

# Cantell School

Violet Road, Bassett, Southampton, S016 3GJ

**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2013

|                                |                      |              |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Good</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Good         | 2        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Good         | 2        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good         | 2        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Good         | 2        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- GCSE results have shown significant improvement from 2010 to 2013. Pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The school makes good use of the data it holds about students' performance to monitor their progress and is swift to act if any are falling behind.
- Teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding teaching.
- Behaviour is good overall and often outstanding in lessons. Students are polite and courteous to staff and visitors. They feel safe and are proud to be members of the school.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported extremely well, contributing greatly to their positive relationships with their teachers and with one another.
- The headteacher is supported well by her senior team and the governing body. Together they have been relentless and successful in their quest to improve standards of achievement, the quality of teaching and students' behaviour.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is some variation in the quality of teaching. In a small number of lessons teachers miss opportunities to challenge students or to match activities to the different abilities of the students.
- The best practice in various areas such as questioning, checking of students' progress during lessons, encouraging students to acquire independent learning skills and marking and feedback is not shared well enough across the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, including 12 joint lesson observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed the routines for registration and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and listened to some students read.
- Inspectors met with groups of students across the age and ability range to discuss their views on progress, teaching, behaviour and safety in the school.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body and school staff, including the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and teaching staff.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation, including: the school's own self-evaluation and development plans; records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance; and data on students' current attainment and progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 60 online responses to the Parent View questionnaire. The lead inspector also met with a group of parents at their request.
- Inspectors took account of the 78 responses to the staff questionnaire and looked at documentation relating to performance targets for staff, the school's monitoring of teaching and anonymised evidence of pay progression.

## Inspection team

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Terry Fish, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| David Smith                | Additional Inspector |
| Susan Bullen               | Additional Inspector |
| Alan Jones                 | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Cantell is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is significantly above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below the national average for secondary schools. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average for secondary schools.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and for whom their first language is not English is significantly above the national average for secondary schools.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students attend alternative provision at Eastleigh College for a small proportion of their curriculum time.
- The movement of students in to the school at times other than the start of Year 7 is much higher than seen nationally.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - ensuring that all teachers plan lessons which provide materials and activities to challenge all students, including the most and least able
  - embedding consistent principles for teaching across the school, including the effective use of questioning, frequent checking of progress during lessons and clear marking with good feedback to students on how they may improve
  - promoting more opportunities for all students to work independently
  - ensuring that all middle leaders maintain a consistent approach to checking the quality of teaching, marking and feedback in their subject areas.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good because students make good progress across a range of subjects.
- The attainment of students entering the school in Year 7 is significantly below average but the proportions of students making or exceeding expected progress in English are higher than found nationally, while in mathematics these proportions are similar to those found nationally.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, improved significantly in 2013 and is now above the national average for all secondary schools.
- Challenging targets for students' attainment, linked explicitly to their progress, have increased expectations. These targets are used well within subjects to identify any potential underachievement and for additional support to be put in place when necessary.
- The school has rightly had a sharp focus on students who are supported through the pupil premium. As a result of this, the attainment of these students has improved significantly and was in line with that of all students nationally in 2013 based on the number gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above. Gaps in the expected progress between eligible students and other students are closing in both English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported very well and they make good progress from their starting points.
- Those students who arrive in the school at times other than Year 7 are supported very well and make good progress from their starting points.
- The school has introduced a range of literacy initiatives across Key Stage 3, which is enabling those students who need additional help to make rapid progress with their reading.
- Students for whom English is not their first language make good progress as a result of the school's highly inclusive ethos and the skilled approach to rapidly developing their English language skills.
- Students from a diverse range of ethnic groups make good progress because of the school's attention to all students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The students' positive relationships with their teachers and with one another greatly support their academic progress.
- A carefully targeted group of students are entered early for their English GCSE examination. This does not limit their potential and they are able to re-sit in the summer to gain higher grades if appropriate.
- Progress in lessons is mostly good and sometimes outstanding. Students thrive when work challenges them to think deeply and they are given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. An example was a Year 8 Languages lesson where, with very careful planning and expert questioning by the teacher, students were able to clearly understand the perfect and imperfect tense in English and then apply this knowledge with enthusiasm and accuracy to translate sentences, resulting in outstanding progress.
- Students who attend alternative provision are closely monitored and their good progress is maintained.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection and this has led to considerable gains in the progress of students, as seen in the 2013 GCSE results.
- Students' work and the school's records of their progress show that teaching is now good, with some which is outstanding. Teachers plan well-structured lessons with clear targets for the students to achieve. More effective teachers include opportunities for students to answer challenging questions and to think about their own progress.
- Students value the support and help that the teachers provide. Teachers create a very positive

learning environment and there is clear respect between students and staff. Students have confidence in their teachers and know they are there to help them make gains with their learning. Students across all key stages told the inspectors that there were very few areas in which they felt that teaching was not good.

