



# St Clement Danes School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117593  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 290886  
**Inspection dates** 24–25 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Marianick Ellender-Gele HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Chenies Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Chorleywood
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Chorleywood WD3 6EW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 284169
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1218	<b>Fax number</b>	01923 284828
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	270		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Rosemary Hadfield
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Josephine Valentine
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 September 2002		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	24–25 January 2007	290886

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Clement Danes School has specialist status for languages and is considerably larger than the average secondary school. It has a large sixth form. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. Very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of students identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. Attainment on entry is above average. A large building project is currently being undertaken to meet the demands of a growing intake. The school gained specialist language status in September 1999.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Clement Danes is a very good school with many features that are outstanding. Excellent care, guidance and support promote an environment where there is a very strong ethos of helping all students to develop academically and personally. Students enjoy school, feel safe and are well supported. They know where to go to for help and are rightly proud of their school. Staff know the students very well. Provision for students with learning difficulties or disabilities is good. Parents are very supportive of the school and many comment that, 'they could not have found a better school for their children' with teachers who are, 'caring and highly committed'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are enthusiastic about taking on posts of responsibility, acting as 'buddies' and mentoring younger students. Many raise money for charities, and take part in sporting activities and after-school clubs.

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in addressing the areas identified for improvement. It has put in place some excellent systems to monitor students' progress and academic tracking is used very well to help students improve. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is now satisfactory although the school is aware of the need to raise standards further. Attendance is good and behaviour is excellent, in and out of lessons. Standards are well above average and students' achievement is good. The school has made significant improvements over the past three years in the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades in GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics.

Teaching is effective with some excellent features. A strong focus on improving teaching and learning, such as through the Think Tank project, has led to very good planning in many lessons. However, in a few lessons, activities are not always challenging enough, leading to some passivity and slow learning for less self-motivated students. The very good opportunities provided by the curriculum meet the diverse needs of students and plans are in hand to improve vocational provision. Citizenship is well integrated into the curriculum and the life of the school. Language college status has led to increased resources, improved learning environment and rich extra-curricular provision, jointly planned with other subjects, such as art and history. Standards in modern foreign languages are above average.

The headteacher provides outstanding personal leadership and is highly respected by staff and students. She is supported very well by a team of skilful senior managers. Heads of faculty undertake detailed monitoring and evaluation of their curriculum areas and work with each other to share good practice. There is a strong culture of high achievement and continuous improvement. Governors are outstanding, providing excellent support and good challenge to the school. The school has excellent capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is growing and is very popular with students. Standards are a little above national levels and students make good progress over their time in the sixth form. A high proportion continue into the sixth form from Year 11 and a large number go on to university.

Students are very positive about the sixth form. They play a full part in the life of the wider school, for example organising charity events and acting as mentors for younger students. The curriculum is excellent, with very good breadth of subject choice and personal guidance. Students are very well cared for. Their progress is regularly and carefully monitored. Teaching is good with outstanding features. Careers guidance is very good, particularly in the very thorough preparation students receive for university application.

The sixth form is very well led and managed. The sixth form director provides outstanding leadership, particularly in the clarity of the information he gathers on the quality of teaching and students' progress. Social and recreational opportunities are outstanding. The new sixth form building now provides an excellent base for learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the level of challenge in some lessons and share the very good practice to bring the satisfactory teaching to the level of the best.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Achievement is good. Standards achieved by students joining the school in Year 7 are above average, though the range of their ability is very wide. Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 have been well above average in recent years. From years 7 to 11, students make good progress and there is no marked difference in the performance of any group of students. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress. Boys achieve less well than girls, in line with the national picture.

GCSE results are very high, compared with the national average. The school is in the top 50 schools nationally for improving its results in 2006. This rising trend has yielded an 87% pass rate at 5+ grades A\* - C in 2006 and an overall improvement of 20% over the last three years in attainment at 5+ grades A\* - C, including English and mathematics. The introduction of a group individual education plan to address the underachievement of a few students is promoting collective responsibility for success. Specialist language college targets have been mostly met, although there was a dip in the French results in 2005.

Standards in the sixth form are a little above average and students make generally good progress over this stage. The school took vigorous action to improve examination

