

Herne Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118736
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326882
Inspection dates	26–27 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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 on roll	
School (total)	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Priscilla Cox
Headteacher	Quentin Roper
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
School address	School Lane Herne Herne Bay CT6 7AL
Telephone number	01227 374069
Fax number	01227 741415

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is larger than average. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage with very small numbers from various minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. There are breakfast and after-school clubs. These are independently managed and were separately inspected.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Herne Junior provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Many aspects of the school are good, including a stimulating curriculum that enthuses and motivates the pupils, living up to the school motto of 'Joyfully we learn'. Parents express mostly very positive views about the school. They especially appreciate the way in which the good arrangements for their children's care, guidance and support contribute to the pupils' good personal development. One parent wrote, 'I cannot quite believe the progress my son has made in his confidence.' Another echoed this view, commenting that the school 'offers every child the opportunity and support to grow in confidence'.

Although they have an overly positive view of the school's overall effectiveness, school leaders have a nonetheless accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development. They have successfully put in place improved systems for keeping a careful track of each pupil's progress, with support provided for any pupil identified as at risk of slipping behind. The impact of some of the measures taken in the past to accelerate pupils' progress has been dampened by the several changes of staff. As a result, standards have remained average in the years since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their key literacy and numeracy skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Recent improvements have begun to have an impact, however. There are signs from their current work, for example, that pupils are now starting to make faster progress when they first join the school. Well planned arrangements help pupils to quickly learn and follow the school's routines. As a parent explained, 'I am extremely pleased with the way my daughter has settled into Year 3', adding that, 'I have never seen her so enthusiastic about school.' Another parent wrote, 'I feel the school works hard to continue to improve.' The impact of the recent changes confirms this good capacity for improvement. In this well run school, this is also evidenced by school leaders' perceptive analysis of what is most effective about teaching and learning and how weaknesses can be improved.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons generally move at a good pace, so that pupils usually get a lot done. Skilled questioning helps pupils increasingly to think for themselves. Sometimes, however, teachers' lesson introductions go on for too long, and the attention of some pupils, especially boys', begins to drift. Where this occurs, the pace of learning slows. Teachers do not always match work closely enough to the wide range of abilities in each class. This means that work is not always challenging enough for the most able pupils. Parents recognise this. Several expressed the view that 'more-able pupils could be stretched more'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set work in all lessons that is closely matched to pupils' different capabilities so that more-able pupils are consistently challenged to achieve their full potential.
- Maintain the attention of all pupils, and especially boys, by ensuring that they do not have to listen passively for too long before being set practical activities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

As measured in the Year 6 national tests, standards in English, mathematics and science are average. The attainment of the boys is notably lower than that of the girls, and the margin between them is greater than seen nationally. The standards that pupils attain represent satisfactory achievement in relation to the average standards at which they are assessed shortly after joining the school in Year 3. They are lower, however, than might be expected in relation to the pupils' infant school test scores. In the past, pupils have made notably better progress in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4. As a result of recent improvements, there are signs that pupils are now getting off to a faster start in Year 3. This has been noticed by parents, many of whom comment favourably on the progress now being made in the younger classes. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make similar progress to their peers. It is the more-able pupils who do not always do as well as they should because, as a parent noted, 'They are not always pushed to achieve higher.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school. Their attendance is satisfactory and they enjoy coming to school because the curriculum is made interesting and fun. Pupils also enjoy the opportunities that they have to develop their sense of responsibility, for example as monitors and as 'book buddies' helping pupils in the neighbouring infant school with their reading. Pupils raise money for charities of their choice, and take part enthusiastically in sporting events in competition with other local schools. They appreciate the need for a healthy diet and plenty of exercise, even if the latter means that playtimes can sometimes be rather boisterous. Nonetheless, pupils feel safe, and describe the school as a friendly place. During a recent 'anti-bullying week', pupils in a Year 3 class devised as their 'recipe for friendship': '2000 litres of fun, 100g of care, 0g of bullying, one ton of nice people, 2kg of helpfulness, a heaped tablespoonful of God's love, 5,000 cuddles, 600ml of sharing, and masses of giggles'. Pupils say that if they have a problem they are confident that they can talk to someone who will help; they feel listened to and able to influence decisions. Behaviour is generally good and pupils mostly listen well in lessons, although the attention of some of the boys sometimes drifts when they are expected to listen passively for too long.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers, even those relatively new to their classes, generally know their pupils well and relationships are good. Teachers make good use of questioning, often targeted well at pupils to ensure that all are involved and understand. Teachers' daily planning sets out the learning objectives for lessons. However, these are not always shared with pupils, which means that sometimes pupils are unsure of what they will be learning. Similarly, success criteria are not always shared, making it difficult for pupils to gauge the progress they are making. Although most lessons move forward at a good pace, overlong introductions in some lessons cause some pupils, especially boys, to lose interest and concentration. Pupils with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities and less-able pupils are helped to make the same progress as their classmates. Work for more-able pupils, however, is not always challenging enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

It is the stimulating curriculum that particularly contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to school and their enthusiasm for learning. Among the innovative activities are the annual 'buggy race': a design technology challenge that has become a school tradition that goes back 20 years. All pupils learn French, with pupils in Year 5 developing lively links with their counterparts in a school in Northern France with whom they exchange letters. Pupils in Year 6 are also introduced to Spanish. A particularly strong feature at Herne Junior is the extensive range of after-school and lunchtime clubs on offer. These are greatly appreciated by pupils and parents alike. One parent wrote, 'My daughter takes part in something every day.' There are clubs to appeal to the interests of pupils with particular gifts and talents, including those who are keen on sports, but the classroom curriculum does not always ensure enough challenge to extend more-able pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare are rigorous and effective, so that pupils feel safe and secure. They know how to improve their work because they have targets which are reviewed regularly. Recent improvements in teachers' marking have resulted in much clearer guidance to pupils that shows them not only what they have done well but also what they need to do next to move their work on. This is an especially strong feature of marking of written work in English, although it is less in evidence in some other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good support from teaching assistants, and this helps them to make similar progress to the others in their class.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A number of school leaders are relatively new to their roles. Nevertheless, they share the headteacher's drive and commitment to make the changes needed to build on pupils' good personal development to raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' academic progress. A succession of staff changes over the past two years has blunted the impact of some of the changes made. For example, the school put in place measures to improve writing. While these were initially successful, some of the improvements were dissipated as new staff arrived with insufficient understanding of what had previously been agreed. Nonetheless, assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection and the school is now much more rigorous in its tracking of individual pupils' progress. This has contributed to the recent acceleration of progress, particularly in Year 3. The school has good links with other local schools. Parents are especially complimentary about the links with the neighbouring infant school from which almost all the pupils transfer. The governance of the school is good. Governors have a well informed view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They take some pride in the range of initiatives to promote community cohesion, but they have not put in place arrangements to evaluate the impact of the school's work in fulfilling this new statutory duty.

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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?	3
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	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Herne Church of England Junior School, Herne Bay CT6 7AL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. You are proud of your school. It is providing you with a satisfactory education, so that you reach average standards by the end of Year 6, and there are many features of the school that are good.

Herne Junior School is well run. Although there have been several changes of staff, your headteacher and school leaders have made a number of improvements that are beginning to have an effect in helping you make faster progress. Teachers help you through their questioning and through their marking, which gives you useful pointers on how you can improve your work. You can help too by making sure you always read and follow your teacher's advice and work hard to achieve your targets. We are pleased to see that you usually listen well in lessons, but we could see that sometimes some of the boys' attention drifts when you have to sit listening for too long. We have asked the teachers to be sure to give you more active tasks so that you are always concentrating hard. We have also asked teachers to be sure to always match work to each of your different capabilities. For some of you, work can sometimes be too easy.

Staff take good care of you and many of you told us that you like school because of the way the teachers give you such interesting things to do. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are and how well you all get on. Together, you are helping to make Herne Junior School a happy place so that you live up to the school motto, 'Joyfully we learn'.

Our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector