

# Cheney School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123253
<b>Local Authority</b>	
<b>Inspection number</b>	354524
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Scott

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<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>	1470
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	294
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Professor Chris Newbolt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jolie Kirby
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Cheney Lane Oxford OX3 7QH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 47 part-lessons, observing 43 teachers, and had meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. Inspectors did not hold meetings with parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and school policies, and analysed 173 parental, 133 student and 28 staff questionnaires. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the quality of learning in lessons on students' attainment at Key Stage 4
- how well the school is using assessment data to secure improvement for all groups of students
- the provision for the more able students and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of leaders and managers, at all levels, on driving improvements across all key stage
- the steps the school is taking to improve attendance and how successful they have been.

## Information about the school

Cheney School is a larger than average school. One in four students (a proportion that is over twice the national average) has a home language other than English. The majority of students are of White British heritage, although almost half are from a range of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In the main school, the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. In the sixth form, over a third of all students are in receipt of the educational maintenance allowance. A quarter of students ' a proportion that is higher than that found nationally ' have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning needs and behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties.

The school has specialist languages status, is a Leadership Partner School and, since the previous inspection, has gained a number of prestigious accolades including the Healthy School and International School Awards.

**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?**

**2**

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

**2**

### Main findings

Cheney School provides a good standard of education, and one that is improving under the positive leadership of the headteacher. The school is a welcoming and harmonious community. Students feel happy and safe and make good academic progress. They behave well, respect the views of others and have a well-developed sense of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle. Good pastoral support and guidance, especially for those students and their families who are experiencing difficulties, make a strong contribution to the school's improving relationships with parents and carers.

Students achieve well in their learning because the school has very high expectations of them, and also of staff. It has been effective in closing the gap in performance of boys and girls. In reaching average standards in 2009, just under half of Year 11 students gained five or more higher GCSE grades, including English and mathematics.

Nevertheless, the more able students do not always achieve the highest grades, given their starting points. Achievement in the sixth form is good and is improving steadily.

The school has brought about these improvements because of the robust way in which senior leaders and many middle managers have tackled students' previous underperformance, weaknesses in teaching and the management of behaviour. As a result, teaching and learning are good throughout the school. There are examples of good assessment practice although the quality across the subjects is variable. This is because, in some lessons, activities and questioning are not always finely matched to students' varied needs.

Despite good teaching, a stimulating curriculum and outstanding community cohesion, not all students attend regularly. The school has worked assiduously to improve attendance, which is average. Nevertheless, there are families who do not observe the school's holiday dates.

Leaders have brought about many improvements, following honest and accurate self-evaluation of the school's performance. Nevertheless, some leaders are new in post and the school recognises that further training and coaching are necessary to help them become even more effective in raising standards. Since the last inspection the school has raised attainment, accelerated progress, reduced exclusions and improved overall attendance. These actions demonstrate that the school has good capacity to make the further improvements that are needed.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and use of assessment, so that they are more

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consistently good or better by:

- ensuring teachers use day-to-day assessments to provide activities that are challenging and carefully matched to students' varied needs, and to clearly 'signpost' students' 'next steps'
- making questioning more probing in lessons to give students opportunities to develop and explain their ideas fully and enable them to be more responsible for their own learning, particularly the more able students
- intensifying the programme for spreading good practice in assessment throughout the school, by coaching and mentoring.
- Work more intensively with families to improve attendance and punctuality by:
  - reducing extended breaks in term time and only allowing time off school for serious illness so that students do not miss valuable learning opportunities
  - developing further worthwhile rewards for consistently good punctuality and attendance.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

The quality of learning and progress in lessons are good and, as a result, students are motivated to learn because of the good relationships with staff and each other. Their positive behaviour and real desire to improve contribute very effectively to their learning. Most of those who previously demonstrated challenging behaviour have bought into the school's drive to help students achieve. This school has been successful in encouraging students to engage more actively with their learning. This was very evident in a Year 8 humanities lesson where students prepared their own TV news script about the impact on the local community of building the 2012 Olympic stadium in east London. This led to a lively discussion where students, and in particular boys, made good progress in their understanding of the issues. Similarly, Year 10 students showed great enthusiasm for discussing and writing about their hobbies and interests in Urdu. Students' learning flourished because the teacher carefully planned and matched the tasks to students' individual needs.

Students' progress accelerates as they move through the school. Through changes to the curriculum and the systematic monitoring of the work of departments, unevenness in subject performance has been partially eliminated. For example, students' performance in mathematics has improved, as has that in science, although not yet to the same level as the sustained record achieved in English. Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress, as a result of well-focused guidance and help.

Students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good overall, with the cultural aspect being a strength. The school has worked hard both with students, and parents and carers to emphasise the importance of good attendance. These efforts have had a fair measure of success and have succeeded in raising students' attendance, which is now average. Nevertheless, not all parents and students have clearly understood the

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detrimental effect on learning of regular lateness, taking extended holidays or attending non-urgent appointments in term time.

Outcomes in the specialist language subjects are improving and make a significant contribution to helping students gain good life skills that prepare them well for education, training and employment. Many students are keen to take on responsibilities and report the value of the active school council in getting things done. For example, they were involved in the appointment of the new catering manager which has led to a significant improvement in the quality of school meals. In discussions, students demonstrated a good understanding of how to stay safe and they reported that they feel very safe in school. Through the work associated with the national awards, students have a good understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, participating enthusiastically in sporting activities and physical pursuits. Students make a good contribution to their local community by acting as captains for community, sports, international, arts and social activities to over 20 primary schools and contribute more widely through Cheney's partnership with schools and charities overseas in India, Nicaragua, and Uganda.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<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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## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is improving due to more rigorous monitoring and is good, with a few lessons being outstanding. Relationships between staff and students are good and subject planning is strong, so explanations are well structured and confident. New technology is used well where available to make the lessons interesting. However, occasionally students' understanding and reflection are insufficiently challenged, particularly at the end of lessons. Students who find learning difficult or who have particular learning barriers are supported well because staff focus sharply on their needs. A real strength on which the school can build is the effective use of assessment to drive up standards within art, English and the languages specialism. However, elsewhere, marking and target setting do not always 'signpost' clearly how students can improve their work, and questions are not always sufficiently probing, particularly for the more able students.

The well-orchestrated curriculum has been redesigned to meet the needs and interests of all learners. Students experience a wide range of activities, including guest speakers, musical productions and dance extravaganzas, and clubs ranging from fencing to tag rugby all contribute strongly to students' enthusiasm for school life. Each year over 50 trips take place, with over 400 students going abroad to countries such as Germany, Morocco and Italy, providing excellent opportunities for students to broaden their personal and academic skills.

The school is rightly proud of its good care, guidance and support. Students new to English are effectively integrated and supported in lessons. The most vulnerable students benefit greatly from effective work the school carries out with external agencies. Staff can point to real successes in helping students overcome difficult histories and challenging episodes in their lives. As one parent commented, 'Cheney School represents the true diversity of the City of Oxford, where the staff really do care about each child.' The inclusion team provides a wide range of support to enable vulnerable students to play a full part in school life and is increasingly successful at engaging hard-to-reach families.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Progress and learning are accelerating at Cheney School because of the determination of the headteacher, with the support of all staff, to ensure that 'every student fulfils

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their potential.' The school has a strong commitment to ensuring that every student has an equal chance to learn. It works hard to eradicate any differences in the achievement of groups of students. Senior leaders guide staff so that equality of opportunity and inclusion are effective, but recognise that occasionally, although improving, the most able pupils do not do as well as other groups of learners.

The headteacher and her senior leaders know the strengths of the school well. Their vision to improve achievement for all students has created confidence and a real sense of purpose throughout the school and among parents and carers. As one parent commented, reflecting the views of many, 'The headteacher enjoys a high profile in the school and cares deeply about every student at Cheney.'

Governors are fully supportive of the school's aims. They know the school well and have an accurate view of its performance. They challenge the school and hold it to account and are securing more rapid improvement in the quality of learning. The school has comprehensive and robust procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. Systems to keep students safe meet all government guidelines and requirements. The school has evaluated its contribution to community cohesion, which is outstanding. This has been achieved by developing and promoting a detailed understanding of its own community and the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures that exist within it. Through the work with national awards, the school's international links promote an excellent awareness of global issues. Through its specialisms it has been enterprising and successful in developing partnerships with other schools and local universities, for example in the training of new teachers.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</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>



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## Sixth form

'Staff respect and trust you and want the best for you' and we have grown up with multicultural reality', commented a group of sixth form students, echoing the views of most and reflecting the school's efforts to provide a truly inclusive sixth form. Achievement is good overall. The rate of progress is steadily improving and a large number of students are on track to meet their challenging targets. Students are particularly successful in English, history, and world development.

The sixth form is enthusiastically led by a member of the senior leadership team and head of sixth form, keenly supported by a committed group of tutors. As a result of more rigorous monitoring, teaching and learning are now consistently good, and the greater proportion of all students complete their courses and proceed to further education and training. Numbers in the sixth form are rising with over half of Year 11 students staying on. Each student's progress is meticulously tracked and remedial action is promptly taken if there are signs that a student is losing momentum or struggling in any way. Students consider that they get constructive, useful feedback on their major written tasks, day-to-day assessment is thorough and students know their targets well. Through the consortium, the attractive curriculum on offer successfully meets the current needs of most students. Plans are well advanced to increase vocational courses as the sixth form expands. Sixth formers make an increasingly positive contribution to the life of the school, for example by acting as reading buddies for younger students and undertaking voluntary work in the support for underprivileged children in Nicaragua. There is a strong ethos of care and support and students say they feel very well looked after.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

The school enjoys the support of most of the parents who returned questionnaires. Almost all respondents were very positive about the school and felt that it keeps students safe and helps them maintain a healthy lifestyle. A few parents raised concerns over behaviour, homework and communication with the school. Inspectors discussed these issues with senior staff and found there to be effective procedures in place to deal with these areas of concern. Inspectors were also shown evidence of the school's own recent surveys of parents' views and these too were wholly positive.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cheney 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 173 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1470 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	34	103	60	11	6	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	47	27	111	64	9	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	25	99	57	27	16	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	24	112	71	8	5	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	36	21	122	71	8	5	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	14	101	71	20	12	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	13	123	71	20	12	3	2
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)	38	22	103	60	19	11	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	22	106	61	19	11	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	20	93	54	26	15	10	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	16	88	51	24	14	9	5
The school is led and managed effectively	38	22	110	64	17	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	31	100	58	9	5	6	3

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 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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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 pupil's 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.**



27 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Cheney School, Headington OX3 7QH

On behalf of the inspectors and myself who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work and at leisure. Many of your parents and carers wrote to say how pleased and happy they were with the school; as one parent said, 'My daughter has grown tremendously in her first year as a result of the exciting teaching and the personal interest shown by all staff.'

You go to a good school that is steadily improving. Your headteacher and all the staff are totally committed to making it a welcoming place. Inspectors were particularly impressed by the way you get along and respect each other's different cultures and traditions. You and your parents and carers told us that you like school and that it is a very caring and happy place where you feel totally safe. Your headteacher and teachers are determined to help you succeed and give you the best possible start in life. So we have asked them to:

- plan work that will challenge and engage you in all lessons, showing you ways to learn by yourselves, particularly for the more able among you
- give you clearer advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve your very best
- make sure you all attend as well as possible, and reach your lessons on time.

You and your family can help by not taking extended holidays in term time, only missing school when you are particularly ill and by arriving on time ready for school in the morning.

Once again, it was very good to meet you all. We wish you and the school all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott

Lead inspector

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