

The Henlow Church of England Academy

Church Road, Henlow, SG16 6AN

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The new headteacher and the deputy headteacher work well as a team. Together with middle leaders, they are improving teaching and raising standards, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Governors are highly skilled and fully involved in the academy. They know its strengths and also what needs to be done to improve it.
- Pupils achieve well at the school so that, by the time they leave, they exceed the expectations for their age in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils feel safe and are very well behaved around the academy and treat other pupils, staff and visitors with respect at all times. They are ready to learn and show a great deal of maturity.
- The excellent leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, ensures that these pupils are able to catch up with their peers.
- Teaching is good. Most teachers challenge pupils well to ensure they quickly gain new skills and make rapid progress.
- Pupils enjoy school and are keen to participate in the many appealing activities it offers them, including additional sporting activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The academy ensures that they develop respect and understanding for people whose beliefs are different to their own.
- Senior leaders monitor the progress made by disadvantaged pupils carefully. They quickly identify their needs and provide support so that their progress accelerates and gaps between their attainment and that of the other pupils close.
- The vast majority of parents are highly satisfied with the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in some subjects is uneven because teachers' feedback is not clear enough to show pupils how to improve their work.
- The progress made by pupils in reading is not as rapid as it is in writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, three of these were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, parents and staff.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, looked at policies, the academy website, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring records, safeguarding documents, information about pupils’ progress and samples of pupils’ work. They heard some pupils read.
- The views of 92 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted’s online survey (Parent View) were taken into account, as were discussions with parents. Inspectors also took account of the 50 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Christopher Cheswright, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Margaret Dutton	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy, for pupils from Year 5 to Year 8, is smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards for the end of Key Stage 2, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- No pupils are taught off-site or in alternative provision.
- The headteacher joined the academy in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of reading, in order to accelerate pupils' progress, by
 - providing more activities for pupils to develop their reading skills within the curriculum
 - ensuring teachers hear pupils read more frequently, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Improve the progress pupils make across all other subjects by ensuring:
 - there is a clear marking policy that teachers implement consistently across the academy
 - teachers use their marking and other feedback to provide pupils with clear guidance on their next steps in learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the academy well. Since her arrival she has brought about significant improvements and established a culture of high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. Along with the deputy headteacher, she has established a leadership team that is committed to providing equally good opportunities for all pupils.
- Middle leaders take responsibility for driving improvements in teaching and learning. They have established a culture in which all teachers recognise their own responsibility for improving their practice and its impact on pupils' achievement.
- The appointment of a leader to oversee the support for disadvantaged pupils has ensured that the many interventions offered by the academy are having greater impact. Form tutors are now taking a central role in identifying the needs of disadvantaged pupils. The academy is using this funding very effectively to raise the aspirations of the more able pupils in this group by providing additional after school clubs and activities.
- The academy has used the Catch-up funding very effectively to support pupils in Year 7 who did not gain expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2. These pupils are making rapid progress in English and mathematics, and growing in confidence in other subjects, as a result of the extra tuition they receive.
- The excellent leadership provided by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator ensures that the support provided to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs allows them to make progress that is at least in line with other pupils. Pupils are very positive about the support they receive and parents said the academy has an 'open door' to them.
- The use of additional funding for the development of sports activities has increased the range of sports available to pupils in lessons, clubs and in the playground - such as two traversing walls. It has also allowed the academy to provide better opportunities for pupils who find some sports difficult. The academy has been awarded the silver Games Mark as more than 35% of pupils participate in sporting activities every week and 10% actually take a lead role.
- The academy prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The academy's values permeate every aspect of its work. Displays around the academy reflect British values such as fairness, understanding and tolerance. Links with a children's home in Kenya, including through a recent live internet session, enable pupils to learn about and respect the experiences of people in other parts of the world. Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted as a result. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Pupils are proud to take on responsibility through the school council or as buddies to younger pupils.
- The curriculum makes good provision for developing pupils' writing and mathematical skills. However, the profile of reading is not quite as high. Specialist teachers develop pupils' knowledge and understanding well in many subjects. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are able to choose from a wide range of subjects, for example in languages, which prepares them well for moving to the Upper School. The academy works closely with other local schools to ensure that the level of challenge it provides continues when pupils move between schools. For example, the history topics covered have been agreed across the local 'pyramid' of schools. A wide range of experiences both at home and abroad, such as the Year 7 trip to the Science museum during the inspection, extend pupils' learning.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and the procedures for referral are understood by all members of staff.
- The management of teaching is good. There are regular checks on the quality of teachers' work and leaders have used the academy's links with the 'pyramid' to verify and moderate their judgements through

joint observations and work scrutinies.

■ The governance of the school:

