

# St Clement Danes School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	136901
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	384804
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roderick Passant

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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1361
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	325
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rosemary Hadfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Josephine Valentine
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Chenies Road Chorleywood WD3 6EW
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They saw 51 teachers teaching 52 lessons as well as carrying out a number of shorter classroom visits. Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, representatives from middle management and a group of teachers. In addition, they had many informal conversations with students as well as formal meetings with groups of students from across the main school and sixth form. An inspector met representatives from the school's governing body. Members of the inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation relating to students' safeguarding and the school's improvement planning. They scrutinised the questionnaire responses from 441 parents and carers, 150 students and 89 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what extent do students' experience of school life make them feel recognised and valued as an individual?
- How is the school driving up the quality of teaching and learning further?
- How effectively the school identifies subject areas requiring additional support?

## **Information about the school**

The school is much larger than average. The large majority of students are drawn from the immediate area. The large majority of students are White British. The school roll is enriched by students being drawn from a range of other ethnic backgrounds, a few of whom speak English as an additional language; none are at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the proportion with statements detailing their educational needs is low. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low.

There has been a phased expansion programme which in turn has led to refurbishment and extension of school facilities. The school was recognised as a High Performing Secondary School and awarded a second specialism, science, to supplement its original specialism in modern foreign languages. The school was awarded Healthy Schools status in 2009. The headteacher is recognised as a National Leader in Education and the school recognised as a National Support School in 2009. The school converted to Academy status in July 2011.

**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?**

**1**

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

**1**

## Main findings

The school has improved since it was last inspected and developed into an outstanding school with an outstanding sixth form. Students' academic excellence is matched by students' outstanding personal development. The school is a highly inclusive and extremely cohesive community.

The many previously judged outstanding features have been maintained or enhanced further. Attainment continues to improve; it is high and in some years and subjects, exceptionally so. The key improvement has been in students' achievement which is now outstanding. Students make extremely good and sometimes exceptional progress across the school. This is the result of outstanding leadership at all levels. Self-evaluation is based on forensic analysis of school data and draws on a wide range of other evidence; it is extremely accurate. The school is quick to pick up on any potential slippage in performance and translate this swiftly into highly effective action. What drives school improvement is the commitment, shared by all staff, to ensure that all students have the very best of opportunities to succeed at the highest possible level. The school has outstanding capacity for sustaining ongoing improvement.

Students' outstanding achievement is supported by the excellence of the school's provision. In addition, the school's history, traditions and consistent high expectations by all staff create a powerful school ethos. Year 7 students are quick to absorb and be absorbed into this culture of high achievement. Individual needs are identified very early. Very detailed monitoring and evaluation of students' progress, very challenging targets and early identification and targeted support are key to the school's success. Staff have an accurate understanding of where students are in their learning and lessons build effectively from that point. The result is that learning and teaching are outstanding. Students move from one high-quality learning experience to another. Lessons mutually reinforce high expectations and ensure an overall upward spiral of achievement. The curriculum provided for students is outstanding in its depth, range and personalisation to meet individual needs. The excellence of the care, guidance and support for students is a bedrock of the school.

The school's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding. The school holds information meetings and publishes wide-ranging information to enable parents and carers to support their child's learning. It also issues three progress reports per year to Years 7 to 10. However, parents' and carers' information is not yet available online.

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

- To further enhance the outstanding engagement with parents and carers by establishing the planned parent portal as soon as practicable to:
  - enable parents and carers to view all relevant school and course information so that they can support their children’s learning even more effectively
  - give on-line access to the latest information about their child’s progress.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>1</b>
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Attainment on entry is above average but the range of attainment is wide. By the end of Year 11, attainment is high, well above the national average in all key indicators. A steady trend of improvement has led to most students gaining five A\* to C grades including English and Mathematics. Attainment in science and modern foreign languages is high. Students demonstrate mature learning skills and are keen to succeed and do well. Students concentrate extremely well, listen very attentively to their teacher and each other, argue their point of view persuasively, build on others’ ideas and justify a case. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, students responded to the increasing challenging activity with enthusiastic commitment as they sought out the solutions for their ‘double function machines’, seeking patterns and relationships between the numbers and gaining enjoyment derived from the rigour and discipline of mathematical thinking. Students give extended answers in Standard English because they are encouraged to use formal language and technical vocabulary. ‘Good answer, shame it tailed off into using “thingummy” at the end!’ Classrooms are rich language environments with strong emphasis on student talk which supports students who speak English as an additional language particularly well. Students develop independent learning skills through a carefully phased approach, so that they take increasing responsibility for their learning.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. There are no discernable differences in performance based on gender or ethnicity. Higher attaining students are challenged extremely well so that the proportion gaining A\*-A in GCSE is well above the national average.

Students conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion around the school and in lessons. They enjoy school immensely, feel very safe and have an in-depth knowledge of how to stay healthy so that there is a very large take-up of sports activities. Students play an outstanding role in school and wide-ranging community events, taking their various responsibilities across the school extremely seriously. The student ‘voice’ in school affairs, through the school council and other consultative activities, is very strong, for example, contributing to evaluations of faculty performance. Students develop skills of empathy, compassion and engage in debate on ethical and moral issues, work together extremely well in a very wide range of

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contexts. Students show respect for one another and get on extremely well with those from backgrounds different to their own. Through trips and the study of modern foreign languages, students develop a strong and first-hand understanding of the diverse nature of culture and society. Attendance is high and this coupled with students' excellent academic skills and personal qualities provides a very firm foundation for their future lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Staff have excellent subject knowledge which they present in a lively, enthusiastic and often inspiring way to challenge students. Planning of individual lessons and sequences of lessons is detailed and rigorous so that students have a clear sense of moving forward. Teachers are acutely aware of student capabilities and what needs to be done in order to move them on. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to students' learning. Questioning brings to the foreground students' prior learning and is also used extremely effectively to check their understanding. Teachers make excellent use of the time, chunking up lessons into a clear sequence of well-paced activities. High quality relationships and a very positive ethos in lessons mean that students, when evaluating their learning, are not afraid to make a mistake or ask for help. Assessment of students' written work is excellent, supportive but identifying clear points for improvement. Examination criteria are regularly shared and explored with students so that they have a very firm understanding of how to make their work even better. This cements the strong sense that students and teachers work together in an active learning partnership.

<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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Learning is supported in other ways too. Students make extensive use of their learning portal, 'Frog', which provides them with course material to support and extend their work. As a student demonstrating it said, 'We do not have any excuses...' (not to achieve). In addition, the learning resource centre and high quality classroom environments, including vibrant displays, project the high expectations of teachers.

The curriculum promotes outstanding outcomes. It continues to be refined, extended and tailored to meet students' wide ranging needs and provides memorable learning opportunities. The school's specialist subjects play an important role within the school and the majority of students take a modern foreign language. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are very successfully integrated across the curriculum to ensure that basic skills are enhanced across all subjects and for all students. Support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is extremely well targeted. Setting is used exceptionally well in this school to provide smaller groups and narrow the range of students' needs. These are met by high quality teaching using appropriate strategies and approaches for the particular students. There are wide-ranging, extremely rich extension activities and many opportunities for international visits. More than fifty extra-curricular opportunities are available per week and over two thirds of students take up these opportunities.

Students are known as individuals by their teachers and other staff. Their needs are met to a very high standard, involving parents and external agencies if, and when, necessary to ensure that all students achieve their potential. The school has highly developed systems and skilled personnel to support students who value highly the help and guidance that they are given. Excellent transition arrangements ensure that Year 7 and Year 12 settle very quickly into the school and sixth form.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Staff are proud of belonging to the school, feel valued, know what the school is trying to achieve and judge that it is well-led. Strong leadership support for staff is matched by strong accountability for their students' progress. There is, therefore, a strong sense of teamwork and a professional reflective ethos. Partnership work to support other schools provides internal opportunities for the school to build its leadership capacity through short-term promotions. This provides middle

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management with opportunities to gain a leadership overview, thus enhancing their own leadership perspectives. There is an outstanding focus on rigorous monitoring, support and coaching of teaching. The work has been manifestly successful in tackling the key issue from the last inspection, and developing consistency of high quality teaching across all subjects and key stages.

Governors provide outstanding strategic leadership. They are rigorous in ensuring staff and students are safe. Safeguarding is outstanding because it is one of the school’s highest priorities and a thread which runs through school life. There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among staff and governors, strong teamwork, up-to-date training on child protection and clear policies and procedures. Governors bring a wide range of professional and personal expertise to their roles and effectively hold the school to account for its performance across all aspects of its work.

The school is deeply committed to the comprehensive nature of its intake, and equality of opportunity is implicit in the school’s values and no form of discrimination is tolerated. The school tests this commitment through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of students’ performance and acts very quickly to rectify any differences. The result is that the attainment of all groups of students including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, students with English as an additional language is high compared to the national average. The gap between the performance of boys and girls is narrower than the gap nationally and the school is reducing it further.

