

Albany Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124529
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328155
Inspection date	25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	22
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Elisabeth Barker
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2006
School address	Beard Road Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP32 6SA
Telephone number	01284 754065
Fax number	01284 705373

Age group	14–16
Inspection date	25 June 2009
Inspection number	328155

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The Albany Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU) for students who have been excluded from schools or who are at risk of exclusion because of their poor behaviour. Currently, nine have statements of special educational needs, mainly for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Students arrive at various times of the year. Their lack of success in mainstream schools means their attainment is below that expected at their ages. The proportion eligible for free school meals is average. Most of the students are of White British heritage. At the time of the inspection, students in Year 11 were on study leave and there were six students in Year 10. The Sportsmark award has recognised the Centre's provision for physical activity.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Albany Centre provides a good quality of education and good value for money. Its overall effectiveness has improved well since the last inspection because it has addressed effectively the weaknesses identified then. It has a good capacity for further improvement because it is well led and managed and its self-evaluation enables it to correctly identify what needs to be improved further.

The key to its success lies in the high expectations of staff and the management committee, which leads to students 'signing up' to improving their behaviour and attendance, achieving examination passes and having a worthwhile placement to go to when they leave. Students particularly enjoy the less formal atmosphere, being taught in small groups and knowing that they all have similar difficulties. They feel safe at the centre and say that bullying is not a problem. As a result, their attendance improves considerably and most attend very well. Staff forge good working relationships with the students and get to know them well. They are skilled in managing students' behaviour and supporting them in improving this. As a result, behaviour is good. Because students' attitudes to learning improve and the teaching is good, they make good progress and achieve well.

Teachers and their assistants work effectively as a team in classrooms, and assistants develop their subject expertise well. Through rigorous monitoring of teaching, areas for development are quickly diagnosed and support and training provided to rectify matters. Insufficient opportunities for practical and investigative work in mathematics lessons have been identified as an area for development and suitable training is being provided. Nevertheless, for a small centre, a good range of learning experiences is provided. These are well matched to students' ages, abilities and interests and enriched well by looking after animals, growing vegetables, visits and links with training providers. Almost all students leave with GCSE passes in at least English, mathematics and science, which improve their life chances. Similarly, all leave with a college or training placement arranged. Examination success has improved since the last inspection and all students have the opportunity to follow vocational tasters, although these are not accredited.

In recent years, the centre has admitted students with increasingly challenging behaviour. As a result, staff now face a higher risk of needing to use physical interventions to control students. Their training in safe physical intervention techniques has not been updated, so that staff can deal most effectively with the higher risk. Discussions have been held with the local authority to secure suitable training. Staff are well trained in other aspects of safeguarding students, including child protection and first aid. However, records of this training are retained in individual staff files, making monitoring of training a laborious task.

The centre works well in partnership with other agencies, schools, training providers and services. This helps to broaden the range of learning experiences available to students and ensures that students have access to support that is available in the wider community. A worthwhile development since the last inspection is the establishment of a support group for parents of troubled teenagers, which is available to all parents in the community.

What the school should do to improve further

Improve the quality of provision by:

- giving students more opportunities for practical and investigative work in mathematics.

- accrediting vocational courses.

Strengthen arrangements for safeguarding students by:

- ensuring that staff have suitable training in physical intervention.
- maintaining a central record of all staff training.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From below average starting points, students make good progress in their time at the centre and they achieve well. By the end of Year 11, they have reached standards that are broadly in line with those expected nationally. Most Year 10 students complete Level 1 Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLaIT) and move on to Level 2 CLaIT modules in Year 11. Results are improving all the time. More students are being entered for a wider range of examination courses. This summer, for the first time, the centre expects a small number of students to achieve six GCSE passes. The proportion exceeding expectations with regard to GCSE passes has increased steadily since the last inspection, to 78% in 2008. The small number that do not reach predicted grades are usually those who do not sit the examination. Students also leave the centre having gained a Duke of Edinburgh Award. Although they follow a range of vocational courses, these are not accredited. Nonetheless, students leave the centre well prepared for further education or training courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It has been strengthened since the last inspection by the addition of a much improved personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) and the creation of a wide range of responsibilities for students to take on in the centre and the wider community. Students are made well aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, but they do not always make healthy choices. They respond well to personal safety matters, through courses such as motorcycle safety and food hygiene. They behave sensibly and safely around the centre. All have responsibilities, such as looking after the chickens, growing vegetables and helping to prepare lunches as part of work experience. They develop a sense of ownership of the centre and respect the building and grounds, which feature some eye-catching sculptures they have made. They contribute well to the local community by carrying out youth work, acting as sports leaders, taking part in arts and cultural projects and raising funds for charities at home and abroad. Through topics in the curriculum, they learn much about a variety of cultures and customs and show respect and tolerance for differences in race and religion.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection, the recruitment of permanent staff has meant that there is more specialist teaching and teachers and their assistants now work in pairs. Teamwork is a strong feature of lessons, with assistants supporting teachers and students so that lessons proceed smoothly. There is effective use of information and communication technology to bring learning to life, such as the use of video clips and animations, which students enjoy. They also appreciate