- Most learning in lessons is planned with a clear purpose to meet the learning needs of all students by providing inspiring activities that interest and challenge them. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson the teacher's expert subject knowledge, highly effective questioning and very clear explanations enabled all students to grasp concepts quickly and work independently.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers monitor the progress of students throughout the lesson and respond appropriately. For example, in a Year 7 history lesson the teacher frequently checked the students' knowledge and understanding, leading them to research information from books using their active reading strategies.
- In less effective lessons, teachers are not planning different activities or creating different levels of challenge for students of different abilities. Some work is too easy for the more able students in the class and students who need more help have to wait for one-to-one support instead of being provided with helpful resources to encourage independent learning.
- Less effective lessons are also characterised by marking and feedback which do not give students sufficiently clear feedback and guidance on how they may improve, together with less effective questioning and insufficient checking of students' progress during lessons.
- Students' skills in reading and writing are developed well across a wide range of subjects, and through specialised additional support for those who need it. Students entering the school with low-level skills in reading or for whom English is not their first language make rapid gains with the extra help they are given.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- In the overwhelming majority of lessons observed, behaviour was good or outstanding.
- Students conduct themselves in an orderly manner around the school site and are polite and courteous. They are very proud of their school and value highly the help and support they receive. This view is endorsed by parents, who are extremely positive about their children's safety and the care and guidance they receive.
- Most students exhibit positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They often show resilience and a determination to succeed. When teaching is less than good and students are not suitably challenged, they can sometimes lose focus and wander off-task.
- Students are aware of different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe. They state that bullying, racism and discrimination are rare and dealt with very effectively.
- Older students said that levels of behaviour and attitudes to learning had improved significantly during the last two years.
- Attendance is average for secondary schools and is improving. The school monitors the data carefully and has evidence to show that overall levels of persistent absence are reducing, as are the gaps between groups of students and their peers. Exclusion rates are low.
- The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire were very positive about the school, agreeing that the school makes sure their children are well behaved, well looked after and safe.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is very well supported by her senior team and together they have been relentless in their quest to improve the standards of achievement across the school. School leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They share a commitment to ambitious rates of academic progress and the all-round personal

development for every student.

- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Professional development has been centred on raising the quality of teaching and the introduction of lead practitioners has supported this well. Lead practitioners are involved in the coaching programme designed to meet the individual developmental needs of teachers. They also use their expertise to share good practice with the wider teaching staff as part of the school's in-service training programme.
- During the joint lesson observations carried out with the inspection team, senior leaders were generally accurate in their judgements on the quality of teaching but sometimes were not sufficiently precise in identifying strengths or areas for development in their feedback.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school and meets the diverse needs and interests of the students well. There is an appropriate balance of academic and vocational courses and students are well prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment.
- Subject leaders, those responsible for house groups and year groups, and those responsible for the provision of additional support or alternative, off-site learning work together extremely well to ensure targeted and timely support for those identified as underachieving and those at risk of exclusion. However, the best practice in various areas such as questioning, checking of students' progress during lessons and marking and feedback needs to be better shared across the school.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet the current statutory requirements and equality of opportunity is promoted well through the highly inclusive culture of the school and by support for individual students.
- School leaders make very effective use of the pupil premium funding to improve the progress of students entitled to additional support. For example, the funding pays for additional staffing to create smaller class sizes in English and mathematics, significant small-group and individual mentoring, a bespoke curriculum for low-ability students and the development of literacy across the curriculum.
- The local authority monitors the performance of its schools rigorously and offers appropriate support and challenge. The school also employs a range of external consultants to support the school's improvement. Recent activity has included working with senior and middle leaders to improve the quality of teaching and with governors on evaluating the headteacher's performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body knows the school very well through an effective system of committees and monitoring procedures. Governors are very well supported by the clarity of information available from senior leaders. Governors are very clear about their responsibilities and have ensured that all safeguarding and child protection requirements are met. Skills within the governing body are used well to ensure that all expenditure is monitored appropriately and that the school is financially stable. Governors are skilled at understanding data on the school's performance and rigorously hold the school to account. They are well aware of the impact of the pupil premium on improving outcomes for all eligible students. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and know where it is strong or requires improvement and what is being done to bring this about. They are fully aware of how salary progression is linked to outcomes for students and are involved in the decisions on staff pay. They challenge leaders well to demonstrate how the school's results are improving and how teachers' performance is effectively managed.

## What inspection judgements mean

| School  |                      |  |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade   | Judgement            | Description  |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 2 | Good                 | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.   |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.   |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

## School details

|                                |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 116469      |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Southampton |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 426547      |

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

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Secondary                     |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                     |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 11–16                         |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                         |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 842                           |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body            |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Elizabeth Hale                |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Ruth Evans                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 22–23 February 2012           |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 02380 323111                  |
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