

Steypning Grammar School

West Sussex County Council

Steypning Grammar School, Lower School, Church Street, Steypning, West Sussex BN44 3LB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Steypning Grammar is a Church of England voluntary controlled, secondary comprehensive school maintained by West Sussex County Council. It is situated in rural Sussex with boarding located on the Church Street campus near Steypning town centre. There are three boarding houses across four buildings.

The school states that the aim of boarding is 'To contribute to the development of positive, independent and fully engaged citizens of our global community, equipped with the character to flourish in their future'.

At the time of the inspection, there were 99 boarders ranging in age from 13 to 18 years.

The Director of Boarding has been in post since September 2016.

This inspection only inspected the boarding provision.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 October 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 14 November 2018

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff working at all levels of the organisation place a high value on establishing positive relationships with boarders. One boarder told an inspector that they can 'talk to the staff about anything'.

Boarders make significant, sometimes exceptional, progress across education, social and psychological areas of their development. Boarders told the inspectors that the experience is 'character building' and that it helps them to mature, gain independence and assume personal responsibility.

Boarders greatly appreciate the all-round education they receive and attribute this to the ethos of those who work with them. The Director of Boarding is regarded by many as a role model for sensitivity, making people feel important and understanding.

Staff have created an environment that is relaxed and flexible but has expectations and boundaries that most boarders accept and follow. This has beneficial effects regarding boarders doing their schoolwork and participating in everyday chores. Parents commented that their children are doing more for themselves, with one parent saying, 'They have brought my son on a million percent.'

This is having a significant impact on educational attainment. Students who are boarders and may have arrived with weaker educational experiences are demonstrating proportionately greater progress than students of the same age who do not board.

Boarders feel able to influence their surroundings and experiences. One boarder said that the Director of Boarding 'will always find a way' of fulfilling reasonable requests. Leaders, managers and governors seek boarders' views and act on them when it is seen to benefit the whole group, although it is acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to please everyone. There are widely differing opinions about the quality of catering, but there is a prevailing view that school managers and the chef are trying hard to get things right.

The current practice around the use of CCTV footage is broader than senior managers may have intended, and boarders are unclear about its purpose. For example, staff and boarders can recall incidents when the system has been used to find out when someone had left the kitchen in a mess or had taken food from a fridge. In a survey carried out by the school, many boarders regarded the use of CCTV as intrusive, although most believed that there is a need to have cameras.

This has led to some boarders feeling that their privacy is being compromised.

Boarders' single rooms with ensuite facilities do not have locks on either the bedroom door or the bathroom door. This means that the privacy of children has the potential to be compromised, and some boarders are uncomfortable with this.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Boarders report that the boarding provision is a safe place and that there is no bullying. Boarders attribute this to staff helping them to form positive relationships across year groups and spotting issues before they become problems. One boarder said, 'You can always find someone who wants to be your friend and spend time with you, we are such a varied group.'

Leaders and managers have introduced helpful tools to identify boarders who may need additional support, including a 'vulnerability index' and questionnaires that rate boarders' level of optimism/pessimism. This monitoring of boarders' care and well-being is exceptional.

Staff know boarders' medical needs well. There are clear processes of managing these and staff support boarders to access health professionals to ensure that their healthcare is maintained

There is a proactive approach to ensuring that boarders receive information and support on a variety of topics such as substance misuse, relationships, consent and the dangers of alcohol. This includes talks and workshops from external professionals, including the police and a gym instructor.

Boarders appreciate the approach to promoting positive behaviour, which allows them to be entered for a prize draw for each act of kindness, social responsibility, and/or achievement. There has been a proportionate response to 'serious' behaviours that combines an appropriate consequence together with support to deal with any underlying issues.

There has been no use of physical intervention in the boarding provision since the last inspection.

Online safety is in place with internet filtering alerting staff to potentially inappropriate use. Managers audit this process and historically it prompted a consultation with Channel to ensure that a boarder was not open to radicalisation.

Current and previous designated safeguarding leads have good relationships with the local authority designated officer.

Leaders and managers are keen to respond to boarders' 'quibbles', and the successful resolution of these means that complaints are at a low level. Those complaints that have been raised have been resolved promptly. However, records are not clear about the process (due to the chronology being held electronically, and evidence as hard copy) and do not have a clear statement as to whether the complainant is satisfied.

Personnel records demonstrate that safer recruitment practice is good. If issues arise, appropriate risk assessments are completed to ensure that staff are safe to work with

children. Checks are also made on all visitors, and visitors are escorted on site if they do not have a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Senior managers have a detailed knowledge of each student and have suitably challenging ambitions for what they can achieve. They have similarly high expectations for the boarding provision, with a clear record of seeking continuous improvement in how boarders are cared for. Examples of this include developing better communication with health providers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and work to advance equality and diversity, such as the appointment of 'racial justice ambassadors'. The school's introduction of strategies to enhance practice around students' identity will be celebrated at a local diocese service for Black History month.

Managers and staff know the progress that each boarder is making. If boarders are not achieving their goals, staff make well-defined plans for how this will be addressed. Managers have a clear understanding of each boarder's vulnerabilities and meet regularly to consider how their safety and security is being promoted. However, for boarders who require welfare plans, information is either absent or limited to little more than chronologies of events. As a result, there is a danger that strategies may become uncoordinated, and that new staff will not have sufficient understanding of the relevant issues.

Senior staff in the boarding houses are suitably qualified and experienced. Senior staff have achieved Boarding School Association accredited qualifications or are enrolled on suitable courses. There is a well-developed training programme with an appropriate level of focus on safeguarding.

Leaders and managers make positive links with external agencies who can be approached to meet boarders' emerging needs. Leaders and managers demonstrate a commitment to learning and professional development by engaging with specialist agencies, for example to prevent bullying.

Families appreciate the level of communication staff have with them. One parent said, 'The school has helped me with every concern I've had' and 'This is a really good experience [for my son]. He's enjoying the school and being with friends.'

There is an appropriate statement of principles for the boarding provision and leaders, supported by the challenge and oversight of the governors.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

- Any use of biometric data/technology or surveillance equipment (e.g. CCTV cameras) or patrolling of school buildings or grounds for security purposes does not intrude unreasonably on boarders' privacy. Any schools which use biometric technology and/or CCTV should set out the rationale for its use in the school's security policy. In addition, schools using CCTV must be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and comply with relevant data protection legislation including the UK General Data Protection Regulations, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. (NMS 4.8)

This relates to the proportionate use of CCTV footage for security and safeguarding purposes rather than monitoring behaviour.

Recommendation

- The school should promote the privacy of boarders in single en suite rooms by enabling either the bathroom or bedroom door to be lockable.
- The school's record of complaints should combine the chronology of events with evidence of how the issue has been addressed. It should include a statement as to whether the complainant was satisfied or not with the outcome.
- The records specified in Appendix B should be maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. This refers, to ensuring that the inclusion of full personal, health and welfare information is captured in all students' written records.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC042673

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Adam Whitehead

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

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