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Mrs Jane Reason
Headteacher
Albany PRU
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Dear Mrs Reason

Short inspection of Albany PRU

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Janet Tomkins, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your passion, commitment, resilience and strength of vision have enabled you to take the school from strength to strength since the previous inspection. You tailor your provision in response to the needs of your community to provide a very good quality of education and care. You are held in high regard by pupils, staff and the local authority. You and your team are determined to give pupils an education which helps them to regain their confidence and self-esteem and to get them back on track to learn and achieve. Your philosophy of, 'Believe, Engage, Achieve' and 'Thumbs up to a new beginning!' permeates throughout the school.

There are very effective systems in place to get to know pupils when they join Albany PRU. Time is taken to identify what pupils know and what is needed to help them improve their emotional well-being and behaviour. You provide an accurate overview of pupils' learning and progress from their entry to exit. Expectations of pupils and staff are high.

You and your colleagues transform pupils' lives because you never give up on anyone. As one of the parents told us, 'Before moving to the Albany my child was absent from school for a considerable period of time. Since starting the school he has only been absent for one day due to illness. He now looks forward to attending school'. Staff referred to the school as 'the Albany family' and this is truly the case.

You and your senior leaders have the support of the staff, who are proud to work at the school. They overwhelmingly agree that the school is well led and managed. Staff appreciate the support you give them, enjoy coming to work and value the way in which you look after their well-being. One member of staff told me, 'There is a fantastic staff morale'.

Previously, inspectors asked you to continue to make improvements to pupils' attendance and whole-school marking and feedback. You have worked hard to develop an effective approach to using the new school assessment policy. It is used by staff consistently and ensures that teachers assess how well pupils are doing and what they need to do next. Pupils correct their work and act on the advice given by teachers. Your pupils now have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and therefore make strong progress in their learning.

In discussions with your senior leaders, convincing evidence was provided that answered the questions I had about pupils' attendance. Most pupils have had considerable periods of disruption to their education prior to attending the school. You have made sure that all pupils now have access to full-time education. Leaders have worked hard on attendance by ensuring that pupils undergo transport training so that they arrive at school independently. You provide a wealth of examples identifying pupils that have previously missed long periods of their schooling, but now attend regularly since joining the school. The longer you have these pupils, the better their attendance becomes. You do not shy away from taking legal action against those parents who do not send their children to school regularly. Staff make sure that any absence is followed up quickly every morning. However, you rightly identify that attendance still needs further improvement as it remains significantly below the national average. Secure plans are in place to deal with this issue by working closely with the local authority.

Members of the management committee have a very good range of knowledge and skills to support and challenge you. Your chair adds considerably to the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management. She works tirelessly to support the school. Experienced and effective school leaders, and other professionals, monitor the school's performance effectively. As a result, you have identified the key priorities for further development accurately.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are thorough. The single central record is maintained fully. All necessary checks are made of adults applying to work with children. Detailed records of incidents and concerns are very well maintained. Staff remain highly vigilant at spotting even the smallest changes in pupils' behaviour and are alert to any risks in school and the local community. Staff make sure that pupils are made aware of potential risks and know how to keep themselves safe. The school provides a safe and caring environment in which pupils feel comfortable about sharing their anxieties. This is because you and your colleagues are good listeners and provide effective ways of dealing with any concerns. You set a clear expectation that everyone is responsible for safeguarding.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly, from 30 to 52 pupils. The reason for the increase is that since March 2017, the school is now a provider for key stage 3 pupils who are at risk of or have been permanently excluded from other schools. You and your staff have risen to the challenge and ensure that pupils settle very quickly and receive a good education. However, you rightly identify the need to develop success criteria to re-integrate these pupils back into schools and the need to embed your new key stage 3 curriculum.
- During this inspection, inspectors considered the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements: how well leaders and governors have tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection; to what extent leaders have ensured pupils are motivated to learn and make good progress; and whether transition arrangements are effective.
- You and your staff go the extra mile every day to build positive relationships with your pupils. These relationships are key to your success in re-engaging pupils with their education. This is an absolute strength of the school. Staff know pupils extremely well and help them to succeed. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is calm and well managed due to the skilled, sensitive support that staff provide to the pupils. Behaviour management training ensures that any difficult behaviour is dealt with appropriately.
- Pupils are assessed individually when they join the school to evaluate where they are. They are set targets for what can be achieved, both in the short- and long term. This provides teachers with accurate information about what pupils can and cannot do. Staff across the school have a deep understanding of each pupil's specific needs and situation. This allows them to plan interesting lessons which motivate, challenge and engage pupils. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning quickly. Scrutiny of pupils' work in books shows that, over time, they make good progress and demonstrate a pride in their work. You rightly identify that pupils do not progress as well in mathematics as in other subjects.
- Teachers encourage pupils to write at length and often. Pupils are willing to write because they have realised that in order to achieve accredited awards in English and a range of other subjects, they need to write fluently, and at length. Your staff motivate them with positive verbal and written feedback in order for them to succeed. Teachers encourage pupils to practise their drafting skills, understand how to gain marks in examinations and improve their resilience to write at length. Improvements in spelling also demonstrate good progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used to address the specific barriers faced by eligible pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. You provide bespoke packages of support to address their diverse range of needs in order to re-engage pupils. You tailor the curriculum for these individual pupils and provide access to the adventure learning programme which builds on their social and teamworking skills. Pupils are motivated to learn and make good progress in their learning and development from often extremely low starting points.

- Transition arrangements are a strength of the school. Your strong transition arrangements upon entry ensure that pupils move seamlessly into the new learning environment. The vast majority of pupils move on to education, employment or training. Leaders make sure that pupils make well-considered choices and that support is in place when plans do not work out. Pupils are well supported to make appropriate applications and their transition to college is monitored carefully. Staff continue to visit the pupils, and stay in contact with them when they leave the school, to ensure that they are settling well into their new setting.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- appropriate information is shared with schools and success criteria are agreed to enable key stage 3 pupils' smooth reintegration back into mainstream school
- the new key stages 3 schemes of work are evaluated and embedded
- leaders work creatively with the local authority, external agencies and parents to create bespoke solutions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
- you continue to improve the rate of progress for pupils in mathematics by providing more challenging work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you and senior teachers and spoke informally to teaching and support staff. We analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, and school policies and procedures. Inspectors conducted a full review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training records, recruitment checks and record keeping. A meeting was held with the chair of the management committee and a telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority. Visits were made to lessons. Inspectors considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff and spoke informally to them. No parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, so inspectors spoke to some parents by telephone and considered one text sent by a parent. Inspectors considered the four pupil responses to Ofsted's online survey and spoke informally to them.