

Inspection of Cantell School

Violet Road, Bassett, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 3GJ

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are exceptionally proud to be part of the 'Cantell family'. They thrive in this diverse and inclusive school. Pupils value the school's positive ethos, as exemplified by the 'Cantell Cs' of challenge, cooperation, courtesy, commitment and creativity.

Pupils develop strong positive friendships with each other. They understand that everyone is different and all have a part to play in society. Pupils seize every opportunity to participate in the vast range of clubs, trips and visits on offer in the school and the wider community. Pupils spoke warmly about how there was something for everyone to get involved in during the recent production of 'Oliver', from acting to building the scenery. Pupils are notably proud of others' achievements. As one pupil said, 'This school encourages us to believe we can succeed.'

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They show high levels of respect for all staff. This is because pupils know that staff want them to be happy and safe. Should any pupil need extra support to manage their behaviour, leaders make sure they get it.

The curriculum is ambitious, demonstrating the school's very high expectations of all pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve strong outcomes.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils display impressive knowledge. This results from the school's highly effective, consistent approach to designing and delivering the curriculum. Each subject sets out precisely the most important knowledge that pupils will learn. Learning is sequenced logically so that it builds on what pupils already know. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. The school has rightly prioritised making sure that teachers are skilled in choosing learning activities that best help build pupils' knowledge over time. Teachers check carefully that pupils are truly learning what they are taught. Importantly, teachers adapt their approach and provide additional support for any pupils who need extra help to grasp the content being taught. Pupils benefit strongly from this approach.

Leaders and governors, with support from the Aspire Community Trust, have made sure that the school has gone from strength to strength, so that it provides an excellent education for its pupils. Leaders are highly effective because they are strongly analytical. Their sharp and accurate understanding of the school has enabled them to identify and quickly improve any aspect that needs it. For example, the school acted promptly to identify why some pupils were not achieving as well in English as they might. There are now more opportunities for pupils to read whole books, and better support for pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. Consequently, current pupils are achieving well in English.

Leaders have created a highly positive culture which is re-enforced consistently well by all. Staff know that leaders care about their well-being and workload. Everyone works hard to remove any potential barriers to pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils' attitudes to their education and to each other are impressive. Any disruption to learning is exceptionally rare. This is a testament to the extensive help leaders have provided for a few pupils who have struggled to maintain calm and safe behaviour in school following the COVID-19 pandemic, including help from other professional agencies. Similarly, the thoughtful and targeted help the school provides for some pupils who have struggled to maintain regular attendance since the pandemic is helping these pupils to overcome their barriers and attend much more regularly.

Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain and the world. This is an impressive part of the school's work. The curriculum in each subject encourages pupils to think about how to be world citizens, challenge world issues and think in an informed way. The well-thought-through and varied careers education inspires pupils to consider how they can make their valuable contribution to society. Regular visits from local businesses and sixth-form colleges and trips to universities ensure that pupils are very well informed about their potential next stages. As one pupil said, 'The school could not do more for us.'

Pupils, staff, and parents and carers are in full agreement that Cantell is an exceptional school that they are all extremely proud of.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at

any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	116469
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10296241
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Glynis Alexander
Headteacher	Harry Kutty
Website	www.cantell.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 February 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cantell School is a founding member of Aspire Community Trust, a cooperative trust in Southampton.
- The headteacher is also co-chair of Aspire Community Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, and representatives from Aspire Community Trust. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority and the school improvement partner employed by the trust. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with the headteacher of a local sixth-form college.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, religious education, technology, physical education and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, visited a further selection of lessons, scrutinised a selection of the work of the most disadvantaged pupils, visited the school's 'learning to learn' provision, visited the school's well-being hub and discussed pupils' published academic outcomes with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, pupils, staff and a representative from the local authority; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors also met with a group of early career teachers and several staff and considered the responses submitted to the confidential staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the views submitted to the confidential pupil survey and met with several groups of pupils to discuss their views and experiences of the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the comments made by those who responded. Inspectors also met with a group of parents at their request and read three letters that parents submitted to the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school policies and records, including records about pupils' behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Serridge	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wayne	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Ellison	His Majesty's Inspector

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