

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Henlow Church of England Academy

Vision

‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.’ John 10:10

HENLOW: Honesty – Enthusiasm – Nurture – Love – Originality - Wisdom

We seek to create a harmonious community in which the individual is valued and is given every opportunity to fulfil their potential in terms of pastoral, emotional and intellectual growth; thus, enabling them to live successfully in an increasingly demanding and ever-changing world.

Henlow Church of England Academy is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The school’s vision is made a reality by the wise decisions and caring actions of leaders and adults at the school. As a result of this commitment to fullness of life, students flourish.
- Leaders ensure that students have a rich and fulfilling learning programme. Students, including those considered vulnerable, thrive because of the many and varied learning opportunities they can access.
- Religious education (RE) is well resourced and taught by enthusiastic, expert teachers. As a result, students enjoy their lessons and make good progress.
- The programme for daily collective worship is carefully considered and comprehensively explores the school’s values in real depth. As a result, students develop as rounded human beings during their time at school.
- School policies and practice create a culture where members of the school community are confident that they are valued. This means that adults and students feel that their voices are heard and that they will be supported in difficult times.

Development Points

- Develop a shared language for spirituality in the school and the confidence to use it. This is to further enhance adults’ and students’ spiritual development.
- Explore ways to introduce Eucharistic worship. This to help students and adults understand its deep significance and transformative importance for Anglican Christians.



Inspection Findings

Henlow's vision reflects the deeply held aspiration that leaders and governors have for members of the school community. It is a well-considered Christian response to the rural context of the school, characterised particularly by high student mobility. Leaders understand Jesus' offer of life in all its fullness in a rich and nuanced way. They work with commitment to ensure that learners at Henlow are offered a wealth of opportunities. The vision is supported by six values or character virtues. These are made memorable because their initial letters spell HENLOW. They are the bedrock of the school community. They establish a culture in which students learn to live life to the full while supporting others to do the same. School routines are kept under review to ensure that they support the outworking of the vision. The school is the lead partner in the Poppy Hill Church of England Multi Academy Trust. Because of this, the school's vision and ethos receive full support from trust leaders.

The curriculum offers breadth and opportunity to learners, including those deemed to be vulnerable or disadvantaged. The Christian vision inspires leaders to offer Key Stage 3 students a distinctive and rich learning experience, through which they thrive. The innovative approach to the curriculum means that, alongside traditional subjects, students can pursue existing interests and develop new ones. In Years 7 and 8 they are enthused by being able to choose from a stimulating range of 'electives'. These include critical thinking, the science of spying and computer programming. In Year 9, further opportunities to personalise learning sustain interest and engagement. The rounded approach is enhanced by broad extra-curricular opportunities and commitment to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Leaders closely monitor the provision and take up of clubs and ensure that vulnerable and disadvantaged learners are fully represented. Subject leaders have identified topics where the spiritual dimension of life can be explored through their curriculum area. However, the school has no shared language for spirituality and some teachers lack confidence in leading discussions about spiritual matters. This means that opportunities to explore some deeper issues across the curriculum are not fully exploited.

From the outset of Henlow's transition from middle school to secondary school status, governors have shown a strong commitment to RE. This is reflected in the generous curriculum time given to the subject throughout the school. Additionally, governors have determined that all students should take a full GCSE in religious studies. Leaders value the subject highly, ensuring that it is taught in specialist rooms by enthusiastic and well-trained staff. As a result, students enjoy their lessons and take great pride in their written work. The curriculum is challenging, broad and balanced. It covers major world faiths and non-religious worldviews with an appropriate focus on Christianity. This means that students grow impressively in religious literacy during their time at school. They particularly value the opportunity to discuss topics they consider important, hearing a diversity of opinions and learning about unfamiliar worldviews. In these ways, RE contributes importantly to their spiritual development.

Collective worship is central to the spiritual flourishing of Henlow's students. The carefully planned worship programme probes the school's six values in real depth. Because of this, students grow in understanding of what it is to be a person of good character. Carefully chosen bible verses and relevant modern examples ensure that collective worship is both inspirational and invitational. Students' reflective responses, completed every Friday, show the valuable lasting impact of the ideas explored in daily worship. Year group worship enables students to benefit from sharing in a larger worship activity. Spiritual growth is further supported by whole school celebrations of major Christian festivals. These enable students to respond to the rhythm of the church's year. Each year group worships at the local parish church once a year to gain a first-hand exposure to Christian liturgical practice. However there is no opportunity for students or adults to experience the central Christian act of the Eucharist. The



lack of a shared language for spirituality means that some staff lack confidence in leading collective worship. This restricts its impact on students' spiritual growth. Christian and Muslim students who are active in their faith value the opportunities to develop spiritually by attending lunchtime activities.

Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of members of the school community by consciously modelling the school's values of nurture and love. Students and parents are grateful that they are treated and valued as individuals. Students who are given a fresh start by transferring to Henlow thrive due to the individual care they receive. The school uses well-targeted interventions to ensure that those who are vulnerable or going through difficult times receive appropriate support. These include horse therapy, counselling, mindfulness training and 'box to be fit'. The behaviour policy is founded on public praise for good conduct, restorative justice and mending relationships. This is highly effective in creating a positive culture in which students and adults flourish. Students thrive by taking responsibility for their own actions and for the wellbeing of their peers. Adults also speak about feeling valued by school leaders. They point to many occasions when they have been supported and encouraged throughout their careers. In particular they are grateful that they have been met with kindness and consideration by leaders during times of personal difficulty. They respond to this generosity of spirit by extending a similar open-hearted and encouraging attitude towards students.

Henlow's vision and culture make students enthusiastic to be agents of change. Through the school action group (SAG), they have the means to be so. Students respond with a deep sense of loyalty to the school and a commitment to making it a place they feel proud of. The SAG has instigated significant changes to the school uniform and to the catering arrangements. Members of the SAG also develop valuable leadership skills by interviewing job applicants, acting as tour guides and running the school shop. Students are empowered to act beyond the school by choosing good causes to support and by raising funds for them. The impact of the school's vision is extended through its deep partnership with its principal feeder primary school. This is also in the Poppy Hill MAT and its Year 5 and 6 pupils are educated on Henlow's site. These pupils' education is enriched by the subject expertise of Henlow's teachers and by access to Henlow's extra-curricular activities. The staff of the two schools benefit from shared professional development activities. The school enjoys valuable support from the parish church in the form of governance and collective worship. It also enjoys a mutually beneficial relationship with St Alban's Diocesan Board for Education.

Information

Address	Church Road, Henlow, SG16 6AN		
Date	3 March 2025	URN	138027
Type of school	Academy (former Voluntary controlled)	No. of pupils	620
Diocese/District	St Albans		
MAT/Federation	Poppy Hill Church of England Academy Trust		
Headteacher	Caren Earp		
Chair of Governors	Jordan Robbens / Perry Huntley		
Inspector	Andrew Wilcock		