

Inspection of Invicta Grammar School

Huntsman Lane, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5DS

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 April 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The executive headteacher of this school is Van Beales and the head of school is Marelle Giles. This school is part of Valley Invicta Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Richard Hayden, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Matthew Fletcher.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since September 2012.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is an exceptional school where pupils flourish. Staff are highly ambitious for pupils' learning. All pupils benefit from a rigorous curriculum that is expertly taught. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, courteous and focus diligently during lessons. Pupils frequently work collaboratively, reflecting their understanding of how they should support each other's learning. Equally, their resilience and ability to work independently are carefully fostered by teachers to ensure pupils are ready for the next stage of their education.

All pupils benefit from extensive opportunities beyond the academic curriculum. The 'Personal Opportunity Programme' significantly enriches pupils' experience of school. The vast range of clubs, activities and societies ensure interests are nurtured across sporting, artistic, political, charitable and academic themes. Music is a particular strength of the school. Pupils love to practise and perform in the numerous choirs and in a rich array of ensembles.

Pupils are rightly proud to attend this school. They feel safe, knowing that staff listen to them and support their pastoral needs. Pupils, along with students in the sixth form, are comprehensively prepared for their futures and life in modern Britain. They value the exciting 'Power Days', where they learn about different cultures, social issues and global issues or develop understanding about their next steps. The school works with many visitors, companies and organisations to ensure pupils are thoroughly informed about future study and career opportunities.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school offers an outstanding level of education for pupils at all key stages, including in the sixth form. The curriculum is highly ambitious and meticulously crafted. Careful attention has been paid to pupils' starting points and the knowledge pupils need before moving on to new learning. A broad range of subjects is on offer to pupils, including in the sixth form. Here students benefit from an extensive range of A-level courses. Pupils master the knowledge and skills that they are taught. They write to a very high standard and use complex subject-specific vocabulary with confidence. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) specifically benefit from high-quality support. Their individual needs are well known. Adaptations to learning are subtly made and are very effective, ensuring these pupils achieve highly.

Teachers are experts in their fields. They introduce new learning in a thoughtful and logical order, providing clear and precise explanations. Short recaps of prior learning help pupils to consolidate what they already know. The use of information technology to support pupils' learning is a considerable strength of the school's work. Pupils use devices skilfully to access lesson resources and complete independent research that aids their learning. Teachers systematically check pupils' understanding. They provide meaningful feedback that pupils use when improving their work. At key stage 5, an emphasis on group discussion helps students to

secure understanding of complex topics. Consequently, students achieve excellent results that ready them for the many education and employment courses they pursue when they leave school.

Reading is embedded across the school's curriculum and culture. Each department supports pupils to read widely in their subject area. Carefully chosen reading of non-fiction ensures pupils develop knowledge of current affairs and can confidently relate this to new learning. The 'Ready, steady, read' programme supports the development of readers in lower year groups. Sixth-form students act as reading mentors, reflecting their sense of responsibility in helping younger pupils to read widely. A rich and diverse range of books in the library are available to pupils. Particular attention is paid to providing specific support to pupils who speak English as an additional language, when this is needed.

The school provides a calm and purposeful environment. Pupils love learning. They show maturity in their conduct across the school site. Harmonious relationships exist between staff and pupils. Pupils are thankful for this, sharing their feelings on the school's 'gratitude tree'. Attendance is high. The school has put in place additional, effective support for the small number of pupils who find it more difficult to go to school regularly.

The personal development programme, built around the 'Invicta Character Compass', contributes considerably to pupils' experience of school life. Pupils develop strong moral and social character traits through their learning across the curriculum. A number of visitors and assemblies add to the key messages the school wants pupils to hear. Additionally, exciting trips, including many international visits, provide lifelong memories. From Year 7, pupils receive comprehensive careers guidance. As pupils move up through the school, time is taken to support transition to ensure pupils are prepared to take their next steps in education, employment or training.

School leaders, governors and trustees are unrelenting in their vision to continually improve provision for pupils. Numerous professional development opportunities support this process. A collaborative approach to planning is well embedded. Staff routinely provide each other with feedback that helps them to reflect and improve. Staff enjoy working at this school. They are focused on providing the very best education and personal development for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136582
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296353
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,625
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	372
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Matthew Fletcher
Headteacher	Van Beales (Executive Headteacher)
CEO of the trust	Richard Hayden
Website	www.invicta.viat.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 September 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes in staffing and leadership, including the appointment of the executive headteacher and the head of school.
- The school is part of Valley Invicta Academies Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider to support the education of a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND, other teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors, a trustee, the deputy CEO and other representatives of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, art and design, geography and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and staff to hear their views.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils and the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Martin Smith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Cathy Reid	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Middleton	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Tash Hurtado	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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