



Albany Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124529
LEA SUFFOLK LEA
Inspection number 281741
Inspection dates 4 May 2006 to 4 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Ian Naylor LI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Beard Road
School category	Pupil referral unit		IP32 6SA
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01284 754065
Number on roll	24	Fax number	01284 705373
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Dudley Whittaker
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2004	Headteacher	Mrs. Elizabeth Barker

Age group 5 to 16	Inspection dates 4 May 2006 - 4 May 2006	Inspection number 281741
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Albany Centre serves western Suffolk for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties who are permanently excluded or in danger of permanent exclusion from mainstream school. Ten students are also registered at another school. Some students attend part time. Attainment on admission is much lower than the national average. Students are predominantly from a White British heritage. A well above average proportion of students have learning difficulties or disabilities. Nine students have statements of special educational need. Students do not have to follow the National Curriculum.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Albany Centre's view is that overall effectiveness is satisfactory and inspectors agree. The head of centre has shown good leadership in the face of difficult circumstances concerning staffing issues. She has led by example. This has meant that, despite some staff absences, the quality of teaching and learning has been sustained at a good level overall. Satisfactory improvement since the last inspection shows most clearly in the year-on-year improvement in results for GCSE. It is also shown by the improved rate of attendance. The centre has an effective capacity to improve in the future. Good teaching has sustained high expectations of student commitment to completing GCSE coursework. Students make good progress and their overall attainment rises accordingly, so that they gain in self-confidence and self-reliance. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Most of the staffing difficulties have been resolved, but the centre is still not fully staffed with permanent teachers and this has an impact on the time available to the head of centre for management responsibilities. Students' personal development is satisfactory. They show a determination to succeed, once given appropriate opportunities to improve across a number of key areas. They are not given enough opportunities to learn about cultural differences in the wider community and, as a result, they have a rather narrow outlook at times. The curriculum is satisfactory and has strength in the flexibility of its arrangements to meet individual student needs. However, the lack of work experience this year has restricted opportunities to learn work-related skills. Student welfare and safety are well promoted. Good relationships are formed between staff and students. The centre gives good support to all students with special educational needs and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Assessment of students' performance is satisfactory but more effective use could be made of this information to guide planning for teaching. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of assessment so that teachers' lesson planning is even more effective.
- Reintroduce the work experience programme so that students are even better prepared for their future working life.
- Ensure that the centre has adequate permanent staffing.
- Increase students' opportunities for cultural development to increase their understanding of our multicultural society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and progress are good. Students on admission have well below average levels of attainment and over a third of them have statements of special educational need. Students make rapid progress in their achievements once they have settled into a pattern of regular attendance. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Students' good progress is shown by the significant improvements in National Curriculum levels attained by students from when they arrive in Year 10

through to the end of Year 11. Examination results have shown sustained year-on-year improvements in grades and in the numbers achieving one or more GCSE passes since the last inspection. Challenging targets were met in 2005. Standards are low overall, but in the last three years there has been a 30% increase in the number of students gaining GCSE grades A*-G. In 2005, 14% of students gained A*-C in GCSE. All students gained at least one GCSE. Eight out of ten students gained the Level 1 certification in Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT), whereas none did in previous years. Attainments in vocational studies have been variable over the period since the last report due to staffing difficulties. The outcomes for students are also good in social and life skills with the centre's own tracking system showing that 14 out of 17 school leavers in 2005 secured placements at college or gained open employment. Overall eight out of ten students go on to further education, training or employment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Their behaviour and their attitudes to their education are also satisfactory. This represents relatively good progress for these young people, whose previous education has been interrupted by exclusions and non-attendance. Because of the supportive atmosphere of the centre, students develop their self-confidence and their receptiveness to learning. As a result, the majority show commitment and attend regularly. Students enjoy their time at the centre and their attendance is satisfactory. Students make good progress in their social and moral development. They learn to get along with others in the centre and to respect the rights of their fellow students and staff. However, their wider views are often intolerant, for example, in relation to cultural diversity. Students lead a satisfactorily safe and healthy lifestyle. For example, many are involved in regular sporting and physical activities. Spiritual development is satisfactory and students develop greater awareness of their own and others' special qualities. Students make sound contribution to their own community in the centre, participating in meetings, making decisions about resources and sometimes showing support to one another. They feel they are not given enough responsibility. Although the work experience programme is not currently running, students are prepared satisfactorily for their future lives through other work-related activities, by a focus on improving their literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills and by opportunities to work together in projects such as the conservation work in the grounds of the centre.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers improve students' basic skills effectively and as a result they make good progress in their learning. Teaching is skilful in managing students' difficult and often challenging behaviour. It helps students to redirect their energy and abilities in a more focused way so that they gain in motivation

