

Albany Academy

Bolton Road, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 3AY

Inspection dates

25–26 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership is outstanding. The headteacher and governors are ambitious and determined to ensure that every child achieves their best.
- Along with other leaders, they have made rapid changes in recent years that have improved standards in the academy, especially of behaviour, in the quality of teaching and in the outcomes for many students, particularly those students supported by the pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Students in the academy are delightful. Their behaviour, both in and out of the classroom, is outstanding. They are universally polite, respectful, look smart and are an absolute credit to the academy and the community.
- Students are well cared for and supported. As a result, they feel safe, bullying is very rare, and the academy is a community where all are valued and respected. Students are very happy in the academy.
- Attainment has risen in the past three years and is above the national average. The progress that students make in mathematics is well above the national average; the progress that students make in English is not as strong, but nonetheless good.
- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. This is having a positive impact on the progress that many students make.
- The curriculum offers a good variety of courses, with extensive opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, such as in the Life Studies programme.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are well supported and achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding, particularly in Key Stage 3, where work is not always hard enough for all students.
- The outstanding progress made in mathematics is not yet evident in English.
- Feedback to students does not always ensure that they are fully aware of how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 part lessons. Five joint observations of lessons were also carried out with three members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders, heads of subject departments and a range of other staff. Inspectors also met with groups of students of differing ages and abilities. A telephone call was also held with the education adviser who supports the academy on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information on how the academy checks on the quality of teaching and data showing students' progress and attainment, academy improvement plans, monitoring documentation and records related to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 42 parents that were made to the online questionnaire, (Parent View), as well as the response made directly to Ofsted. Questionnaires were completed by 30 members of staff.

Inspection team

Derek Davies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Peckett

Additional Inspector

Royston Halford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Albany Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to an academy in August 2012. The academy was last inspected as the predecessor school, Albany Science College, in February 2009, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is just above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are both significantly below the national averages.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy makes limited use of alternative provision at Shaftesbury High School.
- The headteacher commenced his post in September 2011.
- The academy is now approved as an Academy Sponsor and will seek to extend its support to primary and secondary schools in order to establish a local multi-academy trust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all learning is consistently good and often outstanding, enabling all students to make consistently good and increasingly better progress, particularly in some subject areas, such as drama and science, and in Key Stage 3, by:
 - continuing to develop further the systems for sharing the outstanding practice within the academy
 - providing work that is consistently hard enough for all students
 - further improving the quality of feedback given to students by ensuring there are opportunities for students to respond to and consistently act upon the feedback given.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is improving strongly and students make good progress. Outstanding progress is made in mathematics, especially for the most able students.
- Students enter the school with standards that are either broadly average or below average in English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at Grade C or above, including English and mathematics has been increasing and is above national averages.
- From their starting points, students also achieve particularly well in art, English literature, religious studies and vocational subjects. Achievement in drama, however, was well below the national average, and science performance, while improving, is not yet totally consistent.
- Students supported by the pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals typically achieve the same GCSE grades as other students in English and mathematics. Any gaps found in performance are significantly smaller than those found nationally. This shows that the school is extremely successful at closing any gaps in performance for this group of students and promotes equality of opportunity well.
- In 2013, students did not make the outstanding progress in English that was achieved in mathematics, especially for the most able boys. Information from the academy indicates that the progress made in English will improve in 2014 and is on course to be above national averages, with a significant improvement in the progress of all the most able students.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, such as through a nurture group and small classes. This is helping to support their learning across a range of subjects and ensure rapid progress is being made by many, particularly in their reading ages, where some have made 12 months progress in just three months.
- Disabled students and those who have a statement of special educational needs make particularly good progress because of the good support that they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Students identified as requiring school action and school action plus generally make good progress from their starting points. Many have additional needs that are well supported by the academy, such as on-site pastoral support and clear systems for tracking their performance.
- There is a clear approach to developing reading within the academy, such as 'ARC' – All Reading in Class. Students, especially in Key Stage 3, now read frequently and are well supported in developing their reading skills. It is impressive that 3000 books have been read and understood by Key Stage 3 students in just six months.
- Early entry in mathematics is used selectively to optimise students' achievements at GCSE grade C and above.
- Very few students take qualifications outside of school. Students in alternative provision, who would potentially be at risk of permanent exclusion, leave with qualifications that enable them to succeed to the next stage of education, training or employment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is good, with some being outstanding. There is a little variation, with more outstanding teaching in Key Stage 4.
- Where learning is very effective, high expectations and effective questioning clearly challenge students to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Where this is the case, students make rapid progress and are highly engaged and enthusiastic.
- Activities are not always adapted or questioning sharp enough to ensure students make good progress.

