

Herne Church of England Junior School

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

Inspection dates

22–23 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The transformation of the school since the previous inspection is impressive. Inspirational leadership at all levels ensures that all aspects of the school's work are highly successful. The pace of improvement is valued and celebrated by all members of the school community.
- The challenge to improve the school has been embraced by all staff. Leaders have galvanised staff so that they have meaningful input into identifying the school's priorities and what needs to be done. As a result, staff gain great satisfaction from the school's many successes.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have embraced the support provided by leaders to improve their performance. They work tirelessly to ensure that all pupils achieve to their highest ability.
- Teachers know their pupils really well and assess learning accurately; they use this information to ensure learning is exciting and meets the needs of all groups of pupils in their care. In all year groups and across all subjects, pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Pupils' achievement at age 11 in recent years has been above national results, establishing an excellent track record of success.
- Across the school, pupils' current attainment in reading, writing and mathematics matches or exceeds the school's past high achievements.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are extremely positive, polite and welcoming. They follow the rules of the school and rise to the high standards set by all staff. The school's Christian ethos of 'love your neighbour as you love yourself' is embraced.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They are very productive, talk about their learning regularly and listen with respect to the views of others, which deepens their understanding of what is being taught.
- Parents are very pleased with the school. They say that their children are very happy and that the school makes sure pupils behave well and are taught to a high standard.
- Governors have transformed how they work with the school. They robustly challenge the school's leadership, and balance this with a great deal of constructive support.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing even further by ensuring that more pupils, particularly the most able, are encouraged to use and apply their wide range of skills when writing independently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Senior leaders have transformed the school in recent years. All members of the school community are ambitious for pupils and proud of their achievements. Parents are delighted with the changes that have been made and the very positive impact they are having on their children's motivation to learn and the progress they are making.
 - Leaders at all levels accurately evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ensure that the school focuses on the most important priorities. All staff work tirelessly to ensure that improvements are achieved and embedded in whole-school practice. Outcomes for pupils have significantly improved because leaders' strategies to improve teaching and learning have been effective.
 - The challenge to improve the school has been embraced by staff, who have welcomed the opportunity to learn from each other. Leaders have ensured that all staff have contributed to the school's development plans, which has motivated all to be involved in improving outcomes across the school.
 - Staff morale is extremely high and this, along with a culture of all teachers as leaders, demonstrates the school's very strong capacity to continue to improve.
 - Staff are very positive about the high-quality support they have been given to improve their teaching. They feel that they are part of the improvement process and have high aspirations for themselves and the children in their care. All staff, in their response to the staff questionnaire, were extremely positive about the leadership of the school. One commented, 'As a teacher of many years, I feel that the senior leaders are the best I have encountered, they have high but fair expectations and put in the effort and hours like we do'.
 - Middle leaders are highly effective. They monitor teaching and learning carefully and have a clear understanding of what they need to do next to ensure that their subjects are taught to the highest standard. They are adept at recognising any weaknesses in teaching and in giving good-quality support to teachers to ensure improvement when necessary.
 - The pupil premium funding is used very well to ensure that disadvantage is not a barrier to pupils' learning or participation in the school's broad range of extra-curricular activities. The range of support for this group of pupils is well planned, wide and varied, and its positive impact is evident in the good achievement of disadvantaged pupils across the school.
 - The school's curriculum is very well planned so that pupils develop appropriate skills and in-depth knowledge and understanding in each subject. Pupils spoken to during the inspection considered that teachers make learning fun. As one pupil said, 'It's not just about pen and paper', while a parent commented on how the school 'really enthuses and excites learning'. Visitors and trips arranged by the school bring learning to life and deepen pupils' understanding. Additional after-school activities are wide and varied, including among other things, lacrosse, sewing, climbing-wall activity and an orchestra. A very high percentage of pupils take up at least one of these opportunities.
 - Sport is a real strength of the school and excellent use has been made of the money provided through the government's sports and physical education funding. Staff have been supported by the local high school to develop their skills. Pupils have been trained to be playground sport leaders, and new equipment has been purchased. Pupils have extensive opportunities to experience a wide variety of sporting activities during and after school.
 - The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, together with their understanding of life in modern Britain, are excellent. The school's Christian ethos has a very high priority that permeates across the school and underpins school policies and procedures. The school's values are woven through pupils' life at the school. Pupils are taught about different cultures and faiths and this is supported by a range of activities, such as visits to different places of worship and sponsoring a Ugandan musical band.
 - The local authority provided excellent guidance after the previous inspection, for example supporting the school to set up a rigorous monitoring cycle and working with the school to ensure robust assessment of the new curriculum. Officers know the school well and recognise that the rapid improvements made and secured are a consequence of the excellent leadership and the high commitment of staff.
- **The governance of the school**
- Governance has strengthened significantly since the previous inspection. Governors have refocused their work and developed clear methods of holding the school to account. They robustly challenge the headteacher to explain the performance of pupils and to show how leaders have improved the

- quality of teaching. This is balanced with a good deal of constructive support.
- Governors fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of teachers' performance because they are well informed about the progress pupils make.
- Governors know what is going well in the school and what needs to be improved. They ensure that spending of the pupil premium and the sports funding is allocated effectively to improve pupils' achievement.
- Governors' skills are very well matched to their roles in school. This enables them to support the school in its aims and challenge with authority and understanding when required.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records are up to date. The site is secure and staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. On a day-to-day basis, staff act as very positive role models for pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe. The school is alert to its responsibility with regard to dealing with extremism and terrorism, including the Prevent duty, and have undergone training from the local police. Staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to all aspects of keeping pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Staff work as a strong team to continually develop their teaching skills, ensuring a clear, whole-school understanding of what makes learning effective. This has had a remarkable impact on pupils' achievement.
- During lessons, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils know what is expected of them, and because they find their learning activities interesting, they are almost always fully focused on the task they have been given.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work are nearly always very positive. Consequently, they produce an excellent amount of work independently. Pupils listen with respect to the views of others and this enhances their understanding of what is being taught.
- Pupils fully understand what it takes to be a successful learner. They are confident and talk about their learning articulately and understand how teachers support them.
- Teaching assistants are a central part of the learning team and used very effectively. They are very well trained and briefed by teachers and so are able to provide pupils of different abilities with the support they need to make very good progress in lessons and over time.
- The vast majority of lessons are challenging, especially for the most able. Teachers extend pupils' thinking quickly when it is clear that they are ready to move on. Consequently, pupils do not waste time completing work they can already do. Across subjects, pupils have become skilled at reflecting on their understanding. Pupils respond well and with maturity to teachers' questions and to the advice and guidance they are given. This helps to move learning to a higher level.
- A wide range of activities are used by teachers to check pupils' learning. Feedback to pupils is clear and tells them what they need to do to achieve the next stage of learning. Planning is used flexibly to ensure that pupils' learning is moved on at the right time to meet their needs. Pupils who need additional guidance and support receive these promptly so they catch up quickly.
- Teachers assess learning accurately through focused feedback to pupils. They use robust and accurate assessment information to plan interesting lessons that meet pupils' needs very well.
- The support provided for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is of exceptionally high quality. The needs of individual pupils are very well understood. Teaching is modified to give these pupils full access to learning and so they achieve as well as their peers in school.
- Writing is taught effectively and in a systematic way. Pupils are supported well to refine and improve their work. Finished pieces of work show excellent progress over time. Sometimes, the most-able pupils already at a high level of attainment are not encouraged sufficiently to use and apply the wide range of skills taught when writing independently. Reading is a real strength of the school and is taught in a focused way. Reading sessions are led well to ensure that no group is just 'treading water', and all pupils are challenged through engaging activities. As a result, over time, pupils make excellent progress.
- The teaching of mathematics is excellent. In all year groups and for all pupils there is clear challenge. Skills are systematically taught and these are carefully put into real contexts to ensure deeper understanding. Pupils with additional mathematical needs are well supported through a range of strategies and resources.
- Teaching across all subjects is strong. The work in pupils' books, on tablets and on the very impressive displays shows excellent learning. For example, in music, Year 5 pupils composed a backing track for their orchestra to play along to, with outstanding effect.
- Homework is used very successfully in two ways. First, it supports pupils' progress well by allowing them

