

The Belvedere Academy

17 Belvidere Road, Princes Park, Liverpool, L8 3TF

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth-form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Students' achievement is outstanding. Students make rapid progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Teaching is of a high quality. Teachers have high expectations of all students. Students regularly enter into a detailed dialogue with their teachers about how to improve their work, are challenged further, and make rapid and sustained progress as a result.
- On occasion, students' progress is slowed in lessons because they sometimes have to wait to be given more challenging tasks.
- Students' behaviour is impeccable. They are courteous and polite, relate very well to each other and to adults and are very happy at the academy. They are enthusiastic about their learning and this contributes significantly to their progress. Attendance is above average.
- Students feel very safe and the academy is rigorous in keeping all students safe. They are cared for very well. The well-being of all students is as highly regarded as their academic success.
- Parents, staff and students are very positive about the academy and value the quality of education and the care that it provides.
- The Principal, governors and senior leadership team provide outstanding leadership which has guided the academy successfully through a period of significant change. They have ensured that high standards have been maintained. The focus upon improving teaching and learning and the attention given to students' personal development and, therefore, their overall achievement, result in the academy being highly effective.
- Middle leaders cannot always be held precisely to account because plans for improvement at departmental level are not sufficiently detailed or subject specific, so outcomes are difficult to measure.
- Sixth-form provision is outstanding. The leadership of the sixth form is highly effective and students make excellent progress. Sixth-form students make a positive contribution to the life of the whole academy.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of students is outstanding and is an integral part of academy life. Students are, therefore, very well prepared for the next stage in their education and for life in modern Britain.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 part lessons, 11 of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They also undertook a series of shorter observations when they walked around the academy, including evaluating the behaviour and attitudes of students.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, members of the senior leadership team, staff, the Chair of the Academy Trust Board and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with students in lessons and around the academy, at changeover in lessons, break and lunchtimes. They also spoke formally with three groups of students about their experiences in the academy and the education they receive.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and reviewed policies, self-evaluation and improvement planning, and other documents concerning behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. They also looked at information about students’ progress and, with senior leaders, scrutinised samples of students’ work.
- Inspectors took account of 120 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and emails from parents as well as 56 responses to the staff inspection survey.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Denis Oliver	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Belvedere Academy is a smaller-than-average secondary academy for girls, with a sixth form. The academy does not use any alternative provision for its students.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average.
- The school converted to an academy in 2007. Its predecessor school was a selective, independent school for girls. This was still the case for Years 9, 10 and 11 during the previous inspection in 2010. It is sponsored jointly by The Girls Day School Trust (GDST) and HSBC. Since the previous inspection the number of students on roll has increased significantly, including in the sixth form, and the academy now takes girls from around 65 feeder primary schools in the area.
- The academy has two governing bodies, one drawn from staff and parents at the academy and the local community and the other led by its sponsors.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is lower than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students who are supported through the pupil premium funding is lower than average. The pupil premium is additional funding to provide support for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy has specialisms in modern foreign languages and science. It holds various awards, including the Liverpool Inclusion Charter Mark and the Arts Council England Artsmark Gold award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Create a system through which middle leaders can be held precisely to account, with plans for improvement at departmental level that are sufficiently detailed, and subject specific, so that outcomes can be measured.
- Make sure that all students take responsibility for their own progress and are adequately challenged from the outset in lessons so that they can reach their full potential.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal, strongly supported by senior leaders and governors, provides clear direction and has established a culture of high expectation and ambition. They are all determined that students will achieve their potential as learners and reach the best standard.
- This culture is shared by staff and students and is at the core of the academy's drive to continuously improve. Despite significant changes in terms of the academy's intake and its size, the high standards in every aspect of the academy's life have been maintained. Students' learning and progress are outstanding and they have excellent attitudes towards their learning.
- Senior leaders have a very accurate view of the performance of the academy. Leaders are highly skilled at working with staff to improve their teaching, so that it captures students' interest and involves them in their learning. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and students' progress holds teachers effectively to account. Leaders have established systems within the academy, such as the teachers' forums where best practice is shared, to support them in doing so.
- It is clear that pay progression is linked to improved teaching, leadership and achievement. In the rare event of any underperformance, it is swiftly and appropriately managed. Middle leaders directly monitor the quality of teaching and outcomes for students, as a result, they have an excellent understanding about how well students and teachers perform within their areas of responsibility.
- However, although plans for improvement within departments are closely linked to whole-academy priorities, they are not always specific enough to the subjects, which make it difficult to measure their success. This also means that it is hard to hold middle leaders to account.
- The curriculum is a real strength of the academy. It is designed to meet the needs of students, ensure rapid progression for them and prepare them for the next phase in their education or training. It also ensures that they are prepared for life in modern Britain. The academy has revised its curriculum effectively in the light of the changing needs of its students and now provides more opportunities for them to follow vocational as well as academic courses through to the sixth form. The curriculum develops their basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as, for example, working with others, problem solving, information and communication technology and their social skills.
- The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for academic and personal development. There are many additional opportunities for students to pursue their interests and develop new ones, as well as to experience the cultures of other countries. The wide range of extra-curricular activities, including visits, enriches the curriculum and these activities are very popular. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well promoted and pervades the life of the academy. It is strongly promoted through the curriculum as well as the culture of the academy; it is an indication of how well the academy promotes equality of opportunity for all, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.
- The careers education and guidance that students receive very effectively supports them in making choices about their next steps in education or training. Students in many year groups, including in the sixth form, spoke of the value they attach to the independent advice and guidance they receive from the academy, and how it helps them in their career paths and choices.
- Leaders are rigorous in their monitoring of the use of the pupil premium funding and the impact that this spending has on outcomes for disadvantaged students. They ensure that it is used to provide effective support for disadvantaged students and enables them to make the same excellent progress as others.
- There are highly effective safeguarding procedures which protect and ensure the safety of students, and which fully meet government requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective in their role and governance is outstanding. Both governing bodies work very well together. They are clear about their responsibilities and are fully involved in establishing the academy's ethos, vision and ambition. They are very well informed, hold leaders to account extremely well and provide excellent support, working alongside them to contribute to and monitor the academy's performance.
 - The academy benefits from the support of the sponsors' governing body particularly for the continued professional development it can provide for teachers.
 - The governors are very clear about the academy's strengths and areas for improvement. They

understand the academy's and national comparative performance data and what they mean, as well as the quality of teaching throughout the academy. They are active in performance management, and ensure that this and pay progression are rigorous, fair and consistently applied across staff, rewarding those who perform well.

- Governors manage the academy's resources and finances very closely, including the impact of the use of extra funding, particularly the pupil premium funding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They arrive at lessons promptly and get on with their work willingly, demonstrating a thirst for learning.
- Expectations of students' behaviour are high. Students rise to these and take responsibility for their behaviour. They show consistently excellent attitudes to learning which create in them a very strong desire to do outstandingly well and produce their best.
- Low-level disruption is extremely rare. Outside lessons, students behave extremely sensibly during the changeover of lessons, during lunch and break times. Students are very considerate of each other and adults and establish highly positive relationships. They are very polite and respectful, and clearly enjoy their time in the academy.
- Students are keen to say how proud they are of the academy and of being a 'Belvedere Girl' and how much they enjoy their learning. They play a full part in decision making in the academy and take their responsibilities, for instance as academy councillors, very seriously.
- Staff, students and parents have a very high opinion of behaviour and how positively this contributes to students' learning and enjoyment. Bullying or any form of discrimination is infrequent and vigorously discouraged. On the rare occasions when it does happen, students are confident that it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Students with special educational needs or who are vulnerable receive excellent care and support from staff within the academy to make good or better progress.
- Attendance has improved and is above the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged students has made particular improvement over the last year, due to the academy's focus on supporting them.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The academy is meticulous in its efforts to keep students safe, able to identify any risks and, as a result, to prevent any harm. The academy has highly successful systems in place to ensure that all aspects of safety are rigorously maintained. All leaders are diligent about safeguarding and keeping students safe.
- The academy works closely with other agencies to ensure that students are safe and supported very well.
- The students themselves have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and of potential risks; they know how to protect themselves against these, including when using the internet.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching enables students to make rapid progress in almost all subjects throughout the academy over time. Evidence gathered from observing lessons, analysing students' work and performance data confirms this.
- Teachers know students well; they have high expectations of them and of what they can achieve. Students respond extremely positively to this, are enthusiastic learners and usually take responsibility for their work and progress. They are keen to achieve the high targets set for them and do well. For instance, in mathematics, Year 7 students responded enthusiastically to the opportunity to decide for themselves which level of difficulty to attempt and most opted for the higher levels.
- However, this high level of working is not always the case and, on occasion, the progress of students, particularly the most able, is sometimes slowed because they have to complete work they find easy before being able to tackle more challenging tasks. Leaders are aware of this and it is a priority for the academy; teachers are already working together to share best practice in this area.

- Year 11 students made swift progress in solving mathematical problems using trigonometry because tasks were very well matched to their abilities and needs. This was because their progress was monitored very closely and those who needed it were given extra support while others were challenged further.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed. They are effective in supporting students who are disadvantaged or who have a disability or special educational needs, to learn and make outstanding progress over time.
- Written feedback in students' books is usually of a high quality, enhances learning and is a key factor in students making rapid progress. It supports students' understanding of both how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve further, in order to reach the targets set for them. Students are often set further challenges, including through programs on the learning platform on the academy's website; most maintain a lively dialogue with their teachers, including through email, about their progress and how to improve further.
- The teaching of literacy is a strong focus for the academy. It is effective and has a significant impact on students' learning and progress. Students are regularly required to answer searching questions or to explain their thinking to others. The teaching of numeracy is also effective, especially in subjects such as science and technology. Teachers promote numeracy well through requiring students to apply their mathematical skills and understanding to solve real-life problems in these subjects.
- The most able students are regularly challenged and overall teachers expect them to produce a very high standard of work. They respond to this challenge and are very motivated learners, keen to reach the very high standards expected of them. As a result, they are able to apply their knowledge and skills to their work in an exceptional manner.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they use to good effect to make lessons interesting and engaging for students. They present ideas clearly, adapt their teaching and support students to make even better progress.
- Homework is set regularly. As well as reinforcing what students already know, it challenges them, deepens their thinking and aids their reflection on what they have learnt. Students routinely complete online tasks to consolidate or extend what they have learnt in lessons.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is well above average in most years and they make rapid and sustained progress as they move through the academy. Attainment in GCSE examinations has been consistently above average and significantly so in a wide range of subjects. Students do particularly well in English, science, geography, history and art. The proportion of students who gain five or more A*–C grades is well above average and, after a dip in some subjects in 2014, the proportion who are on track to gain the highest grades has increased in the current year to previously high levels. Students do particularly well in English and increasingly so in mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that students' performance continues to be well above average overall and that they continue to make rapid progress.
- The academy is reducing the number of students entered early for GCSE.
- Over time, the proportions of students making expected progress and exceeding expected progress from their various starting points are high in English and mathematics. The academy has a small number of disadvantaged students, most of whom have complex needs. These students make the same rapid progress as others in the academy and their achievement compares favourably with that of other students nationally.
- The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students nationally has closed and current data show that in GCSE they attain similar standards to all pupils nationally. The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students in the academy have also been closing rapidly and current data show that this continues to be the case. In 2014, disadvantaged students' attainment was around half a GCSE grade behind that of other students. A much higher proportion of students are now on track to achieve A* and B grades in mathematics and in English than was the case in 2014.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs make outstanding progress over time at the academy. They are very well supported both academically and in their personal development, and are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education. The curriculum is well matched to their needs, and their learning and progress are outstanding as a result of this provision.

- The most able students make outstanding progress in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects. This is because of the highly effective teaching they receive, a very relevant curriculum, the wide range of experiences they have at the academy and the rigorous monitoring of progress by senior leaders.
- Students improve their literacy and numeracy skills consistently in all subjects. In nearly all the work analysed, students applied their reading and writing skills very effectively to enhance their achievement. They apply their mathematical skills equally effectively.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well and targeted appropriately. Students supported by the funding make significant progress in English and mathematics during Year 7. The small numbers of students who speak English as an additional language make the same rapid progress as others in the academy.

The sixth-form provision

is outstanding

- Students in the sixth form achieve exceptionally well in a wide range of subjects and courses. The academy offers a wide range of appropriate courses that meet the needs of students in the sixth form. Students make outstanding progress from their starting points to achieve outcomes above the national average. They are extremely well prepared for their next phase in higher education or training.
- Retention rates are above average. The small numbers of students who do not achieve a C grade in English and mathematics at GCSE in Year 11 retake the subject in the sixth form. The achievement of some sixth-form students is considerably enhanced by work experience both at home and abroad. This contributes not only to their understanding of different occupations and careers, but also to their personal and social development.
- Teaching is outstanding overall. Teachers use their impressive subject knowledge to involve students and challenge them to reach the high standards set for them. Teachers review and assess students' work frequently to ensure that all understand how well they are doing and have precise feedback about what they need to do to improve further. Students are provided with ample opportunities to improve their work and this contributes to their rapid learning and progress.
- Students increase in independence and confidence in their learning as they progress through the sixth form. During the inspection, Year 13 art students were able to evaluate their own and each other's work in detail and decide how to improve it to achieve their own goals, while also taking fully into account the requirements of the examination. Similarly, in drama, students worked very effectively together to improve their performance and were confident in doing so.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and take great pride in, and full responsibility for, their work. They take up many of the opportunities offered to them, make excellent use of study time and often work collaboratively to help each other assess and improve their work. Students contribute well to the academy community by supporting the learning and development of others, doing voluntary work locally, as well as a range of other charitable activities. They take part in appropriate, non-qualification activities and learning in order to ensure that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Students feel extremely safe in the academy. They are very aware of risks and how to keep themselves safe, and they also support the safety of younger students.
- Leadership of the sixth form is outstanding, ensuring that all students achieve their best. The choice of subjects has been increased in the sixth form to better meet the needs and aspirations of students and now includes vocational subjects. Students' progress is tracked and monitored to ensure that they are constantly challenged and meeting targets. Those who are not meeting their targets have tailored support to help them accelerate their learning. Students themselves say that they greatly appreciate the support to help them to succeed and the advice and guidance they receive in choosing the right courses for them both in the sixth form and beyond.

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

Unique reference number	135174
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	453325

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	835
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	221
Appropriate authority	The Academy Trust Board
Chair	Juliet Humphries
Principal	Peter Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
Telephone number	0151 727 1284
Fax number	0151 727 0602
Email address	info@belvedereacademy.net

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