- Students recognise the improvements in teaching and now believe that activities are more engaging and purposeful. Much of this is due to how well staff know their students and provide clear support and guidance. The vast majority of parents believe that teaching is good.
- In Year 7, effective teaching enabled students to develop skills that would normally be expected from much older students. Students were actively involved, spoke and read fluently and had very mature attitudes. Consequently, the progress made was outstanding.
- Teaching in mathematics is consistently good and often outstanding. Students have a great deal of pride in their work and are keen to succeed. Key skills are effectively taught so that students develop a clear understanding and can apply what they have learnt to other mathematical problems.
- Teachers and other staff provide additional help to those students who require more support to help them progress. This was observed in Year 11 where the use of high-quality resources, adapted to different groups of students within the class, targeted questioning and positive relationships led to students developing their confidence so that they were able to clearly express exactly what they had learnt.
- On occasion, particularly in Key Stage 3, teachers do not provide work which is hard enough, resulting in learning not being quick enough for some students, especially the most able.
- There are examples of excellent marking and it is clear that students' work is marked regularly by all teachers. However, there are missed opportunities for students to respond to the comments made by their teacher and to have an accurate understanding of what the next steps are to improve their work. Likewise, mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not corrected consistently in all departments, other than in English.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. This reflects the academy's high expectations of students' conduct, both in and out of lessons. Students have a very positive attitude to their learning and clearly appreciate the wealth of opportunities that the academy provides for them. The manners exhibited by all students, and the respect they have for other students and adults, are commendable.
- Students willingly engage with adults with high levels of maturity and confidence. Consequently, relationships in the academy are extremely positive. There is a strong sense of every child being known and valued in the academy.
- Within lessons, students at all levels work with enthusiasm and are obviously keen to learn. The positive relationships between staff and students leads to high levels of commitment and a desire to do well. A feature of many lessons is the way in which students work and learn from each other, such as adopting leadership roles in physical education. In these lessons, students have extremely mature attitudes and value the opinion of other students. Likewise, the confidence that this develops makes significant contributions to the good and better progress that they make, and to their personal and social development.
- There are many opportunities for students to take on roles of responsibility, both within the academy and the local community, such as being the youth member of parliament for Chorley. The student council within the school makes significant contributions, both to day-to-day life within the academy and developing teaching and learning.
- Charity work is a strong feature within the academy. There is also a strong sense of a community among staff and students, as demonstrated by them recently raising funds to support cancer treatment for the son of a member of the administration staff.
- Attendance continues to improve and is above the national average. Exclusions this year have reduced from previous years.
- Students are proud of their academy and all look smart in their uniform. They recognise that when they are wearing their uniform in the community that they should behave appropriately, as the academy would expect.
- Out of lessons, students move around the academy sensibly and are highly courteous to other

students and adults. Even in highly congested areas, such as on the narrow stairs, students' behaviour is impeccable.

