

# Steyping Grammar School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126092
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	340920
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Gale HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1998
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	475
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Downes
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Peat
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Shooting Field Steyping BN44 3RX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01903 814555
<b>Fax number</b>	01903 879146
<b>Email address</b>	sgs@sgs.uk.net

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, risk assessments, policy documents, student questionnaires, staff questionnaires, students' books and 325 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following: whether all groups of students in the school make good progress the impact of the school's care, guidance and support on Every Child Matters outcomes in the school for all groups of students, including the most vulnerable the capacity of the school leadership to bring about further improvement the work of the school's sixth form.

## Information about 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. Very few students speak English as an additional language and fewer than average have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A specialist facility for students with specific learning difficulties is integrated into the curriculum; the percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average. The school is a specialist technology college and also has an applied learning specialism. The majority of students join the school in Year 7 and a second cohort joins in Year 9 from a local intermediate school.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Steyning Grammar School provides its students with a good education. Several aspects of its work are outstanding, most notably the care, guidance and support of individual students. One parent, typical of many others, noted, 'One of my children has dyslexia and Steyning Grammar have been wonderful with supporting him and improving his confidence.' Directed by the passionate leadership of the Headteacher, students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds are impeccably supported and nurtured through a range of integrated strategies and commissioned services. An example of this is the way the school uses its outstanding boarding facility to support looked after children. The school places the promotion of equal opportunities at the heart of its work and there is no evidence of discrimination. The school's policies and procedures to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of students are outstanding. Students are very proud of and committed to their school community; their outstanding involvement in the school and interaction in the wider community are highly valued. This contributes to an extremely cohesive community. Students enter the school with slightly above average prior attainment and make good progress in their time in the school to attain above average standards. Vulnerable students, including those who are looked after or from Traveller backgrounds, are very well supported and integrated and make progress in line with their peers. Standards are high on many measures including the important five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. Learning in class is generally good because of effective teaching. However, there is some variation in the quality across and within departmental areas. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching through peer coaching. However, some of the minor deficiencies that made it good rather than outstanding at the time of the last inspection still persist in some classrooms. Information about the students' current attainment is not routinely used to plan different activities to meet the needs of the range of abilities in a lesson. Teachers have a tendency to spend too long talking to students. The good curriculum is responsive to individual need and being rapidly developed in line with national initiatives including the 14 to 19 Diploma. Extra-curricular opportunities are numerous and well attended despite the need for many students to use late buses. Steyning Grammar School offers a very safe environment. Any rare bullying incidents are dealt with effectively and promptly. Behaviour seen during the inspection was very good in class and around the site but a minority of students, staff and parents expressed some concern about the behaviour of a few, especially with regard to low-level disruption. Student response to the school's health promotion work is outstanding. The school's concern for the spiritual growth of its students is deeply embedded. This, combined with a very well-integrated and effective multicultural sixth form, encourages students of all

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ages to think deeply about their own and others' experiences, relating them to personal values. This facilitates openness to new ideas, an appreciation of cultural diversity and a readiness to challenge racism. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development that is grounded in careful and systematic analysis of all the school's work. The complexity of the school means that the school improvement plan is an extensive document. Some middle leaders find it difficult to distil the key areas from it into their own departmental plans and would welcome more practical opportunities to share strategies for the development of learning and teaching. Academic data have been used well to intervene positively where students fall behind their challenging targets, particularly in the core subjects. The resulting rise in GCSE results, coupled to sustained strength in Every Child Matters outcomes, demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the proportion of outstanding learning and teaching by: ensuring that teachers plan more accurately for the range of abilities in their lessons involving students more quickly in their learning in lessons. Focus leadership at all levels more sharply on improving learning and teaching by: making it the priority objective in all departmental improvement plans developing further ways to share the good practice that exists across departments carefully monitoring the implementation of strategies to improve teaching and support student learning.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Students' achievement is good. Attainment is high on many measures but there is some inconsistency between subjects and attainment has been below school expectations, although above national averages, in the specialist subject of technology. Progress is good in the school and any identified underachievement is tackled quickly through a combination of specialist intervention managers, departmental initiatives and changes to the curriculum. For example, lower ability students, particularly girls, underachieved in the cohort that completed GCSE examinations in 2008, but the school worked successfully with a similar group in 2009 and those completing their GCSEs this year made progress in line with their peers. In a large majority of lessons observed by inspectors, respectful student behaviour enhanced enjoyment of and engagement with learning. Students' relationships with teaching staff are mostly excellent and an atmosphere of trust allows them to respond positively to challenges set. As a result of above average standards, attendance and punctuality, coupled to extensive work-related programmes, students gain good skills for their life beyond the school. This, combined with the excellent guidance students receive, resulted in all students bar one going on to further education, training or employment last year. Effective specialist support ensures that students with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Students, including those who are vulnerable, feel very safe in the school and adopt safe ways of working in practical subjects. Bullying is said to be 'very rare' and

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parents and students say it is quickly and effectively dealt with. Although a small minority of parents identified the adoption of healthy lifestyles as an area where outcomes could be improved, students interviewed were unequivocal in their view of the excellence of the school's work in this area. The wide range of extra-curricular activities gives all students significant opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community, which they readily accept in large numbers. Similarly, activities such as linking with African schools by email, environmental groups and local music projects facilitate outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Common features of the good teaching seen by inspectors were excellent subject knowledge and clear explanations to build understanding. Use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning is developing and teachers are increasingly confident in its use. Techniques to assess students' progress quickly and refocus their learning are in evidence across the school. These are increasingly effective, being embedded in some areas of the curriculum, for example art and modern foreign

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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languages, and developing in others. A tour of some of the teaching considered most effective by the school found students given opportunities to work in collaborative small groups, which they seized enthusiastically. Here, teacher support and peer- and self-assessment with clear criteria were being used well to help students move on quickly. Some lessons are more pedestrian. These have all the students working on the same task and can lack challenge for some students. The good curriculum is central to the good and improving outcomes for students from the full ability range. It is under constant review to ensure the best possible experience for all students. For example, the school's new applied learning specialism has been used well to drive developments at Key Stage 4. Increased applied and vocational learning provision on and off site has resulted in improved outcomes, particularly for those who might not otherwise have attained highly. For the more able, technology status has supported the introduction of separate sciences and additional mathematics. The development of occasional themed days has supported the provision of cross-curricular ICT. However, cross-curricular literacy, numeracy and ICT are not yet fully embedded in the curriculum. Students and parents alike support the provision of extra-curricular sport and enrichment. A group of vulnerable students spoke highly of the good relationships they enjoy with their teachers and the caring ethos within the school. Students say that staff ensure there are opportunities for them to catch up when they fall behind or miss work. Commissioned services for identified students are strong and the provision for students returning from absence is well planned and effective. Transitions are carefully planned, including effective liaison with partner schools. Most students feel they have the right information and time for reflection when choosing options in Key Stage 4, and going into or graduating from the sixth form. The needs of all, including those who are looked after and the few from Traveller and minority ethnic backgrounds, are met very well.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

There is a clear drive from the headteacher, respected by staff, students and parents, to improve all aspects of the school. The work of this large, complex school is carefully evaluated by an effective leadership group. Development plans are very detailed. However, some middle leaders find the volume of initiatives and the communication of their relative importance difficult to interpret for their teams. The school has commissioned training for many of its middle leaders but their approaches to monitoring

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remain inconsistent. Senior leaders have been notably successful in creating a school where students of all backgrounds feel happy and very well supported, and achieve well. However, while there is a shared view of where the biggest improvements can be made in learning and teaching, staff's understanding of how to deliver those improvements varies. The impact of middle leadership is more marked in some curriculum areas than others. The promotion of respect and valuing others is at the heart of the school's ethos. The school fulfils all statutory duties in terms of equalities. Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust and systematic in implementation. Risk assessments are detailed. The governing body is well led and fully involved in evaluating the work of the school. They are increasingly sophisticated in their ability to hold the school leaders to account. The school community is both cohesive and harmonious. Very strong links with the local and wider communities are making an exceptional contribution to cohesion. The school works very closely with parents and other partners to support its students' well-being and learning.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Sixth form**

Students enter the sixth form with slightly above average attainment and make good progress to achieve standards that are above the national average. This is achieved by good teaching from experienced post-16 teachers. In some subjects, including art and design, business studies and environmental science, students consistently make very good progress. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding, committed and responsive. There is a strong focus on improving outcomes with



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extensive intervention strategies, planning and self-evaluation. Good outcomes have been maintained in the sixth form and improvements have been brought about in certain subjects, in performance at AS level and in overcoming differences in attainment between boys and girls. Staff know that students' skills in independent learning need further development. The curriculum is broad and responsive to students' needs and extensive extra-curricular provision benefits many students. Care, guidance and support are as strong a feature in the sixth form as in the main school, with all students well prepared for the challenges they meet on leaving school. Students make an excellent contribution to a vibrant sixth form community, the whole school and the wider community. The extent to which students increase their employability is a strength, along with the effective work experience programmes, as well as students' impressive levels of self-confidence, personal development, and high standards of behaviour. Effective engagement between the school, students and their parents makes an excellent contribution to good outcomes.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

**Views of parents and carers**

The parents of nearly one sixth of the school population responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Their responses show high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. The small numbers of parental criticisms were offered constructively and where inspectors agree that these concerns are indeed issues they are included in the main body of the report. Parents responded particularly strongly to the safety and enjoyment of their child and their happiness with their child's experience of school. Positive comments were numerous about the care and guidance shown, especially about the transition arrangements.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Steyning Grammar School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school. The inspection team received 325 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,998 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	124	38	190	58	5	2	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	95	29	212	65	4	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	79	24	192	59	18	6	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	83	26	188	58	13	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	72	22	207	64	6	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	19	176	54	44	14	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	18	198	61	39	12	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	98	30	175	54	17	5	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	76	23	202	62	18	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	22	178	55	29	9	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	15	199	61	20	6	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	83	26	193	59	12	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	106	33	189	58	8	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**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.**



18 September 2009 Dear Students Inspection of Steyning Grammar School, Steyning, BN44 3RX Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when it visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and meeting with you. We were particularly impressed by the pride you take in your school. These are the main points we liked about your school. Steyning Grammar School provides you with a good educational experience. The care, guidance and support you receive are fantastic and help you develop as well-rounded people who behave well and value the relationships with teachers and each other. The headteacher and other leaders know the school well. They are working effectively to improve it further. We agree with the headteacher and senior team that most lessons are good and this is helping you make progress and gain qualifications. The school provides you with a good and improving curriculum and opportunities to experience a diverse range of extra-curricular activities. The inspection team and the headteacher agree that although your school is good it could be even better and we have asked that the school's leaders ensure: teachers consistently plan for the full range of abilities in your lessons and get you involved in your learning as quickly as possible leaders at all levels in the school focus on making teaching and your learning consistently outstanding in all your lessons. You can do your part to help by ensuring that you always behave well in lessons and work hard. The team joins me in sending you best wishes for your studies and we hope that you all do very well in the future. Yours faithfully Peter Gale Her Majesty's Inspector

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