

The Albany, A Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102346
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	335884
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Thomas Gibson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	915
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Brown
Headteacher	Mr Hasan-Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 42 lessons, undertaking three joint observations with school staff and observed 42 teachers, spending 70% of time looking at learning. They held meetings with staff, students and governors and with the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation form, its monitoring of students' progress towards their targets, the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings and the reports of the School Improvement Partner. They also considered responses to questionnaires completed by students, staff and 164 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the school's strategies to increase the rate of progress for students in mathematics
- the school's effectiveness in ensuring that higher attaining students make sustained and substantial progress
- how effectively teachers use the prior learning of the students to plan and develop their lessons
- the effectiveness of leaders at all levels in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school in order to promote improvement.

Information about the school

The Albany, A Business and Enterprise College is slightly smaller than the average secondary school. Most students are White British and there are significantly more boys than girls. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average; the majority of these students have moderate learning difficulties. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language and the proportion who are eligible for free school meals.

The school has been awarded Investors in People and Healthy Schools status, the Artsmark and Sportsmark award, accreditation for Investors in Careers and the CEI Excellence in Enterprise Education Award

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Albany, A Business and Enterprise College is an inclusive school providing a satisfactory standard of education. Improvements since the last inspection have been limited, due to the high turnover of staff and the uncertainty regarding the appointment of a permanent headteacher. Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. They make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 11 their levels of attainment are in line with the national average.

However, since the appointment of the new headteacher in April 2009, the school has started to robustly address the key areas for improvement. The headteacher and the effective leadership team have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Since 2007 the progress for students in English has slightly declined and has not improved in mathematics and therefore the leadership team have correctly focused their attention on improving the rate at which students make progress in these areas. The systematic approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning is already beginning to have an impact, as demonstrated by the improved GCSE results in mathematics taken by the whole of Year 11 in November 2009.

The quality of teaching is now good. This improvement is largely due to better quality planning, which now ensures that lessons are specifically built upon the prior learning of students. Good use of questioning challenges students, and the introduction of a variety of engaging learning activities is starting to have an impact on the rate of progress that students are making. The impact of the focused and rigorous approach to improvement since the appointment of the new headteacher, together with accurate self-evaluation, demonstrates that the school now has good capacity to make sustained improvement. However, the school has yet to effectively address the issue of how the most able students can be consistently extended and challenged in their learning and progress. The proportion of A* and A grades attained by these students is relatively low.

Pupils feel safe in this mutually supportive, cohesive community. They appreciate the support that they receive from all adults and the zero-tolerance approach to bullying, racism and any other form of discrimination. One student commented, 'All the teachers look after you and treat you the same.' Students are friendly, polite and welcoming. They respond well to the expectation of staff and are considerate towards each other. The behaviour of the students is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of progress for students in English and mathematics so that by August 2010 65% of students gain five A* to C GCSEs including English and

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mathematics by:

- continuing to focus on planning lessons based on the prior learning of individual students
- ensuring students utilise the guidance provided by individual marking and assessment
- further refining the tracking and monitoring of the progress of individual and groups of students
- Ensure that the most able students are challenged and extended so that there is an increase in the proportion of A* and A grades achieved across all curriculum areas by:
 - developing students as more active participants in their learning
 - sharing the best practice from within the school and from other schools
 - raising expectations and aspirations of what the students are capable of achieving.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Overall, students make satisfactory progress. Students who enter the school with levels of attainment that are lower than average make more progress than the more able students because expectations of the latter students are not demanding enough. In their Key Stage 4 courses students make most progress in business studies, information and communication technology (ICT) and English literature, but make less progress in art, design and technology and French. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. Due to the recent significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, students now enjoy their learning as they are clear about the progress they are making. Relationships between staff and students are good which creates a positive environment in which to learn.

It is clear, from responses to the parent and student surveys and from discussions with individuals and groups of students, that students feel safe in the school. They have a good understanding of how to assess and to respond to risk. They are confident that they can ask for help and that issues they raise will be dealt with promptly and efficiently. Students behave well and are considerate to each other and respectful to members of staff. Behaviour is good and now supports learning in the classroom. A few students in the lower school are not having their learning needs appropriately met and therefore find it challenging to focus fully on their learning.

Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council is becoming more active. Students are now actively involved in developing the quality of learning in the school. They recently visited, alongside members of the teaching staff, other schools to access the benefits of 'vertical tutoring', and contributed to the implementation of the new 'national skills curriculum' in Year 7. Students, through the work of the school's specialist status as a business and enterprise college, contribute to the development of ICT in local primary schools.

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Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Persistent absence has been reduced over the last three years. The school has begun to reduce the number of days lost due to students going on family holidays in term time. Overall there is an effective system in place to monitor attendance and the punctuality of students.

Students acquire a sound understanding of the skills and attitudes needed in the world of work. They take part in an extended three-week work placement which incorporates an effective opportunity for students to evaluate their experience with employers and governors of the school. Students make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy and good progress in ICT. They are able to apply their basic skills in a range of contexts and are therefore developing satisfactory skills to contribute to their future economic well-being.

