

Steyning Grammar School

Shooting Field, Steyning, West Sussex, BN44 3RX

Inspection dates 6–7 February 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Ably supported by his senior team, the headteacher has successfully led improvements in teaching from the time of the previous inspection. His vision for the school is based on high expectations and an uncompromising ambition for students to flourish and achieve. As a result, teaching is good and some is of high quality.
- The behaviour of students around the school and in class is exemplary. They arrive to lessons keen to learn and their relationships with each other and with their teachers help them to play an active part in their learning. Parents, staff and students are exceptionally positive about the standards of behaviour and safety in the school.
- Governors know their school well and make a significant contribution to its overall leadership.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good, with teaching that is often outstanding. Students feel that they achieve well and appreciate the quality of the guidance and support that they receive. The leadership of the sixth form is outstanding.
- The achievement of students is good. Their rates of progress throughout the school have improved since the previous inspection and most make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all subject leaders are sufficiently focused on raising the quality of teaching or use of achievement data: as a result, a small minority of the school's teaching still needs to improve.
- In a few lessons, the teachers' planning, marking and use of questioning are not yet good enough to ensure high levels of achievement.
- Teachers do not always ensure that the best use of time is made in their lessons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 55 lessons in addition to making shorter visits to a number of classrooms. Twelve observations were carried out jointly with school leaders, including the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at students' workbooks and discussed with them samples of their work.
- Inspectors discussed with a sample of teachers the training and support they have received, and the impact that this has had on their teaching. They observed a number of lessons taught by these teachers.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents, including the minutes of governor meetings; safeguarding procedures; behaviour and attendance records; documents relating to school self-review and improvement; and school records on performance management and teaching and learning, including lesson observations.
- Inspectors met with two members of the governing body, including the Chair, a representative of the local authority and groups of students, teachers and school leaders.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of the 140 responses to the Parent View survey, and 78 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Graham Tuck, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Hoather	Additional Inspector
Keith Homewood	Additional Inspector
Babrul Matin	Additional Inspector
Una Maria Stevens	Additional Inspector
Jason Wye	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-size secondary school with 475 students in the sixth form. The school is on two sites, one for students in Years 7 and 8, the other for older students.
- The majority of students join the school in Year 7, with a second group joining in Year 9 from a local middle school.
- There is boarding provision for 113 students. This provision was previously inspected by Ofsted in October 2012 when it was judged to be outstanding, with no areas for improvement.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- A little under 9% of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium support (additional money allocated to schools by the government). This proportion is well below the national average.
- Just under 8% of students who are disabled or have special educational needs are supported through school action, and a little over 7% are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. These proportions are below the national average.
- A specialist facility for 10 students with specific learning difficulties is integrated into the curriculum.
- A very few students attend courses at local colleges of further education.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed to the school.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all subject leaders make good use of student achievement data, and focus more strongly on raising the quality of teaching in the areas for which they are responsible.
- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by developing the skills and confidence of teachers so that they consistently:
 - use questioning to assess what students have learned and what they need to do to progress
 - provide sufficiently detailed written feedback on students' work to help them to improve its quality
 - plan their teaching so that the best use is made of lesson time in the lower school
 - use assessment data to plan their lessons to meet more securely the needs of all students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with standards of attainment that are broadly average. They make good progress in their learning throughout the school and this enables them to reach levels of attainment that are generally above national averages. The proportion of students gaining at least five grade A* to C passes at GCSE including English and mathematics has been above average for the last three years. The school's own reliable information about current Year 11 students shows this figure to be rising still further.
- Achievement in English and mathematics is strong. Students do well in many of their other GCSE subjects including science, geography and modern foreign languages. While standards in history were lower in 2012, school leaders have successfully tackled this and students are now achieving well in this subject.
- In the best lessons, students' progress was supported by the teachers' excellent use of data to inform their planning. For example, in an outstanding Year 10 information and communication technology lesson, the teacher showed a detailed understanding of the ability level of each student and was able to pitch the work accordingly. Ensuring consistency in this approach across the school will raise levels of achievement still further.
- The school has used pupil premium funding well to provide those students who are eligible for it with a range of support including individual reading and mathematics tuition. This has ensured that the average points score for this group is improving rapidly and, although still below that for all students, they make good progress.
- Good support is given by teachers and teaching assistants to disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those in the specialist facility, and, as a result, they achieve well. Additional sessions, for example to support reading and writing, are helping to improve students' achievement. In a Year 10 support lesson, students had been given specific help with their written work and spoke with justifiable pride of their rapid progress in GCSE English.
- Students are strongly encouraged to read and a range of evidence shows that they read widely.
- Students know their targets and what they need to do to improve. In some subjects, assessment tests are followed by an accompanying advice sheet, which students say they find exceptionally helpful.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good with teaching a particular strength. Students welcome the range of activities in lessons including group and project work. The proportion of students who complete their studies and achieve a qualification is well above the national average.
- For the first time this year the school has entered a small group of students early for GCSE English and mathematics. It is too early for the outcome to be known.

The quality of teaching is good

- Older students speak enthusiastically about the improvements that have taken place in teaching over recent years and rightly believe that this has helped them to make good progress over time. In particular, they have benefited from more opportunities for discussion and investigation, and they recognise that this is providing them with important skills for life.
- Outstanding relationships, with students arriving keen and ready to learn, are a consistent feature of lessons. In most lessons, teachers make good use of their knowledge of the students' earlier achievements to plan activities that stretch the most able while also enabling lower attaining students to make good progress. Where teaching is less effective, insufficient use is made of this information. In some lessons in the lower school, planning is weaker and, on these occasions, time is not always used to the best effect.

- Teachers mostly use assessment well to guide students' learning. For example, in one Year 11 physical education lesson, students assessed each other's dance performances and gave each other valuable feedback on how to improve. As a result, many students were able to produce inspirational performances. Students say that they value teachers' comments in their books and that this helps them to learn. In many lessons, this is a strength although it is not consistently so across the school.
- Teachers' questioning is often very effective and helps students to develop their learning. For example, in a Year 13 mathematics lesson, effective questioning that involved all the students teased out their understanding of the topic. Students were invited to comment on each other's answers and, in doing so, were able to clarify their own thinking. Occasionally, questioning is less effective when teachers look for and accept simple responses, involve just a few students or do not require students to justify their thinking.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students feel very safe and say that poor behaviour and bullying are extremely rare and dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. The culture is one of trust and respect and this was evident in the students' impeccable behaviour moving to and from lessons and in breaks and lunchtimes. Governors and staff comment on the pride that students have in their school and how this translates into excellent conduct. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that students behave well at the school and are safe.
- Students are extremely keen to learn: they take every opportunity to be involved in classroom activities and to support the learning of others. Students work exceptionally well together on group tasks and advise one another on how to improve with very little direction from the teacher. When given responsibility for their learning, students accept this with relish. Set to develop a piece of imaginative drama based on *An Inspector Calls*, a group of Year 11 students worked enthusiastically and with the minimum of supervision.
- The atmosphere of the school is calm and friendly, with staff providing excellent examples of how to behave. Staff and students get on exceptionally well in an atmosphere of mutual courtesy and respect. Visitors to the school and members of the public frequently comment on the excellent conduct and manners of the students.
- As part of the school's Christian ethos, there is a strong focus on respect, tolerance and fairness. Through activities such as assemblies and tutor group meetings, students are encouraged to apply these values to their conduct in school. As a result the school is a harmonious community which students refer to as a 'family'. They appreciate the opportunities they have to interact with students across the age range; for example, sixth form mentors work very effectively with lower school tutor groups and support them in their reading.
- The school has been extremely effective in improving the conduct of the very few students whose behaviour has been unacceptable. Rates of exclusion are well below national averages.
- Students have a thorough understanding of the different types of bullying and have an excellent knowledge of potential hazards, including the risks of internet use and cyber-bullying.

The leadership and management are good

- At the heart of the school is its shared vision of 'Every Person the Best They Can Be': promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are central to this vision and leaders are ambitious for all students to succeed. This is shown by their commitment to monitor and support the progress of all students through the highly effective work of the

school's year leaders and special educational needs co-ordinator.

- Crucial to the school's success is the headteacher's relentless focus on the quality of teaching. In joint observations with inspectors, school leaders demonstrated an acute awareness of the qualities of teaching and their feedback to teachers was astute and uncompromising. As a result of this focus, most teaching in the school is good and some is outstanding. However, school leaders recognise that more needs to be done to ensure consistently strong practice in every classroom and the important role that subject leaders need to play in this area. Currently, not all are sufficiently focused on monitoring and improving the quality of teaching.
 - Pay scales are used well to recruit, reward and retain good teachers. A thorough training programme is in place and has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of the teaching. Leaders regularly observe teachers and their judgement on the quality of teaching in the school is accurate.
 - Based on accurate self-evaluation the school is able to identify areas for further improvement. Staff morale is high as demonstrated by the overwhelmingly positive response in staff questionnaires. The school's development plan focuses on appropriate priorities with specific and measurable targets for success.
 - The curriculum is well matched to students' interests and abilities and includes a wide range of GCSE subjects, in addition to opportunities for work-related courses. A clear policy is in place for supporting students' reading and writing and this was a strong feature of a number of lessons observed. In the sixth form, students may study a wide variety of advanced level courses, including the International Baccalaureate. Boarding facilities are excellent, and boarders feel fully integrated into life of the school.
 - There is a limited use of off-site provision to support the subject preferences of some older students. These courses are well chosen and carefully monitored, and have been effective in enabling these students to continue into education, training or employment after leaving school.
 - Students' spiritual and cultural development is well promoted by a wide range of activities including theatre visits, school productions, an art exhibition and numerous musical performances.
 - The local authority provides effective support for the school in helping it review its examination performance.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make an outstanding contribution to the leadership of the school. They systematically assess the quality of the school's teaching and its impact on students' progress and have an astute understanding of the school's current performance compared to that of other similar schools and what it needs to do to improve. They manage the school's finances well and ensure that pay rewards to teachers are linked to successful performance. Their oversight of school finances is rigorous. For example, they ensure that pupil premium money is used appropriately and supports the achievement of eligible students. Governors have undertaken training in a number of areas including safeguarding and recruitment, which has enhanced their understanding of these matters. They carefully review safeguarding arrangements, which comfortably meet national requirements.
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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	126092
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	403751

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1984
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	475
Number of boarders on roll	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Gue
Headteacher	Chris Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 September 2009
Telephone number	01903 814555
Fax number	01903 879146
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