

Herne Bay Infant and Seashells Nursery School

Stanley Road, Herne Bay Kent CT6 5SH

Inspection dates	20–21 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a happy, caring and vibrant school where children are nurtured and thrive as a result.
- The headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors have successfully improved the school since the previous inspection.
- Teaching and learning are now good. Teachers provide interesting and motivating lessons and pupils learn well as a result.
- Pupils achieve well and from their starting points make good progress so that by the time they leave their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with the national averages.
- Attainment in writing has improved considerably since the previous inspection.
- Children in the early years get a good start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes. They enjoy their learning and are well prepared to continue their learning in key stage 1.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They conduct themselves well in lessons, around the school and in the playground.
- Pupils feel safe in school because their welfare is given high priority and all staff follow all safeguarding procedures.
- Governors have improved their effectiveness in holding leaders to account for the school's performance and now provide a good level of challenge and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress of groups of pupils is not yet tracked or recorded in the same detail as pupils' attainment. As a result, senior leaders and governors lack a strategic overview of the progress of vulnerable groups in their work to continue to close gaps.
- Effective questioning, use of resources and progression in subjects is not yet fully embedded across all classes to ensure pupils' depth of learning is of the same quality to match the best practice seen.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the gap in achievement between vulnerable groups continues to narrow and that senior leaders and governors have a strategic overview of the progress of different groups as well as their attainment.
- As the curriculum is reviewed, developed and embedded across the school, ensure that the provision promotes opportunities for teachers' effective questioning, use of resources and progression in subjects to increase pupils' depth of knowledge, skills and understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders and governors have effectively and determinedly tackled the issues identified at the previous inspection. As a result, the school has made the improvements needed to be good.
- All staff share the vision and ambition to build on the strengths and improvements forged since the previous inspection and work together as a strong team to provide the best learning and personal experiences for pupils.
- There have been considerable changes in staffing since the previous inspection. Senior leaders expect the best and support is quickly provided if any weaknesses are identified. Their arrangements for checking the quality of teaching and learning are rigorous and accurately identify how teaching can improve. Teachers are held to account for pupils' progress.
- The strong ethos, clearly embedded in the school values of learning, kindness, perseverance, cooperation and responsibility, ensures a nurturing environment where pupils thrive, and develop as learners who enjoy their time in school. One member of staff said, 'This is a great school with enthusiastic and dedicated teachers determined to make a positive difference to the children in their classes both academically and in terms of well-being.'
- Senior leaders and governors regularly check all aspects of the school's work. There is a clear, shared understanding of the strengths of the school and the key priorities for further development, which inform the school's improvement plan.
- Subject leaders use their good knowledge and understanding to make a good contribution to school improvement. They are influential in improving the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- The curriculum inspires and motivates learners and is strongly underpinned by pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders are correctly constantly reviewing and developing the curriculum to ensure the best learning opportunities are embedded across the school.
- Teachers plan carefully to engage pupils' interests and spark their enthusiasm and thirst for learning. Year group teams share their expertise and knowledge to plan termly themes and topics, which are effectively planned to link learning across different subjects. Learning is enriched by a range of extra activities including visits in and around the local community, a wide range of clubs and visitors to school. Year 2 pupils, for example, thoroughly enjoyed a theatre group's performance to kick-start their science work on living things and their habitats. These activities help pupils to learn new skills and make a significant contribution to their personal as well as their academic development.
- The primary physical education and sport funding is used effectively to enhance the skills of teachers and pupils and therefore improve outcomes for pupils. Funding includes the provision of specialist coaches, Team Theme, who work alongside teachers in lessons and provide a range of after-school clubs. Participation in sporting activity after school has increased as a result.
- Actions to improve the effectiveness of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, an issue in the previous inspection, could not be put in place as rapidly as senior leaders would have wished, despite their efforts to do so. As a result, gaps increased between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to others in school and other pupils nationally in 2015.
- Senior leaders have worked with determination to remedy this and a recent review by members of the Coastal Alliance (a partnership with a group of schools) shows that funding is now spent more effectively and although gaps in attainment remain, they are narrowing. The impact of this is evident in pupils' work and their good progress. All leaders and staff are aware of and have targets to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Senior leaders have a clear strategic overview of the attainment of this group and check that additional support where needed is appropriate and making a difference. All leaders and staff are aware of the progress of individuals in this group; however, the strategic overview of the progress of disadvantaged pupils as a group is not as clear.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain because all staff and pupils promote and demonstrate fundamental British values in all areas across the school and they are linked into the curriculum planning. Tolerance and respect are fostered very effectively through the school's values. In their questionnaire, all pupils felt that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally.
- Parents are supportive of the school, its leadership and the staff. One parent summed up the views of many with the comment: 'My child loves to come to school and enjoys all aspects of learning. She has

had a fabulous time at this school so far and I'm very happy with the progress she has made. The staff are welcoming and friendly and always very helpful.'

