

Herne Church of England Junior School

School Lane, Herne, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 7AL

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement and teaching, despite recent improvement, have not been consistently good enough over time.
- From above average starting points, pupils have not consistently made the progress of which they are capable.
- Over time, not enough teaching has been good or outstanding. Some inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching.
- In a few cases work is not matched well enough to pupils' learning needs, which can hinder their progress and development as independent and resilient learners.
- Where teaching is not good or better the pace of teaching and learning is sometimes too slow.
- Marking and feedback are not always as effective in helping pupils to improve their work in writing.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is not as strong as their achievement in reading and mathematics.
- Some policies and practices are not yet fully embedded across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Inadequate teaching has been eradicated, which has stemmed a legacy of previous underachievement, and there is now a majority of good and some outstanding teaching resulting in higher attainment and accelerated progress.
- The headteacher leads the school very effectively. He, along with senior leaders and the governing body, has taken rapid and successful action and has improved significant aspects of the school's work, demonstrating a strong capacity to sustain and make further improvement.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They have very good attitudes to learning and enjoy their work and responsibilities in class and around the school. They are polite and caring and uphold the school's values very well.
- Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school's work and the improved communication and partnership with the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed substantial parts of 18 lessons, many of which were joint observations with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher. In addition, inspectors talked to pupils about their work and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, groups of pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's own check on its performance, its improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information and the quality of teaching and the safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 58 responses to the online Parent View survey, the school's own survey of parents and spoke to some parents during the two days. They also looked at 27 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Brian Netto

Additional Inspector

Carol Vant

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school and the number on roll has increased since the previous inspection.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), because they are known to be eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority or are children from service families, is below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school provides a daily breakfast and after-school club.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2012. The deputy was the acting headteacher until the headteacher took up his post in January 2013. Since that time there have been many changes in staffing. There are currently two newly qualified class teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - the consistent approaches to teaching and learning are fully embedded across the school
 - teachers always maintain a good pace to teaching and learning
 - work is always well matched to pupils' learning needs and enables pupils to develop independence and resilience as learners.
- Further raise pupils' achievement, particularly in writing, and sustain the more rapid progress they are currently making by:
 - building on the work already started to raise standards and improve progress in writing
 - ensuring that pupils are clear about how they can improve their work in writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, over time, progress has not been fast enough for pupils from their above average starting points in Year 3. Standards in English and mathematics have not been consistently at the expected level for their ages by the end of Year 6. In the 2012 Year 6 national tests, standards overall were significantly below average and progress was considerably lower than expected.
- However, the as yet unvalidated 2013 results show a marked improvement, with the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading and mathematics being above that found nationally. The proportion making the expected progress in reading and mathematics is significantly above that found nationally. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress has accelerated considerably, although the proportions making faster progress in writing and mathematics are lower than national.
- The school has correctly identified writing as a key focus for improvement for all pupils and, in particular, to raise the achievement of pupils with special educational needs. Action has already been taken to support this area, with pupils having more opportunities to learn skills of drafting and editing their writing, and focus on grammar, punctuation and spelling, which are the areas that held them back last year. This is beginning to improve progress in writing, although achievement remains lower than in reading and mathematics.
- Reading for enjoyment is promoted well across the school and pupils and parents like the new reading resources that the school has invested in. Pupils develop their comprehension skills well, particularly through small group guided sessions, and the most-able readers have a good grasp of skills of inference and deduction to deepen their understanding of characters and plots. Less-able readers use phonic skills well (linking letters and sounds) to help them read unfamiliar words. In mathematics, the focus has been on problem solving and basic skills, which were weaker areas, and this, along with organising lessons into ability sets, has led to the improvements shown in achievement in 2013.
- In the 2012 national tests, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 who received support funded by the pupil premium was around four months behind that of their classmates in English and close to six months behind in mathematics. In 2013, progress improved, as it did for all pupils, and this group of pupils did as well as, or better than, that found nationally in mathematics and reading, but slightly below the national average in writing. There remains a gap between this group and other pupils in the school, but it is narrowing.
- The school's detailed records show that the progress across year groups of different groups, including boys and girls, the most-able pupils and the few pupils from different ethnic heritages, is generally similar.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to others, although they lag behind in writing. Additional support is effective, particularly when pupils work with individual or small group support with teaching assistants who ensure that their learning needs are well met.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, over the past three years, teaching has not been consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils have achieved well enough.
- There are consistent policies for teaching and learning but there has not been enough time under the new leadership team for these to be fully and securely embedded across the school.
- On occasion, work is not precisely enough matched to pupils' learning needs, which can restrict their progress, and sometimes there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop resilience and independence as learners.
- The majority of marking and feedback provides very useful information to pupils about how to

improve their work, and usually time is given to pupils to respond to comments. There are also good examples of pupils evaluating their own progress linked to steps for success, which was an area to improve in the previous inspection report. These aspects are not of a consistently high quality in all classes in writing, which can hinder the pace of pupils' progress.

- The pace of teaching and learning is sometimes too slow and, on occasion, pupils are not clear enough about the purpose of their learning.
- However, the quality of teaching has improved over the last year and a significant proportion is good or better, resulting in more rapid progress overall; this was clearly seen during the inspection in lessons and in pupils' books.
- The most effective teaching is challenging, motivating and provides well-planned activities with high expectations for pupils' learning and moves new learning forward at a brisk pace. For example, pupils in Year 3 showed great enthusiasm and determination in mathematical problem solving activities involving interpreting data from Venn diagrams. They worked successfully to tight deadlines, the most able rose to the challenge of demanding tasks, the less able were supported well with additional resources to ensure they understood the mathematical concept, and as a result all pupils made outstanding progress.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils, resulting in pupils wanting to do well and work hard. Many pupils agreed that learning is fun. As one pupil wrote, 'The teachers always make you feel welcome, are always there for me, make lessons as fun as they can and always help you out.' Pupils have lots of opportunities to discuss their ideas together to develop and share their thoughts and opinions and work well together.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, in class lessons and when supporting individuals or groups outside of lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are great ambassadors for their school. They uphold the school's values in their conduct throughout the school and live up to the school motto of 'Joyfully we learn'. They make a significant contribution to the friendly, caring and aspirational ethos of the school, have a good work ethic and want to do well.
- Pupils are friendly, courteous, wellmannered and keen to share their positive views about school. They are proud of their school and say they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their above-average attendance.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils behave equally well in class lessons and when they are working with teaching assistants or other adults outside of class lessons. Pupils and their parents agree that behaviour is good and say it has improved. Records show that this is typical of behaviour over time, with a reduction in behaviour incidents and no exclusions over the past year.
- Although good overall, and often exemplary, behaviour is not outstanding because where lessons do not fully engage, motivate or challenge pupils they can become distracted and inattentive.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and well cared for. They know how to keep themselves safe, for example through a good understanding of safety on the internet. They say they are not aware of any bullying in school. They do, however, have a good understanding that bullying can take different forms including name calling, physical and cyberbullying. The excellent, trusting relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils are confident to approach all staff should any problems arise, knowing that any issues would be sorted out quickly and fairly.
- Pupils are caring, considerate and respectful and staff are good role models and promote these qualities well.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a good, safe and sociable start and end to the day for those pupils who attend.
- Most parents who responded to the online survey or the school's own survey, or spoke to

inspectors, believe their children are happy, feel safe at school and are well looked after. Inspection findings support these views.

The leadership and management are good

- On his appointment, the headteacher, supported very well by the deputy and assistant headteachers, quickly identified areas that required improvement and took rapid action to bring about considerable changes in the school. These included swift eradication of inadequate teaching, the promotion of high expectations and, not least, a change of culture and ethos in the school.
- The headteacher leads the school very effectively. His ambition and vision, which are shared with all leaders, including the governing body, are firmly anchored in a relentless drive to improve outcomes for pupils. His leadership inspires pupils as well as staff who have a renewed enthusiasm and drive to provide the best possible experiences for pupils.
- The positive impact of the headteacher and senior leaders' actions has stemmed a legacy of underachievement because pupils are now making better progress. Monitoring is rigorous and leaders are fully aware of the need to further improve pupils' progress, sustain their achievement and fully embed new policies; plans are established to support this. For example, the school has invested in resources and training to implement a new literacy programme to support all pupils, but particularly those who have special educational needs.
- There is a very strong focus on improving teaching and learning. All teachers, including those who are new to teaching, are given effective guidance by senior leaders to develop their skills within a culture of support and coaching and well-targeted professional training and development. Senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and the impact on pupils' progress. The procedures for setting targets for teachers ensure that teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and that this is linked to pay and salary progression.
- There are now improved and consistent assessment systems that enable leaders and teachers to keep a close track on how individuals and groups of pupils are doing, so that extra support can be provided where pupils need to catch up or to stretch the most-able pupils. The effectiveness of this is very clear in the more rapid progress made last year.
- The strong senior leadership team makes a positive contribution to whole-school improvement, as well as providing skills and expertise in its particular areas of responsibility. Some leadership roles of middle managers are relatively new but they are already having a positive impact, for example in accelerating progress in mathematics, because they are supported very effectively by senior leaders in developing their roles.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well as it is firmly embedded in the subjects taught and in the ethos of the school. The school promotes its values as a church school and fosters pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths.
- The school ensures that all pupils have access to the full range of subjects and learn without fear of any type of discrimination. There is a broad curriculum, which is enhanced with a good range of enrichment and sporting activities that have a wide take up by pupils. Pupils' personal, social and health education has a strong focus and underpins the importance the school places on promoting pupils' well-being, aspirations and self-esteem.
- The school already gives high priority to a wide range of sporting opportunities and is building effectively on this with the extra funding for sports and physical education to benefit pupils' health and well-being in the long term. Much of the funding will be used to invest in an enhanced school sports service provided by a local secondary school, which includes competitive sports, training to develop staff skills, training pupils to become a 'Sports Crew' and additional equipment and resources. Clear plans are in place to monitor the impact of the funding.
- Parents, including those spoken to by inspectors, are overwhelmingly supportive and positive about the school and the changes that have taken place. They particularly appreciate the increased and improved communication with the school which was an issue for improvement in

the previous inspection report. This has been achieved through, for example, the new website, regular newsletters and informative consultation meetings. Parents appreciate the fact that leaders and class teachers are on the playground in the mornings to welcome parents and pupils to school. Parents also enjoy and are enthusiastic about the opportunities they have to support children's learning at home, particularly through the new homework policy, and at school. For example, trained parents provide a 'Reading Army' to make sure that there are opportunities for individual pupils to read aloud to adults on a regular basis. Parents are very vocal in their support for the new leadership team and several agreed that they have 'turned the school around' and enhanced its reputation and standing in the local community. This is borne out by the increasing roll.

- The school has worked well with the local authority which has supported the school effectively, particularly in improving teaching and learning. It now provides light touch support having acknowledged the strengths in the new leadership and management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed by the headteacher and by the increasing effectiveness of their own monitoring procedures that enable them to know the school's strengths and areas to improve. They understand how well the school is doing compared to all schools nationally. They are committed to improving the school. This is demonstrated in the governing body's action plan which ensures that governors support the school and hold it to account for its performance. The range of skills and expertise of the governing body has increased and a new Chair of the Governing Body has recently been appointed. Governors have a good overview of teaching in the school and the links between the quality of teaching and pay and promotion. There is a good knowledge of how the school uses the pupil premium and new sports funding and governors keep track of the difference this makes for pupils. The governing body ensures statutory duties are met, including those for safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

Unique reference number	118736
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	429576

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

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	352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorrell Furness
Headteacher	Malcolm Saunders
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 June 2012
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