

Herne Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115940
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	298932
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Gehane Gordelier HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maureen Page
Headteacher	Mr Tony Markham
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2005
School address	Love Lane Petersfield GU31 4BP
Telephone number	01730 263746
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Herne Juniors is larger than most primary schools and benefits from spacious playing fields within its grounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average and a very small proportion speak English as an additional language or come from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is high.

Having led and managed the school in an acting capacity since January 2006, the current substantive headteacher took up his post in January 2007. The school has recently appointed a new deputy headteacher, who is due to begin working at the school from September 2007. The membership of the governing body has changed since the time of the last inspection and two thirds of governors are new in post. The school has recently appointed some new teachers.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Herne Juniors is an improving school and is more effective than it was at the time of the last inspection. The school demonstrates that its capacity to make further improvements is now satisfactory. This has been achieved, thanks to the successful leadership of the new headteacher, the commitment and hard work of staff, pupils' positive attitudes to learning, the work of the governing body, support from parents and assistance from the local authority. The school now knows itself well; it has already started to make progress on the remaining areas in need of improvement, which are a residue of former inadequacies.

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. However, in accordance with section 13 of the above mentioned act, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required to ensure that all groups of pupils make consistent progress that is at least satisfactory across the curriculum.

The pupils at the school are well cared for and receive satisfactory levels of guidance and support. Pupils themselves are happier at the school and display positive attitudes to learning. They find their lessons more interesting and welcome opportunities to contribute their views about what they are learning in lessons as well as about whole school issues. Pupils are well behaved and work well together. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good.

The quality of leadership and management has improved and is providing a clear sense of direction and good levels of support and guidance for staff. This has led to the recent improvements made across the school, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning and the slow but steady rise in standards this year in English and mathematics. Targets for improvement are now more measurable and familiar to older pupils as well as their teachers. However, too many pupils still do not understand how they can improve their work on a day-to-day basis. As a result, some pupils are still not achieving as well as they could, including those with LDD or with a statement of special educational need.

Satisfactory whole school self-evaluation is mainly undertaken by senior leaders and has yet to extend fully to all levels of management. Performance is monitored and evaluated well by senior leaders and this has led to teachers developing a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their own practice. However, not all teachers plan as well as they could to ensure that the different needs of pupils are met. Furthermore, even where teaching is good, this is at times compromised by weak curriculum schemes of work that do too little to build on pupils' previous learning. The school has already made some improvements for example in the quality of the medium term planning for history. However, the school also recognises that a review of the curriculum is required in order to promote greater levels of flexibility and continuity as pupils progress through the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement of all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, by providing work that is planned to match their needs.
- Improve the curriculum by revising schemes of work to promote flexibility and continuity.

- Improve teaching by ensuring that all pupils understand clearly what they need to do to improve their work on a day to day basis.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The majority of pupils who arrive in Year 3 are already able to work at a level that is above average for their age. Although pupils in Years 5 and 6 make good progress, it is only in recent months that most pupils in the school are making at least satisfactory progress. Consequently, although standards by the end of Year 6 in 2006 were above the national average in English, good in science and broadly satisfactory in mathematics, they were not as good as they should have been, given the starting point for these pupils. The school recognises that this has been due to the weaknesses identified as key issues in the previous inspection report.

The results of the 2006 national tests highlight the improvements the school has made particularly in English where targets were exceeded. Targets set for pupils in mathematics were not achieved and until recently this was one of the school's weakest areas. The overall rate of progress made by pupils towards their end of year targets in English and mathematics has improved and is now satisfactory for most pupils. However, there are still too many pupils underachieving in these subjects as well as in other areas of the curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of pupils is good, as are their behaviour and attitudes to learning. This is reflected in the calm and happy atmosphere of the school and the good relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their levels of attendance are above average. They are particularly enthusiastic about the way in which lessons now engage their interest by offering a wide range of practical activities. Spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. In a wide range of lessons, pupils respond well to opportunities to reflect on matters of importance to them and enjoy a sense of wonder. Pupils express a clear understanding about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and why this is important to their well-being. They enjoy the opportunities for physical activity and recognise the beneficial effect this has on their health. However, this understanding is not always reflected in the food choices pupils make. Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities around the school as well as in the wider community. For example they undertook a survey of the rewards systems in a number of local schools. The development of workplace skills is satisfactory overall and this is enhanced by pupils' confident communication and mature teamwork skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Weaker teaching has been identified and has improved because of strategic support and changes in deployment of staff. As a result teaching is now more consistent throughout the school. There has been a satisfactory improvement in the use of assessment strategies to support and inform learning, although these have yet to be firmly embedded.

Most lessons are lively and make good use of interactive whiteboards (IWBs) to engage pupils' interest. Pupils are responsive during lessons, work hard and are very well behaved. As one pupil said: "We feel more involved in our learning". Good use is also generally made of questioning and opportunities for pupil discussion to develop speaking and thinking skills. Whilst most teachers' daily planning is useful, a minority of teachers do not always write learning objectives that are specific enough and so their teaching sometimes lacks focus. The pupils are not always sufficiently clear about what teachers expect from the task that has been set. Marking is inconsistent and does not always indicate areas for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The school recognises that pupils are continuing to underachieve because the curriculum is inadequate. New national frameworks for English and mathematics are in use and as a result pupils' progress in English and mathematics is improving and is now satisfactory. However, the teaching of reading by sounding out letters is not yet fully integrated into planning for all year groups. Schemes of work for all the foundation subjects are inflexible and so are not adapted to meet the starting points of the learners. The information and communication technology (ICT) scheme, for example, does not take into account the skills that pupils already bring to school. The pupils do not make consistent progress because themes are repeated or ignored for too long. Learning objectives are too often unclear, especially in the art scheme of work. The personal development scheme is also too rigid and is over reliant on the use of work sheets. Work for pupils with learning difficulties, is not always well enough planned; this is because the progress made by this group of pupils has not been tracked and monitored sufficiently well.

The school has already identified all these weaknesses. They are revising the schemes of work and aspects of planning and they expect that the new curriculum will be in place for the beginning of the next academic year.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Academic guidance is improving and older pupils now have a better understanding of their targets for improvement in mathematics and English. This is because teachers make better use of their information on assessment to offer good advice to pupils on what they need to do to improve before moving on to their next target. As one pupil said, "It encourages you to work hard because you want to reach your next level." Although teachers discuss targets with pupils, and this helps most of them to develop a better long term view of what they need to do to improve, younger pupils do not always understand the meaning of the targets written in their books. This is usually because these targets have been written using language which is too complicated for them to comprehend.

There are new policies and recent training which provides adults with clear guidance on how to keep children safe. There are also improved mechanisms for the identification of pupils with personal or social difficulties. The school works hard to meet the needs of these pupils and liaises satisfactorily with outside agencies.

There are also appropriate checks to protect pupils' physical safety and to ensure the suitability of adults who work with pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is now satisfactory and improving. This has enabled the school to ensure that pupils are well cared for, their personal development and well-being are good and that the quality of teaching and learning as well as the progress made by pupils are continually improving. Under the good leadership of the headteacher the school has developed a culture of openness where an exchange of views is welcomed and growing. This has enabled the school to develop its partnerships with parents and the local community well.

All leaders and managers are now contributing more effectively to whole school evaluation, although middle managers have yet to contribute as well as they could to whole school improvement. Effective team work, action and improvement planning are helping to provide satisfactory direction for the school. However, key documents do not all include sufficient reference to how actions will contribute to raising standards and success criteria are not always sufficiently measurable. Nevertheless, systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school now provide the school with a clearer and more accurate overview of the progress made by individual pupils, although the analysis of data is still not sufficiently rigorous. Leaders and managers provide teachers with focused support which is bringing about improvements. Good examples include peer coaching, the induction of new staff and performance management mechanisms.

The school now tracks more closely the progress that pupils make throughout the year. However, not all groups of pupils are clearly identified. It is only recently that pupils with special educational needs and LDD have been recognised by the school as underachieving. Equality of opportunity is not tackled sufficiently well to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can, or that resources including staff are deployed in a way that ensures adequate value for money. The school also recognises that there is still further work to be done in reviewing the curriculum and in the development of more suitable schemes of work.

The significant changes to the governing body since the last inspection have had a positive impact on strengthening the quality of governance. Governors are now more aware of their legal responsibilities and are providing the school with an improved level of support and challenge.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Herne Junior School, Petersfield, GU31 4BP

As you know three inspectors visited your school recently because your school was in special measures. We spent time in some of your lessons, talking with some of you and looking at the work of the school. I am writing to thank you for your very helpful contribution to the inspection and to share the main findings with you.

All the inspectors agree with you that your school is much better than it used to be and that it is getting better all the time. This is because those who are responsible for running the school are doing this well and also because it has the support of other people including your parents. As a result your school has been removed from special measures, but as there are still some very important areas which still need to be improved, your school has been given a notice to improve.

You told us how much you enjoy your lessons now that the activities are more interesting and you are now able to participate more actively. We agree with you that the quality of teaching and learning is now better. You are well cared for by the school and you receive satisfactory support about how to improve your work. It was very interesting listening to all the things you know about other countries and cultures as well as what you know about keeping yourselves safe and healthy. Those responsible for running your school are aware of what is going well and what still needs to improve. As a result of our inspection, the school has been given the following recommendations to help it to continue to improve.

- The school needs to make sure the work you are given is at the right level depending on your needs, so that you are all able to do as well as you can, including those who sometimes have difficulties in some lessons.
- The staff at the school need to change what you learn in some subjects to make sure the work is more relevant and interesting to you and that is also becomes more challenging as you move up the school.
- Your teachers need to make sure that everyday, in all your lessons, you all understand how you can improve your work.

You have already helped your school to improve by sharing your good ideas, working hard and treating each other with respect and courtesy. I am sure you will continue to do your best. We wish you every success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

G Gordelier Her Majesty's Inspector