- Parents and staff believe that behaviour is well managed and contributes to the positive learning environment within the academy.
- The small number of students who have alternative provision attend well. The quality of education they receive is carefully monitored by leaders at the academy ensuring that these students have the necessary qualifications for the next steps in their education, employment or training.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students say that bullying is rare and is always dealt with effectively by staff. Racist and homophobic bullying is extremely rare, reflecting the open and tolerant values that students have in the academy.
- Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe while using technology through activities in the Life Studies programme, assemblies and e-safety lessons. All students spoken with say that they feel very safe in the academy; this is supported by the views of parents.
- The academy site has many positive displays of students' work which is well presented and maintained. Outside spaces are well regarded by students with very little litter being dropped.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership is outstanding as the headteacher, governors and senior leaders have changed the priorities of the academy so that there is a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for all students. Leaders are ambitious for the academy and are determined to be outstanding in everything that they do.
- The headteacher knows students well and, along with other senior leaders, has made significant changes to provide students with a secure, safe and aspirational learning environment.
- Leaders know the academy's strengths and areas for development. Their very accurate view of the school's performance leads to well-focused actions for improvement. Plans to extend their work beyond the academy are ambitious and based on a strong commitment to supporting other schools and leaders.
- Heads of subject departments understand the academy's priorities and play a significant role in improving teaching. They recognise the importance of their role in making the academy a success. The academy is developing specialist leaders in education to support leaders in other schools.
- The academy has an accurate view of the quality of teaching. During the inspection, the judgements of teaching in all joint observations undertaken by senior leaders with inspectors matched with the academy's views on strengths and weaknesses.
- Target-setting and tracking students' performance are exceptionally rigorous. The 'Flight Path' system that is used by leaders ensures that the needs of all students are carefully catered for with focused support leading to rapid progress being made.
- Key to the success of the academy has been the robust focus on improving teaching. Leadership of this area has ensured that teachers understand the importance of developing their practice; consequently, they are keen to learn new skills. Training for staff has been very successful and is based on the key priorities for the academy and for addressing individual needs, as demonstrated by the improvements made in science.
- Any underperformance is quickly identified by leaders through robust monitoring systems. Senior leaders and governors do not avoid making difficult staffing decisions where necessary.
- Performance management has been reviewed by leaders so that there are clear mechanisms for ensuring the academy's ambitions are achieved. Clear and explicit targets link to student outcomes and reflect the Teachers' Standards. Any increases in salary are firmly based on these targets being met.
- The curriculum is a strength of the academy. The Life Studies programme in Key Stage 3 provides opportunities to discuss social and moral issues, as well as developing wider skills. The

focus for the Key Stage 4 curriculum has changed to promote more academic courses, though, where appropriate, a small number of vocational courses are also provided.

- There is an extensive range of additional activities beyond the normal curriculum, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and Young Enterprise. Students are encouraged to undertake some volunteering work and there are many opportunities to take on leadership roles. All these activities make a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The guidance that students receive is excellent. Students are successfully prepared for the next stages in their education or employment and contribute to the very small NEET (students not in education, employment or training) figures.
- Students have good opportunities to practise their reading, writing and communication skills across subjects.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students are clear and meet statutory requirements. The academy takes effective steps to ensure the safety of the few students who attend courses away from the academy site.
- The academy maintains close links with the local authority, such as the provision of external checks on the accuracy of leaders' view of how effective the academy is, and to assist the governing body in the headteacher's performance management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have been through a period of honest and open self-reflection about their own effectiveness; consequently, they have restructured and organised the way that they function so that they are now an integral part of the determined drive to make a difference to all students in the academy.
 - Governors support senior leaders in maintaining a very close link between pay and performance and ensure that the academy's finances are well managed. Governors check carefully that pupil premium funds are used effectively and result in the closure of the achievement gap for eligible students.
 - The governing body ensures that all leaders are challenged. They are closely involved with all aspects of academy life, such as taking part in lesson observations with leaders. The knowledge that they have of the academy, for example, about students' performance gained through their close analysis of national comparable data, enables them to have an accurate understanding of strengths and the areas that need further development.
 - Governors have ensured that performance management of staff is fair and rigorous, linking clearly to the outcomes for students and pay progression.
 - The governing body is an asset to the academy.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138544
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	431389

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	551
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs H Brown
Headteacher	Mr J Hayes
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01257 244020
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