

Inspection of Herne Bay Junior School

Kings Road, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 5DA

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The vast majority of pupils align to the school's high expectations to 'be respectful, be responsible and be ready'. They build positive relationships with staff and their peers and are respectful of different cultures and religions. Pupils are keen to show their responsibility by taking on leadership roles, such as art ambassadors, sports leaders, house captains and play leaders.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to their education and attend school happily, ready to learn. Those who find school more challenging are well supported through the 'thrive room' and early morning sports club, which help them to make a more purposeful and settled start to the day. These initiatives have had a positive impact on the attendance and punctuality of a number of pupils. However, some pupils continue to miss valuable learning time by arriving to school late.

Pupils feel safe in their school and know they can always talk to a trusted adult. Pupils are aware that poor behaviour sometimes happens in the school, but they are confident that staff deal with this swiftly to reduce any impact on their learning or play.

Despite the school's high ambitions, not all pupils achieve as well as they could in their learning across the curriculum.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils, but this ambition is not being consistently achieved. The knowledge and skills that pupils will learn over time have been clearly set out. However, in lessons, the specific knowledge pupils need to focus on is sometimes unclear. This often results in pupils completing activities without fully understanding what they are learning about. When this happens, pupils do not establish secure foundations in their learning to build on.

Teachers make regular checks on pupils' understanding. Sometimes, these checks do not accurately identify what pupils have learned well and remembered. Where teachers do not have a consistently clear oversight of pupils' knowledge, this leads to misconceptions being missed. Often, important knowledge is not revisited in sufficient detail to enable gaps in learning to be addressed effectively. As a result, not all pupils achieve as well as they could.

Pupils who need additional support to catch up on their reading skills are swiftly identified so that extra help can be put in place. However, some phonics teaching lacks the expertise needed to support pupils in the earliest stages of reading. At times, pupils are not encouraged to decode words using the phonics techniques they have learned. This affects how well they are able to recognise familiar sounds in order to become fluent readers.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are swiftly and accurately identified so that support can be provided. Classrooms are well resourced,

which enables staff to adapt activities where needed. Mostly support is well matched to pupils' needs.

While action has been taken to improve more challenging behaviours, this has not been as effective as it needs to be. As a result, some patterns of poor behaviour, including discriminatory language, persist. There are clear expectations of how pupils are expected to behave, which staff reinforce. Pupils understand what is expected of them and the vast majority behave well as a result. The school provides helpful support to pupils who struggle to manage their emotions. This has had a positive impact in reducing some poor behaviour, but some pupils persist in being disruptive despite the support in place. The school has taken effective action to improve attendance. Despite this, persistent absence remains high for some pupils. This continues to be a priority for the school.

Pupils value their regular visits to the forest area, where they develop socially as a result of teamwork opportunities. Pupils gain confidence and resilience by trying new skills and sharing their experiences. The school is highly considerate of pupils' well-being and mental health. Well-considered opportunities for reflection support pupils' spiritual development.

Staff are proud to work in the school and feel well supported by leaders, who are considerate of their well-being and workload. Governors know the school well but do not provide effective challenge in regard to the impact of the curriculum. Leaders and governors are not as clear as they should be around some aspects of their responsibilities, for instance their statutory responsibilities in regard to the 'Prevent' duty.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and transparent culture of safeguarding in the school. There are clear systems in place for logging and acting upon concerns. However, expertise around some aspects of safeguarding is less secure. Where this is the case, the potential risks associated with certain types of behaviour are sometimes not thoroughly considered. This means pupils may not get the tailored support and intervention they need in a timely manner. Additionally, leaders have not considered, as fully as they could, the role of the wider curriculum to help pupils consider some risks that they may face.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and governors do not have sufficient expertise around some areas of safeguarding. This means that the curriculum is sometimes not as preventative as it could be and pupils may not receive well matched and timely interventions that could reduce their risk of future harm. The school should ensure that leaders have the

expertise to identify all risks fully and to consider these risks thoroughly in the curriculum.

- The school's checks on pupils' learning do not focus on how securely pupils have understood the intended learning. Misconceptions and gaps in learning are sometimes missed. Not all pupils achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise and resources needed to focus their teaching more sharply on the intended learning.
- Some phonics teaching lacks the necessary expertise to support pupils in the earlier stages of reading. Where this is the case, pupils do not decode words accurately, which can slow down their reading progress and fluency. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise to teach phonics accurately.
- Some incidents of poor behaviour, including the use of discriminatory language, are not addressed as effectively as they could be. Some patterns of poor behaviour continue. Leaders should ensure that incidents of poor behaviour are swiftly identified.
- Leaders, including those with responsibility for governance, do not have a sufficiently clear oversight of the areas of the curriculum that need to be improved and the impact that the curriculum is having. As a result, curriculum ambitions are not being consistently fulfilled, and not all pupils are achieving as highly as they could. Leaders should ensure that they review the impact of their work to embed the curriculum as intended so that necessary improvements happen in a timely manner.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	118852
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10379813
Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	384
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	George Smart
Headteacher	Melody Wilkinson
Website	www.hernebay-jun.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 January 2020

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered provider of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation of the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the governing body and the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, English and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential online staff and pupil surveys and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Tash Hurtado, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rosemary Keen

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