

Herne Bay Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118359
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312907
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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 on roll	
School	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Pierce
Headteacher	Anne Hooker
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Stanley Road Herne Bay CT6 5SH
Telephone number	01227 372245
Fax number	01227 742305

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average infant school. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than average. A maintained Nursery was opened at the school a year ago. When pupils enter the school, their attainment is below that expected for their age. The number of pupils entering and leaving the school at times other than the normal entry and exit times is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Its key strength is the excellent curriculum provision that results in a warm and caring ethos in which pupils thrive. 'The school has a wonderful atmosphere,' wrote one parent. Pupils have an exciting range of learning opportunities both in the classroom and outside of the school day. High quality enrichment activities impact very positively on their excellent spiritual and cultural development and offer many practical and stimulating learning opportunities to help pupils achieve well and enjoy themselves. Parents are very pleased with the school.

Standards are above average. Pupils across the school achieve well and most make good progress. Attainment on entry to the school is below that expected but, because of their good achievement, pupils' attainment has been broadly average for the past few years. Standards in the Year 2 national tests rose in 2007 resulting in above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Good personal development and well-being are the result of some exceptional provision for personal, social and health education. The school has been designated 'the healthiest school in Kent'. Pupils know how to keep healthy, take regular exercise and make healthy choices at lunchtimes. Their knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe is exceptional. 'We need to be very careful in the computer suite because electricity can be dangerous,' commented one pupil. Pupils enjoy school and behave well. However, attendance is below average. A very small minority of pupils, particularly those few who do not attend well enough, make satisfactory rather than good progress.

Good and occasionally outstanding teaching in lessons across the school leads to good learning and progress. Teachers know pupils well and manage them effectively so that lessons are calm and harmonious. Marking of pupils' work, while satisfactory, is inconsistent, as it does not always help pupils to improve. Pupils are extremely well cared for. They like their teachers and teaching assistants and relationships are strong. Academic guidance is good but targets for individual pupils are new and not yet well known by all pupils.

Good leadership and management are characterised by the headteacher's outstanding vision and commitment to developing the best possible provision for all pupils. This has come about through effective self-evaluation. Together with the strong and supportive senior managers, she has put in place many effective procedures that have improved achievement and raised standards. Managers know what the school needs to do to improve further. The school works well with parents and other local schools. Information about pupils' achievements is gathered regularly but analysis of data is in the early stage of development and does not yet always identify how much progress different groups of pupils are making. Governors are extremely supportive. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress and achieve well during their time in Nursery and Reception. This results in most children attaining the goals for their age by the time they enter Year 1. Children benefit from the outstanding new Early Years setting that enables them to improve their skills in many exciting ways. The

wide range of activities sustains children's interest and concentration levels and helps children in the Nursery to make a flying start to their school lives. The very effective activities in 'Plan-Do-Review' sessions promote self-esteem, social development and independence skills so that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Teachers are very good role models and relationships are strong. Good teaching is evident in most classes although occasionally, questioning in lessons does not challenge children sufficiently well to extend their thinking skills and the teaching of phonics is sometimes not as precise as it could be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop academic guidance by improving the consistency of marking, by ensuring that pupils know what their targets are and by making better use of data to determine pupils' achievements.
- Work closely with parents to ensure that they understand the impact of regular attendance on their child's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils across the school achieve well and as a result, standards are rising and are above average. Because of their good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, most children achieve the goals for children of their age by the time they enter Year 1. Good progress continues throughout Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching and the outstanding curriculum. Girls do better in reading and writing and boys do particularly well in mathematics. Vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve as well as other pupils. The schools' successful focus on improving standards in writing is evident in pupils' books, which show good improvement in writing in all classes. A few pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. This is mainly because poor attendance impacts negatively on their achievements. The exciting way in which the school promotes literacy, numeracy and ICT through topic work is helping standards to rise.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoy school. They behave well in lessons and are polite, well mannered and helpful. They are good decision makers and regularly reflect on how their actions affect others. Their spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. The way in which pupils reflect on their own lives and the lives of others both in lessons and in assemblies is exceptionally good. The very high quality cultural experiences, visits and visitors that are part of the exciting curriculum, help to raise pupils' awareness of other peoples' lives and beliefs. The way in which two pupils brought artefacts from home to help celebrate Chinese New Year showed how keen they were to share experiences with others. Moral and social development is good. Pupils know right from wrong. Just occasionally, behaviour around the school is more boisterous and is not as good as it is in classrooms.

Children feel safe, and secure at school and know that there is always someone to help them. They value the playground buddies from the nearby junior school and know the procedures for obtaining help if needed. The majority are very aware of the factors affecting healthy living and work hard to keep fit and active. Within the secure and positive ethos of the school, children are able to work independently and collaboratively so that they are well prepared for their futures. Pupils regularly perform for the local community and raise funds for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan many exciting activities from the outstanding curriculum, helping pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Carefully managed behaviour results in calm lessons and positive relationships. Teachers across the school know their pupils well and provide different tasks for pupils of different abilities. This means that more able pupils achieve their potential, as do those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support the learning of all pupils. Effective use of good quality resources, particularly information and communication technology, help to keep pupils interested and on task. Questioning in Years 1 and 2 is carefully focused on extending pupils' speaking and listening skills and on encouraging them to think for themselves. Teachers make good use of the outdoor space to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in the Foundation Stage. In a few classes, marking of pupils' work is too limited and does not always help them to know how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum promotes an excellent ethos in the school and is a major factor in ensuring that children achieve well. It helps in developing the interest, enjoyment and self-esteem of all pupils. An exceptional range of very interesting activities, visits and visitors enriches the strong core curriculum for English and mathematics. It promotes pupils understanding of the wider world extremely well. The recent clear focus on writing has helped to improve standards because of the exciting way in which pupils are encouraged to write for many different reasons. Teachers regularly make whole class books out of pupils' individual pieces of writing which pupils enjoy reading. One commented, 'It makes us feel like authors.' Pupils read about jobs in the world of work and the curriculum is very strong in promoting skills for life and multicultural awareness. The good range of clubs are well attended, particularly the breakfast club which is also attended by many junior children from the neighbouring school. All this ensures that pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care for all pupils is excellent, resulting in strong relationships and high levels of self-esteem. The school knows the pupils well but pupils are not quite as clear about how well they are doing or how they could do better. Procedures to keep pupils safe and secure are robust and well known by staff. Outdoor play areas are exciting though sometimes congested at playtimes. This has resulted in an above average level of minor accidents particularly in Year 1. The school is vigilant in trying to improve this and staff are well trained in health and safety procedures. Staff are very sensitive to pupils moving into and out of the school and transition arrangements are good. The school has a very good resource known as 'FLO' (Family Liaison Officer) which helps parents to be involved as much as possible in their child's learning. Good provision for vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at the early stage of learning English is leading to good outcomes. The school collects information about pupils' achievements but these data are not always analysed well enough to inform about

the progress of all groups of pupils. There has been satisfactory progress in developing targets for English and mathematics but these are not yet fully embedded in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has an outstanding vision for the future of the school and has put many successful procedures in place to raise standards and improve achievement. Exceptionally good improvements to the building over the past five years have resulted in an outstanding Early Years Centre and several small withdrawal areas, which now provide high quality accommodation for all pupils. Rigorous staff training and good links with other providers have greatly improved the curriculum provision, which is helping to raise standards. The headteacher is extremely well supported by the deputy headteacher and by senior managers. Together they form a strong team clearly focused on improvements. Formal procedures for self-evaluation are good, resulting in leaders having a clear view of the schools' strengths and areas for development. Rigorous monitoring by senior staff has given the school an accurate view of most aspects although data is not yet used fully to inform decisions. Targets for improvement are realistic and leaders are working to improve attendance though it remains stubbornly below average. Governors are supportive and regularly question the school about their decisions. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 February 2008

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for your help during our recent visit to your school. It was lovely to meet you and talk to you. You told us lots of things about your school. You said that yours is a good school. We think you are right. You have many interesting things to do and you enjoy them all. We were very pleased to see how well you keep fit and healthy. We enjoyed having lunch with you and talking to you about your school. You know how to keep safe and told us how you make this happen. You achieve well in your lessons although a few of you could come to school more often. This is something that we would like you all to try and help to improve. You like your teachers and they take good care of you.

We were very pleased to see that you have many very good activities to do at school. Your curriculum is excellent and you like all the exciting clubs and visits that you do. Teaching is good and you get lots of support from the teaching assistants. Sometimes your work is not marked as well as it could be and so some of you do not know how you can improve. You have just been given some targets for learning in literacy and numeracy and this should help, although some of you are not yet clear about them.

Your headteacher and the other staff work extremely hard to make sure that your school is a lovely place to be. They provide lots of things to keep you safe and secure. They gather lots of information about your work and we have asked them to try and use this to plan even more challenging activities for all of you. Most of your parents are very pleased with the school.

We are asking the school to do two things to help you improve further.

- To improve marking of your work so that you know what to do next and to make sure you know your own targets.
- To work closely with you and your parents to improve how often you come to school.

Thank you again for your help and good luck for your futures.

Best wishes

Denise Morris Lead inspector

Annex B



7 February 2008

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Denise Morris
Lead inspector