- The school works effectively with other local schools in the Coastal Alliance. All staff benefit from activities undertaken as a group of schools, including sharing good practice.
- The local authority has worked productively with the school since the previous inspection and supports it effectively. Senior leaders have welcomed and initiated support where they have identified needs. The local authority has every confidence in the leadership of the school and supports the school's own evaluation of its performance.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors, including some new members, have formed an effective team, which benefits from a wide range of expertise and experience.
 - The governing body shares the ambition and aspirations of the headteacher to ensure that the school continues to improve.
 - Since the previous inspection, the governing body has made significant changes to the way it works and the effectiveness with which it holds senior leaders to account for the performance of the school. By their own admission, they 'have come a long way'.
 - Governors are now much more involved in the work of the school. They are now well informed about the quality of teaching and learning from detailed reports from senior leaders and their own monitoring visits, which are linked to the school improvement plan priorities. They check the impact of actions taken against the milestones in the plan and know the strengths of the school and the areas for further development.
 - Governors expect to see evidence of targets being met to agree with any recommendations for pay rises or promotion to sustain the improved and now good quality of teaching and learning.
 - Governors are aware of the information on pupils' achievement to help them compare the school's performance to the national picture and challenge any underperformance.
 - The governing body is aware of the impact of additional funding and how it is making a difference for pupils. Governors are able to compare the attainment of, for example, disadvantaged pupils with others, from information provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Governors are not so well informed, however, of the detail of the funding breakdown to help them monitor the effectiveness of spending decisions.
 - Governors have undertaken and benefited from training from the local authority and from links with other governors in the Coastal Alliance schools. They have correctly identified the need to sustain a high level of challenge to the school and to promote and increase parental involvement.
 - The governing body meets all of its statutory duties including those for ensuring that safeguarding requirements are met.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met and all staff are trained and alert to signs of risk and act quickly to raise any concerns. Policies are up to date and procedures are robust, including those involving outside agencies to benefit pupils. As a result, the school is a safe place for pupils and staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection. This is shown in the school's rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and regularly moderated by the local authority. As a result, pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have improved and are good.
- Teaching assistants and additional adults provide effective support for learning. The teachers and teaching assistants work well together, particularly in their year teams, in a culture of mutual support and strong teamwork. Staff are good role models for pupils, promoting respect and good relationships between pupils. Rules and routines for pupils' behaviour and learning are clear and pupils know what is expected of them.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are trusting and positive so that pupils want to do their best and are not afraid to make mistakes or ask for help. One pupil said, 'Teachers help me do my best and make sure everyone understands things.'
- A strength of teaching is the fact that teachers make learning fun. This was confirmed by pupils who agreed that 'We do fun things like making rockets', and another said, 'My teachers make everything fun, like maths games.'
- Teachers generally provide lessons that capture the interest of pupils and motivate them. Pupils' good

behaviour and personal skills help them to work and learn together well. Teachers provide pupils with lots of opportunities to share their ideas and opinions. This helps them to make good progress, especially in their speaking and listening skills.

