

Steypning Grammar School

Welfare inspection report for a boarding school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

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 four 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 is also accredited to deliver the International Baccalaureate. Steyning has the largest sixth form department in West Sussex with almost 70% 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 113 boarders ranging in age from 13 to 18 years. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2009.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for boarders	outstanding
Quality of boarding provision and care	outstanding
Boarders' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of boarding	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the boarding inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is outstanding. There are a significant number of strengths in the care provided. Boarders receive excellent levels of care which enables them to make significant progress in their educational, social and personal development.
- Boarders have their individual needs met in an excellent manner within a vibrant and culturally diverse environment. An ethos of mutual respect permeates the school environment and in particular is cemented in the fabric of everyday life within the boarding community.
- The school harbours a culture of safety where the well-being of boarders is central to practice. A rigorous approach ensures boarders are kept safe, while not being limited to lead anything other than a full and active lifestyle.
- The management and organisation of boarding is outstanding and ensures boarders continually receive the highest standards of care, support and guidance. A dynamic and forward thinking management team strive to be an exemplar of boarding provision. A professional approach is embedded in the running of boarding with suitably high expectations being implemented in practice.
- Boarders feel they receive excellent care and say they are looked after and that they are part of a family. An obvious sense of community is further nurtured by the excellent quality of relationships between boarders and the staff who care for them. Such relationships are meaningful, trusting and extremely positive and help to create a relaxed, open and inclusive environment where boarders thrive.
- Parents and carers comment positively on boarding and feel boarders are kept safe and achieve to the fullest of their potential. Clear communication is a

cornerstone of the schools ethos with robust and inventive measures in place to ensure boarders are enabled to keep in close contact with family, carers and friends.

- Boarders benefit most positively from living and learning in an inclusive environment which allows them to develop as individuals, while appreciating the needs of others. A hugely impressive enrichment programme encourages and empowers boarders to engage in a vast array of activities, interests and pursuits. The focus on providing such a holistic living experience is of paramount importance to the school who are committed to assisting boarders to develop as a whole.
- Significant improvements have been implemented and consolidated throughout boarding with boarders at the heart of planning and development. Since the last inspection a new head teacher, director of boarding and deputy director of boarding have been appointed. A new multi-million pound state of the art boarding facility has been opened which has seen the boarding population nearly double in size. The growth and development of boarding has been sensitively and comprehensively considered and is an absolute strength of the whole school.
- No recommendations were made at the last inspection. All national minimum standards are fully met and in many cases exceeded. As a result no recommendations have been made on this occasion.

Outcomes for boarders

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding. Boarders benefit from extremely positive relationships with staff and each other. The idea of difference is valued and celebrated with some 22 different nationalities contributing to a vibrant and unique living environment. The ethos of boarding, and indeed the school in general, promotes the notion of the whole person.

Boarders clearly enjoy and fully embrace the residential experience. They spoke most positively about being part of a caring community and of the school being their second home. Comments such as, 'It is like a family here' and 'people are really kind,' were indicative of the feelings expressed by boarders. Boarders make significant progress in their lives and develop their skills and talents to an extent that bodes well for their future.

Excellent behaviour is promoted, with boarders displaying respect and care for each other and the wider community. When issues arise they are enabled and empowered to find appropriate resolutions and to learn from the experience.

Boarders are encouraged and supported to develop independence, confidence and self-esteem alongside progressing in their learning. An extensive and greatly improved enrichment programme ensures all young people participate in an extensive range of interests that broaden their horizons.

Boarders benefit from having their views and opinions valued and promoted to an excellent standard. Boarders have a strong student voice and contribute fully to the boarding community. An inclusive approach empowers them to affect their daily lives and futures. Boarding has a high status across the school and the views of those living there are seen as of similar importance. A large number of avenues are available for boarders to express their views and to put their requests forward. Boarders say they feel listened to and that their views contribute to decisions made regarding the boarding community.

Boarders benefit from having their health care needs met extremely well. Comprehensive systems are in place to ensure the physical and medical health care needs of boarders are promoted. Boarders enjoy good health with their emotional well-being seen as crucial. Healthy lifestyles are promoted with a considerable number of sporting activities and events available.

An excellent programme is in place which ensures boarders receive comprehensive guidance and support in their transition toward adulthood and independence. Older boarders are provided with outstanding opportunities to develop their independence skills. An excellent approach toward future planning allows sixth form boarders an invaluable chance to experience increased levels of responsibility and autonomy. This is an extremely important aspect of boarding provision given the vast numbers of boarders who move directly from the school to university. Boarders stated that having such an opportunity provides them with a significant stepping stone before they embark on the next stage of their lives and further education.

