

Steyning Grammar School

Church Street,
STEYNING
West Sussex
BN44 3LB

Inspection dates

22 September 2015 to 24 September 2015

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Quality of care and support

Outstanding

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is outstanding because

- There is a fully inclusive culture with students from 34 different countries living in harmony in a peaceful environment. Christian values are embraced by all faiths and lived out in practice. Students are happy. They feel like they are living in a family. They have fun while learning about themselves and others. Boarding fully underpins their learning and academic success is excellent.
- Staff are unreservedly committed to student welfare. Careful consideration is given to the emotional well-being of students. Bespoke arrangements ensure students with particular needs are extremely well cared for.
- Students are safe. Staff allow students to develop independence and show responsibility while fully safeguarding them. The excellent presentation and behaviour of students are an exemplar for others.
- Students are happy. They enjoy the boarding experience. They make friends. They mature and embrace Christian values. Their individuality is celebrated. They look forward to returning to boarding after holidays.
- There is exceptional leadership. Senior leaders are inspirational, confident and ambitious to continually challenge and improve practice. They strive for a 'gold standard' of care. Their passion to place students at the centre of practice and improve outcomes, is contagious. Students have a strong voice in the running of the boarding provision.
- There is an experienced and fully active governing body who regularly visit the school. Governors with sole responsibility for boarding provide challenge and

oversight. There are ambitious but realistic plans for development.

- Excellent communication with parents, making the best possible use of social media, keeps them up to date on a day-to-day basis.
- Staff advocate for students to ensure they receive the best quality care. They challenge other professionals' practice when they consider there is a better way for any individual student. Bepsoko arrangements are provided for students who are in need of boarding provision due to unforeseen circumstances. Students speak in the most positive terms about how they are supported to be the best they can even in difficult circumstances.
- The enrichment programme is top class. Considerable effort is made to ensure students access the activity of their choice. They are fully engaged with the local community. Students demonstrate care and responsibility toward the wider society.
- Students live in an environment that is furnished, decorated and maintained to an exceptional standard. They demonstrate the pride they have in their boarding areas by taking excellent care of them and keeping them clean.
- Students are healthy. They take an interest in their health, well-being and appearance. They engage in sports and healthy exercise. Students from a wide range of different cultures benefit from a healthy diet.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with two hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings; formal and informal discussion with a wide range of students who board; sharing mealtimes; discussions with the head-teacher, director of boarding and other members of the senior management team. Boarding and ancillary staff were consulted; contact made with the local statutory safeguarding authority; and the school's chaplain was spoken to. A tour of all the accommodation was undertaken. A wide range of documentation concerning boarding was scrutinised. The responses on Parent View were considered and the point-in-time surveys conducted in November 2014.

Inspection team

Keith Riley	Lead social care inspector
Suzy Lemmy	Social care inspector
Maire Atherton	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Steyning Grammar School is situated in the rural Sussex countryside and is set across two sites approximately a mile apart. Boarding is located on the lower school campus near the town centre. There are four boarding houses. Steyning Grammar is a Church of England voluntary controlled, secondary comprehensive school maintained by West Sussex County Council. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum with a three-year key stage 4. Steyning has a large sixth form college with 70% of the boarding community currently studying there. The school states the aim of boarding is to create a homely environment that is purposeful but relaxed, allowing students to develop as well adjusted young adults. At the time of the inspection there were 123 boarders ranging in age from 13 – 18 years. The residential provision was last inspected in October 2012.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding
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Students make exceptional progress in this school. They develop personal and social skills so they can represent themselves and the school to a very high standard. A former student was invited to speak at a national conference and cited, 'I am honoured to be able to represent Steyning at such an event.' Another student spoke of the companionship, compassion, friendship, happiness and laughter in the most positive of terms. Students enjoy each other's company and there is a buoyant and vibrant atmosphere. They are happy to board. Many students told inspectors that boarding felt like family. A parent said, 'He's happy there. He can't wait to go back after holidays.' Day and residential students establish effective links. Students who board see themselves as part of the whole school, calling themselves Steyning Grammar students and not Steyning Grammar boarders.

Discreet management of students' health and well-being enables them to focus on their academic study. Records showed that a student 'has done extremely well this term and shown an attitude to learning that is exemplary.' Students learn how to overcome life's adversities and succeed in their learning. Another student proudly spoke of the high grades achieved at GCSE level.

Equality and diversity is a real strength. There is no economic divide or hierarchy. A comprehensive social, moral, spiritual and culture schedule is set up at the start of the academic year. Students celebrate their own heritage and learn of other beliefs. There is an all-encompassing, inclusive culture regardless of gender, age or background. Students enjoy each other's company in a calm, loving and accepting environment.

Staff use a positive rewards system and low-level sanctions to promote behaviour. Behaviour is exemplary. Students represent themselves and the school tremendously well. They live up to the high expectations embedded in the culture.

Students engage with the wider community. They help with events at the local primary school and church. They show a sense of responsibility and empathy for others. They raise money for local and international charities. Staff teach British values from day one, utilising members of the local community.

Staff treat students as young adults. An example is students taking responsibility for notifying staff of their whereabouts. They are effectively safeguarded while developing independence. A parent said, 'Boarding is really, really good. I've seen him progress in leaps and bounds. I can see him growing in independence.' Another parent said, '(name of child) has matured so well, he has more confidence and is able to talk about personal things.'

Quality of care and support

Outstanding

There is an intimate and individualised approach to care. Staff are very knowledgeable about students' needs. They have a thorough knowledge of their responsibilities. They are sensitive to the ongoing and emerging needs of students, including their emotional well-being. Students are at ease, knowing that staff are taking appropriate action to ensure their all-round health. All students identify adults they can turn to. This includes the school nurse or counsellor. A parent said, 'Staff are brilliant and supportive. I am amazed how they follow things through with (name of student).'

Staff make considerable effort to seek the view of students about the food provided. Students from a variety of cultures have a varied and healthy diet. The catering manager ensures any specific dietary needs, for example, due to religion or health, are fully met. The menu is unique every week. Students from each house are able to choose a meal. Plans to improve the catering include looking at best practice in other schools.

Accommodation is to a very high standard. Students take care of where they live. They are proud to show others around their accommodation. They use the variety of communal areas. Staff listen to them and their ideas about the creative use of space. An example is utilising a quiet room as a movie room on particular nights. A maintenance team is on hand to attend to any necessary repairs promptly. Students live in a warm and homely environment.

Students have a strong, clear voice in boarding. Examples are the provision of a full-length mirror at the girls' request and changing the day a sport runs so all students are able to participate. They gain confidence, build self-esteem and are able to join other groups, such as local sports teams. Staff advocate for students to ensure they are getting the best possible support to promote positive outcomes. A parent said, 'I have nothing but praise and gratitude for the house-parents and the team. My daughter is beyond happy.'

Health-care arrangements are excellent. The school nurse is on hand to give advice, for example about immunisation for students who have been living overseas. Staff ensure students have access to the relevant specialist health professionals, such as an orthodontist and child and adolescent mental health services. There are succinct and up-to-date written plans to promote health. All staff provide full support to students who have experienced difficult and painful life events. Students are able to continue and

succeed in their academic studies while their emotional well-being is cared for.

Contact with parents and others is a strength. Staff use social media to update parents daily. Students make full use of digital technology, such as video conferencing, to speak to their parents and family. Staff consider carefully how to facilitate this, for example, to accommodate time differences in other countries.

There is an excellent approach for inducting students to the school. Students who live overseas are able to access a virtual tour. A high-quality boarding booklet gives students all the information they need. Induction is comprehensive. A family member said, 'This is the very best place for him to be.' Another said, 'Boarding has been the best experience in (name of student) life as well as in ours as parents.' A student said, 'It is like family to me. It's been amazing.' A session called, 'Who can I talk to?' takes place on arrival. Students can identify the adults seen in their boarding guide with whom they can talk.

The student enrichment programme is a particular strength. Students access a vast range of activities of their choosing, within the school, the local community and further afield. From paintballing to helping at church services, charity fashion days to a synagogue visit, there are many opportunities for all students to be involved in the richness and diversity of life.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Students are very safe in this school. Designated safeguarding leads are suitably trained. They are very familiar with the most recently published statutory guidance. An example is formally assessing the sleeping accommodation in line with new minimum standards. All staff, including governors, are concerned with safeguarding students. They are trained and well versed in safeguarding procedures. They consult with other professionals who give advice and guidance in the event of any concerns or allegations. Safeguarding leads take swift and robust action to keep everyone safe while established procedures are followed. This has happened on one occasion since the last inspection. Staff keep detailed and accurate records clearly showing the action taken.

Risk assessments guide staff as to any individual risks. Students are involved in writing their own risk assessments. Suitably qualified staff train boarding staff in any presenting issues, such as specific health needs. Students feel comfortable with staff. They trust them to tell them about any issues troubling them. They feel supported and confident to tell their parents their struggles. A parent stated he was grateful for the support staff had given to his child. A student said she is feeling much more settled, having placed herself at risk in her previous school.

There is an excellent approach to e-safety. Senior managers have undertaken a comprehensive audit. There are excellent systems in place to manage risk without becoming wholly risk averse. Staff are well trained and versed in the latest software applications that students may download on their phone and computer devices. They know what to do to keep students safe. Trusting relationships means students are not averse to showing their device to adults. The learning leader for digital technologies gave a talk to students about the risks in the cyber world, especially the use of applications to

post photographs. Students take individual responsibility to keep themselves safe in the cyber world.

