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**CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report**

<b>Name of school:</b>	<b>Steyping Grammar School</b>
<b>School address:</b>	Shooting Field, Steyping, W Sussex. BN44 3RX
<b>Hub:</b>	Brighton and Hove

<b>Telephone number:</b>	01903 814555
<b>Email address:</b>	nwergan@sgs.uk.net

<b>Unique reference number:</b>	126092
<b>Local authority:</b>	West Sussex
<b>Type of school:</b>	Secondary
<b>School category:</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	11-19
<b>Number on roll:</b>	1995
<b>Head teacher:</b>	Nick Wergan

<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	February 2013
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good

<b>Date of quality assurance review:</b>	8-10 March 2017
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## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES<sup>1</sup>

<b>School improvement strategies:</b>	Outstanding
<b>Outcomes for pupils are:</b>	Outstanding
<b>Quality of teaching, learning and assessment:</b>	Outstanding
<b>Area of excellence: Improving outcomes for disadvantaged students</b>	Confirmed and valid for 3 years
<b>Previously accredited areas of excellence:</b>	Developing influential leadership at every level (in 2015) Innovative projects (in 2016)

### Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that Steyning Grammar School appears to have moved beyond the 'good' grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report and is working within the 'outstanding' grade.

1. Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

## Information about the school

- Steyning Grammar School is considerably larger than the average-size secondary school with around 2000 pupils on roll. There are nearly 500 learners on 16-19 study programmes. About 30% join the sixth form from elsewhere.
- About 145 pupils currently join the school in Year 9 from a local middle school.
- The school is on two sites. One is for pupils in Years 7 and 8 and the other is for pupils in Years 9-13. The school will expand onto a third site in Storrington from September 2017 and take an extra 330 pupils.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. The school is situated in an area of comparative economic advantage but many pupils travel a considerable distance to come here from a large rural and coastal strip catchment.
- The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic group is below average. Around 88% of pupils are of White British heritage. Only a few pupils have English as an additional language.
- The school has met the government's floor standard over the last few years.
- There is a boarding provision for approximately 125 pupils. The majority of boarders are sixth formers. Ofsted judged this provision outstanding in February 2016.
- This is a Stonewall Champion school.
- The school was recently designated a teaching school and is now part of the Pavilion and Downs Teaching School Alliance.
- The school was judged outstanding in its most recent SIAMS inspection in June 2016.

## School Improvement Strategies

### What went well

- The headteacher and his senior team give the school strong and purposeful leadership based on shared values and a very clear educational philosophy. They believe in enabling every pupil to value and enjoy the process of learning and they place a premium on the happiness and fulfilment of all members of the school community. 'The Steyning family' is a very real concept in this strong community. Pupils and staff have a well-founded sense of pride in their school.
- A clearly enunciated vision for the development of learning supports strong and effective professional development. The school has a sophisticated model for leading teaching and learning that maintains coherence at the same time as nurturing innovation.

- At the centre of the school's philosophy is the concept of developing 'learning character'. This involves the careful teaching of eight learning characteristics, for example through the REMAP programme on the timetable in key stage 3. This aims to address the underlying capacity of pupils from Year 7 to Year 13 to be life-long learners and take pleasure from the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills and to flourish as adults. There are explicit expectations of classroom behaviours, summarised in the 'Steining 5'. These strategies are knitted together in an exciting and very effective manner.
- The size and complexity of the school mean that great emphasis is placed on the coherence of leadership and the clarity of planning. This is achieved through the identification of a small number of key priorities that are continually monitored.
- The headteacher believes in developing a sustainable and strong approach to the leadership and management of learning and welfare provision that can sustain the school on its 'journey to excellence'. This is based on what the school calls 'assumed earned autonomy'. This is a model of professional trust coupled with a firm and rapid approach to any departure from expected standards. Subjects, teachers or leaders whose performance indicates that they would benefit from higher levels of support take part in a process of deep support monitoring (DSM), which can be 'light touch' or 'full'. It always involves high levels of accountability.
- The process of DSM has a good track record of turning around subjects that were, or were in danger of, underperforming. For example, after being in the DSM programme drama is now securing good outcomes for pupils and is a successful and happy department.
- This philosophy of assumed earned autonomy has supported a strong culture of action research in the school that has, in turn, often led to tangible improvements in provision and outcomes for pupils and learners here. Staff enjoy the freedom this gives them to innovate and develop their pedagogical skills.
- Strengths in the best performing subjects are usually associated with a readiness to experiment and innovate. This is the case in humanities, mathematics, performing arts and creative technologies. These departments are 'early adopters' of new ideas. For example the use of Google classroom, and iPads to video learning and offer instant feedback. What is learned is applied and communicated to other subjects via the professional learning communities structure.
- Leaders in the sixth form provide very good levels of support for learners.
- There are high expectations of pupils' achievements. There is the explicit requirement to build access to higher-level ideas and concepts in teaching in all subjects. Targets are set at FFT5 level and there is a high minimum outcome expectation for every department. The average number of qualifications achieved at the end of key stage 4 is much higher than average, at 10.28.