results when, as anticipated, they declined in the last two years. Results at AS-level have already recovered and current data suggest much improved performance at A2-level in 2007.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, cultural, moral and social development is good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. The number of exclusions is higher than might be expected but that is due to the school's policy of zero tolerance of unacceptable behaviour. Attendance is above average. Students enjoy their education very much. About three-quarters of students progress to the sixth form and the majority in the sixth form go on to higher education. Students understand safe practices and adopt healthy lifestyles, with many involved in sport and recreational activities. Students are very courteous and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. Many take responsibility as librarians, school council members and sports captains. All members of the sixth form take part in community service, either within the school or the local community. Students have very good relationships with adults and each other. They learn about their rights and responsibilities very well. They develop into mature well-rounded individuals and are prepared very effectively for future studies or work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning in the main school and the sixth form are good, with much outstanding practice. The excellent teaching enthuses and inspires students. The high level of challenge in most lessons enables students to think for themselves and make rapid progress. The school wants to improve consistency across all areas and is working hard to develop teaching and learning further. Consequently, lessons are well planned with clear purpose shared with and understood by students. Teachers are well informed specialists and convey their very good knowledge to students in an interesting and understandable way. Teachers establish positive relationships and insist upon high standards, helped by the very good attitude and behaviour of students. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, teachers planned lessons less well, activities were not well managed or were not sufficiently challenging. Consequently some students were too passive, with instances of restless behaviour during discussion and group work, particularly in life skills.

The school has placed considerable emphasis on teachers using ongoing assessment to show students how they can improve their work. Students comment positively on

teachers' efforts to keep them informed and while still being developed, good practice exists across most subject areas.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. The sixth form curriculum is very strong, with a wide range of opportunities offered to students. Thirty-one different course choices cover all major subject areas and include music technology, two applied courses in business and ICT as well as photography and Italian offered in local consortium schools. This extensive programme is enhanced by a well planned enrichment programme and community service.

St Clement Danes specialist languages status significantly enhances the curriculum. Modern foreign languages are a significant aspect of all main school students' education and the good range of courses and opportunities for students to take GCSE and Advanced Subsidiary in earlier years are further enhanced by considerable overseas visits and other extra-curricular activities. Students' language studies are complemented by a well balanced programme of core and foundation subjects. The school recognises the need to develop its vocational options further. Gifted and talented students benefit from extended learning activities, including a number of master classes. The school excels in many areas, including physical education, and the arts, such as art and design, drama and music. The school's life skills course provides students with a sound programme of personal, social and health education, citizenship, economic and careers education and, in Years 10 and 11, religious education. Careful planning and some cross-curricular provision ensure that all National Curriculum requirements are met, although time allocated to each aspect is tight. Provision for careers and enterprise education is very good, with effective use of local industrial and commercial links.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The quality of care provided by the school is outstanding. All requirements for child protection are in place and suitable risk assessments are undertaken. The success of this care is due to the integrated system within the school ensuring that all students are well known, monitored and supported in pastoral and academic matters. Consequently any areas of concern are quickly acted upon. The school policy of small class sizes also assists in this respect. Students have the confidence that staff take appropriate action when any incidents of bullying occur. Students' views are listened to so that they have a say in the way that the school is run and can quote examples where their suggestions have been acted upon. Students know how to improve the standard of their work. The very good careers programme gives advice on option choices, opportunities when leaving school and guidance for higher education. Students are appreciative of the school, facilities and the care they receive, describing the school

as one where 'students are loyal to each other' and where staff 'challenge you but at the same time treat you as a person'. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and feel that their children are very well cared for.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is energetic and has a clear vision for the school. She leads a strong team of senior staff and governors, who clearly demonstrate the skills and commitment necessary to improve the school still further. The governing body is highly effective in discharging its responsibilities. Governors know the school very well and make a significant contribution to its development, for example in monitoring its work carefully and in spearheading the programme of enhancing its facilities.

Performance in examinations is monitored and evaluated very rigorously by senior staff and by managers at all levels to set challenging targets for improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate, honest and based on a very thorough knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Equality of opportunity for all students is actively and successfully promoted. Good continuous professional development ensures that leadership is successfully cultivated at all levels. Finances are well managed and resources are used efficiently and effectively to secure excellent value for money. The new buildings, the refurbishment and extension of classrooms in a number of subjects and expansion of ICT facilities and other specialist equipment have greatly improved the learning environment.

The school has been very successful in making the best use of its specialist status. Partnerships with other schools and the community are highly effective, and an increasing range of international visits are very productive.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 January 2007

Dear Students

St Clement Danes School, Chenies Road, Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, WD3 6EW

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you for your openness and cooperation during our visit. We enjoyed meeting some of you and appreciated your comments and opinions. We were very impressed by your maturity.

The inspection found that yours is a very good school. Leadership and management are excellent. You are set challenging targets and examination results are high. You make good progress because you have very positive attitudes to learning. In our discussions with you it was clear that a major reason for your success is the regular checking of your progress with your tutors. This, along with the help you receive from staff both in lessons and at other times, ensures that you achieve well. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which you enjoy. We were also impressed by the level of care you show towards one another and the pride you take in representing your school, for example at musical and sports events.

There are some areas where the school recognises it needs to continue to develop. Teachers are very keen to improve your learning further and, consequently, they wish to make teaching more consistently excellent. We left the school confident that it will continue to improve and keep up the achievement it enjoys. We wish you every success in the future.

Marianick Ellender-Gele HMI

Lead Inspector