

Herne Bay Infant School

Stanley Road, Herne Bay, Kent , CT6 5SH

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Too much teaching requires improvement. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and rates of progress, particularly in writing, are too slow.
- Achievement requires improvement because teachers do not consistently use the information they have on pupils' attainment to plan activities that will stretch and challenge all groups, especially the more able.
- In recent years, standards in writing at the end of Year 2 have been too low and although there was some improvement in 2013, pupils are still not doing as well as they should be.
- Behaviour requires improvement because pupils become fidgety and inattentive in some lessons, when teaching is not stimulating.
- In the Reception classes, children spend too much time on activities which lack challenge and limit the development of their early literacy, numeracy and personal, social and emotional skills.
- Leaders and managers do not check pupils' work frequently enough to make sure all pupils are making good progress.
- School improvement planning is not focused precisely enough at those aspects of teaching which need improvement and there are not enough measurable steps for senior leaders and governors to check carefully enough how well the school is doing.

The school has the following strengths

- Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and expressed confidence in the headteacher and her team.
- Systems and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are robust because senior leaders and governors are committed to making safeguarding a high priority. Pupils said they feel safe in school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and pupils have opportunities to learn about other cultures and religions and raise money for charities.
- There are strong partnerships in place with other schools. Links with the junior school have improved and transition arrangements are well planned.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons or part lessons. The majority of these were carried out with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading, and looked carefully at their work in lessons and work they had completed over time in their books. The inspection team observed pupils' behaviour during breakfast club, at lunchtimes and around the school. They met with several groups of pupils to listen to their views about the school.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, five members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers through the 37 responses on 'Parent View' and also through informal meetings on the playground. Inspectors also noted the responses to the 48 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspection team reviewed documents relating to attendance, child protection, safeguarding and behaviour, information about pupils' academic performance, information relating to the governing body, the school's self-evaluation and development planning and documents relating to checks on the quality of teachers' performance and links to salary progression.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Sue Quirk, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Josephine Lewis | Additional Inspector |
| Carol Vant | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Herne Bay Infant School is larger than the average-sized primary school. Since the time of the last inspection, a new Headteacher has been appointed. There is currently an acting deputy headteacher in place.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action are higher than the national average. The proportions supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are similar to average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for children looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families) is just below the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club which was included as part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, leading to more rapid progress for all groups of pupils, especially in writing, by:
 - making sure all teachers set work which challenges all pupils, but especially those who are more able, to do their best and make the progress of which they are capable
 - improving the quality of marking and feedback so that pupils know exactly what their next steps should be
 - expecting pupils to apply what they have learned in literacy sessions when they undertake longer pieces of writing
 - improving the attitudes and behaviour of some children by making better use of assessment information to plan stimulating, purposeful activities, especially in the Reception classes.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - scrutinising pupils' books more frequently to ensure that all teachers have consistently high expectations of both the quantity and quality of work so that all groups of pupils make good or better progress
 - ensuring that plans for improvement are more sharply focused with measurable steps of what needs to be done so senior leaders and governors can check more precisely how well the school is doing
 - making sure that leaders and managers check the quality of provision in the Reception classes more frequently and raise expectations of what staff should be teaching and what children should achieve.

An external review of governance, including the school's use of pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils in the school requires improvement. From their various starting points, most groups of pupils are now making expected rates of progress across the school but not enough make more rapid progress and too few pupils are currently working towards the higher levels, especially in writing.
- When children start in the nursery or Reception classes, their knowledge, skills and abilities are often below those typical for their age. Although teachers assess children's attainment on entry, they do not make sufficient use of this information in the Reception classes to plan work that will stretch and challenge them. During the inspection, children spent too much time choosing low-level activities such as colouring in pre-printed pictures, or wandering aimlessly. As a result, more able pupils, in particular, are not making the rates of progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is improving. A more focused, systematic approach to the teaching of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) resulted in a higher proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2013 than in 2012, although results were still below the national levels. Additional support such as 'reading to dogs' and one-to-one reading with a specially trained teacher has helped those pupils who were falling behind.
- In recent years, standards in writing at the end of Year 2 have been too low and although there was some improvement in 2013, pupils are still not doing as well as they should be. Across the school, expectations of both the quantity and quality of writing have not been high enough. Senior leaders have recently identified the need to ensure that teachers provide clearer guidance to pupils on how to improve their writing but this has not yet had an impact on all classes.
- Pupils said they enjoy mathematics and inspection evidence indicated that the most able pupils are now beginning to make more rapid progress in mathematics. In a lesson in Year 2 where teaching was judged to be outstanding, higher ability pupils enjoyed the challenge of working out word problems using addition and subtraction and then as soon as they had mastered that, moving quickly on to multiplication. However, these high expectations were not consistent across the school and the progress of groups is too variable.
- Over the last two years, pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, especially those at school action plus, made much slower progress than other groups and their attainment by the end of Year 2 was much lower than that of other pupils. Since September, those rates of progress have improved significantly because the school is providing extra help and so fostering equality of opportunity.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding premium have benefitted from extra help with their work, and gaps between their attainment and that of their peers are closing. At the end of Year 2 in 2013, they were about a term behind in reading and mathematics and half a term behind in writing.
- The most able pupils achieve well in reading, with a higher than average proportion reaching the higher levels in 2013. However, pupils' books indicate that more able pupils are not making the same rates of progress in writing as they are in reading, because the work they are set does not consistently provide a sufficiently high level of challenge.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there is not enough good and better teaching in the school to make sure that all groups of pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough in some lessons. Work in pupils' books is often untidy and some teachers are too accepting of poor quality work. They do not consistently set work which challenges all pupils, especially those who are more able, to do their best and make the progress of which they are capable.

