

Steypning Grammar School

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC042673
Inspection date	3 March 2009
Inspector	Kevin Whatley / David Coulter
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Steypning Grammar School Lower School Church Street STEYNING West Sussex BN44 3LB
Telephone number	01903 814555
Email	sgs@sgs.uk.net
Registered person	West Sussex County Council
Head / Principal	Dr John Peat
Nominated person	
Date of last inspection	23 June 2003

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Steyning Grammar School is situated in the beautiful Sussex countryside, being set over two sites approximately a mile apart. Boarding is found on one of the sites near the town centre with the three boarding houses in close proximity to each other. Steyning Grammar is a secondary comprehensive school maintained by West Sussex County Council. Already an International School Steyning has recently been accredited to deliver the International Baccalaureate. Steyning has the largest sixth form department in West Sussex with almost 75% of the boarding community currently studying there. The school states the aim of boarding is to create a 'home from home' atmosphere which is purposeful but relaxed, allowing students to develop as well adjusted young adults. At the time of the inspection there were 71 boarders ranging in age from 12 to 18 years.

Summary

This key announced inspection took place over the course of two days during the school week. Boarders have their health care matters looked after in an excellent fashion by qualified and experienced staff. An extremely comprehensive and robust approach towards the protection and wellbeing of boarders ensures they are kept safe from the risks of harm or abuse. Boarders enjoy a range of activities and are offered excellent individual support, guidance and care. Open dialogue and communication ensures that boarders feel they are listened to extremely well with their views and opinions underpinning decisions made about them. Boarders live in good standards of accommodation with the school having recently been given a grant to build a new boarding house which when completed will almost double the number of places available. Boarding is provided in an extremely efficient and caring manner with staff being guided by outstanding leadership. Current boarders represent some 17 different countries with the diverse and vibrant cultural mix lending itself to a very unique living environment where mutual respect, understanding and a sense of family is part of everyday life. No recommendations were made as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have their health care needs met extremely well. Each boarder has a health assessment prior to arrival. Health care plans are subsequently compiled which clearly consider the physical and medical issues for each boarder. Where necessary particular health matters are included in welfare plans, which in turn ensures staff are fully aware of how to meet individual needs. Excellent and comprehensive information technology systems are used to consider every boarders' health care needs in depth via individual plans. Boarders have their weight and height regularly checked. All health plans are accurately maintained providing clear and concise guidance for staff as to how the individual issues of each boarder must be met and monitored. The information technology system is fully supported by a paper process which protects all information in the event of data failings. Boarders are registered with a local GP surgery with

access to all other medical care such as dentists and opticians. Matrons offer an open door policy and boarders can come and ask for advice or treatment at any time.

Where boarders have particular needs such as unhealthy or concerning diets these are known by staff, acted upon and monitored. When necessary contact is made with the boarders' own GP which ensures a joined up and professional plan and response. Should staff have concerns about the diets of boarders a print out from the school's meal data system can be obtained which confirms meals eaten. Boarders with known eating issues have their day time diets monitored appropriately.

The school is proactive in providing boarders with appropriate and up to date health care advice and information. The school is a non smoking environment, with good information available to assist those who may wish to give up. Information is also readily available in regards safe sexual health, healthy eating and drug misuse. The whole school has been involved in health awareness events which included one on testicular cancer.

When boarders are ill suitable arrangements are in place to both ensure segregation and containment of potentially infectious illnesses, with boarders given mobile phones to ensure they keep contact with nursing staff on site. Suitable arrangements are also in place to address epidemic outbreaks such as influenza.

Boarding staff are suitably trained in administering first aid, whilst medically trained staff are available. No external trip takes place unless a member of staff with first aid training is able to accompany boarders. The local GP is linked to the school. All medication is suitably stored in lockable cabinets within the sick bay, with accurate stock records being kept. Medicines are only dispensed by staff who are suitably trained to do so with accurate administration records confirming safe practice.

Boarders feel that since the employment of a new head of catering some five months ago standards in both quality and variety of meals have improved considerably. Boarders are able to choose from a number of meal options including a vegetarian dish at lunch and tea. Snacks, fresh sandwiches, rolls and fruit are available at morning and afternoon break times, whilst boarders can cook themselves toast or noodles in the evening once back in their houses with tea, coffee, hot chocolate, water and juice readily available. A food committee regularly meets to discuss any issues or requests in regard to meal planning and standards. The diverse boarding community has particular cultural preferences addressed, though with 17 different nationalities it is not always possible to meet all requests or wishes. Whenever possible cultural diversity is acknowledged and celebrated through traditional foods and meals associated with events, festivals or customs, such as Chinese New Year, Nigerian Independence Day, Shrove Tuesday and Valentines day. Meals were found to be of a good quality being nutritious, well prepared, plentiful and tasty.

