

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Henlow Church of England Academy

Church Road

Henlow

SG16 6AN

Diocese: St Albans

Local Authority: Central Bedfordshire

Date of inspection: 23rd May 2012

Date of last inspection: 29th June 2009 (Henlow C of E Middle School)

School's unique reference number: 138027

Headteacher: Mr Ray Payne

Inspectors' names and numbers: Mrs Lilian Weatherley 42

School context

Henlow Church of England Academy is a large, middle deemed secondary school which converted to academy status on the 1st April 2012. The new Academy caters for pupils aged 9-13 and has a higher than average proportion of pupils with special needs and disabilities. The Academy serves RAF Henlow and has some fluctuating pupil intake. The majority are of white, British origin. Pupils are intensely proud of their school, its friendly welcoming atmosphere and are enthusiastic about their relationship with their teachers.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Henlow Academy as a Church of England school is 'good'

Pupils feel safe, behaviour is outstanding and achievement is high. The focus for the staff and governors of the new C of E Academy is to ensure that all aspects of the school are underpinned by its Christian distinctiveness

Established strengths

- The focus on developing each individual child
- The wide range of learning and extra curricular activities offered to the pupils
- The excellent relationships
- The enthusiasm of all members of the school's community to develop the Academy as the flagship of the Diocese

Focus for development

- Make the Christian elements of the school's ethos more explicit
- Ensure that the Christian vision for the new Academy is understood and developed by all staff
- Create more opportunities to underpin the curriculum with pupils' spiritual development, prayer and worship
- Further develop links with the local churches and clergy

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners.

The new Henlow Academy exudes vibrant energy and vigorous enthusiasm, encouraging and motivating pupils. There is a sense of vitality and purpose in the school which allows and encourages staff to express their creativity as teachers, while ensuring high standards are expected and achieved. The school's distinctive Christian character and values are as yet explicit

but currently expressed through the quality of relationships and the manner in which the emotional, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is given priority. Christian principles of justice, faith and service lie at the heart of the school. All staff and pupils feel valued and treat each other with mutual respect. Pupils speak confidently and positively about how much they love their school, their teachers and the friendships they enjoy. One pupil commented 'I love the teachers and the subjects we do'. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are confident, polite, articulate and listen to each other.

The range of pupils' work in the classrooms and common areas are indicative of the manner in which the school encourages pupils' imagination and creativity. This is shown in the new Academy logo designed by a pupil: the logo clearly reflects the school's church status. Pupils are eager to talk about their choice of 150 clubs, their sporting successes and the strong musical tradition. Ofsted judged the curriculum offered to be 'outstanding'. Charitable giving has been at the heart of the school for many years and pupils speak with pride of their links with Casuarina House, Operation Christmas Child and Children in Need to name but a few. In doing so they participate in and promote a Christian vision of a more equitable, just and tolerant society. The annual visit and nurture of the family of ducklings is mirrored in the way all pupils at Henlow are given opportunities to flourish. As a member of staff stated, 'This school fosters an environment that encourages all to develop and grow. The ducks are nurtured until they are able to fly and this is equally so of the pupils'.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is 'good'

The pupils enjoy participating in worship and engage fully in what the school offers, though they express a desire to be more involved in the planning and presentation. Class worship takes place each day and year groups meet together in the hall for worship.

As a new C of E Academy the school is re-evaluating its Christian values and opportunities for spiritual development and worship. Lack of space creates a difficulty for the whole school to worship together and several parents commented that they would like opportunities to share in worship with their children. Senior staff have attended recent CPD on spiritual development and worship and the school is discussing more creative ways to involve the pupils with opportunities for prayer and reflection. These ideas have not yet permeated through to all staff in order to have an impact on the pupils. The introduction of the prayer table is very popular and is used regularly. One pupil commented 'It would be good to have a larger space for the prayer table'. One added, 'I'd like a quiet place to go if you were really stressed in lessons or play time. The prayer table could go there and that would make it easier to use'. Worship is clearly planned to indicate the rich variety of Christian worship that pupils will experience during their time at the school and pupils are given opportunities to share in celebrations of the Church year.

Links with the parish churches have been growing and visits to the local church are now in place for each year group. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the pupils.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is 'good'

As a new academy the school is in the process of re-evaluating its vision as a church school and the Christian foundation on which the original middle school was founded. The leadership is lively and thoughtful and there is a clear and inspiring vision of how the school can continue to develop further as a church school through a commitment to the quality of collective worship and building on the improvements that have already taken place. The senior leadership team has been highly self-critical as a church school, developing a rigorous process of self evaluation and providing CPD for staff. These aspirations, although understood and shared by the governing body, senior leadership team and staff, are still in their infancy. The foundation governors are eager to promote the quality and distinctiveness of the Academy's Christian character. After recent difficulties and staff absence there are now effective and productive links with the local church community. With a new staff team and clergy the previously-formed ethos group will once again be leading the drive for improvement in this area. A large majority of parents speak positively of the way in which the school values their views and opinions but there was evidence of a lack of understanding as to the role of the diocese.