A robust policy underpins the use of closed circuit television in communal areas. Considerable background research informed practice to keep all safe while maintaining a suitable environment. This included consultation with parents. Strategies are successful, for example, students have access to all the areas they need.

Students' health needs are met in full. The qualified nurse on site is able to give guidance about important health needs, such as vaccinations. There is a sick bay where students can rest if feeling unwell. Staff work effectively with health professionals to ensure the ongoing health of students. This includes utilising other agencies, such as child, adolescent and mental health, when necessary.

Bullying is not an issue. 'Banter' is not a word in the Steyning vocabulary. Staff address any hint of teasing or bullying quickly and efficiently. Students, new to the school, quickly learn what is acceptable.

The holistic approach, considering fully the welfare of each individual student, is impressive. Senior managers go beyond expectations to ensure any student in need gets the right help and support. They keep the clear and succinct welfare plans under regular review. Students speak in the most positive terms of the support they have had. Results are spectacular, for example attaining excellent grades at GCSE level in the midst of difficult personal circumstances. A parent said, 'The pastoral care is as good as parent's, it is a home from home.'

A robust policy is in place in the event of a missing person episode. There has been one such event since the last inspection in 2012.

All necessary health and safety certificates are in place. Students regularly practice fire evacuations. Staff have assessed extensively the risk from a public right of way running close to some buildings. The management team ensures there is suitably qualified person on site to test portable appliances. Electronic devices brought into the school, such as phone chargers, are tested for electrical safety. Students live in a safe environment.

The recruitment process is exceptional. All necessary checks are in place to ensure only suitable adults have contact with students. This includes running checks on adults who only have a short and limited contact with the students.

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

Leadership and management are exceptional. The passion and enthusiasm for boarding is contagious. Senior leaders are confident, inspirational and ambitious. They lead by example, demonstrating a respect for others and a humility that pervades the whole culture of boarding. There is harmonious working to deliver the highest quality of care, putting students at the centre of practice. 'Being the best you can be' is an underpinning principle for staff and students. They are implementing the Christian ethos in practice.

The senior management team ensure that new staff are fully inducted into boarding. Staff have the experience, knowledge and skills to perform their role effectively. Line

managers ensure performance management targets are linked to the statement of principles and the national minimum standards as well as the students' needs. This means that each staff development plan is unique. They are able to gain specific skills, such as becoming a recognised coach in a sport which students enjoy playing. Further formal training is planned, for example, in child exploitation and extremism.

Communication between staff is excellent. There is cohesive working in a supportive and open culture. Regular boarding meetings ensure staff keep pace and are up to date with events and recently published statutory guidance.

Care, kindness and acceptance are at the heart of the principles of the school. Clearly, these are applied exceptionally well in day-to-day living. Equality and diversity are particular strengths. A national charity recognises the school as a champion in tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Nevertheless, equality is still on the plan for further development. Students have recently hosted an 'equalities day' and made a DVD on equality. A student chose to publish a children's book on diversity. There is a collective worship development plan for students of all faiths. A student said, 'The experience gives us insight into what an organic and healthy community works like. We experience multi-national friendship.'

Boarding is an essential and valued part of the school. The head-teacher has a leading role in a national boarding association. A change in management structure has strengthened the residential provision. The director of boarding is part of the senior management team. House-parents no longer have teaching responsibilities and can focus on boarding. An independent visitor said they are 'a model of professionalism'. Another said that students who board appreciate the opportunity to thrive, both socially and academically.

Staff are on hand to observe the idiosyncrasies of each student. They are perceptive to any subtle changes so they can quickly offer the right support. Any potential incident is well documented and reviewed by the management team. There is a robust response. They review practice. Excellent standards of behaviour are further promoted by the strategies that are implemented. There are successful outcomes. Other school leaders who visited the school said, 'Students felt happy, safe, secure and well supported by your knowledgeable staff.'

Other professionals, parents and local authorities form excellent relationships with senior leaders and boarding staff. Other senior leaders visit the school and give a professional opinion on the quality of care. Any complaints are taken seriously. Staff take robust action to address any issues. Continual improvement is the underlying ethos. The senior management team have a thorough self-evaluation in place. The management team already knew any minor issues, identified during the inspection.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	126092
Social care unique reference number	SC042673
DfE registration number	10006328

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.

Type of school	Secondary
Number of boarders on roll	123
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	13-18
Headteacher	Mr Nick Wergan
Date of previous boarding inspection	20-22 October 2012
Telephone number	01903 814555
Email address	sgs@sgs.uk.net

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