Boarders are able to have their laundry cleaned daily. Boarders felt the system works well with the quality of laundering seen as good overall.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school is pro-active in identifying and addressing any issues which relate to bullying matters. A zero tolerance approach ensures all boarders are made fully aware of the expectations and

consequences of such behaviour. Information regarding issues of bullying or intimidation is readily displayed around the boarding areas with clear details of a number of individuals and independent organisations who can be contacted should the boarder wish to remain anonymous. The boarding community feel there are no significant issues of bullying and on the rare occasion that such matters occur they are swiftly known and addressed. The boarding ethos is firmly based on an idea of mutual respect and acceptance and as such is self governing in challenging any prejudicial or discriminatory views, comments or attitudes.

An excellent approach toward protecting boarders from the risk of harm is in place, with a comprehensive and robust safeguarding policy and procedure well established to consider all children and young people. Staff are suitably trained in child protection displaying a sound understanding of safeguarding matters and practices in the event of concerns becoming known. Strategic staff have specific child protection responsibilities with clear protocols to ensure information is easily passed on to those responsible and any other agency as necessary. Close liaison with local safeguarding teams ensures practice is up to date and in line with national procedures and practices. When safeguarding matters arise notifications are made swiftly and sensitively.

Boarders benefit from fair rules, boundaries and expectations. The status system in place to recognise good effort, attitude, behaviour and responsibility is seen as commendable and negates the need for punitive sanctions or punishments. Those boarders who may be struggling in some areas are assisted in a creative manner to achieve within the status system with a real emphasis on promoting positive reinforcement. The school employs a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to address any issues as and when they arise and to liaise with matters in the local community; the prevalence of actual criminal situations are very rare. The PCSO also assists the school with crime prevention and awareness programmes linked to the personal, social and health education school curriculum.

An appropriate complaints policy and procedure is in place and is well known to boarders. The number of complaints is currently nil. There are a considerable number of avenues for boarders to raise concerns at individual tutor meetings, committees and councils. This in turn allows for on-going and open dialogue, with the school becoming aware of matters early. When this is the case the school engages swiftly and appropriately to address such concerns. No boarder raised any complaints that their views had not been fully listened to and acted upon.

Boarders and staff alike are protected from the risk of fire. Clear records confirm that all necessary fire fighting equipment is regularly tested and serviced. Checks of the actual fire detection systems are carried out weekly and clearly exceed standards.

The school is well prepared for addressing welfare issues of young people. The school is linked to the Royal Wanstead Foundation which provides sponsorship to young people who maybe experiencing welfare related problems in their lives, but who would benefit from boarding at school. Where boarders have recognised problems or difficulties these are assessed and incorporated into welfare plans. Pro-active actions by the school ensure boarders receive the help and support needed to support their placements.

No boarders raised concerns about their privacy not being appropriately considered. Staff were seen to knock on bedroom doors, whilst bathing and private telephone facilities offered adequate privacy.

A robust and rigorous process of recruitment ensures that staff are only appointed following confirmation and assessment of the necessary checks and references. A number of the key Human Resources and senior management staff have undertaken the safer recruitment in education training. Staff files viewed confirmed the required Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), previous employment history and professional references were in place. Those who do not work for the school directly but who live on site or who may have contact with boarders also have CRB checks completed.

All possible measures are taken to ensure boarders are protected from public intrusion. The layout of boarding means that a public right of way runs through the school. Doors all have key pads and these numbers are changed regularly. Closed circuit television covers the outside areas, with boarders given the option of personal alarms should they wish.

Comprehensive risk assessments are in place to address all aspects of boarding, including the living environment, trips away and personal boarder and staff safety. One of the school's policies and procedures has been adopted by the County Council across all their schools.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

A large number of activities are offered to boarders which match both the needs of the whole boarding community and those of individuals who wish to pursue an interest or activity. A number of on site pursuits such as sports, music and entertainment are available every day, with regular trips taking place to nearby shopping centres, cinemas and theatres. External trips are also planned such as skiing in America, camping in the English countryside, adventure and outdoor activity centres and cultural excursions to Europe. In school sports matches occur whilst recently a basketball match took place between existing and ex boarders. Issues identified by boarders in respect of improving the choice of weekend activities have been acted upon with new staff being appointed to deliver greater opportunities. The school participates in the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme, with boarders currently engaged in completing the gold award.

The commitment of boarding staff is obvious and far reaching with boarders having their personal needs considered fully. The leadership, commitment and dedication shown by the head of boarding exemplify the excellent support, care and guidance provided to all boarders. Boarding staff go the extra mile which clearly enriches and nurtures the whole boarding experience. Individual needs are clearly known by staff who understand how to meet the particular issues and circumstances of each boarder. Where boarders have more immediate or entrenched pastoral care needs clear plans are put in place to meet their individual issues. When required close liaison with other external care professionals is sought and maintained thus ensuring boarders receive a joined up approach in meeting all their needs. A robust system of tutorials ensures each boarder meets with their tutor regularly to discuss both educational and pastoral matters. Communication between school and boarding staff is excellent with boarders benefiting from an ethos of working together. The flow of necessary information between staff is clear and accurate. It is clear the approach taken in meeting the individual needs of boarders is thoughtful and holistic.

The school is mindful of, and swift to address, any issues of discrimination. Boarders state they do not feel in any way that they are discriminated against. Boarders feel their own cultures are fully acknowledged with a uniquely culturally diverse boarding community respecting each

other as individuals and the cultures they bring with them. The boarding community nurtures a real sense of family, understanding and mutual respect clearly seen in the manner boarders respect, support and care for each other.

The academic achievement of boarders is extremely high which is clearly enhanced through living at the school. However staff are vigilant to the needs of each boarder being mindful to watch that no onerous demands are placed on them by themselves or others. Where necessary boarders are supported and guided to lead a balanced academic and age appropriate lifestyle.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The approach taken in regards seeking, acknowledging and acting upon the views and wishes of boarders and their parents is outstanding. A number of surveys and reviews have been completed by the school during the past year or so which focus primarily on the needs of boarders; the findings of which have been used to directly inform managerial decisions. This has included the appointment of a new catering manager, the setting up of a review of wireless internet access in boarding houses, the appointment of additional sports and activity staff to improve weekend activity choices and most recently being consulted over the proposed new boarding house design by the architects. Suggestion boxes are also situated around the houses to allow for comments to be made in confidence should boarders wish.

Boarders are consistently encouraged and enabled to play an active and key role in all aspects of decision making in their school life and in particular boarding matters. Boarders are represented on all main forums and committees such as the sixth form forum and whole school council, whilst they have their own food committee and boarding councils. The head boy and girl in school are also boarders having been at Steyning for a number of years. Regular house meetings take place between boarders and house parents which allow boarders the opportunity to raise issues in a formal manner. Boarders say they are 'listened to' and feel they have their views respected. Boarders are clearly treated as individuals with boarders being engaged by staff in age appropriate debate and negotiation.

Excellent levels of communication are maintained with boarders receiving timely responses to their requests, concerns or opinions. Minutes of house meetings are displayed in communal areas with clear outcomes to any points previously raised. Boarders note the school email service enables them to get in touch with both educational and pastoral staff extremely efficiently stating that any queries are responded to very swiftly. A regular 'boarderlines' newsletter is produced which enables all boarders and parents to keep up to date with all that is going on and planned for.

The majority of boarders keep in regular touch with their parents and friends via their personal mobile phones and lap tops. Private phone areas are also available. Internet access via the schools own computers is available in the evenings in the main school, although wi-fi connections in the boarding houses themselves have yet to be fully established; this is being looked into with a view to a suitable and sustainable fix being implemented soon.

New boarders are considerably supported and guided through their admittance to school. All potential boarders have to visit the school along with their parents to ensure the student is suitably matched to the school and vice versa, this particularly applies to overseas boarders. Shortly after arrival bonding and induction events take place which allow all boarders old and

new to meet each other and support new boarders. New and existing boarders said this process works really well taking away a lot of their fears and anxieties. New boarders said they were made to feel 'extremely welcome' from the start and were told all the particulars of boarding as soon as they arrived.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders are provided with appropriate lockable storage boxes and given additional opportunities to use the school safe should they wish. No boarder has a key to their room, though this was not raised by boarders as an issue. The idea of respect and trust proliferates into the boarding community ethos and is one that is clearly adhered with.

In general the accommodation provided to boarders is good. Boarders share most rooms though reasonable amounts of space and comfort are afforded to them. Boarders can request who to share with and this is taken into account every term to ensure a suitable balance of age and needs. Boarding is situated across three houses on the same site, with two separate girls houses and one larger block comprising of all the boys and a small number of older sixth form girls. Where girls and boys are located in the same building appropriate segregation is in place. Basketball and tennis courts are nearby as is the dining room, whilst one of the school's nearby buildings can be accessed for study and the use of internet in the evening. Boarders are able to complete repair forms left around the houses when there is a need to replace or repair fixtures and fittings in their rooms or any maintenance issues they become aware of.

All houses offer a good standard of décor throughout with nice homely touches such as pictures, photos and displays including ex and current boarders engaged in a number of pursuits and events. Each house has communal areas which offer comfort and modern entertainment facilities with the opportunity for boarders to prepare drinks or snacks in the evening. There is an adequate number of toilet and bathing facilities available in all houses. All areas were found to be extremely clean throughout, with each bedroom being vacuumed and cleaned daily by domestic staff; though realistic expectations are placed on boarders themselves to keep their rooms tidy.

The proposed new boarding facility will be built in close proximity to the current accommodation areas. It is envisaged that such a build will raise the standards of accommodation and facilities to a very high level and will offer double the number of boarding places presently available. The current accommodation areas will not be affected during any of the proposed building works.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school's statement of principles, aims and practices encompasses all aspects of boarding. Extensive and up to date information is available for parents/carers and boarders which outlines the nature and provision of boarding in specific detail. Prospectuses are further supported by dedicated sections found on the school's main website. A sixth form DVD was recently produced with students which provides a pleasant visual overview of life at Steyning, including boarding.

A comprehensive development plan is in place which addresses all current and future matters across the whole school. This includes details of how the school will continue to meet the present needs of boarding provision with consideration for the proposed boarding expansion.

It is clear the senior management team addresses boarding in high regard with a number of key boarding related roles and responsibilities being led by staff who hold senior posts in the main school. Such a leadership structure ensures boarding has a considerable profile. The head of school regularly meets with boarders on an informal basis enjoying meals and engaging in conversation, notably at weekends. The provision of boarding is further supported and enhanced by an informed and active board of governors who clearly view the notion of boarding as a positive, vibrant and vital element of the school. There is no doubt the senior management team is committed to ensuring boarding at Steyning continues to flourish and grow.

Boarders benefit from being supported, guided and looked after by staff who are extremely committed and caring. Staff clearly understand the particular needs of each boarder in their charge with care being provided in a sensitive and thoughtful manner. Appropriate numbers of staff are on duty during the day and night and are readily available to offer care, support and guidance. Boarders feel staff are 'friendly and caring' and 'go the extra mile' to help them, culminating in an atmosphere which is like 'a family'. Staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities with lines of responsibility being well known.

The direct leadership and guidance provided to staff by the housemaster is excellent. The housemaster leads by example with an obvious drive, commitment and enthusiasm to meet the needs of boarders at all times of the day and night. The levels of responsibility shown by the housemaster during very unsociable hours must be seen as exemplary practice. As a result boarders feel 'safe and understood', clearly thriving in an inclusive, open and relaxed environment.

The school produces and maintains excellent records across the spectrum with thorough and comprehensive risk assessments, including emergency planning, in place. Extremely comprehensive policies and procedures address all areas of boarding practice in a pro-active and responsive fashion. The monitoring and reviewing of policies are completed ahead of required timescales and are in line with current legislation being forward thinking and inclusive in their construct.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Boarders feel they are 'respected as individuals' and are 'included in all things' with an obvious sense of mutual respect running throughout the school and particularly the boarding community. The school's own charter champions the notion of being equal irrespective of race, colour, gender, religion or culture. Compared to the numbers of day students boarders make up a relatively small group, however as an international school they represent 17 different countries. Such a diverse and cultural mix allows boarders a unique opportunity to learn and appreciate each others' cultures, customs, views, and indeed different ways of life. In turn the whole school benefits from a cosmopolitan and vibrant group of students who are integrated fully into the main fabric of everyday school life. This is positively reinforced through the acknowledging and celebrating of a variety of festivals and events including Nigerian Independence Day, Christmas feast Night, Halloween, Chinese New year, Shrove Tuesday and Valentines Day. Other school wide charity and awareness events with national and international themes such as Macmillan Cancer Care, Amnesty International and Red Nose Day further highlight the needs, lifestyles and cultures of others.

Where boarders wish to pursue their chosen faith the school aims to facilitate participation including supporting boarders during periods of fasting, prayer and celebration. A number of boarders regularly attend the nearby church and choir with the local chaplain playing an active role in regularly engaging with boarders from all faiths.

The school do not place boarders in lodgings and are mindful of private fostering protocols should they become aware of any boarders falling under these circumstances.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):