- Although pupils have regular opportunities to write at length, they are not always sufficiently well supported to practise, apply and improve their literacy skills. For example, pupils in a Year 1 class were shown an illustration of a liner at sea and asked to write about their own ideas. However, there was no clear guidance of the amount of work expected or focused teaching of any specific literacy skills based on an accurate assessment of what pupils can already do and what they need to move on to. As a result, many pupils' writing was of mediocre quality because they were not clear what they should do.
- Teaching in the Nursery class is good because children enjoy an attractive stimulating range of activities both indoors and out and adults have a good understanding of how young children learn. They support their early language development well. However, teaching in the Reception classes requires improvement. Teachers do not always use the information they have on what children already know and can do, to plan interesting, purposeful activities. Although teachers work hard to improve children's speaking and listening skills, there are too many missed opportunities to develop their skills across all areas of learning.
- Pupils' learning targets are displayed on the wall but they are not well used to plan for progress as they are too general and not all pupils know them. Although pupils know that marking in their books is based on 'pink to think' and 'green to go', teachers do not give enough guidance to pupils on exactly how they can improve their work and this slows the progress they make.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They work well with the teachers to provide appropriate targeted support for individuals and groups.
- There have been improvements in aspects of teaching which are helping pupils to make better progress. Pupils in a Year 1 literacy lesson demonstrated highly positive attitudes to learning because the teacher's lively, confident delivery kept them totally absorbed and engaged as she read them a story. Her skilful questioning helped them successfully identify features of fictional texts and work out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although pupils are friendly, polite and sensible when walking around the school and at playtimes and lunchtimes, their attitudes to learning are not always so positive. Where teaching requires improvement, pupils sometimes become distracted and fidgety and lose concentration. A small group of boys in one of the Reception classes became overly boisterous when playing with 'superhero' figures because the activities provided lacked purpose and a clear focus for learning.
- The school successfully fosters positive relationships and tackles discrimination. Pupils are respectful to adults and to each other. The school's behaviour records show that racism and other prejudiced based behaviour is not tolerated. Clear guidelines on behaviour (the 'Golden Rules') help pupils to learn what is acceptable and most pupils understand the system of rewards and sanctions.
- Pupils confirmed there are virtually no instances of bullying and were confident that adults at the school would deal with it if there were.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils all said there was an adult to whom they would go if there was ever a problem. One pupil commented 'I feel really, really safe because there's lots of lovely teachers here!' 100 per cent of staff who responded to the staff questionnaire agreed that pupils are safe at the school.
- Pupils know about the importance of staying safe when using computers because the school has made e-safety a focus of its work not just with pupils but with their families as well.
- Parents and carers who responded to 'Parent View' and those to whom inspectors spoke on the playground were overwhelmingly positive that the school keeps their children safe and that children are well behaved.
- Governors are committed to ensuring pupils' safety has the highest priority. Risk assessments are well managed and the school site is secure.

- Attendance is broadly average when compared to primary schools, though is stronger than this when compared to that found typically in other infant schools.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders and managers have not carried out frequent enough checks to ensure the quality of teaching is consistently good across the school and that all pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. Leaders have not made their expectations of the quality of teaching in the Reception classes clear enough.
- The headteacher and her senior leadership team have accurately identified both strengths and areas of weakness within the school. Priorities in the school improvement plan are appropriate but actions need to be more sharply focused with measurable steps so senior leaders and governors can check precisely how well the school is doing and be held to account.
- The curriculum is generally broad and balanced, with opportunities for enrichment through regular 'Dazzle Days' and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through activities such as 'Welly Walks' to raise money for farms in developing countries.
- Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and appreciate the caring ethos. A minority of responses to the staff questionnaire indicated some discontent with recent changes but almost all respondents said they were proud to be a member of the school.
- Partnerships with other schools are strong and links with the junior school have improved. Arrangements for transition from Year 2 to Year 3 are well planned.
- The school's capacity for improvement is demonstrated by robust performance management arrangements, accurate identification of priorities for improvement and the development of middle leaders. Literacy and mathematics subject leaders are providing effective support to their colleagues. Other middle leaders are relatively new and inexperienced but highly enthusiastic and keen to contribute to necessary improvements.
- Leaders have carefully planned their use of the primary school sport funding and are working in partnership with a local cluster of schools to develop the skills of teachers and targeting pupils to improve their fitness.
- The local authority has provided light touch support to the school and has confidence in the senior leadership team and governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors possess a wide range of relevant skills and are committed to enhancing and refreshing their skills through additional training. They ensure that procedures for the management of the performance of all teachers are in place and that any movement up the pay scale is now dependent on outcomes of appraisals, with teachers meeting their targets. Governors are highly committed to the school and make frequent visits. They receive regular reports on the quality of teaching. They are aware of information relating to pupil achievement, have made decisions relating to pupil premium expenditure based on external research and know that gaps in the attainment of eligible pupils and those not eligible are closing. However, they have not challenged the senior leadership team about this area of the school's work as much as in other aspects such as financial management. Consequently they have been less successful in driving improvements to both achievement and the quality of teaching. Governors ensure that statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are fully met and that financial resources are managed well.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 118359 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 440472 |

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.

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 410 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | June Jolly |
| Headteacher | Bernadette Lax |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9–10 May 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01227 372245 |
| Fax number | 01227 742305 |
| Email address | admin@herne-bay.kent.sch.uk |

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