The school has an in-depth knowledge of its local community and carried out an extensive and detailed audit of its provision detailing its local, national and international engagement. It is steered by an equality monitoring group, the school council and student voice and has outstanding dimensions of quality and breadth across all aspects. The impact is outstanding – reflected in students’ behaviour, mutual acceptance, appreciation and deeper understanding of other communities. Feedback from sixth form students and others show that some of the visits, talks and experiences have helped to change their ‘world view’.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>1</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</b>	<b>1</b>



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<b>tackles discrimination</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>1</b>

## Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. Attainment is high and students’ progress relative to their starting points and nationally is outstanding. Students’ personal development is also outstanding. Almost all students go onto higher education.

Discussion with students confirms the excellent quality and range of the courses provided which include some vocational A-levels. The outstanding curriculum provides in-depth opportunities for academic and personal development using the wider community, business and educational links and enrichment opportunities are abundant. Courses are exceptionally well matched to the range of students’ needs and interests, and reflect the school’s commitment to equal opportunities. Retention rates as a consequence are very high. A student commented, ‘My sixth form experience so far has been characterised by highly personalised learning.’ Target setting is systematic, identifying challenging targets for students and staff and thoroughly supported by excellent student-tutor relationships. The care, guidance and support provided in the sixth form are outstanding.

The quality of teaching and subsequent learning are outstanding. Teaching is often inspirational in pitch, collegiate in approach and founded on very high expectations and deep subject knowledge. This ensures that the students engage intellectually at a very high level with the rigours of the subject. Very high quality feedback to students ensures that they know how well they are doing and the step they need to take to improve. The quality of leadership and management is outstanding because it places student learning and achievement at the heart of all it does. As with the main school, the sixth form’s leadership is quick to pick up any issues in performance as soon as they arise. It is also ambitious to promote even better achievement. The success of the recent target to increase the proportion of students gaining A\* in A2 examinations to 16% in 2011 is a very clear example of this.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

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

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## **Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers expressed strong support for the school. A few parents and carers had concerns about the information that the school provides about their child's progress, the support given to them in order to support their learning, and how the school responds to their suggestions and concerns. The school surveys parents' and carers' views and the results are incorporated into school development planning and have led to, for example, the introduction of Parent Mail to improve communication. Students have an excellent understanding of health-related issues. Unhealthy food is not available either at break or lunchtimes. The school has introduced a further report about students' progress. The school provides excellent information about courses and deadlines and there are a range of information evenings to help parents and carers support their children.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Clement Danes 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 441 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1361 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	265	60	168	38	3	1	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	283	64	156	35	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	164	37	230	52	20	5	2	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	200	45	201	46	23	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	205	46	216	49	8	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	143	32	245	56	37	8	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	138	31	251	57	40	9	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)	197	45	203	46	10	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	209	47	188	43	19	4	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	238	54	176	40	8	2	2	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	120	27	227	51	26	6	6	1
The school is led and managed effectively	290	66	132	30	6	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	282	64	149	34	6	1	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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 pupils' 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.**

17 October 2011

Dear Students



**Inspection of St Clement Danes School, Chorleywood, WD3 6EW**

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. I would particularly like to thank those students who completed the questionnaire, talked to us informally, and to those who gave up part of their lunchtime to formally meet with us. We were extremely impressed by your maturity, thoughtfulness and perceptiveness. What you had to say was extremely helpful to our discussions.

This is an outstanding school both in the main school and in the sixth form. Your attainment is high, sometimes exceptionally so, and you make extremely good progress, so that your achievement is excellent. Your personal development is outstanding. You develop into mature, confident, aspirational young adults, well able to take responsibility for how you want to shape your lives. Your conduct around the school is exemplary and in lessons you engage at a high level. The school is a very cohesive and inclusive community. You work very effectively in partnership with staff and learn to take increasing responsibility for your learning.

There are many strands which account for these outstanding outcomes. Key among these are: the outstanding care, guidance and support provides a solid foundation to the school's other work; the curriculum ensures that the school meets your needs and provides you with rich and wide ranging opportunities for success; above all you have highly skilled teachers. Learning opportunities are outstanding so that lesson by lesson you build on your strengths.

The school works with your parents and carers extremely well. I have asked the headteacher to implement the parent portal so that your parents and carers have even more information to support you and an even clearer view of the progress you are making.

You told us that the headteacher and staff are doing a good job. We agree with you. What drives the school to continually improve is the shared ambition by all staff to meet your needs the best that they can. Older students have helped shape this school into what it has become. Younger students now have a clear role in continuing to shape its future.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant  
Lead inspector

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