that help is readily available in their small groups. Improved assessment is used well to plan activities that offer a suitable challenge and teachers adapt their methods to suit individual students' preferred ways of learning. Students are engaged well during lessons, they show interest, ask and answer questions and complete work sensibly. However, although teachers share learning intentions with students at the start, they do not routinely review learning at the end of lessons and give students a sense of their achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It now contains vocational courses and work experience for all students, whether this is at the Centre or on employers' premises. The curriculum meets students' needs well, including those with statements, for example by providing therapy. The centre has correctly identified the need to provide more practical and investigative mathematics work in lessons as well as accreditation for vocational courses. A well developed PSHE and citizenship programme supports students' personal development well. Visits, such as to Tate Modern, provide enjoyment, widen students' horizons and bring learning to life. Visits to venues such as Thorpe Park are rewards for students who successfully accumulate points for good work and behaviour. There are good opportunities for participation in sporting activities, including competing with other teams, as well as outdoor and adventurous activities that form part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good induction procedures, including mentoring of Year 10 students by those in Year 11, help students to settle. There are effective arrangements for encouraging good behaviour and attendance, including a points and rewards system, which students like, and close liaison with the education welfare service and parents. Good working relationships between staff and students add to students' feeling of security. They also have an effective voice through the student forum, for instance in influencing provision of lunches. A free breakfast and an excellent, healthy midday meal are provided, and lunch is a pleasant social occasion with family seating that encourages social interaction. Supervision is good. Arrangements for safeguarding students meet requirements and the centre recognises that it needs to train staff in more advanced methods of physical intervention. Keeping a check on staff training is not easy as records are kept in staff files and not collated, leaving a risk of essential training being overlooked. All students have individual education plans, which identify personal targets for behaviour, attendance and basic skills. Students are also guided by displays showing how they can move to a higher level in academic subjects. Guidance from Connexions helps them select and apply for college or training courses, and they approach these with confidence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, staff and management committee share a vision for the centre as one that mirrors mainstream provision and enables students to achieve as many examination passes as possible. All contribute ideas for improvement and the development plan drives this effectively. Challenging targets are set for improving results and attendance; these are usually met and sometimes exceeded. The management committee check on the work of the centre, monitor

the delegated budget, and ask pertinent questions. The chair is supportive, visiting frequently and pursuing issues such as the availability of assistance from the primary care trust. Staff all contribute by taking on areas of responsibility. For instance, a member of the support staff coordinates work experience. Creative use of available staffing has made administrative support available and released the headteacher so that she can spend more time on managing the centre. The centre supports community cohesion satisfactorily. It supports the needs of parents and other local partners well, but the work to extend links to the national and international communities is limited.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of the Albany Centre, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 6SA

Thank you for making us feel welcome at the centre when we visited recently. A special thanks to those of you who talked to us about your experiences at the centre.

We came to see how well you are all getting on and to see if there was anything needed to improve the centre. We were pleased to find that the Albany Centre is doing a good job for all of you. Those who spoke to us said that they like the extra freedom at the centre, the small teaching groups and that all the students have similar difficulties. The centre helps you to improve your behaviour and attendance and, because the teaching is good, you are making good progress and achieving well. Examination results have improved each year and this means that you have a better chance of getting into college or training courses once you leave. We were particularly pleased to discover that you feel safe at the centre and that bullying is not a problem. You know how to be healthy, although you do not always make healthy choices. We found your behaviour to be good, considering the problems you have had in the past. We were impressed with the number of responsibilities that you take around the centre as well as out in the local community. It was also good to find that the staff give you many opportunities to learn to be tolerant and respectful of those who are different from you, as this was not the case the last time inspectors visited.

There are some things that could be improved. The staff are going to give you more practical work and investigations in mathematics, and provide accreditation for the vocational courses that you complete. They are going to upgrade their training so that they can deal even more safely with any physical outbursts from students and keep one record of all the training that staff have taken.

We wish you well in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector