

Inspection of a good school: Albany Academy

Bolton Road, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 3AY

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Albany Academy value their education and wear their uniform with pride. The school is a calm and welcoming place for pupils to learn. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other. They are happy to belong to this small and friendly school.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. However, some pupils in key stage 3 do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects. This is because there are weaknesses in how well some subject curriculums are designed and delivered. In addition, leaders do not always make it clear how teachers can support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively.

Leaders have very high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils are respectful and well-mannered. They behave well in lessons and around school. Staff deal with incidents of bullying quickly and effectively.

Pupils benefit from the leadership opportunities to develop their character and confidence. For example, they can become a prefect, a sports ambassador or a high-performance learning leader. Pupils value their life studies curriculum where they can learn about equality and respect. School is a place where pupils can feel safe and be themselves, for example as part of the LGBTQ+ group.

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

Leaders are in the early stages of building a curriculum that builds on what pupils already know. The curriculum is broad and is becoming more ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND.

In some subjects, for example science, leaders have carefully thought about the knowledge they want pupils to learn and in which order it should be taught. However, in a number of other subjects, the curriculum has not been considered in as much detail. In these subjects, pupils do not get enough opportunities to remember, practise and build on what they already know.

Recently, leaders have increased the number of pupils who are studying a modern foreign language. This is increasing the proportion of pupils who follow the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects. Leaders are increasingly putting EBacc at the heart of their curriculum thinking.

Teachers typically have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Teachers use assessments to monitor pupils' progress. However, these checks lack rigour. They are not always used to consider where pupils have specific gaps in their knowledge or understanding. Teachers do not always use assessment information to adapt their teaching so that pupils can recover any learning they may have missed or forgotten.

Leaders have introduced a focus on developing pupils' reading and vocabulary knowledge in all subjects. Pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read are beginning to benefit from a programme to help them read more fluently. Pupils have opportunities to read across the curriculum. They are introduced to new subject-specific vocabulary each week. They visit the school library regularly and enjoy reading in English lessons.

Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers. However, leaders do not identify the needs of pupils with SEND with enough precision. This means that teachers do not always know how to adapt their teaching to fully support pupils with SEND to achieve as well as they can.

Pupils are very well behaved. They are polite and focus fully on their work in class. Pupils' learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour in lessons. Pupils move between lessons sensibly. They arrive at lessons on time and are ready to learn.

Leaders provide pupils with a range of activities that support their personal development. Some pupils attend sports clubs, while others attend chess or cheerleading club. Leaders ensure pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are given clear and impartial careers advice and guidance.

Most staff told inspectors that they appreciate leaders' efforts to support their well-being and to ensure they have a reasonable workload.

In discussion with leaders, the inspectors agreed that English, art and design, and history may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are trained regularly so that they can identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders ensure that everyone quickly reports concerns when they are worried about a pupil. Leaders work closely with a number of agencies to ensure families get the help and support they need in a timely manner.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe, including when online. For example, pupils are taught about the risks of drugs, alcohol and gambling. They also learn about how to treat everyone with respect.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not clearly identified the key things that pupils should learn in each subject. This leads to variability in the way the curriculum is taught. Leaders should complete their curriculum thinking in all subjects so that teachers know exactly what content they must teach to pupils.
- Leaders have not fully developed assessment strategies that allow teachers to check where pupils have missing or insecure knowledge. As a result, teachers do not always address pupils' misunderstandings well enough. Leaders should strengthen assessment strategies so that teachers check precisely what pupils know and understand.
- Currently, leaders do not make best use of the information that they have about pupils with SEND when putting together plans to support these pupils with their learning. Consequently, there are times when teachers do not have a complete enough understanding of what they need to do to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. Leaders must ensure that any information is analysed accurately and used effectively to improve the quality of education for pupils with SEND.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2014

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138544
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10240269
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	727
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Brown
Headteacher	Peter Mayland
Website	http://www.albanyacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at one registered external provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has had several staffing changes in the last year. These include changes to the senior leadership team and the English department.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place on 15 and 16 November 2022. An additional visit was made on 8 December 2022 to gather additional evidence.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors conducted deep dives in English, history and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders and groups of teachers.
- The inspectors met with governors and representatives from the trust board.
- The inspectors spoke with some pupils about their wider development and about school life.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents about safeguarding and spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe. Inspectors reviewed leaders' record of checks carried out on newly appointed staff.

Inspection team

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