to practise skills and apply their knowledge in the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Second, homework projects reinforce and enhance learning in other subjects such as history.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils feel very safe at school. All parents who responded to Parent View agree. Pupils are very clear about what to do if they are unsure about anything and would confidently talk to an adult at school if they had a worry or concern. The school has a comprehensive e-safety policy and a system in place for any child who has any online concerns to seek help.
- Pupils who need additional support are cared for extremely well. Pastoral care is very well organised and used to great effect. Systems for identifying and supporting pupils with needs such as anger management or who lack emotional resilience are well embedded and effective. Any safeguarding concerns raised are acted upon and are well documented. The school maintains very strong links with a range of external agencies, such as services for social care.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared to take their place in modern Britain. The school's curriculum places a very strong emphasis on supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their understanding of British values. The school's ethos is one of respect, and pupils enjoy the responsibility of voting democratically for their peers for roles of responsibility. The school's daily act of worship is of outstanding quality and gives pupils an opportunity to reflect on the world and be understanding and tolerant of others.
- Pupils relish opportunities to take on responsibilities at school, in roles such as house captains, and they carry out any tasks they are given well. All children represent the school in some sporting event throughout the year. Pupils are very proud and very successful when they represent the school in local and district sporting events.
- The extensive opportunities for taking part in sport and regular health-awareness activities help pupils to understand how and why they should keep themselves healthy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are positive, polite and welcoming. They know and understand the clear rules of the school and work towards meeting the school's high expectations. The school's Christian ethos of 'love your neighbour as you love yourself' is adhered to and pupils' behaviour towards each other in all aspects of school life is extremely positive.
- In lessons, pupils listen carefully to the views of others and conduct themselves in a positive manner when involved in discussions, being respectful of each other's input. The vast majority of pupils have excellent self-discipline, which was clearly demonstrated in the high-quality Year 4 Easter show.
- The vast majority of pupils believe that behaviour in lessons and around school is very good. Pupils appreciate the fact that teachers encourage them to be friendly to each other and report that bullying is extremely rare, and is dealt with swiftly and very effectively if it does occur.
- Pupils' attendance is good and improving. Attendance is monitored closely, so if the attendance of any group of pupils does dip, actions are taken to improve it.
- Pupils come to lessons prepared to learn, are very supportive and work extremely well with one another. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils focus on their work, are keen to contribute and take great pride in presenting work well. Those few who find controlling their behaviour a significant challenge are effectively and discretely supported by staff.
- All parents spoken to at the school gate and those who responded to the parental questionnaire say that their children are extremely happy at school and that staff ensure pupils behave well. The vast majority believe that the school deals with any incidents of bullying effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils in all year groups make rapid and sustained progress. There has been continued and sustained improvement in outcomes for pupils since the previous inspection.

- Year 6 attainment has been significantly above national standards for the last three years in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils working at the higher levels is impressive, being considerably greater than that found nationally.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils currently in the school matches the school's past achievements. Nearly all pupils have reached expected or better than expected in-year attainment.
- The majority of pupils currently at the school are making better than expected progress. This has been secured because of the very effective action taken by leaders in improving teaching and learning over the past three years.
- Work in pupils' books shows excellent progress across all subjects of the curriculum. There is a high expectation of presentation in all subjects. Pupils achieve well in all subjects because work is planned that makes them think at a higher level.
- Gaps in performance between disadvantaged and other pupils at the school have been eradicated in mathematics and reading, with a very small gap in writing. In 2015, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils at the school was higher than that of other pupils nationally in all subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs attain very well, with the vast majority reaching the level expected for their age by the end of their time at the school. This is because of the extremely well-organised support they receive and the management of this area of the schools' work by the special needs leader.
- The most-able pupils at the school are challenged to excel. The percentage of pupils achieving at the very highest levels in reading and mathematics is higher than the percentage nationally. The most-able pupils do well in writing, but not quite as well as they do in reading and mathematics. Sometimes, the most-able writers do not use and apply their wide range of skills in their written work. Leaders have built challenge into all subjects of the curriculum to ensure that the most able achieve their potential.
- The school's monitoring, along with excellent procedures in holding staff to account, ensure that no child is left behind and that pupils are ready for the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	118736
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10002350

This inspection 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	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorrell Furness
Headteacher	Malcolm Saunders
Telephone number	01227 374069
Website	www.herne-junior.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@herne-junior.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school. There are three single-age classes in each year group.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils.)
- The number of pupils who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- A breakfast and after-school club, managed by the governing body, runs each day during term time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 23 lessons or parts of lessons. All classes and a wide range of subjects were observed. Over half of the observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher.
- Collective worship was observed and a section of the end-of-term Easter show.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, and governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to newly qualified teaching staff.
- Pupils were spoken to in groups within lessons and during breaktimes. The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and on display around the school. Inspectors also listened to a range of pupils read aloud.
- The views of the 34 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were taken into account.
- Inspectors visited the breakfast and after-school club. They had discussions with parents at the start of the school day, and considered their views, together with those expressed by the 54 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including information on pupils' progress and attainment, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, monitoring carried out by leaders, curriculum planning, and information and policies relating to the safeguarding of pupils, including those linked to attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

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