

Inspection of The Albany

Beard Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6SA

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils come to The Albany having had difficult experiences at other schools. The school does not provide pupils with the positive new start that they need. The poor behaviour that has blighted their education before continues after they have joined the school.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. They are provided with a very narrow education that does not prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. Pupils receive little guidance about future jobs or life after school.

Pupils' behaviour over time has been extremely poor. For example, until this academic year, pupils frequently climbed on the roof and left the school site without permission. Pupils' behaviour inside the school was often unsafe and out of control. Leaders have taken actions recently that have reduced the frequency and intensity of these behaviours. The school is now calmer, but pupils' learning remains disrupted by others' behaviour.

The school has improved over the last few months. Pupils feel safer now than they did previously. Their lessons are disturbed less often than they were before. Pupils are not worried about bullying. Relationships between pupils and staff are typically strong. This helps pupils to feel safe at school.

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

The Albany does not provide pupils with an acceptable quality of education. Trustees have not held leaders to account well enough. The school's curriculum is very narrow. It includes only English, mathematics, science, and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils do not receive the broad and balanced education that they are entitled to.

The curriculum is at a very early stage of development. As a result, there is little evidence of pupils' learning being built on over time. Learning is haphazard and poorly planned. Many pupils are registered both at this school and at their 'base' mainstream school. Leaders have not ensured that there is close liaison with pupils' base schools. The curriculum at The Albany does not help pupils to keep pace with their peers in their base school.

The curriculum lacks ambition. All pupils, regardless of their age or previous learning, have the same lessons and do the same work. Staff do not have the knowledge they need to be able to teach the curriculum successfully.

Many pupils are either educated entirely off site or attend school part time. Some pupils do not have a full timetable of educational activities, with some having as little as 14 hours of timetabled activity per week. The school does not offer any GCSEs, despite some pupils being capable of achieving them. All pupils, including those in Year 8, are entered for functional skills examinations in English and

mathematics. It is not clear that this is always in pupils' best interests. Pupils do not achieve well and they are ill-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teachers' use of assessment is underdeveloped. They are unable to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum because leaders have not identified what pupils are expected to learn. Pupils' individual learning needs are not identified or met well enough. Too little is done to ensure that gaps in pupils' learning are filled effectively.

Leaders do not put sufficient emphasis on reading. There is no structured programme to help the weakest readers to become proficient. The reading curriculum is underdeveloped. Too many pupils do not value reading or see why it is important.

Leaders do not keep or use records of behaviour incidents effectively. For example, records do not show the actions leaders have taken in response to incidents. This means that leaders are unable to identify patterns of behaviour. They do not know whether the actions taken in response to incidents are effective. Although there has been some recent improvement, persistent low-level behaviours continue to disrupt pupils' learning.

The school's PSHE curriculum is at a fledgling stage but includes some positive aspects. For example, pupils are starting to learn about issues such as equality and diversity. Careers education is at a similarly early stage. Pupils in Year 11 receive some careers guidance but there is currently no provision for pupils in other year groups.

There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. These are starting to have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour in classrooms, but it is very early days. Staff provide pupils with opportunities to take part in activities such as cooking and visits to a local gym. Pupils go on trips to places of interest both locally and further afield.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Recently, leaders have strengthened and improved safeguarding. Staff have received a great deal of training. They identify concerns about pupils well and report their concerns promptly using the school's system. The designated safeguarding leads understand their roles well and take appropriate action when concerns are reported to them.

Leaders have put strong arrangements in place to check that pupils are safe while attending alternative providers or when they are being educated in their own homes. Staff take appropriate actions, including visiting pupils' homes, to assure themselves about pupils' welfare.

Leaders carry out the required pre-appointment checks and record these accurately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school provides a poor quality of education. As a results, pupils do not achieve well and are ill-prepared for their next stage of learning. Leaders should take action to ensure that:
 - the school has a coherent and well-sequenced curriculum, of appropriate breadth and depth, that gives reading a sufficiently high focus
 - staff have sufficiently strong subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively
 - assessment accurately identifies pupils’ individual learning needs and gaps in their knowledge, and these are addressed effectively.
- There is frequent low-level disruption and pupils often refuse to follow instructions given to them by members of staff. Expectations of how pupils should behave are not high enough and staff do not routinely manage behaviour effectively. This results in poor behaviour around the school and disruption to learning. A large proportion of pupils are either educated remotely or are on part-time timetables. This means that they do not receive the full-time education that they are entitled to. Records of behaviour incidents do not contain all the information they should. As a result, leaders are not able to check for patterns of behaviour or monitor the effectiveness of actions taken. Leaders should take action to:
 - ensure that all staff have consistently high expectations of how pupils should behave, and have the necessary skills to manage behaviour effectively
 - significantly reduce the number of pupils on part-time timetables
 - improve the way behaviour incidents are recorded, including where physical intervention has been necessary, so that patterns can be identified and the effectiveness of actions taken can be assessed
- The school’s wider curriculum is underdeveloped. Pupils are not provided with a rich and varied range of experiences. Careers and guidance are underdeveloped, particularly for pupils in key stage 3 and Year 10. As a result, pupils are poorly prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment. Leaders should take action to ensure that all pupils:
 - are provided with broad set of experiences that are well matched to their needs and interests
 - receive appropriate careers information and guidance that fully meets the Gatsby Benchmarks.
- Trustees have not held leaders well enough to account over time. As a result, the quality of provision has deteriorated so that the school’s overall effectiveness is now inadequate. Leaders and trustees should take action to ensure that:
 - as a minimum, the school provides an acceptable standard of education

- leadership of subjects is developed so that high-quality schemes of work are developed across the curriculum
- governance arrangements are improved and strengthened so that trustees support and challenge the school effectively.

Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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	146422
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10268331
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Fletcher
Headteacher	Darryl James (interim headteacher)
Website	www.thealbany.school
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Albany is a school for pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities related to their social, emotional and mental health needs. More than half of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has been sponsored by the Believe Engage Succeed Trust since 1 February 2019.
- The school uses four registered and four unregistered alternative providers.
- The Albany converted to become an academy school in February 2019. When its predecessor school, Albany PRU, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- At the time the inspection took place, the school was expecting to be re-brokered to the Raedwald Trust on 1 June 2023.
- The interim headteacher joined the school in July 2022 as head of school, under the direction of the then executive headteacher. He took on the interim headship role at the end of September 2022 when the executive headteacher left the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the interim headteacher, subject leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the Believe Engage Succeed Trust and, separately, with the chief executive of the Raedwald Trust, using video conferencing. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading, scrutinised a range of school documents and observed lunch and break times.
- In order to check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at records of child protection concerns and spoke with staff and pupils.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted Parent View for results to be available. Inspectors took account of the six free-text comments that were received. They also took account of 13 responses to the staff survey and six responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Suzanne Thrower

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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