

Herne Bay Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118852
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313119
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Gavin Jones

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	494
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Crowther
Headteacher	Jonathan Dunn
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Kings Road Herne Bay CT6 5DA
Telephone number	01227 374608
Fax number	01227 741055

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Herne Bay Junior is a larger than average junior school in which there are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, whilst the number of pupils with statements for their particular learning needs is low. The new headteacher has only been in the school for just over a year and there have been other staff changes and new buildings at the school.

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 and a happy school. 'My daughter is always happy going to school. What more could a parent want?' writes one mother. Achievement is good. The school has closely tracked the progress of the current Year 6 pupils from their starting points in Year 3, and they have done well to reach solidly average standards. Pupils' good achievement is largely due to good teaching, especially in English and science. The part played by teaching assistants in this is very important. They not only work well under teachers' guidance, but also can work equally well on their own initiatives. Teaching is good overall, as reflected in the good progress made, with relationships being particularly strong. Questioning is good and, because relationships are so positive, little time is wasted with behaviour issues. As a result, the pace of lessons is high. Sometimes, this is not the case and some pupils lose their focus. Teaching in mathematics is at least satisfactory across the school, with some good features. It is the teaching of mathematics and standards within the subject that the school now seeks to improve. Careful changes to the curriculum, joining some subjects together, has a motivating effect on pupils as does the use of interactive whiteboards and other aspects of information and communication technology (ICT). The school is well led and managed, especially by the headteacher and senior managers. The headteacher and his senior team are managing change well, with their colleagues feeling involved and appreciated. Most recently promoted subject leaders are still too new in post to have had a chance to affect standards in their subjects. The school works well with the local authority and with other agencies. It has good relationships with the adjacent infant school. Alongside pupils' good progress, their personal development is excellent. This is because the school cares and supports them in an exemplary fashion. Pupils feel really safe and parents know this to be true. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their school days and their very positive attitudes to their work have an effect on the progress they make. The guidance that the school can offer its pupils is currently somewhat limited because class teachers' access to assessment information is not as easy as it might be. However, teachers mark work satisfactorily and provide targets for pupils in literacy, but not yet in numeracy. Pupils know their targets and work towards them. Initiatives to improve writing and reading have had positive outcomes; however, there are other initiatives that have not yet been evaluated. As a result, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory rather than good at this stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in mathematics across the school by raising the quality of teaching, making use of the renewed framework for numeracy, and matching activities more closely to the needs of all pupils.
- Provide opportunities for the continuing professional development of middle leaders and managers to ensure they have a strong overview of their subjects and can positively affect standards.
- Enable teachers to make more informed checks on pupils' progress, through more readily accessible assessment information, so that they can plan more effectively for pupils' next steps in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Over time, standards have mirrored the national trends in English, mathematics and science, with the latter falling slightly in 2007. The school's data strongly suggest that standards have

