



“Making a Moot Point”

Belfairs 6th form students, Lauren Burls and Sam Veitch, took on the challenge of demonstrating their budding legal skills when they represented the Academy at the Southend Borough inter-school ‘Mooting’ (debating) contest held at Giles Wilson Solicitors on Tuesday 17 April.

After winning their preliminary heat, Lauren and Sam progressed through the quarter and semi-finals; taking on Southend High School for Boys in the final.

The two teams were given a bundle of papers taken from a real court case and tasked with presenting cases, both for the defence and prosecution at Giles Wilson’s chambers in Leigh-on-Sea.

Such was the quality of Belfairs and Southend High’s intellectual argument and reasoning that the judging panel – quite literally including three county court judges – needed extra time to deliberate over which team had presented the winning case. Eventually, a majority points decision was awarded Southend High School for Boys by a narrow margin.

Speaking afterwards, Lauren said: *“This was a tough challenge, but we wouldn’t have missed out on it and were glad we were given the opportunity to participate. Not many people of our age have the opportunity to stand up and present a case in-front of three judges.”*

Sam added: *“Southend Boys were tough opposition, but we definitely held our own. Lauren and I would both like to offer our special thanks to Joshua Richards and Jake Clifton, last year’s finalists, for giving their time to help and support us in readiness for the final.”*

Currently studying Psychology, Geography, Business and EPQ, Sam is interested in pursuing a career in law. So much so, he is already participating in a project Belfairs 6th Form is running in partnership with legal practices Baker McKenzie and Barclays Legal.

Although she may not go into the legal profession herself, student Lauren who is studying History, English Literature, Philosophy and Ethics, Psychology and EPQ, found the mooting competition played to her research skills and attention to detail.

Tina Rabone-King, Assistant Director of Post 16 at Belfairs Academy commented: *“From conception to delivery, the ‘Moot’ competition, managed and run by Jonathan Hodge at Giles Wilson, is an amazing experience for all those who choose to become involved.”*

She added: *“The whole concept of young people having an opportunity to work alongside professionals from the legal profession, facing the rigours of dealing with ‘real life’ cases, is a challenge designed to stretch and inspire the individual. All the students from Belfairs who took part benefited in so many different ways; some were inspired to become involved in the law, others have improved their presentation and negotiating skills and some, who have never stood in front of a group of professionals before and presented an argument or idea, now find that this is no longer such a daunting experience. Having a broad range of life skills is vitally important, especially in a society where competition for the best jobs is so high.”*

