

Herne Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118736
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379674
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Helen Hutchings

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Douglas Kiely
Headteacher	Quentin Roper
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 February 2009
School address	School Lane Herne Bay Kent CT6 7AL
Telephone number	01227 374069
Fax number	01227 741415
Email address	office@herne-junior.kent.sch.uk

Age group	7–11
Inspection date(s)	27–28 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings

Additional inspector

Ronald Elam

Additional inspector

Maura Docherty

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work, including 18 lessons involving 15 teachers, and included joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read, attended assemblies, and held discussions with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documents including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, pupils' attainment and progress, and the curriculum. Inspectors analysed 68 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those completed by a sample of staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Herne Church of England Junior School is larger than the majority of primary schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a range of other backgrounds represented in small numbers. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is in line with that found nationally. Before and after-school clubs are attended daily by around 40 pupils from the school and the adjacent infant school. Since the last inspection there has been some turbulence in staffing, with almost half the teachers new to the school. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school holds Healthy School status and is accredited as an anti-bullying school.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Pupils' achievement is improving, but the school is not yet good because progress is uneven through the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well through an interesting curriculum and wide range of extra-curricular activities. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment in the Year 6 national tests has improved over the last three years and is above average in English. Attainment in mathematics has been average, but pupils are currently making faster progress than previously and are now working at higher levels. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, they have made satisfactory progress.
- Teaching is satisfactory and improving in the majority of lessons. In good lessons, teachers use a range of strategies to ensure that pupils are clear about their learning and that there are high expectations for the work to be achieved so that pupils move forward quickly. However, in a few lessons, these approaches are less effective.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their learning and are keen to produce good work. They enjoy positive relationships with one another so that they work successfully in groups and play together well. They say that they feel very safe in school and that misbehaviour is uncommon.
- Leaders and managers have accurately identified what the school needs to do to improve. Leadership of teachers' performance is satisfactory and recent actions to improve teaching and attainment in mathematics have had a positive impact. A small minority of parents and carers indicated concerns that they do not feel listened to and that they are not given the information they need to support their child's learning.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils' progress is more consistent across the school by building on the good strategies already in place, particularly:
 - setting success criteria for pupils' learning which enable pupils to focus on the most important skills and knowledge being developed
 - setting high expectations for the quality and quantity of work to be achieved throughout lessons
 - using assessment through the lesson to judge when pupils are able to move forward more quickly in their learning
 - ensuring that learning is reinforced by visual prompts.
- Develop communication with parents and carers so that they feel that their views are listened to and to maximise their support for their child's learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are satisfied with the progress their children make. Inspectors found that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for secondary school. Following the last inspection, attainment in the Year 6 national tests fell, but this trend has been successfully reversed and pupils' attainment in English has been above the national average for the last two years. The school's data show that, until this year, pupils did not make consistent progress in every year group from their above average starting points, particularly in Years 3 and 4, so that much had to be done to catch up in Years 5 and 6. Teachers are now monitoring pupils' progress more closely through the year and they use the information to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning. Consequently, progress rates are accelerating and progress is more even through the school. However, whilst most pupils have made good progress this year, their progress overall is satisfactory because of earlier underachievement. All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Similarly, as a result of closer monitoring of pupils' achievement, the attainment gap between English and mathematics has been closed so that pupils' attainment and progress are similar in both subjects. Pupils' attainment in reading by the time pupils leave the school is above average, including a higher than average proportion reaching the higher levels.

Pupils are keen to do well and try to do their best, for example they take care with spelling and grammar when writing in their topic studies. Careful marking helps pupils to understand what they have to do to improve, and they are beginning to respond routinely to their teachers' suggestions. Pupils say that lessons are particularly enjoyable and most effective when they have practical activities. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils quickly developed their understanding of measurement as they estimated and took measurements when they relaxed and tensed their arms. This particularly engaged pupils because it was carefully linked to their current healthy living topic and their learning about muscle function. Because

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pupils have positive relationships with one another, they are comfortable to share their views as they know that others will listen with respect. Consequently, group work is effective. This was seen in a series of lessons when Year 6 pupils developed their understanding of play scripts and small groups effectively planned a short film about concerns that pupils might have on going to secondary school and how these might be resolved.

Quality of teaching

The majority of parents and carers believe that pupils are taught well, whilst a small minority raised concerns about variation across the school. Inspection evidence confirms that teaching is satisfactory overall. However, there is much good practice to form the basis of further development. There are many examples of teachers using talk partners effectively to help pupils consolidate their understanding by talking their ideas through. This was seen to good effect when pupils worked in pairs to analyse which instructions had not been sufficiently clear to replicate a diagram from verbal instructions. In the best teaching, teachers set slightly different tasks for groups to ensure that all are challenged when introducing and reviewing learning within whole class sessions, but this is not consistent across the school. Teaching assistants provide good support for individuals and small groups, often for those pupils who find learning difficult, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They balance support and challenge carefully, and guide pupils well by questioning and probing their understanding before letting pupils undertake their tasks independently.

