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Mr P Kennedy
Principal
The Belvedere Academy
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Dear Mr Kennedy

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 22 and 23 November 2011 to look at work in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons and short visits to a further two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of English is outstanding.

Achievement in English

Achievement in English is outstanding.

- Attainment in English at GCSE is very high. Virtually all students obtain at least a grade C and the percentage who get the highest grades (A* and A) is far higher than the national average. Attainment in the sixth form is well above the national average for girls.
- Throughout the academy, all groups of students make outstanding progress and the quality of their learning is very high.
- A key factor in students' success is the academy's ethos of high aspiration which has a very positive effect on students' attitudes and commitment to achievement. They are eager learners.

Quality of teaching in English

The quality of teaching in English is outstanding.

- All of the teaching observed was of at least a good quality and much was outstanding. The effectiveness of teaching is underpinned by rigorous and systematic assessment of students' attainment and progress.
- Typically, teachers have very strong subject knowledge and very high expectations. They set clear, measurable objectives for each lesson and mark students' work helpfully, giving detailed pointers to further improvement. Consequently, students know exactly what is expected of them and how well they are doing. Teachers have very positive relationships with students and provide enjoyable learning activities with good opportunities for cooperative and collaborative work.
- The most effective lessons were characterised by an intense pace of learning and very skilled questioning that probed and deepened students' knowledge and understanding.
- A few lessons were generally less pacy and engaging than the best.

Quality of the curriculum in English

The quality of the curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The very well-considered curriculum ensures that students benefit from a wide range of rich opportunities which cover the full breadth of the subject, with elements such as media and drama fully integrated into the schemes of work.
- The curriculum is kept under review and is adjusted frequently in the light of findings from the assessment of students' achievement and consultations with students.
- Provision is very good for students who fall below their targets or are at risk of not obtaining a good pass at GCSE. They are identified promptly and given effective extra help.
- The sixth form currently offers only AS and A-level courses in English; almost all students continue to A-level. These courses are appropriate for the current students but are not sufficient to cater for the wider range of ability of students who have joined the school since it became an academy.
- The curriculum is enriched with a range of activities, such as the journalism club, and visits and visitors.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in English

The effectiveness of leadership and management in English is outstanding.

- The enthusiasm and commitment of the English staff reflect strong, positive leadership. Teamwork in the department is very good with all staff encouraged to contribute to the development of the provision.

- The curriculum leader for English and her deputy are relatively new to these posts. Nonetheless, their rigorous analysis of performance means they have a clear, accurate picture of the effectiveness of provision and well-founded plans for the future.
- The staff leading the subject are very well-supported by the senior leaders who take a close interest in the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- extending provision in the sixth form to ensure that the courses on offer meet the needs of all students.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector