

Inspection of Henlow Church of England Academy

Church Road, Henlow, Bedfordshire SG16 6AN

Inspection dates:	29 and 30 April 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Caren Earp. This school is part of the Poppy Hill Church of England Multi Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Caren Earp, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Perry Melvin Huntley.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils welcome the school's friendly and inclusive culture. The HENLOW values of honesty, enthusiasm, nurture, originality and wisdom are evident in the positive relationships reflected in daily school life.

Pupils are expected to work hard and to behave well. Most pupils rise to these expectations. Typically, they achieve at least as well as others nationally by the end of Year 11. Those who need extra help are supported to improve.

Pupils feel safe. They know that staff will assist if they are worried. Pupils are taught to make safe choices, including when using social media and playing games online. They socialise well together. Bullying is rare. If it happens, it is dealt with appropriately.

Pupils benefit from a curriculum which allows them to develop personally as well as achieve academically. Most pupils enjoy their learning and the wider opportunities on offer. They are proud of their responsibilities, such as being prefects and pupil librarians. The pupil-led 'school action group' represents its peers' views to leaders. In these roles, pupils contribute positively to the school community, while building leadership and teamwork skills. The curriculum ensures that pupils are prepared well for their next stage in education, employment and/or training.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has redesigned the curriculum to support the extended age range of the pupils that it now serves. High expectations underpin the school's aspiration for all pupils to achieve well. The number of pupils taking GCSE subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate is increasing. This is because more pupils now choose to study a modern foreign language.

In 2024, the school's first cohort of Year 11 pupils achieved broadly in line with others nationally, overall. The focus on continuous improvement continues to raise standards, including in mathematics and for different pupil groups. Staff identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities promptly and support them effectively to learn alongside their peers. For a few pupils who need extra time to settle into secondary school, individual programmes offer tailored support. In most cases, this ensures that these pupils return quickly to their mainstream classes.

The ambitious curriculum is logically sequenced. New learning builds on the content previously taught. Key knowledge and skills are revisited in different contexts, so that pupils remember more over time. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use this to check pupils' learning so that misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills are addressed promptly. Occasionally, teachers do not use all the information they have to adapt learning activities precisely to meet pupils' different abilities. This means that sometimes pupils who could achieve more are not moved on quickly enough to the next stage of learning.

The school promotes a love of reading. The library is well used. Pupils have frequent opportunities to read different literature. They are encouraged to read for pleasure, as well as in their studies, so they develop an appreciation of reading. Effective reading catch-up support is in place for pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read.

Most pupils behave well, attend school regularly and are punctual to lessons. Pupils' personal development is supported appropriately, including through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme, visiting speakers and assemblies. Pupils learn about respect and healthy relationships. Some staff, however, are less confident than others in delivering the programme's content. This means that pupils do not always understand the important links across the different strands of their learning.

The careers education offer is well implemented. Pupils make informed choices when they leave school at the end of Year 11. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs, educational visits and taking part in activities such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

The school works closely with the trust and local governors to secure ongoing improvements in the quality of education for all pupils. Ambitions are high. Staff appreciate the positive focus on their workload and well-being, as well as the opportunities for continuous professional development. Relationships with parents and carers are typically positive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few instances, the school does not use all the information available to adapt learning activities closely enough to pupils' different abilities. This means that, at times, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff use information about pupils to match activities more closely to their abilities.
- The delivery of the school's PSHE programme is inconsistent. Consequently, pupils sometimes miss important connections, so they do not benefit fully from the different strands of their learning. The school should make sure that teachers are confident to deliver the PSHE programme so that pupils deepen their understanding across all aspects of the personal development offer.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138027
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10378513
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	617
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Perry Melvin Huntley
CEO of the trust	Caren Earp
Headteacher	Caren Earp
Website	www.henlowacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school became part of the Poppy Hill Church of England Multi Academy Trust in September 2021.
- The headteacher is also the CEO of the trust.
- As part of local authority changes planned at the time, in 2021 the school was redesignated from a middle school to a secondary school. As a result, it now provides education for pupils aged 11 to 16 years.
- In this context, the first cohort of Year 11 pupils completed GCSE examinations in the summer term of 2024.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 from the other school in the trust, Meppershall Primary Academy, are accommodated and taught on the Henlow site.
- The school currently works with two alternative provisions. One provision is registered. The other is unregistered.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The most recent inspection of the school's denominational education and collective worship, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, took place in March 2025. The next section 48 inspection is due within eight years of this date.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in the following subjects: English, including reading, French, mathematics, science and physical education. To complete each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers and other staff. They also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- A wider curriculum sample was considered beyond the deep dives, including in humanities.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: looked at safeguarding policies, the school's record of pre-employment checks on new staff and a sample of child protection files; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector spoke with trustees and a group of governors, including the chair of the local governing board.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead and other members of the safeguarding team. Inspectors held further meetings with the school's special educational needs coordinator and other leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, behaviour logs, attendance records and school policies.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the online survey responses from staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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