

# Belfairs Academy

Highlands Boulevard, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3TG

**Inspection dates** 22–23 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Achievement is good. Most groups of students are achieving well and making good progress over time.
- Teaching and learning are good in most lessons; in some, they are outstanding.
- Significant improvements in setting targets for students and checking progress against these have contributed well to improving outcomes. All students, including those in the sixth form, know what is expected of them, and they are given clear guidance on what they need to do to meet course or examination requirements.
- Behaviour is good. Students attend regularly, are polite and feel safe and valued in a harmonious setting.
- Significant progress has been made since the appointment of the present headteacher. She offers clear and visionary leadership and is successfully leading the academy through a period of considerable change.
- Recent changes in sixth form leadership have resulted in significant improvements in expectations and outcomes.
- A strong emphasis on monitoring the quality of teaching has led to many improvements, helping to ensure that learning is now good.
- The academy has a most effective governing body. Governors are ambitious about the academy's future. They provide very effective support to the school, check outcomes robustly and hold staff at all levels to account.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able students are not always set work that challenges and extends their learning fully.
- Inconsistencies in marking and the quality of written feedback sometimes restrict students' progress. This is because they do not always identify what has been done well and what needs to be improved.
- Further improvements are needed in the sixth form. Though outcomes in the sixth form are improving, not enough students are on track to gain the very highest grades at A and AS Level.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, involving 41 different teachers. Many lessons were jointly observed with senior members of staff. In addition, a number of other lessons were visited to determine how well the learning of specific students is planned for, to look at the quality of marking and assessment and how well literacy skills are being fostered.
- Meetings were held with five different groups of students and with three members of the governing body, including the Chairman. Meetings were also held with many different members of staff, including senior and middle leaders, including heads of departments.
- Inspectors took account of 142 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Fifty-four responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised samples of students' past and present work and looked at various documents. These included the academy's self-evaluation and planning, extensive information on students' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- During the inspection, various public examinations were being conducted and this limited the number of lessons in Years 11 and 13 that inspectors could observe.

## Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jackie Easter	Additional Inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Additional Inspector
Gay Tattersall	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority, or who have a parent in the armed services) is close to the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, or with a statement of their special educational need, is above average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are well below average.
- In Years 10 and 11, a small minority of students are partly educated off-site at South Essex College.
- Belfairs Academy converted to an academy school in July 2012. When its predecessor school, Belfairs High School, was last inspected by OfSTED, in June 2010, it was judged to be good.
- The academy has not yet had its first set of external examination results since it converted to an academy. Hence, there is no data to assess its track record, including how well it is meeting government targets for performance at GCSE.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further so that by January 2014 learning is at least good in all lessons by ensuring that:
  - in all lessons more-able students are consistently set work that properly and fully challenges their knowledge and understanding
  - inconsistencies in marking and the quality of written feedback offered to students about their work are eradicated so that they always have a clear understanding of what they have done well, what needs to be improved and how improvements can be achieved.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form by ensuring that levels of challenge and expectations are set sufficiently high so that more students gain passes in the A\*-B range at A and AS Level.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- When students join in Year 7, they are working below national standards in English and mathematics. In Years 7 and 8, good teaching and support give them the help they need to improve their standards. By Year 11, most students are working at levels that are at least in line with national average standards. All groups, including those from minority ethnic communities, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, are making good progress.
- Effective use is made of pupil premium funding to raise achievement. The academy is successful in helping Year 7 students who are behind to improve their skills in reading and writing by using funding to help them to catch up with others. Although students eligible for pupil premium funding do not attain as well as others in English and mathematics, the gap between their attainment and that of their peers is closing at a brisk rate and, by Year 11, is less than the equivalent of half a GCSE grade.
- All students are set realistic but challenging targets in their work and outcomes are monitored closely. The academy is able to provide detailed analysis of the performance of individual students and of different groups. Such careful and detailed checking of individual performances has contributed significantly to improving outcomes as any who are not on track to meet their targets are identified quickly and given extra support or help to enable them to get back on track.
- The academy evaluates carefully its policy with regard to early GCSE entry. Individual students will only be entered early for examinations if the chances for success are high. Some Year 11 students have already been entered successfully for GCSE mathematics for example.
- Senior staff are aware that more-able students should be gaining a greater proportion of higher grades at GCSE. Though their work shows that they are achieving well, more-able students are not always presented with work that is challenging enough to enable them to achieve the very highest levels.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 follow vocational courses at South Essex College. They make good progress and are on course to achieve the qualifications they need to progress to further education at the end of Year 11.
- Sixth form students who are completing their courses of study are beginning to make good progress from standards on entry that are frequently below average. Though attainment at both AS and A Level is broadly average overall, too few students are on track to gain grades higher than a C.
- Students praise the new post 16 management team, saying that they receive excellent support and guidance, which is enabling them to make better choices about their futures. Increasing numbers are entering higher education.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- In most lessons, and over time, learning is good. In a small number of lessons, learning is outstanding. Most lessons are suitably planned to make sure all students can achieve at least well.