improved for the current Year 6 pupils, who have made good progress since joining the school in Year 3. In all three subjects, pupils make good progress from their starting points. This is now particularly the case in science, reading and writing. Initiatives put in place to improve standards in these areas have proved successful. In mathematics, whilst standards are at least satisfactory in the current Year 6, they fluctuate in the rest of the school. The school has not yet put into effect initiatives to improve standards in mathematics. Standards of work seen in ICT are in line with expectations, and ICT skills are used well in aspects of literacy. Vulnerable groups, such as those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make the same good progress as their classmates because of the very good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and take great delight in learning. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent and pupils know exactly what is expected of them. This has a positive impact on their learning. Their social and moral development is outstanding. Pupils are polite, courteous and have developed a sensitive approach to life and everyday issues. They clearly appreciate the achievement of others. In spite of visits to a range of places of worship, pupils have not developed a clear understanding of living in a culturally diverse society. Pupils are proud of their school and feel extremely safe and free from problems such as bullying. In spite of the efforts made by the school, attendance is just below average, caused in the main by parents taking their children out of school for holidays. Pupils are clear about healthy lifestyle issues and can readily explain a 'balanced diet'. 'The new school meals are fantastic. Better than home cooking', one parent notes. Many pupils start the day with 'Wake and Shake' exercises and more pupils want to take part in after-school sports clubs than there are spaces available. The school council is an effective voice for pupils and contributes well to the day-to-day life of the school. 'My son is in school council', writes one mother, 'and he enjoys putting forward ideas from his class.' Through fundraising for a range of charities and good causes, pupils gain a clear understanding of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils have a good range of skills that prepares them well for life beyond school. For example, many were busy organising their own stalls ready for the summer fair.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Both teaching and learning are good, with pupils enjoying their lessons and making good progress in their work. They know how to improve their work and, in literacy, they have a clear picture of their next steps in learning. Tasks are generally set to challenge all groups within classes, although in some cases the challenge for the most able pupils is not enough. This is also the case within sets for mathematics where, although pupils are grouped by ability, the challenge for the most able could be greater. Teaching assistants give good support to a range of vulnerable pupils who make the same good progress as their peers. Teachers assess prior knowledge well through questioning and behaviour is very well managed because of the excellent relationships adults have with pupils. Outstanding behaviour allows much work to be carried out in pairs and groups, with all pupils being confident to answer questions and express views. The difference seen between good and satisfactory lessons is best noted in the pace of learning. Where pace drops, pupils sometimes lose focus on their work, whilst in lessons where the pace is brisk, pupils are motivated, keen to work, show excellent attitudes and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is stimulating with excellent links made between subjects. In Year 4, literacy tasks are related to pupils' visit to the National Gallery, for example. Good use is made of the locality, with pupils visiting the beach prior to painting in the style of Alfred Wallis. Themed days and weeks add further interest to the good curriculum. A visit to Chatham Docks and a talk from a Battle of Britain pilot created much interest in the World War 2 topic. An element of the curriculum, which is not as well developed, is the provision for pupils to gain an awareness of the multi-cultural nature of today's society in which they live. Pupils have access to a wide range of club activities, which they say offers them 'things we can't do at home', and helps them learn 'new skills and how to work as a team'. However, because of the size of the school, not all activities can be available to all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is an exceptionally caring school and this plays a significant part in the level of enjoyment pupils get from their time at school. The focus on social and moral development results in pupils who are confident and happy. All arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robustly in place. All vulnerable groups are well supported and as a result, they make good progress. Teaching assistants give good and consistent support to a range of pupils and work well, using their own initiative. The school is revisiting its assessment procedures. Currently, although there are termly progress meetings to discuss the progress made by all pupils, assessment information is not readily accessible to teachers on a very much more regular basis. Consequently, teaching does not always challenge all pupils and take them from their current levels of understanding. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory, and often shows pupils how to improve, although this is less consistent in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Effective leadership and management ensure an equal focus on pupils' personal development and their academic achievement. The school has travelled through some important changes in the very recent past. A change in headship, changes in staff and significant accommodation changes have all been managed well, with only minimal effect on pupils' progress. The headteacher has a very clear view about what needs to be improved in order to raise standards and support higher achievement. He provides good leadership and has re-established a network of middle managers, including a senior management team, year team leaders and subject leaders. This has had the effect of creating a collegiate feel in the school, with morale high, and all feel they are contributing to the school's success. Self-evaluation is well developed, and arises from the range and quality of the layers of leadership. The most senior middle leaders are sure of their roles and effectively gather information about the school in order to evaluate performance and suggest initiatives for improvement. The most recently appointed subject leaders, who took up their posts in April, are keen to take on tasks and already have some basic knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects. The school's Development Day brings together staff and governors, in order to discuss the next part of the school's improvement journey. It is mainly the senior management team that has monitored teaching and learning

and given support to improve the quality of teaching. Governors are supportive and involved. They too know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and make individual links with subject leaders. They are becoming more informed and this is allowing them to ask questions of the school and hold it to account for its performance.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2
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

19 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Herne Bay Junior School, Herne Bay CT6 5DA

Thank you for making us welcome and helping us when we visited your school the other day. We were pleased to see how happy you were at school and how hard you were working.

We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour both in lessons and out on the playground. Several of you explained what healthy eating was and we were very convinced by your knowledge. You told us that there was almost no bullying at your school and that there was always an adult on hand if you needed someone to talk to or a mediator to help. Your school is a very caring place and your parents know this. This is particularly true for the children who need extra help and support. Your teachers' assistants give you good help in class, especially when you are working in groups. Recent changes in reading, writing and science have had a good effect on the progress that you are making in these subjects. Changes to the ways in which things are taught are also having positive effects on the standards you reach.

The school is now in a good position to make improvements in mathematics. If you are going to achieve your best, then teaching in maths needs to improve further and the school needs to use the advice available to it from outside the school. We have also asked the school if it will help teachers get better information on how well you are doing in all your subjects so that they can see what you need to do next and how you have been improving over time. Finally, we have asked your headteacher if he can find some extra time for teachers who look after particular subjects in school, so that they can learn more about their subjects and how to improve them for you.

You too can help. If you keep working hard, enjoying school and showing such good attitudes to your work, this will also help you improve. Try to ask your parents not to take you on holiday during term time, as you know how hard it can be to catch up on things you have missed.

Thank you again for making our two days with you so interesting.

With best wishes

Gavin Jones Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector