

Belvedere Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135174
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	348986
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Tom Grieveson HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	660
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Juliette Humphries
Principal	Mr Peter Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Academy address	17 Belvidere Road Princes Park Liverpool L8 3TF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The team observed 31 lessons, meetings were held with students, senior and middle leaders and telephone discussions were held with the chair of the Associated Trust Board (ATB), the Local Governing Body (LGB) and representatives of the academy's local partners. They observed the academy's work, scrutinised a large sample of students' work, evaluated strategic policy documents and subject plans. A detailed analysis of the academy's tracking and assessment evidence was undertaken. The 223 inspection parental questionnaires were considered along with the 99 completed by students and the 42 by staff.

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

- whether students in all year groups, subjects and all ability groups are making progress commensurate with their capabilities and starting points at each key stage
- whether teachers are making effective use of the academy's assessment and tracking information when planning lessons so that the needs of all students are being met
- the extent to which the curriculum is meeting the needs and interests of the increasingly diverse student body
- whether the additional support being offered to students in Key Stage 3, (academy intake) in particular is adequate in meeting their needs.

Information about the school

Belvedere Academy opened in September 2007. Its predecessor, The Belvedere School, was a selective independent girls' school. It is located in the Princes Park area of Liverpool in buildings it has occupied since 1880. These have been extensively modified and expanded since that time. Recent further refurbishment and the addition of new buildings have significantly improved the quality and range of accommodation. There has been extensive recruitment to the academy with about half of the current teaching staff, the Principal and other senior leaders appointed since 2006. The academy has two governing bodies, the Academy Trust Board (ATB) and the Local Governing Body (LGB). The Academy is co-sponsored by the Girls Day School Trust (GDST) and the HSBC Global Education Trust. It has specialisms in modern foreign languages (MFL) and science. Almost one quarter of students are from ethnic minority communities with about half of this group speaking English as an additional language. An average proportion of students are known to be entitled to free academy meals and a similar percentage has special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students in Years 11 and 12 were not present during the inspection and Year 13 were in the final stages of GCE examination preparation. Since opening, the academy has successfully acquired Investors in People status, the Inclusion Charter Mark (Advanced), the Healthy Schools Award and Full Extended School Status.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Belvedere Academy provides its students with an excellent education. The outstanding leadership of the principal and the very effective support of the senior team have skilfully guided the academy through a challenging period of transition while maintaining very high standards. Attainment is significantly above average with almost all students gaining five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. In the sixth form, the proportion of students gaining A or B grades in GCE A level examinations is similarly well above average. These results are underpinned by good and excellent learning and progress. The academy's specialisms are making an increasingly strong contribution to the standards achieved and the progress being made.

Almost all aspects of teaching, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support provided for students are exemplary. The increasingly effective role played by subject leaders is making a marked improvement to the curriculum on offer and is significant in supporting the leadership's successful efforts to continually strengthen the quality of teaching. While much has been achieved to improve the use of assessment information by teachers when lessons are being planned, the academy is rightly focused on improving this further. Similarly, while the excellent curriculum is meeting the needs of students well, further work to strength the contribution of technology-based subjects is underway.

The academy's self-evaluation is both rigorous and accurate; there is a clear understanding of where further improvement is required. Development plans are highly ambitious and rightly focused on where progress is needed. The behaviour, conduct and attitude of the students are excellent. They are studious, mature and highly aspirational young people. The leadership of the older students is outstanding both in the degree of responsibility they undertake and in their support for younger students to ensure their transfer from primary schools is effective. All aspects of safeguarding and health and safety are rigorously enforced and are highly effective. Morale amongst staff and students is high and is reflected in their loyalty and commitment to the academy and in promoting its success. Capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the use of assessment information when teachers are planning lessons so that the needs of all students, of all abilities, and in all subjects, are met.
- Continue to develop the technological dimensions of the curriculum so that the aspirations and interests of all the students can be fully realised.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning, exhibiting sustained concentration and a strong desire to achieve highly. This underpins the good and outstanding gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Standards are exceptionally high. In the last two years, almost all students gained five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. The progress made by students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is consistently good and for some it is outstanding. Very challenging targets are set for all students. Robust assessment and tracking information accurately charts students' progress and clearly identifies any under-achievement. Interventions to effect improvement are swift and effective.

Students say they feel safe in the academy; they have confidence in the staff knowing that any concerns will be addressed. Their attendance is excellent. Students' acceptance of personal responsibility for their conduct is a particularly strong feature of the academy. Their behaviour is never less than good and usually outstanding in lessons and around the site. Students cooperate very effectively together, they enjoy each others' company and relationships are strong. The leadership offered by the older students in supporting their younger peers is commendable. High attendance rates at the wide range of sporting related enrichment provision and their commitment to healthy eating highlights students' very good commitment to leading a healthy lifestyle. Students fully respect the views and values exhibited by others and are respectful of those differences. They listen carefully to others' opinions and reflect meaningfully about how these relate to their own viewpoints and values.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1

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 extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Almost half the teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding and rarely less than good. In almost all contexts, teachers prepare their lessons in significant detail, using assessment information well to recognise the range of students' learning needs and their prior achievements. Lessons are interesting and well prepared, with effective use of resources and new technologies. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively to stimulate and engender students' engagement in lessons. They are adept at using probing questioning skills to challenge students' thinking and extend their understanding. There is regular checking on students' progress and an emphasis on consolidating gains in knowledge. In the very best lessons, teachers take full account of the range of abilities in the class when formulating their questions to ensure that all students are able to contribute, offer their ideas and demonstrate their understanding. Teachers have exceptionally high expectations of students' capabilities and this does much to encourage and motivate students to participate, work hard and achieve highly. The excellent curriculum meets the interests and aspirations of the students particularly well and underpins the academy's outstanding outcomes. Constant review and development has resulted in additional courses being added, often in response to students' expressions of interest. Technology-based courses have been extended and further work is planned. The extensive range of enrichment courses make a significant contribution to supporting the academic programme but make a particularly strong input to students' personal development. The academy's specialisms make an increasingly effective input to the curriculum. The extensive array of educational and cultural visits, both in the United Kingdom and abroad, and the use for example of visiting artists and authors enrich and enhance students' learning well.

Students receive very effective support at key transition points and older students offer excellent mentor support to their younger peers. Recent NSPCC training as peer mentors has further added to their skills. Very good support, advice and guidance is provided to enable students to make appropriate study choices at Key Stage 4 and into the sixth form. This further extends through very good links with the Connexions Service and the bi-annual careers and university fairs which enhance students' ability to make informed choices about their future careers and further study. Excellent pastoral support is a strength of the academy and is highly valued by both students and parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The highly effective and skilful leadership of the Principal has successfully steered the academy through a challenging period of transition. With the very able support of the senior team he has retained a resolute focus on the maintenance of very high standards and a purposeful drive to improve the quality of all aspects of the academy's provision. Evaluation is accurate and provides a secure context from which development priorities are identified and pursued.

Targets are challenging and match the leadership's aspirations about students' academic capabilities and personal development. Monitoring is rigorous with staff held fully accountable for their own and their students' performance. The manner in which teaching and learning have been improved is a particularly strong feature of the academy's work. This has been innovatively and skilfully led and has been central to the improvements in students' learning. The strengthening of the collective capacity of middle leaders and their confidence to drive improvements at departmental level has also been significant in developing both subject content and teaching quality.

The clear separation of the strategic and operational roles between both governing bodies has established very effective governance. Robust systems for monitoring the academy's performance are evident, strengths and weaknesses are well known and understood. Accountability processes, including financial monitoring, are strong. The increasing delegation of responsibilities to the local governing body is to be welcomed, including the presence of parent governors. Effective systems have been developed to enable parents and carers to engage with the academy. The large number of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire offered overwhelming support to the academy and reflected the continuous improvement in relations.

The academy continues to develop good partnerships to promote students' learning. Effective support has been provided by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) while relationships with another local high school, as a Training School, have successfully supported staff development. The work of the pastoral team, through its links with external agencies, is efficient in supporting students' needs. Good links with local primary schools continue to progress including through the school sports coordinator and this has further enhanced local network arrangements. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent and extremely robust in promoting all aspects of health and safety and students' welfare. The academy's good work in promoting all aspects of community cohesion is developing well and is given high priority in the development

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plan. The appointment of staff with community responsibilities is providing very clear leadership in this respect and future plans are ambitious. The academy has a very good understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic basis of its student population and their needs. The gaining of advanced inclusion award status is testimony to the academy's desire to improve further. The constant drive to ensure that the needs and aspirations of all students are met ensures outstanding equality of opportunity and excellent value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The outstanding leadership of the sixth form is driving improvement and expansion. The trio of director of sixth form, Key Stage 5 manager and assistant manager are highly effective. They are a reflective team that constantly seeks to refine and improve the quality and impact of their work. Consequently, students' progress is securely good and much is excellent. Standards are high and significantly above average. The data used to track students' performance, and to target intervention, are based on very high targets, they are regularly revised upwards to promote continuously higher achievement. Students' personal development is exemplary. They are confident, articulate, ambitious young women who want to succeed and are proud of their achievements. They show unstinting commitment to the academy and take pride in their association with it.

The teaching observed was strongly good and focused on revision. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge shines through in careful explanations and questioning and through their synthesis of different areas of subject revision. Students strive for the highest grades, take responsibility for their own learning, paying close attention to teachers'

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modelling of answers and use of technical language. The curriculum is continuing the long-established traditions of the predecessor school. It is well planned and supported by very high quality schemes of work and is increasingly responsive to girls' interests and ambitions. Rich opportunities for wider personal and academic development extend the curriculum offer through the academy's extensive enrichment programme. Staff have an exceptionally incisive knowledge of the students. While teachers provide a very high degree of challenge and expectation, the intervention and support provided, including for the most vulnerable students, is well judged and is highly regarded by the students themselves. Partnership working with the further education sector is effective.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The overwhelming majority are very supportive of the academy's work and the education it provides for their children. Of those parents and carers who provided written comments, the majority were strongly supportive. Of those which were critical, these matters tended to focus on students' behaviour, healthy eating and the academy's support for less-able students. These matters were fully considered by the inspection team and receive detailed commentary within the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Belvedere Academy 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 223 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 660 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	110	49	96	43	13	6	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	146	65	71	32	4	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	118	53	90	40	10	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	126	57	81	36	11	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	113	51	98	44	8	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	80	36	119	53	19	9	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	35	117	52	20	9	4	2
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)	107	48	97	43	9	4	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	113	51	95	43	12	5	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	98	44	97	43	21	9	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	72	32	121	54	16	7	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	117	52	89	40	7	3	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	137	61	75	34	7	3	3	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



28 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Belvedere Academy, Liverpool, L8 3TF

Thank you for your support and help during the inspection. Thank you in particular to those younger students and those in the sixth form who gave up their lunch break to meet with us. The inspection report is now complete and I want to share our findings with you.

You attend an excellent academy. We have judged almost all aspects of the academy's provision as outstanding and this provides the basis for the very high standards you achieve and your good and excellent learning and progress. Staff invest significant time and expertise in providing highly effective teaching and in providing you with an excellent curriculum. The outstanding leadership offered by the Principal and senior staff has ensured that the core values of Belvedere have been maintained in the last three years. We know how much you all appreciate this and take pride in what being a 'Belvedere' girl means. The leadership and staff have very high expectations of you; it was a pleasure to see how hard you work and the commitment you show towards your studies and to each other. We were particularly impressed by the responsibility and leadership of the older students in helping younger students to transfer and settle so effectively into Belvedere. Your behaviour and exemplary attitudes towards your studies are noteworthy. Well done!

Even the best schools and academies can improve. The academy development plan demonstrates very clearly where the senior leaders and governors are seeking to strengthen the academy further. In addition, we have asked them to concentrate on two matters in particular. Firstly, to make sure that the use of assessment information when all subject lessons are being planned is further strengthened and used more consistently by all teachers. Secondly, although we can see an expansion in the offer of technology-based subjects, we want to see this extended further so that there is more choice in this area. We know that you will want to support the Principal and staff in their efforts.

Please accept the very best wishes of the inspection team for your future education and careers and in all that you are seeking to achieve.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Grieveson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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