



# Albany Science College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 119768  
**LEA** Lancashire  
**Inspection number** 280654  
**Inspection dates** 5 July 2006 to 6 July 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Michael Cladingbowl

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Bolton Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Chorley
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Lancashire, PR7 3AY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01257 244020
<b>Number on roll</b>	694	<b>Fax number</b>	01257 244021
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Tom Hollick
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Don Higgs

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	5 July 2006 - 6 July 2006	280654

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This small specialist science college has 694 students on roll and serves an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage, although some students do come from more affluent parts of Chorley. The number on roll has fallen in recent years, in line with other schools in the area, but this has now steadied and more parents are selecting Albany as their first choice for their son or daughter. There are slightly more boys than girls.

Student mobility is high and a significant number of students have been placed in the college by the local authority (LA) after experiencing earlier difficulties with their education. In all, students come from around 20 different primary schools. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most other schools, as is the proportion of students who have a Statement of Special Educational Need. Few students are from minority ethnic groups.

A new vocational education centre will open on 1 September 2006, run by a partnership that includes other local schools and a general further education college.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This improving and increasingly popular specialist science college provides a satisfactory education for its students. Forward looking leadership, and a strong commitment to improvement, ensures that many students achieve well and that their personal development is good. The college has good systems to support students and to guide them in making decisions about courses. Achievement is uneven across subjects and key stages, however, and results are not as good in English as they are in mathematics and science. Teaching is often lively and imaginative but this is not so in all lessons; some lack sparkle and insight and not all students make the good progress that the college expects. Good aspects of the curriculum are the vocational courses for older students and the wide range of extra curricular activities for all. Together with senior leaders and managers, teachers and the other staff have worked very hard to establish a friendly and supportive learning environment. A notable strength of the college is the emphasis placed on encouraging staff to play a full part in finding ways to improve the college. Many of these have been successful but the approach taken to implementing and checking on their impact has not always ensured consistency or helped the college know if they have led to discernible improvement to the quality of education. Nevertheless, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and there is the capacity to improve further. Generally, financial and other resources are used well.

### What the school should do to improve further

- improve English results so that they match or better those achieved in mathematics and science;
- increase the proportion of good or better teaching by sharing its effective features more widely;
- adopt a more robust approach to implementing improvement strategies and to checking on their impact

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Most students enter the college with levels of attainment lower than those expected for their age, although there are a few higher attaining students in each year group who can reach very high standards. By the end of Key Stage 3, the majority of students have made good progress in science and mathematics; in 2005 around three quarters of students achieved the expected Level 5 or above. English results were weaker and have fluctuated markedly in recent years. In other subjects, students are making adequate progress towards their end of Key Stage 3 targets. Provisional results for the 2006 end of Key Stage 3 tests in science and mathematics show that students have again made at least satisfactory or even better progress.

At Key Stage 4, the proportion of students achieving five or more A\*-C grade GCSE passes, including mathematics and English, has risen modestly over the last three years to 35%, as has the proportion achieving five or more GCSE A\*-G passes; but improvement has not been even across all subject areas and results remain below average overall. The students who follow a work related curriculum achieve well overall and in 2005 nearly all achieved GCSE passes in mathematics and English, with none leaving at the end of Year 11 without any qualification. Boys did less well than girls at GCSE, particularly in English, and the gap between them was a little wider than in most other schools. Around a fifth of the students achieved one or more of the highest grades at GCSE.

Those students who have a Statement of Special Educational Need or who are most vulnerable make good progress. Overall, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make broadly similar progress to other students.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Their willingness to work hard to achieve the targets set for them shows that they enjoy college and are keen to succeed. They usually behave well in lessons and around the college, and most talk positively about learning, although in some lessons they are compliant rather than enthusiastic. Previously high rates of exclusion are reducing and are currently satisfactory.

Moral, social and cultural development of the students is good, but there are more limited opportunities for spiritual enhancement. Students make positive contributions to the college and wider community, for example through enthusiastic support for several charities. They exercise responsibility in many ways, for example as Head Boy and Head Girl, prefects, peer mentors, or as elected representatives on the 'student voice'. They help make decisions, such as in the installation of CCTV in parts of the college. They are encouraged to adopt a healthy and safe lifestyle, and the well planned pastoral guidance programme helps students learn about health related issues, including smoking cessation and drugs awareness. The allocation of time for physical education, although not generous in Year 10 and Year 11, and the good opportunities for extra-curricular sport, ensures that students benefit from regular exercise. Careers advice, the growing range of vocational courses at different levels, and established partnerships with local employers and other training providers means students gain useful skills and knowledge that help prepare them well for later life.

Above all, students gain in self-confidence and ambition as they progress through the college, and this is because of good and nurturing relationships between teachers, other staff and students. Attendance is monitored well and is broadly average. Parents are pleased with the way that the college helps the students develop as individuals and their comments about the college in the inspection questionnaires endorse its growing popularity.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although much is good and some is outstanding. Good relationships are evident in nearly all lessons and this encourages good behaviour from students who are eager to cooperate with teachers and each other. The best lessons are characterised by: planning that focuses sharply on learning; exciting but challenging activities; and a firm emphasis on students taking responsibility for, and playing an active part in, their own learning. These lessons also pay particular attention to developing students' literacy.

