

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Steying Grammar School | |
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| Address | Shooting Field, Steying, BN44 3RX |
| School vision | |
| ‘To live life in all its fullness and flourish as God intended’ John 10:10 | |
| School strengths | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision, with its emphasis upon flourishing, permeates and influences all aspects of this large school. It is applied consistently across the four sites. Students are encouraged, supported and helped to be the best they can be. • The curriculum has been carefully and thoughtfully designed. It allows students to explore and debate questions of meaning, to make connections across the subjects they learn and to develop their spirituality. The character programme, which is inherent to this, is an anchor point in the life of the school. • Partnership working is highly effective. There is a mutually beneficial partnership with the local churches. It has resulted in the development of a chaplaincy which understands the needs of students and provides strong pastoral care. The partnership with the diocese is very helpful. That with the Bohunt Educational Trust is valued as it provides very good support. • The religious education (RE) curriculum is extremely well-planned and thought-through. Moral and philosophical questions are its backbone. It has a clear-cut impact on the way students think and live their lives. • The boarding provision has a highly positive effect upon the ethos and character of the school. Students who board are exceptionally well cared for pastorally and spiritually. Within the boarding house there is a truly inclusive and nurturing atmosphere. | |
| Areas for development | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that students have greater involvement in the planning and delivery of collective worship. This is in order that they can gain more from collective worship. It will also extend their opportunities to exercise leadership within the school. • Increase consistency in the way in which collective worship takes place in tutor times. This is to ensure that the spiritual development of all students is deepened. | |
| Inspection findings | |
| <p>Students and adults flourish at Steying Grammar because the Christian vision is at the very core of the school. The words ‘flourish as God intended’ are a living reality. Senior leaders are fully committed to ensuring they are lived out daily. The vision is central to the school development plan priorities and acts as a catalyst for improvement. The biblical context of the vision reflects the need for hope, perseverance and for flourishing. When the school considered joining the Bohunt</p> | |

Educational Trust, a key factor was the maintenance of the Christian vision. The trust's vision of enjoy, respect and achieve has total synergy with that of the school's vision. The trust provides strong support, and monitors and evaluates the work of the school in line with the school's vision. The local governing body knows the school very well. It ensures the school maintains its strong Christian character. It monitors and evaluates the school effectively.

The development of 'character education' is the cornerstone which links the vision and the curriculum. Character strengths such as curiosity and zest, gratitude, kindness, grit and self-control have been built into learning. They have influenced the design of the curriculum, and the way students learn and behave. They align with Christian values of the 'fruits of the spirit' and help students develop spirituality. Students talk confidently of the debates they have in many subjects which make them reflect deeply. Spiritual areas and prayer rooms exist on all school sites and are used well. At one site, two boys were enjoying a moment of quiet contemplation. There is a huge amount of extra-curricular activity on offer. This helps students to flourish in the widest sense. The needs of vulnerable students are given the utmost consideration. They are provided with strong support, going way beyond that which might be expected. Parents testify to this. They talk of students being looked after superbly, signposted to specialist help and of needs being met. One commented that Steyning had given her son a totally new lease of life after a difficult time.

The implementation of the vision ensures that students and adults are treated well. Students are polite, respectful, tolerant and helpful. The school and trust are passionate in ensuring everyone is well looked after. The trust provides effective professional development and a range of support services for staff. A considerable number are long-serving and speak of the pleasure of belonging to the 'SGS family'. There are many instances of kindnesses and compassion shown to them. In the boarding house, students are treated with consideration and thoughtfulness. A dedicated team of staff, including a qualified nurse, cares for them very well. The boarding 'houseparents' are very conscious that boarders are away from home for long periods. For this reason the mental health of the students is an extra-high priority. Within the boarding house there is a highly inclusive ethos. Students from different nations and cultures celebrate living together very well. For those who are not of the Christian faith, their individual religious observances are respected.

The school, despite its large size, is a very welcoming and inclusive place. Equal care is given to students on all sites. The sixth form appreciate the dedicated hub where they can go to seek support. The wellbeing of all students is of paramount importance to the school. Students report that there is always someone who will help you. In this, the developing chaplaincy team plays a significant and important role. It provides spiritual nourishment and walks alongside staff and students in times of difficulty and joy. It includes the long-established Catholic sisters and the youth worker from the local parish. They know the students well and are highly respected. The chaplaincy is constantly seeking ways in which to develop its work. It plays a central role in collective worship each week and runs clubs such as the Christian Union and Bible study groups. The school has good links with the diocese.

Collective worship is important to the students and staff. A sense of stillness exists when worship begins. It always includes a Bible passage, prayer and time for reflection. It is totally invitational. Some students spoke of the impact on their daily lives and of the spiritual dimension of worship. However, students are not actively involved in planning or leading any part of this worship. They lead in the churches at Christmas services. They consider this participation enhances their spiritual development. When not gathered as a year group, worship takes part in tutor groups. This has been meticulously planned. It is linked to a 'thought for the week' and integrated into different activities planned for this time. Many of these sessions pose moral and spiritual questions for debate. However, the consistency of how these times are delivered varies. Staff gain spiritual nourishment from the 'thought for the week' and from attending the collective acts of worship.

To allow students to flourish as broadly as they can, there are many opportunities for student leadership. Posts such as library leaders, sports leaders, teaching and learning ambassadors, and senior student leaders develop students' sense of responsibility. The students contribute extensively to the local community and beyond. A vast range of charity fundraising exists. Students play an active part in many social action projects such as the Steyning Downland Scheme. They have removed trees suffering from ash die-back. They have worked on rewilding and have helped to create and build a locally sourced hardwood gate for a local estate. They are also part of Steyning Arts trail. A group is shortly off to St Lucia to help with an ecology project. Students have a well-developed sense of standing up against injustice. Racial ambassadors from boarding and Key Stage 4 were commissioned by the Bishop at Chichester Cathedral and have been delivering training to the primary schools and to lower school classes. In the debating society, injustice is a hot topic. Students have taken part in days at the local Foreign Office country house, which has increased their understanding of world issues.

The RE curriculum is very well-structured. It meets the requirements of the Church of England. It has been developed to include a range of world religions and non-religious worldviews. As one pupil said 'It doesn't just talk about religion but dilemmas which real people face'. It is a 'safe space' where deep questions are explored. There is careful sequencing of knowledge, skills and concepts. It incorporates the use of purchased resources as well as those which have been specially created. All students take GCSE either as a full or short course. For those students who study A-level, Philosophy, Ethics and Beliefs critical thinking skills are an essential part of the course. All students in the sixth form have RE lessons and special days. For example, an annual beliefs conference allows for deep debate. There is a collaborative approach within the department. Additional training and support enables any staff members who are non-specialists to deliver lessons confidently. There is a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation by the leadership of the department and the school. The trust is using the high-quality skills of the head of department to enhance the teaching of RE across its schools.

The inspection findings indicate that Steyning Grammar School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

| Information | | | |
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| Inspection date | 15 May 2024 | URN | 148221 |
| VC/VA/Academy | Academy | Pupils on roll | 2095 |
| Diocese | Chichester | | |
| MAT/Federation | Bohunt Education Trust | | |
| Executive headteacher / headteacher | Adam Whitehead / Aidan Timmons | | |
| Chair | Rod Scott/Ray Morton | | |
| Inspector | Marcia Headon | No. | 761 |