**Even better if ...**

... the balance of number of qualifications and the depth of learning in each was reviewed.

... there was more precision in the school's self-evaluation and in the presentation of its strengths. For example in the way that underlying improvements in the performance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium are highlighted in the new accountability measures.

## **Pupil outcomes**

- Key outcomes indicators are strong and consistently so across nearly all subjects.
- Historical strengths in the core subjects are currently being maintained due to stability in their very strong leadership, and accurate assessments and projections of likely outcomes.
- English is currently still rising to the challenges of a new assessment pattern. Key stage 4 predictions for 2017 are over-cautious but pupils are being prepared well for their examinations and there is a great deal of useful reflection in the department about how the occasionally conflicting demands of high quality learning and high exam readiness will be reconciled.
- New performance table measures have affected some progress indicators, but very high proportions of Year 10 and Year 9 students are now following fully Ebacc compliant courses.
- Pupils in key stage 3 make consistently strong progress in all subjects.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium learn well and make good progress overall. Leaders are pleased but are not complacent and want this strength to become deeply embedded. Progress of disadvantaged students in the open element of the Ebacc was lower than in others. This was due to this group tending to follow some courses that contribute to this indicator where the PP-first strategy is relatively underdeveloped. Leaders are aware of this and are addressing it.
- Leaders are particularly pleased with the historical and current achievements of high prior achieving pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. This is the result of a strong ethos of 'PP first' and systemically high expectations.
- The quality of pupils' learning in humanities is outstanding. This is reflected in very strong outcome measures at the end of key stage 4. This is a consequence of this department's innovative approach to developing pedagogy and their adherence to learning guidelines such as the Steyning 5.
- Girls tend to make better progress than boys despite both having positive P8 outcomes in 2016. The school is very aware of this and has a range of analyses and strategies in place that have the capacity to make a difference. The key issue is the development of some boys' capacity to write at length. The work on developing a strong learning character is a key plank in this strategy.
- Languages has been a lower-performing faculty recently. Better leadership is now driving very good learning. Anticipated outcomes for 2017 meet senior leaders' high expectations for all departments.

- Pupils with special educational needs or disability make very good progress here. Their P8 in 2016 was pleasingly positive. This is a direct consequence of successful changes in the strategic nature of the support for these pupils and learners.
- The majority of courses in this large sixth form are A-level based. The overall progress score is average and is very consistently so across the wide range of subjects on offer. This disguises some important variations in the background of the learners, however. A significant minority come from abroad and their very good progress is therefore not reflected in published performance data. The small number of applied general courses have a much better progress score of +0.57 which is above average. Those who need to retake English and/or mathematics GCSE do well: progress scores are well above national averages in both. The sixth form is very inclusive and leaders argue that this tends to affect adversely the published measures of value added. A very high proportion of learners move onto their first choice university or other progression pathway.
- Retention in the sixth form is commendably high. Learners are very well cared for. Leaders knowing them as individuals and their going out of their way to support learners so carefully are important factors in the success of many.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **What went well**

- Teachers promote an exceptionally strong learning culture here. The high quality of working relationships between teachers and pupils supports rapid progress. The school's aim to inculcate a 'thirst for learning' is successful.
- Teachers work to encourage pupils' use of the specific learning characteristics is impressively successful. For example in a visit to an art lesson in Year 11 pupils had undertaken a mid-year review and were using stop and think sheets very usefully to identify their progress and the reasons unpinning it. Some good displays in languages bore evidence of pupils' application of the learning characteristics. Pupils often showed grit and determination and healthy curiosity in mathematics.
- Teachers use this culture to generate a spirit of personal and group challenge. For example, in maths there are high level questions posed at the outset that lead pupils to look for 'ways in' to solving problems and experience high quality learning and develop their mathematical reasoning in the process.
- Most teachers bring the PP-first model to life in the classroom. Teachers deal skilfully with pupils who, in different contexts, may have been more challenging. A sense of calmness and a concentration on learning permeates the school.
- All teachers know pupils very well and use the Passport system to meet the needs of more vulnerable learners. This results in strong progress for those with special educational needs or disability as well as those with a range of other potential

barriers to learning. In one lesson visited younger pupils were seen gradually learning and practising how to make best use of the assistance they will probably be offered in formal examinations.

- Assessment and feedback are strengths throughout the school. Pupils' capacity for self-correction is strong throughout, and especially in key stage 3 where it has been taught explicitly. For example, in several lessons in the sixth form students were seen to be able to articulate their next steps with accuracy and precision because of high quality detailed feedback. Feedback in English in a key stage 4 lesson visited was challenging and stimulating. In a Year 7 science lesson visited test outcomes were used forensically by pupils and to great effect. In music several groups were witnessed working independently, all receiving excellent feedback as they worked together. This is the result of a continually refined school-wide model of feedback recognising the context of different subjects.
- Questioning is often used very well. There is little or no spoon-feeding and some good examples were seen of the use of questioning to promote very secure progress. For example in languages a teacher scaffolded an understanding of sentence structure via close, skilful and rapid questioning. When pupils moved into paired work they demonstrated the same skills with a genuine sense of care about the grammar.
- Digital resources play a key role. 'Show my homework' is used independently by students to consolidate and extend their learning, Google classroom is used in similar ways to encourage and support independence in learning and channel curiosity.
- Several examples were seen of teachers enabling pupils to work both independently and collaboratively as appropriate on different tasks in lessons. Everyone was clear what they were doing and why. For example, in a Year 13 photography lesson, learners were seen working in pairs to coach each other towards ideal responses to the requirements of an aspect of the examination. Many boys enjoy the greater sense of self-determination they have and are better engaged as a consequence.
- Very good behaviour and high levels of motivation support very good learning. The Steyning 5 model is used flexibly and successfully. The combination of being clear about expectations and giving teachers the autonomy to take risks works here!

#### **Even better if ...**

... the outstanding practice observed was embedded fully in all classrooms.

... the most-able pupils experienced everywhere the high levels of academic challenge witnessed in many lessons.

... more subjects in the sixth form considered adopting some of the rigorous approaches taken to supporting good progress in A level chemistry.

## Quality of Area of Excellence

### Improving outcomes for disadvantaged students

#### Why has this area been identified as a strength?

Historically, outcomes for this group have been low. This was due to a lack of focus in the actions being brought to bear. A recent passionate and strong focus on the needs of this group using the considerable strengths in leadership and management, has made a significant improvement. The school feels a strong sense of moral responsibility to do the very best for all pupils and believes that this is a particularly group where a successful response will make a significant difference to these young people's lives.

#### What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

- Responsibility for this aspect of the school's work lies in the senior team.
- It has high status. It is one of a small number of key priorities in the school development plan. It features explicitly on all department development plans.
- Responses are characterized by a real focus, specifically on three areas: improving academic outcomes; reducing exclusions; improving attendance.
- There are dedicated facilities within the school (such as the Cuthman Centre) to provide ready access to help and support.
- The emphasis on action research has been brought to bear on this issue. Funded research opportunities provide teachers and support colleagues to investigate the effectiveness of EEF strategies and other bespoke strategies to support the three areas of focus.
- This research thinking has led to the development of a Pupil Premium Passport (Bursary Passport) to support class teachers in a better understanding of the needs of this group, and to track interventions and the impact of spending.
- There is good collaborative research-based work underway with local primary schools.
- 'PP-first' means that all teachers have the needs of this group 'at the front and centre' of their thinking. For example, disadvantaged pupils receive pre-populated invitations to parents' evenings.
- There are strong links with the learning characteristics programme established here.
- Attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been low historically, however the attendance of a very small number of pupils with extreme personal circumstances skews this figure.
- All students' aspirations are supported with one-to-one careers advice and workshops. The most able disadvantaged learners are supported to aspire to Russell Group universities through work with the Brilliant Club with a range of universities. This involves PhD students working with disadvantaged students, and organising visits to the university.
- There has been the development of support strategies for Bursary students. First in family is also tracked.
- The Futures First scheme prioritises the needs of this group.

- There are established plans to sustain the good work begun throughout the curriculum. Good plans are in place to capitalise on the school's recently acquired Teaching School status in their work with other schools in the alliance and beyond.

**What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?**

- There is a clear and convincing positive upward trend in the progress being made by pupils eligible for the pupil premium over the last few years. This has translated into much better attainment by the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium learn well and make good progress. At the end of 2016 their progress matched the progress of others nationally. More able disadvantaged pupils did particularly well. If the old VA measure is used, to take account of the impact of the new curriculum, this group did very well in 2016 with a modeled VA of 1007. The outcomes for this group, as with all pupils, are achieved against a demanding curriculum structure.
- Disadvantaged pupils are currently set to achieve well. The proportions making expected and more than expected progress in English and mathematics against the school's flight path model are high, particularly in mathematics.
- Gaps in the sixth form are small. Similar numbers of Bursary pupils to others are making the expected progress in their 16-19 study programme.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils moving onto sustained further education or employment with training has been in line with national figures in the past but is improving due to an emphasis on this group's needs in careers advice and guidance and relentless practical support for their aspirations.
- The school has reached out to others locally. For example, a character-based project has supported The Chanctonbury Challenge, aimed to improve the resilience of Year 5 pupils eligible for the pupil premium. Leaders have worked in a Challenge Partner HPA PP review in a local hub school. The school is a member of the Brighton and Hove pupil premium strategy group. Leaders have spoken at an SSAT conference on Learning Character and at a BETT show on developing feedback loops.
- Disadvantaged pupils are very positive about their learning and proud of their school. One said to a reviewer, 'I know I was at risk of exclusion and I hated teachers once, but I love them now.' This pupil now supports and inspires younger pupils who may be at risk.

**What is the name and email address of the staff lead in this area?**

Nick Wergan  
 nwergan@sgs.uk.net

**What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?**

Following discussion with the headteacher, the school would like some additional support to connect with like-minded schools nationally to secure high levels of challenge for their work and stimulate their thinking.

**This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.**