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23 July 2018

Mrs Caren Earp  
Headteacher  
Henlow Church of England Academy  
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Dear Mrs Earp

### **Short inspection of Henlow Church of England Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 2018 with Vivien Corrie-Wing, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have a clear set of values which steers the school community. Pupils, staff and governors give their backing to these and it helps the school to have a consistent ethos of charity and support for others. Pupils are involved in many opportunities to display the school values, including sponsoring children overseas and raising money for various charities. Pupils say that they are happy at school, and this is endorsed by parents and carers. A strong faith ethos underpins your work and ensures that pupils are understanding, respectful and tolerant of others.

Pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times is impeccable. They are polite and articulate with visitors; you and staff teach them how to be thoughtful.

The progress made by pupils in the national tests for key stage 2 is low. The focus by leaders on attainment has masked the underperformance in progress over the last three years. This has led to a lack of focus on improving outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2. Leaders and governors do not have an accurate view of the progress of pupil groups, including pupils from a disadvantaged background. Progress in mathematics has declined. The progress for writing has been in the bottom 20% nationally for two years. Too few pupils reach the higher standards in the national tests.

You have implemented changes this year to improve the tracking and monitoring of

progress in Year 6. The system previously in place was not fit for purpose and staff did not have insight into the effectiveness of support strategies for these pupils. This lack of robust monitoring contributed to poor outcomes at key stage 2.

The school internal data is too generous. It has inconsistencies which make it difficult for staff to accurately assess the progress pupils make. The system used to review the effectiveness of subject leaders is not rigorous enough. This means that senior leaders have a variable appreciation of the impact of teaching and leadership within subject areas.

Governors take a keen interest in the school. However, they do not have an accurate view of how well pupils are doing. They do not offer effective challenge to leaders regarding the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of reading in order to accelerate pupils' progress. This included providing more activities for pupils to develop their reading skills in key stage 2. Progress in reading has not improved. An effective strategy to improve reading for pleasure and for academic progress is yet to be embedded, therefore reading remains an area for improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your team have created a safe culture where pupils can learn and socially interact well. The staff understand and follow the school procedures to keep pupils safe. Staff are well trained and the system of reporting ensures that even the smallest concerns are followed up. Leaders keep meticulous records and work well with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. Leaders ensure that all staff receive training on safeguarding issues.

Staff and pupils say that Henlow is a 'telling school', and they are confident to discuss concerns. Pupils are taught 'how to tell' via personal, social, health education lessons. This method is used to explore topics such as online bullying and keeping safe from strangers. Pupils say that they feel safe at school. Bullying is rare and is dealt with swiftly using the 'Henlow values', to help pupils understand why it is wrong.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry explored how well teachers and additional staff improve the outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Too few disadvantaged pupils reach the expected national standards at the end of key stage 2, their progress is significantly below that of other pupils nationally. You have implemented new leadership to manage this area and there is now a well-evaluated strategy. The pupils speak positively of the additional support that they receive. Teachers now employ strategies to try to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and this is monitored for effectiveness. These pupils are now as actively engaged with learning as their peers and internal data is showing an improvement in their progress.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school is too high. The school has only just started to track this and is yet to implement effective support to ensure that these pupils attend as well as others.

- My second focus explored how well leaders ensure that the curriculum and quality of teaching in key stage 3 leads to improved progress for all pupils. The curriculum has a broad base, for example pupils are able to choose two languages at key stage 3 and you have insisted that teachers are specialists in their subject areas. We saw lessons that were interesting and challenging, for example pupils exploring the idea of irony in English.
- You have implemented a programme of training and development over the last two years to help staff teach well. The quality of teaching is stronger than progress in key stage 2 would suggest. Teaching enables pupils to catch up in Years 7 and 8, therefore they leave well prepared for key stage 4 study in upper school.
- The final line of enquiry explored the quality of teaching in mathematics, reading and writing and what leaders are doing to ensure that pupils make as much progress as they can. The quality of teaching observed was strong. Pupils were challenged and expectations set by staff were consistently high. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning.
- Teachers made good use of 'pupil champions', pupils who were able to explicitly support their peers during lessons. The pupils have been taught the value of collaboration and support for each other and were spontaneous in their support for each other's learning. This was impressive and enabled many pupils to make greater progress in their lessons.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all groups of pupils make good progress by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics
- disadvantaged pupils attend school as regularly as other pupils
- systems designed to monitor pupils' progress and the effectiveness of the work of leaders are consistent and robust across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of St Albans, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diana Osagie  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we held meetings with you and members of your senior leadership team, middle leaders and members of the governing body. We met with groups of pupils. We visited lessons with you and members of your senior leadership team. We considered 154 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, 94 responses from pupils and 43 responses from staff to their surveys. We reviewed a range of documentation, including

the school's self-evaluation summary, improvement plans and information about pupils' outcomes, progress and attendance. We reviewed safeguarding documentation and procedures, scrutinised the school's record of checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school, and carried out checks to confirm that the website meets publication requirements.