Students work well together and are respectful of those from different ethnic, social and religious backgrounds. However, the provision for reflection introduced in tutorial time is uninspiring and there remains only limited opportunity for students to reflect on their experience and that of the world around them.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The quality of the teaching in the school has rapidly improved during this academic year and is now good. This improvement in teaching is due to a systematic and focused approach to developing the expertise of staff. Lessons are well planned; they have clear learning objectives and provide a good variety of activities to engage students. ICT is used well to support learning. Relationships are good and students respond well to individual support and guidance. The quality of assessment has improved and is beginning to provide real support for students to accelerate their rate of progress.

The improved tracking system demonstrates clearly that students are accelerating the rate of progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. However, the school does not consistently challenge the most able students. In certain curriculum areas such as mathematics, students are invited to review their own learning and feedback to staff on how they learn most effectively. This is an important development in encouraging the students to be active in taking responsibility for their own learning. At this stage this system is not consistently embedded across all curriculum areas.

The extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of the students is satisfactory. Recent positive changes to the curriculum, such as the introduction on the 'national skills programme' in Year 7, provide the opportunity for effective cross-curricular work as well as good support for students in the transition from primary to secondary school. Students enjoy this curriculum. However, at this stage the impact on students' progress as a result of this change is not fully established. The school's specialist status has supported the development of applied learning courses at Key Stage 4 and has been successful in raising the level of attainment, particularly in business studies and ICT. The changes in the Key Stage 4 curriculum are having a positive impact on the motivation of students and the rate of progress they are making, but as yet have not had time to make a significant impact on students' levels of attainment. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. There is a high take-up rate for sporting activities which are provided within an appropriate range of recreational and competitive situations.

Students quickly settle into secondary education because of the effective transition procedures in place. Students are well known by staff and are provided with supportive guidance to help them with their choices at the end of Year 9. The school is inclusive and can demonstrate its impact on particular students who have arrived in Year 7 and have, through careful care, guidance and support, overcome significant barriers to their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

After a period of instability the school now has clear leadership and a focused agenda of improvement. Improving the quality of teaching and learning has been at the centre of the agenda. This has been well managed. Good provision has been made to support teachers in developing new strategies, through a creative mixture of external support and the use of best practice within the school. The school has now established a robust system of monitoring the quality of teaching. The governing body is highly supportive of the school. It is well organised and governors are visible in the school community and offer support to staff and students. However, the governors do not as yet offer robust challenge to the school to ensure that all students make good progress.

The school has developed a range of partnerships to promote learning and well-being such as the effective links established between the technology departments and the centre for excellence in manufacturing. The enterprise days established for pupils in primary schools is effective in supporting transition between Key Stages 2 and 3. However, partnerships have not always been successful in promoting learning and therefore the overall effectiveness of improving learning through partnerships is satisfactory.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough and all staff have received appropriate child-protection training. The school demonstrates a clear commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity. There is no significant difference in outcomes for different groups of students within the school. The 'Albany Echo', the school's newspaper, demonstrates clearly the cohesive community that exists within the school. The school provides scouting opportunities for students from the school and the local community and has carried out an initial audit of its contribution to the wider community. This is a developing area for the school, which has started to establish some exciting partnerships with schools and organisations outside of Europe.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaire responses indicate that a very large majority of parents are happy with the work of the school. One parent reflecting this view commented, 'Our children enjoy attending and are proud of this school.'

A few parents commented on behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour overall to be good, but noted that a small minority of students in the lower school were not fully engaged in their learning. A few parents also commented with regard to the efficiency of communication. Inspectors agree that the school needs to improve its protocol so that communication is efficient and that parents are able to share their concerns and make a full contribution to the life of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Albany, A Business and Enterprise College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 164 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 915 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	31	99	60	9	6	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	56	34	101	62	4	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	31	94	57	15	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	29	97	59	13	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	38	23	112	68	7	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	18	107	65	19	12	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	17	110	67	18	11	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	22	106	65	6	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	23	106	65	11	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	23	92	56	22	13	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	15	99	60	17	10	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	46	28	107	65	4	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	37	90	55	11	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 March 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Albany, A Business and Enterprise College, Hornchurch, RM12 4AG

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your help during our recent inspection. You were friendly, polite and courteous. It was a pleasure to meet with you and talk to you in your lessons and around the school. We have taken your views into account in our judgement that The Albany is a satisfactory school.

Since the appointment of the new headteacher the school has been improving and this was particularly evident in the quality of teaching and learning we observed during the inspection.

We have asked the headteacher and staff at the school to do two further things to ensure that you all make the most progress you are capable of.

Improve the rate of progress for students in English and mathematics so that by August 2010 65% of students in Year 11 gain five A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics by:

- continuing to focus on planning lessons based on the prior learning of individual students
- ensuring students utilise the guidance provided by individual marking and assessment
- refine further the tracking and monitoring of the progress of individual and groups of students.

Ensure that the most able students are challenged and extended so that there is an increase in the proportion of A* and A grades achieved across all curriculum areas.

You are part of a school community that has great potential. It is important that you are always fully engaged in your lessons and that you take responsibility for your learning. The staff and governors of the school are fully committed to ensuring you achieve your full potential.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Gibson

Lead inspector

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