

Albany Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124529
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	380911
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson HMI

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Lockwood
Headteacher	Lis Barker
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2009
School address	Beard Road Bury St Edmunds IP32 6SA
Telephone number	01284 754065
Fax number	01284 705373
Email address	admin@albanycentre.suffolk.sch.uk

Age group	14–16
Inspection date(s)	14–15 September 2011
Inspection number	380911

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. They visited nine part-lessons and observed four teachers and two teaching assistants. They held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, the chair of the management committee, three representatives from the local authority and a group of five pupils. They observed the pupil referral unit's (PRU) work and looked at a range of documentation including eight questionnaires from pupils, nine from staff and eight from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors considered whether the unit is a safe, healthy and enjoyable place for students to be.
- They explored the effectiveness of the unit in re-engaging students in learning and ensuring that they acquire the key skills needed for further training or the work place.
- They investigated the effectiveness of procedures for assessing students' progress from entry to exit of the unit.
- They looked at the effectiveness of leaders and managers in driving improvements since the last inspection.

Information about the school

The Albany Centre is a pupil referral unit for students living in and around Bury St Edmunds who have been excluded from schools or who are at risk of exclusion due to their poor behaviour. Students arrive and leave the unit at different times of the year. The majority of students are White British. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is average. Very few students have a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities, but all have some degree of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the leadership and management of teaching, learning and assessment, the monitoring of attendance, the promotion of community cohesion and the effectiveness of the management committee.

The Albany Centre has experienced a period of turmoil over the last year. Significant staffing issues have prevented it from building on its previous good inspection. During this time, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to maintain stability, ensure that students are kept safe and are suitably prepared for further training or the work-place. In the absence of the permanent deputy headteacher and some other staff, she has had to assume a range of additional responsibilities and consequently much of her time has been absorbed in day-to-day management issues. This has prevented her from systematically monitoring the quality of teaching, regularly assessing students' learning and rigorously checking their attendance. She has received some support from the management committee but it has not provided sufficient challenge to bring about improvements nor ensured that the unit meets its statutory duties towards promoting community cohesion.

Although attainment on entry is usually below that expected for their ages, a satisfactory curriculum enables almost all students to achieve pass grades in GCSE English, mathematics and science, giving them the essential skills needed to help to secure their economic well-being. This, and good quality information, advice and guidance on future career opportunities ensures that the vast majority of students leaving the unit go on to vocational training in local colleges or into employment. Students say that they feel safe, cared for and are making progress. The majority behave themselves and when students disengage or display challenging behaviour, it is managed effectively by staff. Daily personal, social and health education lessons contribute well to students' personal development and well-being. The majority of students regularly attend and enjoy life at the unit but overall attendance rates are low due to a small but significant number who are regularly absent. Students' attendance is not monitored thoroughly and actions to reduce persistent absence are inadequately targeted.

The quality of teaching varies from good to, at times, inadequate. The headteacher

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

knows the strengths and weaknesses of staff. Ineffective baseline testing means that teachers do not have sufficient information about students' abilities on entry. Consequently, individual education plans are of poor quality, and despite students making satisfactory progress overall, learning is not always suitably planned to meet all students' specific needs. Teachers do not set meaningful targets to help all students achieve their full capabilities. Teachers make their own assessments of students but this information is not collated centrally to provide an accurate overview of how well students are progressing over time or to identify who requires additional support.

The PRU provides a caring and supportive environment for potentially vulnerable students. All safeguarding arrangements are securely in place. Staff work effectively with parents and carers and a wide range of support agencies to protect students and gain a good understanding of their personal backgrounds. Teachers and assistants possess the tolerance and patience to help students regain their confidence, self-esteem and interest in learning. The PRU now has a full complement of senior leaders and staff are working collectively to strengthen the unit's effectiveness, demonstrating that it has satisfactory capacity to improve further. A senior teacher appointed on a temporary basis until the long-standing absence of the permanent deputy headteacher is resolved is providing the headteacher with time to strengthen relations between staff and re-affirm a collective vision for the unit. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and development plans rightly prioritise the areas for further development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of senior leaders and managers by:
 - fully resolving all long-standing staffing issues by the end of this year
 - further embedding leadership and management arrangements so that all senior leaders make an equal and effective contribution to driving improvement
 - creating more time for the headteacher to steer the strategic direction of the PRU
 - delegating responsibility for the monitoring of attendance, baseline assessments and monitoring of students' progress to other managers.

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that in most lessons teaching is good or better by:
 - providing all teachers with a detailed profile of students' prior attainment gained from testing on entry and scrutinising their planning to ensure that they use this information to plan lessons that meet the different needs of each student
 - requiring all teachers to regularly share assessment data with senior staff to illustrate how well all students are progressing
 - instigating a programme of regular lesson monitoring and providing teachers and assistants with accurate feedback to improve their

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- performance
- sharing best practice and providing additional professional support for teachers who need it.
- Increase the effectiveness of the management committee in supporting and challenging the unit so that weaknesses are tackled and statutory duties are met by:
 - regularly scrutinising the implementation of actions prioritised in development plans within the given timescales and monitoring the impact on students’ learning and well-being
 - ensuring that the unit fully understands its role in promoting community cohesion and evaluating the effectiveness of its plans.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Observations carried out jointly between the headteacher and HMI noted that the combination of teachers’ specialist knowledge, good relations and one-to-one support provided for students enables them to progress satisfactorily. Attainment is low but the PRU can provide convincing evidence that students’ achievement has been maintained and improvements have been secured. For example, the number of students entered for GCSE examinations has increased year on year and overall results have improved. Students work steadily and seek help when they find tasks too difficult, but their attention spans are short and at times they are easily distracted. When tasks are too difficult or do not capture students’ interest, they disengage from learning, misbehave and their progress slows. Progress is accelerated when they are encouraged to work together in practical tasks and evaluate their own and others’ learning. Teachers lack sufficient information on students’ prior attainment which limits their ability to set targets for improvement.

Behaviour during the inspection was satisfactory. The turmoil experienced last year led to a small number of fixed-term exclusions but this has been addressed and the PRU is generally a calm place to be. A lack of detailed analysis of attendance data masks the regular attendance of most students as only a minority of students refuse to attend or are persistently absent. Pupils say they eat well and exercise regularly. They make a satisfactory contribution to the local community by acting as sports leaders in local primary schools. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. They generally respect others’ feelings and know the difference between right and wrong but opportunities to engage with those from different ethnic and religious backgrounds are limited.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning Taking into account:	3
	4

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and assistants forge positive relations with students and manage behaviour effectively. In most lessons, dedicated support from adults aids students' progress. However, when the pitch of work is too hard or tasks fail to stimulate their interest, some students easily disengage from learning. Generally, students are literate, articulate and readily engage with staff during questioning and group work. Learning is not sufficiently matched to the needs of different students to challenge more-able students or fully accommodate those with lower levels of literacy and numeracy. During lesson observations, it proved difficult to gauge whether students' progress is commensurate with their full capabilities because teachers do not have information on their prior attainment. Teachers regularly praise students for their effort and quality of their work but do not accurately inform them of their progress against examination criteria or explain what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum has been expanded to include a wider range of GCSE and vocational subjects and an array of enrichment opportunities which students thoroughly enjoy. These developments are new and have not been fully evaluated to gauge their impact on students' achievement and well-being. Information and communication technology is not taught discretely or used regularly enough in other subjects to enhance learning. Personalised pastoral care and support ensure that new students integrate well and mix with others. Staff meet with all students at the start of each day to prepare them for learning and meet again at the end of each day to review how well they have done. Staff are very responsive to personal issues that may arise and that prevent students from achieving.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The experienced headteacher has retained her vision for the PRU but acknowledges that recent disruptions have prevented her from embedding her ambitions. Notably, throughout this time students' outcomes have remained satisfactory and are improving. Newly appointed staff and teachers returning to work after a period of absence have strengthened the quality of teaching and learning. In the majority of lessons observed students were progressing satisfactorily and at times made good progress. Furthermore, the PRU has fulfilled one of its key functions in preparing the vast majority of students for post-16 training or employment. Staff get to know their students well, helping them to integrate promptly and taking decisive action to eliminate any discrimination they may have experienced prior to their arrival.

With the support of the local authority, the headteacher is rebuilding the PRU by strengthening the senior leadership team, galvanising existing staff and implementing improvement plans to return the PRU to a much stronger position. New procedures to formulate individual education plans have been initiated. However, the use of information gained from lesson observations, scrutiny of work and analysis of performance data to drive improvements to the quality of teaching and learning remains limited. Middle leaders demonstrate good subject knowledge but currently play a modest role in raising students' achievement. The management committee ensures that safeguarding arrangements are fully met but has too little impact on the direction and work of the PRU and is failing to ensure it contributes towards a cohesive community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

More than half of all parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most of them are satisfied with the work of the PRU and the impact it has on their children. A few would like more information about their children’s progress. Two parents commented very favourably about the positive changes they have seen in their children since attending the Albany Centre and the good work of staff in increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Albany Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received eight completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 14 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	63	2	25	1	13	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	1	13	5	63	2	25	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	13	6	75	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	1	13	5	63	1	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	13	6	75	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	25	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	25	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	13	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Albany Centre, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 6SA

I recently visited your PRU to see you learning in lessons and meet with some of you. Thank you for making me feel welcome, in particular can I thank those of you who met with me to talk about life at the PRU; you presented yourselves very well indeed.

Staff give you the care and support you need to help you to re-focus on your education and help you to learn well with others. They provide a wide range of opportunities for you. I know that most of you really enjoy the enrichment activities on Wednesdays. The PRU also allows you to study for GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics and science and some other subjects which will help you enormously when you leave at the end of Year 11. You spoke positively about the advice and help you receive about future careers and the opportunities available at college and other places. The inspection team found that although the PRU does many things well, it needs to improve some things to ensure you get the very best education. The inspectors have given the management committee and staff a notice to improve. So we have asked your headteacher to make the following improvements:

- to sort out some staffing issues by the end of this year and share responsibility amongst other staff for checking your attendance, doing assessments and monitoring your progress
- to let teachers know how well you have done before coming to the PRU so that they can plan lessons for you that you find challenging enough but also allow you to succeed
- to ask the management committee to make sure that you know how to live in a cohesive community and appreciate the different faiths, cultures and religious beliefs of others.

You can all help your headteacher to make further improvements by attending regularly, always behaving well and letting her know your views on what would improve life at the PRU. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**