and learn how to succeed in tasks where they have had little success before. Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively to support students and as a result they learn to use their literacy and numeracy skills effectively in other subjects. Relationships between staff and students are good and this gives students a chance to increase in self-confidence and self-reliance. Staff have high expectations of their students' commitment to examination courses and so students work effectively to develop their key skills. These expectations are continually reinforced and can be seen in lessons. More could be done to use the teachers' good assessment of students' progress directly to inform future lesson planning for each student.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The centre's view is that it is good. However, there is currently a very much reduced provision for work experience. The centre acknowledges this and is working to remedy the situation. Careers work, especially in conjunction with Connexions, is well established and successful in securing post-school college placements and open employment opportunities. A satisfactory core curriculum of English, mathematics, science and art is provided to GCSE level. Information and communication technology (ICT) is provided at an offsite facility and taught there to a nationally accredited level. Additional GCSE options are available for students in history and geography. There is sound provision for personal, social and health education. This is enhanced by a series of visiting speakers who contribute to open forums for students on a range of topics. The centre makes good use of a range of local provision, such as the leisure centre, to provide realistic and regular physical and sporting opportunities for students. They successfully engage in activities such as swimming, soccer and badminton. The newly appointed coordinators for visits and work placements have extended the external opportunities available to students by providing mentors through partnerships with local businesses. The impact of these has not yet been fully evaluated, but the potential is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Student welfare is well provided for. There are robust procedures for child protection, risk management, health and safety. All necessary checks are carried out on adults to ensure that students are kept as safe as they can be. The centre also has strong policies for discipline and behaviour management that give good support to students' emotional and social development. Individual education and behaviour plans are well constructed to address students' needs. Effective links and some liaison with other agencies and professionals support students well and the centre is constantly seeking to extend these to meet individual needs. It has already had good success in ensuring access to college courses and expertise from specialist therapy clinics. Good links are forged by staff with parents, especially with regard to attendance. The most successful recent innovations have been the work of the coordinators and mentors. These are helping students in their

transition from school to college courses or open employment and also supporting parents with the management of their children. The centre's system for the assessment and tracking of student performance has been improved and this provides valid information about students' performance and individual needs. However, assessment is not always used effectively to plan students' future work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the centre has taken positive steps to improve students' achievement and has done so with good success as demonstrated by the quality of teaching and by rapidly improving GCSE results. There have been some improvements to the curriculum and the general school ethos through aiming for high standards in all areas. This is despite the continuing difficulty of coping with some long term staff absence. The head of centre has shown good leadership and direction. The appointment of a new deputy head of centre and the delegation of responsibilities to several coordinator posts have helped to give some stability to planning and a stronger commitment to improvement. Close cooperation between the centre and the local authority has helped to overcome some of the complex staffing issues more speedily. However, the centre still does not have a full complement of permanent teaching staff, and this reduces the time available for the head of centre's management responsibilities. Satisfactory use of school self-evaluation based on realistic expectations has brought about sound improvements since the last inspection. For example, more students are attaining GCSE grades A*-G. The school has a good capacity to improve and now seeks and acts upon the views of parents and students. The head of centre, with the full support of the well organised and supportive management committee, is addressing accommodation and staffing issues in the school improvement plan, which is an effective instrument for change. There are advanced plans to improve levels of accommodation. Good success in providing access for students to external facilities and teaching resources for some areas of the curriculum, such as those for ICT, mean students' achievement in ICT has improved considerably. The centre has employed coordinators to boost key activities such as post-school transition and parental support.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

Thank you for talking to us and allowing us to look at your work when we visited the centre recently. You were friendly and made us feel welcome. We think there is a good atmosphere at the centre and that most of you are getting on well with your lessons and coursework for your GCSEs. We think that teaching is good and this helps you to make good progress in controlling your behaviour and in your learning. We are pleased with the way that the centre has helped more students each year to gain sound grades at GCSE. The leadership at the centre is providing many effective activities to help you grow in confidence, particularly in areas such as preparing yourselves for college placement. Work experience is vital to you for learning about life skills. It is not available at present and the centre should restore it as soon as possible. Most of you enjoy the sporting and physical activities available at the leisure centre, such as swimming and soccer. However, the centre does not provide enough opportunities for you to learn about and respect the lives and cultures of other people. We think that the head of centre and management committee should make sure that the centre is fully staffed with permanent teachers. Teachers record and measure how well each of you is doing in your work, but do not use this information as well as they could to plan the next lessons. Best wishes for the future.