Quality of boarding provision and care

The quality of the boarding provision is outstanding. Excellent pastoral arrangements ensure a clear focus on boarders' welfare. These are embedded in practice and clearly understood and implemented by staff. Effective communication ensures the pastoral and educational needs of boarders are addressed as a joint focus. Recent improvements have led to increased educational support for boarders who benefit from additional and specific sessions which are facilitated by tutors within the boarding environment. Boarders obviously share positive, meaningful and respectful relationships with staff, which result in an open and respectful environment.

A well designed induction process allows boarders an important opportunity to learn about the school and each other. Boarders stated they were made to feel very welcome when they joined the school with initiatives such as, the 'buddy system', providing an excellent peer support network. A number of team building exercises, including camping trips, further promote the strong sense of community.

A fantastically varied and comprehensive enrichment programme affords all boarders excellent opportunities to engage in activities and positive pursuits. The excellent range and quality of extra curricular pastimes not only focuses on a considerable

number of leisure activities, but equally on personal development and fulfilment. Alongside a plethora of sporting options, boarders are enabled to take on roles of responsibility, including facilitating the gospel choir and youth parliament. The school places a large emphasis on the importance of community cohesion and engagement with the local community. Extremely positive volunteer activities have included relaying paths on the nearby South Downs and dog walking at a local sanctuary.

An excellent ethos ensures boarders have their successes rightfully celebrated. The strong empowerment and involvement of boarders is seen no more clearly than in the development of a new rewards system. Such a progressive and inventive approach assists boarders to understand and value their achievements. A huge variety of ways are made available to ensure all boarders can make progress which is built into the everyday life of the school. The school facilitate celebration events, balls and dinners which significantly enhance self-esteem, confidence and personal aspirations. Staff have suitably high expectations for boarders and contribute fully in supporting and acknowledging their progress, effort and contributions.

Excellent facilities are available for boarders who may fall ill. A new medical centre has been developed, which when combined with the nursing team, provides a very good level of health care. A safe and effective medicine storage and administration process is in place which ensures boarders' medication needs are well met. Boarders are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and receive age appropriate advice and guidance. Excellent support, matched with close links with external health care agencies, ensures boarders have their emotional needs met extremely well. Plans are put in place to support boarders who may have specific needs which staff implement in practice. Such plans are reviewed regularly and include the involvement of boarders themselves.

A good standard of catering service is available which provides boarders with a wide variety of choice. Meals are nourishing with boarders having their eating habits sensitively monitored to ensure they eat healthily. Celebratory meals are put on which allow boarders opportunities to experience foods from different cultures and other parts of the world. Recent events have included Chinese and Nigerian evenings and a Halloween themed meal.

Boarders are provided with extremely high standards of accommodation and facilities. A new state of the art building has greatly enhanced the overall standard. This has included significantly more single bedded rooms with en-suite facilities, a new computer suite, catering facilities and dining room. A continued programme of refurbishment has ensured that the older boarding houses are maintained to a very good standard. Boarders are involved in the development of their houses with budgets being awarded for the best improvement ideas. Most recently this has seen a house common room being completely revamped and significantly upgraded.

Boarders are enabled to keep in close contact with family and friends. Improvements have been made to internet connections in the boarding areas, with a good number

of landlines available which offer sufficient privacy. A recent initiative has seen the development of a 'boarding blog' which allows family and friends to stay in touch with events within boarding through a weekly internet update.

Boarders' safety

There is excellent provision at the school for ensuring boarders are safe and protected from harm. Comprehensive recruitment procedures are effectively implemented. The thorough and robust recruitment procedure ensures that only adults who have been checked as being appropriate to work with children are employed.

Boarders live in a very safe environment amid a culture that is built on the safety and well-being of each of them. A robust approach is in place to address child protection which is disseminated to all staff groups. Staff are proactive in promoting and protecting the welfare of pupils, and effectively implement the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. Boarders say they feel safe and cared about at the school. One parent said, 'I really appreciate your commitment to these kids and the way you act makes me realise my daughter is safe even if she's away from home.'

Bullying is not seen as a problem in the school with none of the boarders raising this as a concern. Any incident is closely reviewed and addressed in a fair and just manner and in keeping with the atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

A strong approach to behaviour management enables boarders to develop constructive ways in which to address issues of conflict. Boarders understand the boundaries and rules in place to ensure everyone is treated fairly. Boarders are supportive to each other and have expectations that other boarders will be tolerant and respectful. Where appropriate this includes the involvement of older boarders who assist in bonding exercises in supporting other year groups to resolve their differences in a constructive way. Such an approach has been very successful in bringing about more harmonious and respectful relationships. The few incidents that occur are recorded in detail and reviewed.

Boarders say sanctions are fair and they understand why they are given. The boarders develop good friendships and enjoy each other's company. One boarder said, 'I really enjoy being with my friends who help me if anything is troubling me.'

An excellent and inventive approach is taken regarding the safety of boarding provision. Fire precautions and fire equipment are checked on a regular basis. Fire drills are held regularly and all residential pupils receive an induction which includes fire safety and evacuation. Fire safety is clearly of paramount importance with all risk management systems being monitored effectively. The school recently arranged for the local fire safety service to visit the boarding environment and facilitate a fire evacuation using fake smoke to imitate a real life situation.

Approaches to assessing the risks boarders may face, and indeed reducing them, are outstanding. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed, updated and endorsed after auditing by senior members of staff. These risk assessments include environmental checks as well as on-site and off-site activities. Risk management is taken seriously, but does not detract from allowing boarders to participate fully in activities and their interests.

Leadership and management of boarding

Boarding is managed to the highest standard. Strong and focused leadership encourages the boarding community to be the best it can be, culminating in a highly professionalised approach. The aims of boarding are clearly identified and implemented in practice, with boarding central to the ethos of school life. The management structure has been further defined since the last inspection with boarding an integral aspect of the leadership team.

Effective quality assurance systems ensure a consistent drive toward improvement. Records are maintained to a high standard with regular monitoring taking place to ensure their accuracy. Considerable progress has been made in many areas since the last inspection. These include a massive investment in facilities, significant improvements to the enrichment programme and increasing the numbers of staff on duty within boarding. This during a period that has seen the numbers of boarders almost double.

Boarders are cared for by a good number of experienced and dedicated staff who share the schools aspirations for boarders to make exceptional progress. A comprehensive approach is in place toward training and supporting staff. This ensures their professional development and enables them to care for boarders extremely well. Staff say they receive excellent support and guidance and feel motivated to be part of such a caring and dynamic team.

A robust complaints procedure ensures issues are addressed promptly and rigorously. Few matters have been raised by boarders, but those that have were addressed without delay with clear and appropriate outcomes; no serious complaints have been made since the last inspection. Parents and carers say communication is excellent and that boarders make significant progress in their lives while staying at the school.

The boarding community harbours and nurtures a diverse number of young people from many countries of the world. The individual needs of each boarder are recognised in depth within an atmosphere where difference is celebrated, valued and shared. Such a unique living environment is a core strength of the whole school.

All national minimum standards are met by the school and in many cases exceeded.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22/10/2012

Dear Boarders

Inspection of Steyning Grammar School

As you may know, a team of inspectors recently inspected the boarding provision at your school.

We spent time in the boarding houses, joined you for meals, viewed some of the activities you were enjoying, met with groups of you, met with members of staff and examined numerous records. We also looked at comments you had made in questionnaires and those made by some of your parents and carers.

We have been extremely impressed by the high standards of boarding that you receive and feel the school is clearly outstanding in the care it provides for you.

We felt very strongly that you are kept safe whilst living at the school and that there are very good plans in place to ensure this continues.

You told us that you really felt like an important part of the school family and were made very welcome when you first arrived there. It was obvious that boarders are proud of their school and of the sense of community you get from living together.

We saw that the boarding community is made up of young people from many parts of the world. Boarders clearly benefit from a wonderful opportunity to share and celebrate difference. You told us you felt listened to and that your views and opinions are always taken seriously.

You have a really good team of nursing staff who make sure you have the support you need if you are injured or unwell.

You have an excellent range of activities and clubs available to you and it is clear to us that you all develop responsibilities during your time at the school. We feel a good variety of meals are on offer to you with special occasions being marked with different foods from an array of cultures.

We feel most strongly that the leadership team and the staff who care for you are

excellent. They provide you with the highest standards of care and consider your needs fully at all times.

Many thanks for your openness and welcoming approach during our visit to your school.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Whatley / Gaynor Moorey