- Teachers and teaching assistants are all aware of how well each pupil is doing and what the next steps are because of the regular meeting with senior leaders to discuss the progress of individual pupils. This enables teachers to plan carefully for different groups to help reduce any gaps in achievement. For example, teachers ensure that they plan activities to motivate boys without losing the interest of girls, which is effectively narrowing the gap between them. Similarly, teachers are successfully narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others with well-planned interventions.
- Appropriate and effective additional support is provided where needed for pupils with special educational needs or disability. They are identified at an early stage and are supported well either in class, in small groups or individually, depending on their needs.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge means that in most cases they explain learning clearly and use well-chosen resources creatively. They question pupils well to ensure pupils' understanding deepens and strengthens. On a few occasions, teachers' knowledge of progression in subjects and questioning skills are not yet of the same good quality. As a consequence there are fewer demands made of pupils to promote a depth of learning and so sometimes pupils do not always make the rapid progress of which they are capable. This is sometimes, but not always, the case for the most-able pupils.
- The school's policy for marking and giving feedback to pupils is used consistently across the school. Pupils say that teachers help them know how to improve their work.
- Teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) has strengthened over the past year, which led to a considerable improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in 2015. Teachers and teaching assistants provide skilled phonics sessions that reinforce sounds systematically, moving promptly from hearing and saying sounds into reading and writing. Teachers promote an interest in and enjoyment of books from the beginning so pupils are excited and motivated by familiar and new stories and learn to read for information. They have lots of opportunities to read to adults.
- Teaching and learning in writing has improved. There has been a focus on pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling in Year 2 in particular and the impact of this is seen in a greater accuracy in their writing. There are also helpful opportunities for pupils to rehearse what they are going to write and develop a wider vocabulary prior to independent writing, and increased opportunities for writing other than in English lessons. Work is presented well because teachers have high and consistent expectations and pupils are proud of their work.
- Mathematics is generally taught well. Teaching provides opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and try a range of approaches to solve problems as well as developing fluency in number work.
- Classrooms are attractive and inviting, help to promote pupils' learning and stimulate enquiring minds and resourcefulness.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Almost all parents who responded to the online survey agree that their children are happy at school and most agreed that they are well looked after and feel safe.
- Pupils thrive in a happy, caring environment where their welfare and safety is paramount. They enjoy their time in school and have good attitudes to learning. They are friendly and well mannered.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and know how to keep safe in a range of situations in their daily lives. The 'Safe Surfers' group champion e-safety and take an active role in promoting safe use of the internet, for example by talking to all pupils in an assembly.
- Pupils say they are not aware of any bullying, just that sometimes some children are 'a bit mean' or 'tell fibs'. However, they are confident and secure in the knowledge that they can always talk to adults in school if there are any problems that are worrying them and that adults will always sort things out.
- In their questionnaire all pupils agree that teachers encourage them to be friendly towards other pupils. Equality of opportunity is promoted well by all staff and pupils learn without fear of any type of discrimination.
- Pupils enjoy their responsibilities in school and take them seriously, such as school council members, and fitness friends. They also learn, as one of the school values, to take responsibility for their own behaviour and for taking care of their school.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club get a good, healthy, safe and social start to the day.

- Attendance has improved over time and is now broadly in line with the national average because the school works relentlessly with parents to promote regular attendance, particularly for the few who are more persistently absent. The family liaison officer makes a significant contribution to supporting children and their families who may be vulnerable and by reducing any barriers to learning, including low attendance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations for behaviour and school routines to be followed.
- Behaviour in lessons is usually good; pupils pay attention and respond well to praise for demonstrating positive behaviour such as good listening and good thinking.
- Occasionally, pupils lose focus in lessons when they are not fully engaged in their learning and become quietly distracted and do not make as much progress as they should.
- The small number of pupils who find it more difficult to manage their own behaviour receive good support from staff and generally settle quickly as a result. School records confirm that behaviour is good over time and show that it has improved.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school, at lunchtimes and in the playground. They thoroughly enjoy playtimes because staff have created a rich, vibrant and exciting outdoor environment that caters for a very wide range of choices for play. Pupils respect this and show they are caring for the needs of others by taking turns, not bumping and looking out for each other. They all, and particularly boys, enjoy the dance sessions on the stage.
- Most parents agree that the school ensures pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection because of improved teaching and learning and more appropriate learning activities. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- In 2015, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were broadly in line with the national average and improving, particularly in writing.
- The proportion of most-able pupils that reached above average standards, the higher level 3, was above the national average in reading and mathematics and just below in writing.
- Pupils' work in their books and the school's information about their progress show that pupils currently in the school generally make good progress overall from their different starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils currently in Year 2 had particularly low starting points at the end of the early years and they are making good progress to catch up with the expectations in line with their age.
- On occasion, some pupils are making the expected rate of progress rather than the more rapid progress of which they are capable. This is because pupils are not always sufficiently challenged through teachers' questioning to promote greater depth of learning in order to further accelerate their progress.
- In the 2015 phonics screening check for pupils in Year 1, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard was in line with the national figure. This demonstrated a significant improvement from the previous year when it was considerably below that found nationally. School information and inspection evidence suggests that results this year will continue to improve. This is because the quality of phonics teaching has improved.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in 2015 was behind that of other pupils in the school and others nationally, and the gap had increased from the previous year. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school, however, make similarly good progress to their peers generally and, where needed, the faster progress necessary to begin to catch up. The extra help they are given is matched very closely to their needs and in mathematics, for example, they are currently achieving better than other pupils because of the quality of the additional support.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress from their differing starting points. Extra help is closely tailored to their needs and the provision for this group is managed well including pupils in the Learning Bay.

Early years provision

is good

- Children start in the Nursery or Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are generally below those typical for their ages, particularly in their communication and language skills and their personal, social and emotional development.
- Children get a good start to school. They make good progress throughout the early years and are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- In 2015, the proportion of children that reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was in line with that found nationally. This was an improvement from the previous year when it was below the national figure. In 2015 there was also an improvement from the previous year in boys' achievement. There were many more boys than girls in the Reception classes and staff had successfully planned activities to appeal to boys in particular, as well as girls. The impact of this was that the gap between boys' achievement and that of girls narrowed considerably, especially in their literacy and mathematical development. Gaps between disadvantaged children's achievement and others are also narrowing.
- There is a determined and successful focus on children's speech and language, writing, phonics and reading skills as well as interesting and engaging activities across all areas of learning.
- All areas of the provision stimulate children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Staff promote problem solving and challenge children's thinking through a range of well-planned learning opportunities. For example, two boys in the Nursery were stuck with the problem of fitting a large sheet of paper, with a message to their mums, into a smaller envelope and asked for adult help. They were challenged to find the solution for themselves; one folded the paper and the other simply cut it to size with scissors.
- The Nursery and the Reception classes are motivating and exciting learning environments where children are nurtured and challenged. Their independence is promoted well and they develop confidence and enquiring minds as a result. There have been marked improvements in the Reception classes in particular, which was an issue for improvement in the previous inspection. One parent of a child in the Nursery commented that 'His teacher has given him a fantastic confidence boost getting him ready for school in September.'
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Learning stems from children's interests and they happily make choices for themselves. Adults use questioning well to extend thinking and model speaking and vocabulary and provide good role models for the children. Assessment is used well to plan the next steps for learning and a record of achievements is made throughout the year.
- Adults know the children very well. There are good procedures to get to know children and their families before they start. Good relationships with parents ensure they are well informed about their children's progress and can work in partnership with the school to support their children's learning. Several parents were very positive about a phonics workshop provided for them. One parent wrote, 'We are well informed about what is happening, staff are very approachable, we also get the opportunity to go along and view classes in action.'
- Children learn and play in a stimulating, safe and secure environment. Staff work very well as a strong team and provide a welcoming, friendly atmosphere where children are happy and settle calmly into the routines of the day. Several parents agreed with the comment, 'The environment and relationships are enriching and exciting. My child's class feel like a big family and we love it.'
- Children behave well, learning to share and cooperate with each other. The outdoor area has been developed well and provides opportunities for learning in a range of areas, including those promoting children's physical skills and imaginative play. The school has correctly identified the scope for further improvements to enhance and enrich learning.
- The early years is led very effectively by the experienced deputy headteacher. All procedures to protect children from harm are robust. All the safeguarding and welfare requirements appropriate to these age groups are met. All the necessary actions are taken to support any child whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- Parents are very pleased with the start their children receive. One wrote: 'My child is very happy at school and had an amazing start and progression from the Nursery – a real head start with phonics in particular. It's an exciting place, every day there seems to be something new and inspiring. The local trips are a huge asset to the school, the children love the experiences.'

School details

Unique reference number	118359
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10012218

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

Type of school	Nursery and Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David McGovarin
Headteacher	Bernadette Lax
Telephone number	01227 372 245
Website	herne-bay.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@herne-bay.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized infant school and Nursery provision.
- 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 a little above 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.
- Children in the four Reception classes attend full-time. Children in the Nursery attend for a morning or afternoon session.
- There are four classes in each of Year 1 and Year 2. In the mornings, Year 2 pupils with complex special educational needs or disability (currently 11 pupils) work in a separate group known as the Learning Bay.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 22 lessons, many of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or senior leaders. They talked to pupils about their work and looked at the work in pupils' books. They observed pupils at playtime and 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 other staff with key leadership responsibilities.
- Discussions were held with governors and a representative from the local authority.
- 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 37 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 21 written comments, and spoke to some parents at the start of the day. They also took account of 28 questionnaires returned by staff and 67 returned by pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Good	Ofsted Inspector
Lynda Welham	Ofsted Inspector

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