

Herne Bay Junior School

Kings Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 5DA

Inspection dates	8–9 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership for the school. She has high expectations for the staff and pupils. A parent summed up the views of many with the comment that, 'The school has improved beyond recognition since the arrival of the headteacher in 2014'.
- As a result of the work, vision, ambition and aspirations of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors, the school has improved considerably since the previous inspection.
- Teaching and learning have improved and are now good. Teachers plan activities that interest and engage pupils.
- The curriculum has been innovatively designed and provides many exciting opportunities to stimulate and enhance pupils' learning.
- Pupils learn well and make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are above average.
- Pupils feel very safe and happy at school and are well looked after.
- The governing body has developed more effective ways of working and has the skills and expertise to hold leaders to account well for the school's performance.
- Leaders of learning and subject leaders form effective teams and make a very significant contribution to improving teaching and pupils' outcomes. They are fully aware of strengths in their areas and where action is needed to make further improvements.
- Pupils are a credit to the school. They develop as exceptionally well-rounded individuals who enjoy their time in school.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and want to do well. They are inspired and motivated by their teachers.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in lessons, around the school and in the playground. They are polite, friendly and well mannered.
- Inspectors agree with the comment from one parent who wrote that, 'The school is simply buzzing and has really strong leadership which is obvious from just walking through the door'.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and learning across the classes.
- Progress is a little uneven across the classes and not always as rapid as it could be for all groups.
- Teachers do not always make the most of pupils' excellent behaviour and personal skills by giving them more opportunities to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding in resourceful ways where they can use their own initiative.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, so that pupils in all classes consistently make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Build on the successful actions that have already been taken to ensure that gaps in achievement for different groups continue to narrow.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in ways where they can use their initiative and be more resourceful learners, drawing on their excellent behaviour and personal skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership for the school and is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. As a result, the school has improved in all areas since the previous inspection. Teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' achievement are now good and pupils' behaviour, personal development and welfare are now outstanding.
- Many parents commented on the changes in the school since the headteacher was appointed. One wrote, 'I have found that in the last two years the school has just kept on improving massively'. Another commented, 'The school has been turned around under the new leadership. It has a vibrant, safe and happy feel from all areas'. These comments, which are typical of many, demonstrate the strength of parents' support for the leadership of the school.
- All senior leaders, staff and governors share the ambition, aspiration and determination to build on the strengths and improvements forged since the previous inspection. They share a very clear vision for the school and work together as a strong team.
- The headteacher is unwavering and uncompromising in her determination to provide the best possible learning and personal experiences for pupils. The impact of this is evident in the improved quality of teaching and learning and the outcomes for pupils. Leaders at all levels have demonstrated a strong capacity to improve further, and all subscribe to the vision enshrined in the school 'motto', 'One chance, let's get it right'.
- Leadership capacity has been increased to ensure further impact and influence on the quality of teaching and learning. Subject leaders and leaders of learning make a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in their subjects and year groups. Leaders hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.
- Any weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning are picked up quickly from rigorous checks on pupils' progress. Underperformance is challenged. Support is given, action points are followed up and rapid improvement is expected to meet the high expectations. Teachers work extremely hard to meet the increased expectations and welcome opportunities to develop their individual skills and meet whole-school priorities through further training. Teachers who are new to their careers are supported very well.
- A key factor in pupils' improved outcomes and their outstanding personal development is the impact of the curriculum. Leaders have been innovative in designing a curriculum that includes a wealth of enrichment activities to inspire and motivate learners and that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. The curriculum enrichment programme known as 'Top 20' provides all pupils with a diverse range of experiences during their time in school.
- A wide range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, which have a good take-up, help pupils to learn new skills and make a significant contribution to their personal as well as their academic development. Many pupils spoke with enthusiasm about memorable experiences both in and out of the classroom, such as participating in 'Dinosnores', which involved spending the night in the Natural History Museum.
- The arts and sport have a high profile in the school. Around a quarter of pupils learn to play a musical instrument and the annual performance of a Shakespeare play is, as a group of pupils agreed, 'really interesting and exciting, we did Macbeth last year and this year it's Romeo and Juliet, we think he wrote really good stories'. A range of impressive art work displayed around the school demonstrates pupils' high standards and positive links with the community such as the Turner Gallery.
- The school promotes British values such as tolerance and respect very effectively through the school's values and the curriculum. Pupils are prepared very well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary physical education and sports funding is used effectively to improve the quality of physical education teaching and learning through specialist coaching. It enables pupils to experience new sports and has widened their participation in competitive sport and therefore improved outcomes for pupils.
- The school uses additional funding very effectively for disadvantaged pupils. Improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has been and continues to be a key priority for leaders. To this end, a review of pupil premium funding was instigated by the school from a colleague in the Coastal Alliance, which is a partnership with 17 other schools. The outcomes from this review support the evidence from the inspection that gaps are closing and disadvantaged pupils are included in the full life of the school.
- The local authority has worked productively with the school since the previous inspection to support its improvement.

■ The governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the governing body. There is a new chair of the governing body, a number of new governors and a different way of working. Governance has strengthened significantly as a result. The governing body is now highly effective and fulfils its responsibilities rigorously. Governors share the vision, aspiration and ambition of the headteacher. Governors are very well informed by senior leaders and their own monitoring visits, and they know the school's strengths and priorities for development. They have a clear depth of knowledge and understanding of the progress of different groups from their analysis of the school's progress information. The governing body has the necessary skills to provide a strategic overview of the school's performance and consequently governors hold leaders to account very effectively.
- Governors oversee the performance management process and fully support the headteacher in expecting nothing less than good teaching and the actions that have been taken to tackle underperformance. Governors check carefully that additional funding is allocated effectively and that it is making a difference for pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All requirements are fully met and the procedures and processes to keep pupils safe are very well led and managed by the assistant headteacher. Policies are up to date and procedures are robust, including those involving outside agencies, to benefit pupils. Procedures to check staff suitability are systematic and robust. Improvements have been made to ensure that the site is safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved and outcomes are good.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils work hard and want to do well. They learn to be resilient learners to try out ideas and work well together.
- Teachers provide lessons that capture the interest of pupils and engage them well. Pupils' excellent behaviour and personal skills help them work together well, share ideas and opinions and make good and sometimes better progress. Pupils learning to calculate the area of complex shapes in Year 6, for example, were prompted to discuss their ideas using accurate mathematical vocabulary. They were fully engaged and motivated, and determined to work to the best of their ability and take on challenges to extend their learning. Effective and skilled questioning meant that pupils acquired a depth of learning, knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' good and sometimes excellent subject knowledge helps pupils to learn effectively. Year 5 pupils studying gravity in science, for example, were inspired and motivated by the enthusiasm and knowledge of the teacher and developed good scientific understanding as a result.
- Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music, Spanish, physical education and religious education.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together in a culture of mutual support and strong teamwork. Teaching assistants are skilled, due to intensive training, and make a significant and positive contribution to pupils' learning in the classroom and when providing extra support for different groups or individuals. A teacher and teaching assistant worked very effectively together with a group of Year 6 pupils to help them catch up in their writing.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on teaching reading, writing and mathematics and good opportunities to develop these skills in other subjects, particularly writing.
- The school's policy for marking and feedback is used consistently across the school. Pupils say that teachers' comments help them know how to improve their work. Teachers are generally clear about the next steps for learning from effective use of the assessment system that has been implemented to track pupils' progress.
- Teachers are good role models for pupils. Classrooms and shared areas provide exciting and attractive displays that inspire and motivate pupils and effectively support teaching and learning.

- Expectations for learning and progress are generally high and there are some outstanding features in teaching. The features of the most effective teaching and learning, however, are not of the same high quality or consistency in all classes, which results in some pupils not making the very best progress of which they are capable. In addition, teaching does not always make the most of pupils' excellent behaviour and personal skills by providing more opportunities for them to be resourceful and apply their knowledge and understanding to stretch their thinking and learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- There are excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. All staff know the pupils well and as a consequence, individual needs are supported very effectively.
- A parent whose child was new to the school commented, 'The school was enormously supportive in helping my child with transition, he settled quickly and is thriving in this positive and aspirational learning environment'.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements. They have excellent attitudes to learning and want to do well, which has a very positive impact on their progress.
- Pupils and parents express a strong sense of belonging to a community. One parent commented, 'My child feels part of a community that he cares about in his school'. Another wrote, 'Herne Bay Junior School works so hard for all the children and I have always felt part of a family whenever I have called into the office or spoken to the staff'.
- Pupils develop as exceptionally well-rounded individuals and develop confidence and self-esteem in an ethos that strongly promotes a positive 'can-do' philosophy.
- Pupils are very polite and friendly and respectful of adults and each other. They show respect, tolerance and understanding for diversity in school and in the wider community.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and know how to keep safe in a range of situations in and out of school. They understand and have a very good awareness of online safety and promote this very well across the school, for example by designing posters that are displayed around the school as reminders to all.
- Pupils say that they are confident to confide in an adult in school if they have any concerns or problems. They say that any bullying is rare, but that teachers are very good at resolving any issues should they arise. They clearly understand the difference between bullying and friends falling out or being unkind.
- Pupils enjoy their time at school and this is reflected in improved and above-average attendance. The school works tirelessly to promote regular attendance for all pupils. Leaders are particularly diligent in their work to narrow the gap in attendance between the disadvantaged pupil group and others.
- The family liaison officer makes a very effective contribution to supporting pupils and their families who may be vulnerable to help remove or reduce barriers to learning.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast or after-school club receive a safe and healthy start or end to the school day.
- Most parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire and the school's own survey agree that their children feel safe in school and are well looked after.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion in the playground, at lunchtimes, around the school and when they gather together as a whole school for singing or celebration assemblies.
- Pupils know and understand the behaviour system and are very clear about what is expected. They understand the need for rules in the school and wider community. School records confirm that behaviour is excellent over time and has improved for individuals.
- Pupils are very attentive in lessons and respond well to teachers' high expectations for behaviour, which supports their excellent attitudes and good learning.
- Most parents and all the staff agree that pupils behave very well.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Progress is now good in reading, writing and mathematics. This is a result of the successful action taken to improve teaching and learning. Attainment is rising. Overall, pupils reach good standards in English and mathematics and a range of other subjects including art, music and sports. Pupils are well prepared to continue to the next stage of their education.
- In 2015, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 was significantly above that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who, by the end of Year 6, had made the expected progress in all three subjects was above that found nationally. In reading and writing, the proportion making more than expected progress was above national averages.
- Pupils' work in their books and the school's information about their progress show that pupils currently in the school make good progress overall from their different starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is, however, a little uneven across the classes and sometimes for different groups within classes. This is why outcomes are not yet outstanding.
- Strong and skilled leadership in English and mathematics have helped to improve outcomes for pupils. In reading, for example, leaders have focused on pupils' comprehension skills and consequently there has been a marked improvement in outcomes. By Year 6, pupils are able to use skills of inference to help them gain a depth of understanding of character, plot and settings. Reading for enjoyment is promoted very well across the school. Pupils develop as expressive, fluent readers who can express their preferences for styles of writing and give reasons why.
- In writing, leaders correctly identified that although pupils' outcomes in grammar, punctuation and spelling were significantly above average, fewer most-able pupils reached the higher Level 5 compared with nationally. There is now an increased focus in this area and the impact is evident in many pupils' writing in English and in other subjects. A group of pupils agreed that they enjoy writing because 'it is made exciting using film, music and events'. The whole school was, with great justification, very proud of a pupil who had recently won a BBC Radio 2 competition to write 500 words. Her story, 'Poor Pig's Revenge', will now be professionally illustrated and published and her splendid work has served to inspire and motivate all pupils.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved as a result of innovative leadership decisions. The skilled leader was released from class over a period of five weeks to work intensively with colleagues to help increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning and so improve teachers' confidence and expertise. As a consequence, pupils' outcomes have improved significantly.
- The most able pupils currently in the school are generally challenged to achieve well. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels by the end of Year 6 was significantly above national figures and particularly strong in writing.
- In 2015, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally narrowed. Compared with other pupils in the school, gaps increased in reading and mathematics but narrowed in writing, and grammar, punctuation and spelling. The biggest gaps remained, however, in mathematics and writing.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is, as with other pupils, a little uneven across classes and subjects, and progress generally remains less rapid than for their peers in most year groups. Senior leaders, including governors, are taking determined action to tackle this. In all year groups, school information shows that the gap in progress narrows as the year progresses and in some cases this means that the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are achieving as expected for their age is similar to other pupils. An example of this is in mathematics in Year 6.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are making similar progress as others, which means that it is uneven across the school but improving as a result of strong leadership and provision. It is notable that as the year progresses, a number of pupils no longer require additional learning help. They have been able to catch up because of good-quality interventions from trained and skilled teaching assistants as well as the improved quality of teaching and learning in most classes. Leaders are, nevertheless, relentless in their work to accelerate the progress of this group in order to narrow the gaps between their achievement and that of others in the school.

School details

Unique reference number	118852
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10012222

This inspection 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 of pupils on the school roll	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Bore
Headteacher	Frances Nation
Telephone number	01227 374608
Website	www.hernebay-jun.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@hernebay-jun.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school provides a daily breakfast and after-school club.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2014 after the school's previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 22 lessons, most of which observations were conducted with a member of the senior leadership team. They talked to pupils about their work and looked at the work in pupils' books. They observed pupils at break- and at lunchtime and asked them for their views on the school and their learning. Inspectors also talked to pupils about reading and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities.
- Discussions were held with governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including: the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The inspectors looked at the 76 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 42 written comments. They also looked at the results of the school's own survey of parents that had 274 responses. Inspectors took account of 39 questionnaires returned by staff and 58 returned by pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Gordon	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Reid	Ofsted Inspector

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