

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Henlow Church of England Voluntary Controlled Middle School

Church Road  
Bedfordshire  
SG16 6AN

**Diocese: St Albans**

LA: Bedfordshire

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006

Date of last inspection: April 2001

School's Unique reference number: 278248

Headteacher: Ray Payne

Inspector's name and number: Lyn Field NS 151

#### School context

Henlow Middle School is a well regarded and expanding school. It serves a rural area that includes an RAF base so there are more changes in the pupil roll than usual. The 540 pupils are mostly white British and the number with special educational needs is above average. The Local Authority is currently reviewing the system of lower, middle and upper schools and this is of great concern to the whole school community.

#### Summary Judgement

This is a good church school that takes excellent care of its pupils. Pupils show a level of responsibility towards others that is a shining example of how Christian values can underpin the life of a school community.

#### Established strengths

- The impressive contribution of pupils to the leadership of the school through the School Council
- The inspiring presence of the headteacher and role models of staff
- The contribution of RE to the spiritual and moral development of pupils

#### Focus for development

- To incorporate evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness into the strategic planning for the school
- To develop stronger links with the Diocese

#### How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

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

The School Council provides a picture in miniature of why the school is effective as a church school. The pupils behave with courtesy and show real respect for each other's views. They can describe the many sources of help available to pupils. They highlight Protective Behaviour which is about the right to be respected and safe. Behaviour is excellent because expectations and boundaries are clear. The Council helped reshape the behaviour code and they now monitor the improvement. They explain it was important that the language became more accessible so that the underlying Christian values were clear. Pupils have taken a lead in the stand against bullying and the Green and Clean campaign – key initiatives that challenge the values of the community. The system for rewarding achievement is effective not just because it motivates children but because they say it shows them how to value each other. Display throughout the school reflects issues of current concern and the overriding impression is of the energy with which pupils engage with life. The School Council is very accessible through class reps and in tutor time. They receive all contributions because they believe their role is to expand simple ideas into something valuable. They completely reflect the ethos of the school. It meets their needs and shows them how to meet the needs of others. This comes from the headteacher who together with the staff, provides a model for children in commitment, relationships and personal conduct.

RE has a significant impact on pupils because it challenges them to consider what it is that changes the way they behave. Teaching draws on well-researched strategies

to ensure that all pupils are inspired to learn. A local minister and youth worker provide an extra dimension to the department. Their sessions demonstrate that pupils can ask deep and searching questions and that they are comfortable to discuss personal faith openly. Children are aware that God has a relevance to every subject area. Links between the Jewish Passover and slavery and the messages behind negro spirituals indicate that all areas of the curriculum challenge pupils and staff at a spiritual level.

#### **What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?**

Collective worship makes a good impact on the whole school community. The headteacher and senior staff have established a pattern of worship that is central to the school's Christian ethos but their own evaluation does not fully recognise the power or the richness of what they offer to pupils. They believe that everyone has a spiritual side and if pupils are expected to access it, they will be able to do so. The level of trust in the school helps students respond to this and they speak positively about the impact of daily worship on their lives. The time for worship in morning registration reinforces the school's values whilst affirming individuals and giving time for personal reflection and prayer. It is well planned to meet pupils' needs in their personal development. They participate willingly because they feel it is a time of quiet preparation that stays with them through the day. They identify the quality of leadership as the reason why messages in worship are effective. This is because in daily worship, adults share their own personal experience and all the adults who attend are present as worshippers. Whole school services for Easter and Christmas are memorable because of the spiritual challenge they offer. For example, students recall the services led by local clergy for Operation Christmas Child and the time when nails were hammered into wood. Worship is also a vehicle for linking with the wider Church community. The Christmas service is taken into the community and the school is preparing to join in a simultaneous broadcast for harvest. The missing link is the experience of worship in the parish church that is too small to hold the whole school. This limits pupil's understanding of Anglican tradition and of using a special place for worship.

#### **How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?**

The leadership and management of the school as a church school is good. The headteacher empowers staff and pupils to share in the leadership of the school. It is his inspiring presence that sustains the distinctive Henlow ethos but there is strong support from members of staff for its Christian dimension. The school has benefited from its involvement in the wider education world and this has revitalised the focus on improvement. RE has a high profile in the school. It is a very effective subject because members of the RE department have a national profile in writing articles and working with the Farmington Institute. This generates constant debate and ideas but the real impact comes from the encouragement of the head for staff to take a brief that goes wider than the department. The headteacher leads the local learning community of over forty schools and this has developed his own understanding of leadership. It has brought more challenge into school management and sharpened self evaluation. The school's own evaluation of Christian distinctiveness has been led by the staff. Judgements have been cautious because they have not taken sufficient account of the impact on pupils of what the school does. It also lacks the perspective of the governing body to ensure that evaluation informs the strategic planning for the school. Pupils identify with the wider Christian community in the village. They have established good relationships with the Methodist minister and youth worker through worship and their involvement in RE and PSHE. Although limited use has been made of Diocesan training, the vicar has a guiding presence on the governing body.