

Invicta Grammar School

Huntsman Lane, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 5DS

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Invicta Grammar School is an outstanding school. There is an unyielding pursuit of excellence by the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and governors.
- Achievement is outstanding across all key stages and in all subjects with all groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, making outstanding progress.
- Students' welfare and well-being are enriched and enhanced by an environment and ethos which value personal success, support endeavour, encourage creativity and promote enterprise.
- The overall quality of teaching is outstanding and inspires, enthuses and motivates students in their thirst for knowledge. Relationships are excellent.
- Teachers have very high expectations and use their excellent subject knowledge to support students in maximising their achievement. In a very small minority of lessons, teaching does not always cater for the full spread of ability or allow time for students to reflect on their learning.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students overwhelmingly agree that the school is a safe place. They express surprise that bullying might take place, but know exactly what to do should it occur.
- The school is constantly reviewing its performance, identifying improvements and addressing shortcomings. The leadership of teaching and learning and the provision of continuing professional development are exceptional.
- The highly effective curriculum ensures that students' needs, interests and aspirations are met extremely well. Enhancement and enrichment opportunities are extensive and popular with students.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported exceptionally well, contributing greatly to their success.
- The popular sixth form is outstanding. Achievement is rising due to strong teaching, a broad curriculum and personalised support which results in higher recruitment, retention and completion rates.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent over 18 hours observing teaching and learning in 44 lessons, taught by 42 teachers, of which 7 were joint observations with senior leaders. There were 155 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 83 responses to the staff questionnaires which were analysed during the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, students and members of the governing body. They observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documentation including school policies, assessment data, safeguarding documentation, anonymised performance management records and minutes of governors’ meetings.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Michael Elson	Additional inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional inspector
Heather Leatt	Additional inspector
Carolyn Steer	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Invicta Grammar School is a larger-than-average 11 to 18 girls' selective school situated in Maidstone. The school has a business and enterprise specialism with a second specialism in languages.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below national averages. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well below average. The proportion of students on the school action plus programme or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are above national averages. Approximately four fifths of the students are of White British heritage with smaller numbers of students from other White, Asian, Chinese and mixed backgrounds. Invicta Grammar School converted to academy status in April 2012. The school shares a governing body and chief executive with its neighbouring non-selective secondary school.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the very small minority of lessons which are not of the same high standard as others by:
 - ensuring that the needs of different groups of students are fully met in lessons through the provision of appropriate tasks, challenge and intervention
 - increasing opportunities for students to reflect and articulate their learning through skilful questioning and extended discussion.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the school with attainment above national averages. By the end of Key Stage 4, the attainment of all groups of students is very high in comparison with national averages.
- Students make rapid and sustained progress. The proportions of students meeting and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics in 2011 and 2012 are high compared with national figures. Progress measures place the school in the top 8% of schools nationally based on their performance across a range of subjects.
- The learning and progress of groups of students, particularly those who are disabled, those who have special educational needs and those for whom the pupil premium provides support, is similarly outstanding. This demonstrates the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity for all students.
- Students engage quickly in lessons and maintain high levels of interest and engagement. They work well in groups and support one another well. They have high expectations of themselves and one another. Parents and carers are very positive about the progress that their children are making at school.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is high across a variety of measures including average point score and the percentage of students gaining A* and A grades at A level. Systematic monitoring and tracking quickly identify students in need of extra support to ensure that they meet their potential.
- Success rates are high in comparison with national averages. Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment, with provision ranging from valuable careers advice to support for Oxbridge entrance.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much of the teaching in all key stages and across all subjects is good or outstanding so that all students, including disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those for whom the student premium provides support, make outstanding progress.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students which encourages them to achieve and progress well. Outstanding teaching is supported by teachers' strong subject knowledge and their comprehensive awareness of their students' needs. Lessons are carefully planned and structured. The pace of lessons is fast and appropriate to the needs of students.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is highly effective and evidenced in a wide variety of lessons, such as the stressing of subject-specific words in information and communication technology and discussions on symmetry and shape in dance.
- Most teachers systematically assess and monitor students' understanding during the lesson but, in a very small minority of lessons, opportunities for students to reflect and articulate their learning through skilful questioning and discussion are missed. Very occasionally, lessons do not cater sufficiently well for the full spread of ability in the class.
- Students' progress is measured regularly and rigorously. Students receive constructive feedback from teachers on their achievement and use this to plan their work and focus their learning. As a result, students make rapid progress in their studies.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary and their behaviour, inside and outside lessons, is calm, considerate and courteous. Students take pride in their work and their school as evidenced through discussions and observation. Sixth form students act as excellent role models and peer mentors for younger students.

- Students, staff and parents are unreservedly positive about behaviour. The school's effective behaviour monitoring system quickly identifies any incidents which are swiftly addressed and resolved.
- Consistently and subtly applied behaviour management by all staff contributes well to the positive ethos of the school and ensures that curriculum time is used productively. Students confirmed that any instances of poor behaviour are dealt with very quickly.
- Students are fully aware of different possible forms of bullying, including cyber, racist and homophobic bullying. The well documented pastoral programme promotes the amicable and harmonious relationships observed by inspectors across the school.
- Students say, and parents agree, that all groups of students feel safe at school. They have a very acute sense of what constitutes unsafe situations and lessons on e-safety have extended students' awareness of safety when using technology and social media.
- Attendance figures are consistently above the national average and persistent absence figures are significantly below. Students arrive punctually to school and to class. Exclusions are rare.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, assisted by the chief executive of the governing body, has been resolute in driving up standards of achievement while providing students with memorable experiences and promoting endeavour, creativity and enterprise.
- All leaders and managers, including those responsible for governance, are highly ambitious for the success of students and have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school which are being addressed with energy and determination.
- The school is uncompromisingly focused on moving towards excellence in everything that it does. Self-evaluation is well considered and documentation confirms the school's ambition to provide all students with a world class education.
- Leaders focus tirelessly on improving teaching and learning and provide personalised professional development, underpinned by highly robust performance management. The provision is summed up by a new teacher who commented, 'I have felt extremely well supported, appreciated and encouraged throughout my first few weeks at the school.'
- The school's effective curriculum is broad and balanced and ensures that students' needs, interests and aspirations are met extremely well. The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities.
- The school works extensively with a range of partners and has a number of strategies for successfully engaging with parents. The very large majority of parental responses are positive and a very large majority agree that the school is well led and managed.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and the school understands and addresses the need to develop students both academically and pastorally. Assemblies and tutor time are well planned to support spiritual, moral and ethical issues.
- Exchanges take place to a host of countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. Students take an active interest in current affairs, politics and news as well as raising significant amounts of money for their chosen charities.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well equipped and effective in carrying out its statutory duties and holding senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance.
 - Governors have a good awareness of the school and a clear view of the strategic direction of the school through regular visits, including lesson observations and focus groups.

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	136582
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403672

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1221
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judi Taylor
Headteacher	Julie Derrick
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
Telephone number	01622 755856
Fax number	01622 678584
Email address	office@invicta.kent.sch.uk

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