- Students frequently learn well because staff expectations about what the students can do and achieve are realistic. However, this is not consistently the case for more-able students, who are not always given sufficient opportunities to learn independently. In a minority of lessons that require improvement, staff do not ensure that what is planned fully engages and challenges all students, especially the more-able.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers create a positive atmosphere for learning. Students are encouraged to work well together and ask questions. Consequently, attitudes to learning are highly positive and enthusiasm is fostered; students are keen to participate and contribute.
- Outstanding learning was a feature of a Year 7 lesson on medieval villages. Students were successfully encouraged to think for themselves and take responsibility for their learning. The teacher used timely interventions to guide learning and ensure all were properly on task. Learning was outstanding because the work was pitched at the right level of difficulty for all. It was interesting and succeeded in enthusing the students and triggering their imaginations.
- There is much evidence to show that marking and assessment are improving well but inconsistencies still persist. In a minority of cases, work is not marked regularly and does not comply with the academy's guidance on marking. In other cases, there are too few annotated written comments indicating what is good and where improvements are needed and how they can be achieved.
- Sixth form lessons are becoming increasingly well-planned to meet students' different capabilities. However, expectations of what they can achieve are not always high enough. In addition, work is not sufficiently well structured to help the more-able students to develop the thinking and reasoning skills to attain the higher grades. Nonetheless, sixth form students are given opportunities to learn through discussion and by working in small groups, which they enjoy.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. It is rare for learning to be disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Though a small minority of parents and staff expressed some doubts about the quality of behaviour, most felt it was good. Students' overwhelming view is that behaviour is both good and improving. This is evidenced in the low and falling exclusions figures
- Inspectors found that low-level disruption tended to occur only in the very few lessons where the quality of teaching was less than good. Overall, in lessons and in public areas and corridors, inspectors were impressed by the consistently good behaviour they observed.
- Students are aware of different types of anti-social behaviour, including cyber-bullying, racism and bullying based on other differences in students' backgrounds. They told inspectors that they do not consider bullying to be a problem in this academy. Students feel confident that their teachers will take reports of any incidents seriously and deal with them quickly and effectively.
- Students of all ages know how to stay safe and learn about the dangers of the misuse of drugs and alcohol, for example. The academy's well-planned personal, social and health education programmes, which now extend into the sixth form, ensure that everyone is given ample information about how to lead safe and healthy lives. E-safety is also promoted well. Students are given ample information to foster safe and beneficial use of modern technology.

- Students told inspectors that they feel safe. Feedback from parents shows that almost all agree that their children are safe. Students have good opportunities to think about their own safety, both in the academy and in the local community.
- Attendance overall is improving and is above the national average. Valiant efforts to improve the attendance of sixth form students have been successful so that their attendance is now reasonable. Sixth formers agree that in order to succeed, their levels of attendance need to be high.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The academy is improving quickly because of the clear, decisive and visionary leadership of the headteacher. She is well supported by her senior staff, her strong and determined governing body and by most staff who are fully committed to making the academy even more successful.
- Improvements in leadership and management are identifiable at many levels, including in the sixth form, where outcomes and attendance are improving well.
- Despite the pace of change, most staff have remained positive and are keen to play their role in securing even more improvements. As one member of staff commented: 'Our school is a family. The headteacher provides great leadership and we all strive to be the best we can for our students.'
- Improvements in achievement and students' good attitudes to learning can be partly attributed to careful planning and improvements in the variety of subjects on offer to meet the full range of abilities, especially in Years 10 and 11. Many students now have individually designed programmes that are successfully tailored to their capabilities.
- Improvements in the variety of subjects offers all students more challenges and wider experiences, which contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and development. It also helps to ensure that there is an improved commitment to equality of opportunity and that discrimination is tackled.
- Self-evaluation is effective. Procedures to check and evaluate how well the academy is performing are embedded and strengths and areas for further development are readily identifiable. The provision for staff training is good and teaching and learning are managed well. This is reflected in learning that is mostly good, but with elements that are outstanding.
- Additional funding is utilised well to ensure that all students can access all aspects of the academy's growing provision, including taking a full part in educational visits. This ensures that gaps in performance between different groups of students are being closed at a good pace.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding, including risk-assessments compiled for off-site education, meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The academy benefits from an astute and supportive governing body. Governors share a passion to make the academy even better. They challenge leaders through close checks on progress, attendance data, behaviour reviews and regular visits. Governors demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the quality of teaching across the academy. They check decisions on

pay awards for teachers and ensure that students' progress justifies better pay or promotion. Governors fully endorse leaders' actions to tackle underperformance. Financial planning is meticulous and governors have a keen understanding of how pupil premium money is being spent and how effective this is in improving progress and achievement. Governors ensure that procedures for safeguarding meet requirements, especially regarding the appointment of staff and the safety of students.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138174
<b>Local authority</b>	Southend-on-Sea
<b>Inspection number</b>	412747

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1310
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	220
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Robin Marcus
<b>Headteacher</b>	Beverley Williams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01702 509000
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