- The very strong governing body provides highly effective support and challenge to the academy leaders. The appointment of the current headteacher followed a very rigorous recruitment process. Governors make excellent use of data and are very aware of the academy's strengths and areas for development. They have a wide range of expertise and the church governors provide a good perspective ensuring that pupils learn key values, such as tolerance and the rights of the individual, and that pupils respect those from other faiths and points of view. Governors have worked closely with the headteacher to introduce new arrangements for managing the performance of teachers. These ensure that only good teaching is rewarded financially, and focus strongly on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Governors monitor closely the use of additional government funding to ensure that it is used to good effect in benefiting eligible pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in the improving rates of attendance, which are now similar to the national average. For those pupils who are absent too frequently the strategies employed by the academy are increasingly successful in improving their attendance.
- There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. In lessons pupils are eager to learn, develop their ideas well when working in groups and listen carefully to others in class discussions. For example, a group of girls, in a physical education lesson, realised they were not focused enough on developing their football skills and discussed at length how to improve them. The resulting changes they made, allowed them to make good progress.
- Pupils show great respect for each other. They move between lessons in an orderly fashion, carrying their books and equipment carefully, and wait patiently in the queue for the tuck shop without direct adult supervision.
- Pupils readily take responsibility. For example, during the inspection, some pupils led sessions in an Anne Frank exhibition in the library with other pupils and adults.
- The overwhelming majority of parents believe that behaviour is well managed in the academy. One parent commented that a senior leader 'commands respect with a light hand' and that staff deal with problems in a fair and respectful manner.
- Pupils are very confident when speaking with adults and often during the inspection initiated conversations about how the academy met their needs. When asked what else the academy could do for them, they answered, 'Nothing'.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel very safe and that most parents who responded on Parent View indicated that their children are well looked after in the academy.
- Incidents of bullying are exceedingly rare and are dealt with very quickly. When pupils were asked about bullying they said it does not happen.
- Pupils are made fully aware of the need to be safe when using modern communication technologies through lessons and assemblies. They understand the need to keep personal information safe.
- The arrangements to keep pupils safe are good. The safeguarding policy includes clear details of the procedures to take following any referral and staff implement these procedures confidently and consistently.

- Pupils are fully aware of how their behaviour could affect others and how to identify possible danger to themselves. This is very evident in the playground where pupils readily moderate their behaviour if they become aware that it could affect others, particularly the younger pupils.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers ensure pupils respond well to the challenges they set and demonstrate mature attitudes to learning. Pupils quickly pick up and emulate the teachers' own enthusiasm for learning. In a Year 8 French lesson, pupils learning to speak in French about sports, enthusiastically joined in naming games, and were able to remember them by the end of the lesson.
- The teaching of writing and mathematics is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that they provide pupils with tasks that challenge them appropriately. In Year 6, their effective use of regular assessments, particularly in mathematics, is allowing them to quickly identify and address pupils' specific learning needs. In one lesson the teacher's use of well-chosen resources allowed him to quickly identify what pupils had been doing wrong and correct this.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully to challenge pupils to think through their problem or to use information provided by other pupils. In a food technology lesson, the teacher's good knowledge of the pupils' capabilities meant that she could set a task that stretched their understanding of how to make best use of different types of pastry.
- In mathematics, pupils are set tasks that develop their skills through problem solving. This helps them to develop expertise in the use of a range of mathematical skills. In one good example, a Year 5 class was working out the cost of building a theatre. One pupil realised that an essential measurement was missing and confidently shared this insight with the class.
- Teaching assistants are highly committed to their roles and work closely with teachers to provide skilled support for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils practise, consolidate and develop their writing skills in subjects such as history and geography where they are often challenged to write at length. However, pupils do not practise their reading skills, often enough, across the curriculum. The academy's current development plan sets out a priority to provide a wider range of texts for guided reading in order to increase pupils' progress in reading.
- Marking provides pupils with good pointers for improvement, particularly in English and humanities. In these subjects teachers give pupils clear pointers, such as 'Even Better If' statements, that they use to make improvements to their work. This process is not as evident in other subjects, where teachers are not as clear in identifying the next steps in pupils' learning, as they should be.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils join the academy in Year 5 with achievement that is typically in line with age-related expectations. Some pupils have gaps in their knowledge, particularly in reading and mathematics which, as a result of effective teaching, are quickly addressed. Results of national tests, at the end of Year 6, are broadly average overall and are above average in writing. Above average proportions of pupils make expected progress in writing and mathematics but progress in reading is not as rapid as it is in the other two subjects. Teacher assessments, checked by the upper school, indicate that pupils make good progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 8 and are well prepared for their next stage of learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 were a year behind other pupils, both in the academy and nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The academy has been quick to intervene and within one term in Year 7, this year, they have closed these gaps. The appointment of a teacher to lead and manage the provision for disadvantaged pupils is now ensuring that additional teaching is well-targeted and effective. Full use is made of the skills of experienced teachers, such as the headteacher to work with

more able disadvantaged pupils, in English.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. Although many start Year 5 below those levels typically expected for their age, by the end of Year 8 they are often above. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator expertly tracks and identifies the needs of individual pupils and utilises the skills of well trained teaching assistants, to provide targeted support in the classroom. Teachers meet daily with teaching assistants to ensure the needs of these pupils are met.
- The academy has given a high profile to improving writing and pupils' progress is above that expected nationally. The academy promotes spelling, punctuation and grammar well through weekly dedicated lessons in Years 5 and 6. Teachers reinforce pupils' writing targets in all subject areas and often refer to them when marking their work. This is helping pupils to improve their writing across a range of subjects, particularly in the humanities and religious education.
- The proportion of the most able pupils who start at the academy having attained higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics, is higher than the national figures. By the time these pupils leave the academy they have made good progress. This is a result of teachers' and pupils' high expectations. The teachers' excellent specialist subject knowledge enables them to set challenging work and prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' progress in reading, particularly for the younger pupils, is not as rapid as it is in writing and mathematics. Although pupils are keen to read at school and at home, and always have a book with them at school, the amount of time spent teaching reading and listening to pupils read is insufficient for them to develop their skills at the same rapid pace as in writing and mathematics.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138027
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	456065

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	492
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Perry Huntley
Headteacher	Caren Earp
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2012
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