Where lessons are less focused on learning, or where there is less variety and pace, the students do not make the good progress that the college expects. Some teaching lacks sparkle and fails to enthuse the students. Where learning support is targeted at the most vulnerable students, including those who have a Statement of Special Educational Need, teaching and learning are often good. However, teaching is not so effective in dealing with weak literacy skills in other students.

Students' books are marked regularly but teachers' comments, where they are given, do not always say why students have done well or explain what they need to do to improve, especially in relation to National Curriculum levels or examination course grades. The amount and quality of homework set varies from subject to subject.

The college has invested much effort into improving teaching and learning and this has helped some individual teachers to improve. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. However, the arrangements for improving the quality of teaching and learning more widely across the college have not yet had the expected and marked impact in all classrooms.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

At Key Stage 3, the students are taught all National Curriculum subjects for a suitable period of time, and there are good arrangements for supporting groups of low attaining students in some classes. There are strengths in the Key Stage 4 curriculum; in particular, well-taught vocational courses give all students access to opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding within a work-related environment. Extra-curricular activities, including after-college clubs, are numerous and varied. Students take part in educational visits, at home and abroad, and this enriches the curriculum and helps to raise aspirations. Specialist science college status has helped ease the students' transition from Year 6 to Year 7, supported the development of the vocational curriculum in Key Stage 4, increased the availability of ICT equipment, and helped improve achievement in science and mathematics.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

There is a high level of concern for safeguarding the welfare of students. Procedures for child protection meet statutory requirements and are understood by staff. All necessary health and safety requirements are in place; systems for risk assessments, especially for visits, are thorough. Students are well known to staff, and say they feel safe and cared for in the college. They trust adults to take their concerns seriously, and value the steps taken by the college to deal with issues such as bullying should they arise.

Support for vulnerable students and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is sensitive and generally effective. Teachers and learning support assistants link well with outside agencies to provide help for individuals, and the students' progress is tracked well. Good links with primary schools, helped in part by specialist science college status, smooth the transfer of students into Year 7. The Foundation group, now in Year 8, helps targeted students to cope well with their secondary education. Students receive useful guidance about subject choices in Year 9, and when making decisions about post-16 courses and career decisions.

Sound systems are in place to set curriculum and other targets and checks on the students' progress towards these are frequent. Students who achieve well are encouraged by a flourishing rewards system; those likely to underachieve are identified early although there is variation in the quality of action taken to address this. Review days are popular, and help parents and students understand how well students are doing, and what in broad terms they need to do to get better.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good vision and a clear direction for the college, which is underpinned by a focus on improving achievement. His good team building skills have resulted in very good relationships at all levels and happy, well behaved students. He is loyally supported by a hard-working, highly committed and enthusiastic senior leadership team, all of whom make a considerable and effective contribution to driving the school forward. Subject and pastoral leaders are enthusiastic about leading initiatives to improve teaching and learning, but they are not always implemented forcibly enough and their impact is not yet evaluated rigorously. For example, good ideas that exist in the college about improving teaching and learning do not find their way into all classrooms. Teaching and learning are monitored, and subject performance is reviewed regularly, but action based on this is not always sufficiently swift or effective enough to raise standards. Subject leaders are also responsible for monitoring, but its quality varies and consequently lesson planning, marking and the usefulness of homework are not as good as they could be across the college.

More generally, the college has correctly identified its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning identifies key priorities based on these. However, the impact of the action taken is not yet monitored robustly enough for the college to always measure the extent of improvement accurately.

Governors know their college well and are aware of what needs to be done to improve further. They are committed and supportive and carry out their responsibilities effectively. They meet their legal responsibilities in full, apart from ensuring that all students experience a daily act of collective worship. Performance management is linked to the college's focus on improving student achievement, and teachers are set suitably challenging targets.

Day-to-day management is effective and the college runs smoothly. Financial management is good. Staff and resources are well deployed to give value for money. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory, although more needs to be done to raise standards in English and literacy. The college has the capacity to improve.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

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To the students of:

Albany Science College

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Lancashire

PR7 3AY

7 July 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for your contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed talking with you and listening to your views.

We agree with you that your college is friendly and that your teachers care about you. We also agree with you that your college is improving and you can be very proud of your good behaviour, your smart appearance and your willingness to work hard.

You told us you enjoyed lessons best when they were fun but also when your teachers told you exactly what you were doing and why. We agree that these are the best lessons and your college is committed to making as many of them like that as possible.

We were particularly impressed with your mathematics and science results, and we know your college is working hard to replicate these in all subjects.

Lastly, we have asked your college to check carefully that all of you are doing as well as you can; you can all help with this by making sure that you continue to have positive attitudes to lessons, by making sure your work is the best you can do, by completing homework regularly, and by acting on any advice that your teachers give you.

All best wishes for the future

Michael Cladingbowl

Her Majesty's Inspector