



Steyning Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126092
Local Authority West Sussex
Inspection number 293467
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Stephen Long HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Shooting Field
School category	Voluntary controlled		Steyning
Age range of pupils	11–18		BN44 3RX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01903 814555
Number on roll (school)	1670	Fax number	01903 879146
Number on roll (6th form)	447		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Richard Downs
		Headteacher	John Peat / M Ashley
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	1–2 November 2006	293467

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and six Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Steyning Grammar School is a non-selective Church of England school. It is much larger than most secondary schools and has two sites within the town of Steyning: one for students up to Year 8 and one for older students. There is boarding provision for up to 70 students, more than half of whom are in the sixth form and most of whom are from overseas. Most students are White British and come from relatively privileged backgrounds. Very few students speak English as an additional language and fewer than average have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has specialist status for technology. The majority of students join the school in Year 7 but a second cohort joins in Year 9 from a local intermediate school. The headteacher left at Easter and the school's two deputy headteachers are jointly filling the role of acting headteacher pending the appointment of a substantive replacement.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Steyning Grammar is a good school with a number of outstanding features, especially in the sixth form. It makes excellent links with other agencies and providers of education to support and include its students. Leadership and management are good. Monitoring and evaluation, including by middle managers such as subject leaders, are effective. It gives the school an accurate overall understanding of what needs to be improved further. The two acting headteachers maintain a strong pace for improvement. Progress since the last inspection has been good and the school has good capacity to go further.

Achievement and standards are good and have improved over the last five years. Students' attainment on entry is broadly average and standards are above average by the end of each key stage. Students make a strong start in Years 7 to 9. Progress is satisfactory and improving in Years 10 and 11 although there is variation between subjects. The progress of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is also improving throughout the school with current students on target to make good progress.

The students' personal development and well-being are good and they make an outstanding contribution to the community within and outside the school. The majority of students enjoy school and feel safe. Good care and support enable most to behave well and learn to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. The school is a popular choice and is oversubscribed. Most parents and carers feel the school does a good job although a minority have concerns about behaviour. Nevertheless, that seen during the inspection was good; a view reflected by the students themselves.

A good curriculum, including in subjects related to the school's technology specialism, underpins the effective learning. Opportunities for work-related learning are outstanding. Teaching and learning are good with many strengths although there is some variation in quality in different years. They are most effective in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form, because the needs of students of differing abilities are better catered for. However, this good practice is less consistent in Years 10 and 11. The guidance given to students as to how to improve their work is good overall. Most are aware of their targets in each subject although not all are clear as to how to achieve them. However, careers guidance is an outstanding feature of the school's provision and students are prepared well for their future in education and employment.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school provides well for sixth form students. Leadership is good with outstanding features, such as the evaluation of the effectiveness of the courses provided. The care and guidance provided for the students, and their personal development, are also outstanding. The students themselves make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and its community. They make good academic progress, reaching above average standards in many subjects and achieving well, based on their starting points. Teaching is regularly good and sometimes outstanding. The curriculum meets the

students' needs outstandingly well; in particular it is enriched through a wide range of links with other providers. Students speak highly of the opportunities provided for them and the majority feel well prepared for future employment or the next stages of their education.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of the boarding provision is good. The school has effectively addressed issues raised on a previous inspection. Boarders feel secure and have adequate access to their families. Relationships between students and with staff are very good. The care, guidance and welfare of students are good and contribute significantly to the high standards they achieve in external examinations. The only concern voiced by students was about the variation in the quality of meals they receive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of achievement between subjects at Key Stage 4 so that good progress at Key Stage 3 is built on comprehensively.
- Improve teaching where it is weaker, so that it meets the needs of all students across all subjects and year groups.
- Ensure parents and carers understand the steps taken to secure good behaviour and have a clear picture of behaviour.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and build well on their broadly average attainment on entry, reaching above national average standards in Year 9 national tests. The trend of improvement in English, mathematics and science for this age is faster than seen nationally. The school met its 2006 specialist technology targets for Year 9 in science and exceeded them in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is more varied but has some areas of real strength. Students make good progress in ICT, music, chemistry, biology, art and most vocational courses. They do less well in German, manufacturing, applied science and dance. The 2006 specialist technology targets for Year 11 were reached in science and ICT but not in mathematics and design and technology. Able students have not been achieving well enough in English, and average and lower ability students in mathematics and science. However current students are on target to do better in next year's examinations.

Sixth form students achieve well and make particularly good progress related to expectations in vocational courses, economics, mathematics, art and drama. Able

students do well overall. A good proportion of students progress to further education and higher education. Overall, girls achieve better than boys although there are variations between subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Most students enjoy school and attend well. When lessons are stimulating they are keen to learn; however the attitudes to learning of some in Years 7 to 11 are too passive. Most students behave well in lessons and around the two sites. The behaviour and attitudes of sixth form students are excellent and provide a good example. Students say that the school is a safe environment, bullying is uncommon and that staff deal quickly and effectively with most reported instances. Relationships between students are good; for example they usually listen to each other's contributions in lessons.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In particular the school's Christian ethos is evident in students' support for religious festivals, and spirituality is further promoted by effective displays around the school. The school's cultural life is enriched by the active contributions of overseas boarding students. Most students appreciate the school's commitment to healthy lifestyles. For example they are keen to collect merit points awarded for making healthy choices in the cafeteria, and the take-up of the wide range of sport-related extra-curricular activities is popular. Students make an outstanding contribution to the community both within and outside the school; there are active student councils, and students as a whole undertake a wide programme of charitable activities. There is strong involvement by all sixth formers in community service.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge and, for most lessons, make effective use of data on students' attainment to plan learning which meets all of their needs. However this is not universally the case, especially in Years 10 and 11, and the pace of learning suffers when some students are not fully challenged. In lessons, most teachers use questioning to explore and deepen students' understanding. The strongest teaching develops this further by asking students to discuss and question each other's ideas. As a result they become more independent as learners and make better progress. Many of these lessons also accelerate progress by offering a variety of ways to learn, including practical activities. As one Year 9 student commented, 'We have active lessons that are fun and I learn lots.' However a few teachers talk for too long without fully involving

students or making lessons interesting enough. In these circumstances behavioural problems emerge and are not always well managed.

Over the last year, effective systems for identifying and intervening to support students with learning difficulties and disabilities have been introduced. These, together with improved tracking of their progress, are proving successful. The support provided in lessons, including by learning support assistants, meets the needs of these students well overall, although there are variations across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Good progression in learning is ensured for students entering the school in both Years 7 and 9. Strong liaison with the school feeding students into Year 9 plays an important role in this respect. In Years 10 and 11 the school offers a wide variety of academic and vocational subjects, ensuring that the majority of students are well served by their curriculum pathways. The school's specialist status has had a positive impact on the curriculum, for example all students have good opportunities to study ICT and related courses such as Business Studies. Nevertheless, the skills acquired, for example in ICT, are not fully extended and applied in all curriculum areas.

The sixth form offers outstanding provision of AS/A-level and vocational courses. Excellent links with other providers, such as local colleges, ensure that virtually all students remain in education or apprenticeships after the age of 16.

Outstanding provision at all key stages for work-related learning, including apprenticeship placements where appropriate, contributes well to students' future economic well-being and the development of workplace skills. These are outstanding by the time the students complete their studies in the sixth form. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned up to Year 10 and in Years 12 and 13 but it is not capitalized on in Year 11 because no PSHE programme is offered to this year group.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Strong care and support promote students' personal development and well-being effectively throughout the school. They are outstanding in the sixth form because of the close attention paid to the needs of each student, for example through tutorial support. Secure child protection and health and safety arrangements are widely understood and regularly reviewed. Most students settle into school well when they start and know who to turn to if they have concerns. Procedures are robust for identifying and supporting vulnerable and at risk students. Excellent links with external agencies, such as the child and adolescent mental health service, enhance students' personal development.

Good assessment systems track students' progress well. As one student said, 'There is no escape from meeting coursework deadlines.' Students know what their individual targets are. In the sixth form they are fully involved in reviewing their own progress and clear about the steps required to move on. In the main school, students are not always involved in deciding how to meet their targets and while some marking is of very high quality, some gives too little guidance for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The acting headteachers share their vision effectively with other staff, providing a clear sense of direction and high expectations. The senior leadership team works well across this large and complex organisation, although some are stretched in balancing management and teaching commitments. Those in middle management positions, while not as consistently effective as their senior colleagues, nevertheless provide good and improving leadership in their areas of responsibility. Some are outstanding.

The school's monitoring of its performance draws on a wide range of sources, including the views of students. This yields a good awareness of strengths and weaknesses which is used well to set priorities in the whole-school development plan. The monitoring of teaching is accurate overall but does not always give sufficient emphasis to the impact on learning when making a judgement about its effectiveness. Within individual subjects, evaluation and improvement planning are good. However the implementation of some whole-school initiatives, for example to improve teaching and learning, is inconsistent.

Governors challenge the school effectively as critical friends. They monitor progress well, especially in subjects related to the school's specialism and in core subjects such as English and mathematics. The monitoring of other subjects is less rigorous. The school's accommodation has significant shortcomings, for example, the tightness of some corridors, the paucity of sixth form study space and unsuitable rooms for some specialist subject teaching. The school has worked well to exploit its accommodation to best advantage, however some weaknesses are beyond its financial capacity to resolve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- Thank you for your help during the school's recent inspection. This letter is to give you a summary of what we found out. These are the school's main strengths:
- Your school provides you with a good standard of education.
- The acting headteachers lead the school well with the dedicated support of the staff.
- You are taught well and make better progress than most students of your ages. Progress is especially good in the sixth form and in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Most of you enjoy coming to school, attend well and enjoy learning.
- Most of you know what your learning targets are although not always how to achieve them. However, sixth form students understand well how to move on.
- The school makes a good job of tracking your progress to check you are on target.
- Staff take good care of you. You told us you feel safe and secure at school.
- You are trying to live healthy lives and to eat well when buying your lunch.
- You get on well with each other. Your behaviour is good in most lessons and around the school, although some of your parents and carers think this is not the case. Sixth formers set a very good example to younger students.
- You make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and the community outside, for example by getting involved in the student councils and charity fund raising. The sixth formers play a leading role in this work.
- The school provides a good range of subjects in the main school and an excellent range in the sixth form. You also have excellent opportunities to learn about the world of work through work experience.
- Although your school is good, it could be even better and so we have identified three steps it should take to improve:
- Help you do equally well in all subjects, especially in Years 10 and 11 where, at the moment, progress is better in some subjects than others.
- Make sure that the quality of teaching in all lessons matches that of the best, and you can help by approaching all lessons with a determination to do well.
- Ensure that your parents or carers know about all the work the school does to support you in behaving well.

Thank you again and I wish you the very best for your future.