everything, but especially these things:

- You become very confident and able to talk about things in a grown-up way.
- Your reading, writing and mathematics work is excellent. You do plenty of problem solving and thinking, which is just what we want all children to do.
- Your school keeps you very safe and looks after you extremely carefully.
- Your headteacher and all of the other grown-ups are doing everything that they can for you. Please remember to say thank you to them.
- You try your hardest; well done and please keep this up!
- The way that your parents, carers and other adults help you is great.

Your school is always improving. There are only a very few things at the moment to work on to make the school even better for you and here they are.

- We want the school to continue to be a fantastic school and we have asked the adults to keep a very close eye on things to check that it continues to be outstanding.
- We would like you to learn even more about the big wide world in which you and other people live.

We think that your gardens are beautiful and we wish you good luck in the 'Herne Bay in Bloom' competition.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector

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