Where teaching is good, high expectations with appropriate success criteria are set for different groups of pupils. These focus clearly on the precise skills and knowledge to be achieved within the lesson. Teachers give pupils clear guidance about the quality and quantity of work expected within a given time.

In some lessons, the pace of learning slows where teachers are less effective in judging when pupils have mastered a new skill and are ready to move on to more challenging work, or where learning objectives are less well defined for pupils. In these situations, teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough and pupils do not know exactly what they are intended to learn. Teachers introduce new information in interesting ways, such as in a lesson when the images on the whiteboard helped pupils to learn about burial rituals in Ancient Egypt. Occasionally, pupils are required to listen to too many instructions without sufficient visual reinforcement to help them understand the requirements fully, with the result that the teacher has to explain the task again to small groups. This slows progress for some pupils.

The teaching of reading is effective, building well on pupils' above average attainment on entry to the school. A number of initiatives are successfully raising attainment in mathematics, including guided mathematics sessions and occasional separate groups for girls and boys. These sessions effectively address gaps in numeracy skills and give pupils good opportunities to apply their skills in a range of

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'challenges'. The links that teachers make between subjects help pupils to enjoy their learning, often because knowledge or skills are developed in relevant situations, for example in a lesson conducted in the school garden when pupils learned about how herbs were used as medicines in Victorian times.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents and carers responding to the questionnaire indicated that behaviour is good and inspectors agree. Almost all pupils feel safe and secure and say that behaviour is managed fairly by adults. It is rare that learning is disrupted by inappropriate behaviour in lessons. Pupils value the skills they develop during anti-bullying weeks to help them manage situations for themselves. They have a clear understanding of different types of bullying. They reflect maturely that, occasionally, incidents such as disagreements about games in the playground make life unpleasant for a short time and understand about the ups and downs in friendships. Pupils show tolerance towards a few who need support to manage their language and behaviour. Exclusions, either permanent or fixed term, are rare. Learning mentors and the family liaison officer provide good support to help those experiencing difficulty to improve their emotional well-being so that they are ready to learn. A renewed emphasis on attendance has reduced absence and pupils' attendance is above average.

Leadership and management

Since the last inspection the school has successfully addressed issues identified at that time, improving teaching by making learning more active and challenging and ensuring that boys do as well as girls. Other improvements include better attendance and improved monitoring of pupils' progress, with consequent action. Improvements in teaching this year are evident in the school's monitoring information. Senior and middle leaders have a sound understanding of how to consolidate the current improvements. Leadership and management are satisfactory because of this. The governing body has secured interim arrangements to oversee the school's development when the headteacher leaves at the end of the academic year, so that the school has the capacity to continue to improve.

A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns that they do not feel listened to and that they do not have enough information to keep them fully informed and helped to support learning at home. Opinion on changes such as setting online homework is split, with some parents finding it helpful whilst others have had difficulty in making the necessary links. While the school has a number of ways of involving parents and keeping them informed, senior leaders and the governing body are concerned about the recent increase in the number of issues raised with them and have resolved to consult on how this aspect of the school's work can be improved. Recent training ensures that the governing body has the skill and understanding to support and challenge school leaders in raising pupils' attainment, reflected in a sharpened sense of accountability throughout the school. As such, discrimination is tackled and equality of opportunity promoted so that the

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progress of all groups of pupils is beginning to accelerate.

Good attention is paid to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the curriculum, which is appropriately planned to meet pupils' needs, and through a wide range of additional activities and visits. The before and after-school clubs encourage good social interactions and pupils mix well, with the younger pupils attending from the infant school helping to support their transition into Year 3. Specialist teaching in subjects such as information and communication technology and music provide additional enrichment for pupils, and extra-curricular activities promote enjoyment across sport, art, music and the environment. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet statutory requirements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



29 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Herne Church of England Junior School, Herne Bay CT6 7AL

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited recently. We found our conversations with you and watching you work in lessons very useful in finding out about the school. Please thank your parents and carers for their questionnaire returns. Some of them told us that they do not always have the information they need to help your learning at home and we have asked the school to look at how this can be improved.

You go to a satisfactory school and staff know how to make it better. Your behaviour is good so that you feel safe in school and enjoy your time together. The progress you make in your learning and the way you develop into mature young people mean that you are prepared appropriately for secondary school by the time you finish Year 6. You told us that you particularly enjoy learning when it is practical. We saw this happen in a number of lessons, such as the lesson in the school garden about how the Victorians used herbs for medicine and another when you took arm measurements. In order for you to make faster progress, we are asking your teachers to make sure that you have high expectations about the quality and amount of work you have to complete in the lesson. Similarly, if you finish your tasks easily, we have asked teachers to give you harder work quickly so that you make the best possible use of your time. We noticed that sometimes you are given a number of instructions which can be difficult to remember because they are not all written down and that sometimes you have rather a lot of points to consider in your success criteria. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you are clear about the most important skills and knowledge you are developing in the lesson. You can help by asking the teacher to explain anything you do not understand.

We hope that you thoroughly enjoy all the interesting things arranged for you until the end of term. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector

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