



Notes on virtual SIP visit to Cantell School 17-23rd September

Report to Governors

Unfortunately I was unable to attend in person so exceptionally this visit took place online. The format consisted of the following:

1. Attendance at management meeting with ELT
2. Meetings with members of SLT covering review of results, behaviour and attendance, student experience, curriculum, teaching and learning, CEIAG and Schools of Tomorrow.
3. Meeting with Headteacher
4. Performance management meeting with Chair of Governors, Chair of Finance Committee and Headteacher. (Minuted separately)

Key points from the visit:

- The weekly management meeting with all of the extended leadership team is a valuable opportunity for proactive communication at the beginning of the week. Because my visits are rarely on a Monday, I had not been to one of these meetings for some time though had extensive contact with members of this team. What was evident about this meeting was the extent to which the commitment to outstanding leadership at all levels of responsibility and the quality of that leadership is shared by everyone and has become fully embedded in the ethos of Cantell. Contributions came from many different members of the group covering aspects of consistency, feedback from learning walks and the early stages of the term, support for new staff and urgent matters.
- The examination results continue to reflect the improving trend we have seen in previous years. What is particularly pleasing is the evidence of the impact of the vast amount of work on teaching and learning, the professional development work and the support given to individual students. The role of head of interventions has consolidated the approach to this and is providing coherent support to enable subject leaders to implement the strategies they feel they need. The impact of all of this is not only evident in the improving headline indicators including the highest grades but also in the progress individuals have made over their five years at Cantell. All of this has rightly led to the agreed priority of further embedding existing strategies rather than piling on new initiatives this year. A focus on love of learning and independent study is well placed as shown in the examples of the impact on specific students that were shared with governors. *The absence of progress 8 at the end of this academic year can be viewed as an opportunity rather than a problem.* Many schools (not Cantell) have focused disproportionately on this indicator rather than focusing on every single student in the round. Strong formative assessment, checking for understanding and feedback as well as a focus on aspects of the curriculum that capture the students' interest and engagement are the kinds of approaches that have resulted in the high levels of motivation and achievement of Cantell students.
- The links between attendance and attainment are stark. The powerful data collated from daily analysis by the school has already been used with students and parents via

different versions of letters. The school's attendance policy has been updated in accordance with recent government guidance. Hopefully the recognition of this nationwide problem will lead to greater government investment in external specialist support for young people. *I strongly recommend this [recently published report on lost learning](#)*

- In line with the nationwide trend, challenges with behaviour continue to need to be addressed by the school's policy and procedures that continue to be kept under review. *This [Nuffield Foundation research report](#) highlights the continuing impact of the pandemic on young people.* Though exclusions are unavoidable the number so far this term has been lower than the same time last year and the high level of support provided includes an increase in the SEN team. We discussed further ways of attempting to address the cycle some students get themselves into through repeated offences making the reflection room placement ineffective for them. *We explored an opportunity to follow up placement in reflection with visits to lessons focused on 'catching them doing something well' and building this into the learning walk visits.* We also discussed the pros and cons of the system used in some Southampton schools of 1 day respite placements in another school.
- The school responded speedily to information about the recent availability of highly toxic vapes in the community with a special assembly/lesson A led by the deputy head. Though this responded to a specific local and national problem it was one of a planned programme of safeguarding assemblies which are backed up with communications to parents to raise their awareness.
- With the focus mentioned above on embedding and further building on existing approaches to curriculum planning, teaching and learning the introduction of a programme of peer to peer review across the trust has vast potential for both Cantell and partner school staff to learn and develop and for progression across all key stages to be strengthened further. *I have been asked to quality assure one of these reviews at a future visit.*
- A very helpful tool for collating all of the quality assurance work carried out by each area of the curriculum has been welcomed by staff and with further support consistency of practice.
- Careers information, advice and guidance is another aspect of the school's provision that has developed into a sector leading example of best practice. The extremely comprehensive programme is greatly enhanced by the exceptional range of employer, FE and HE links. In particular the link with NatWest has been extremely beneficial both for the employer and the school. *We discussed the greater involvement of parents on the college application days which is under consideration at present.*
- The immense range of student experiences on offer at Cantell is exceptional. More than 100 trips and visits last year as well as all kinds of wider experiences.. What has developed more recently has been the involvement of external clubs in the community to enhance the large number of clubs run within the school. As well as those run by teachers a number are led by students. *We discussed potential ways of capturing this to equip students with evidence/examples of achievement beyond examination outcomes for potential employers etc. I would recommend exploring some of the examples of innovative work on student profiles which are being researched and developed by schools in the [rethinking assessment movement](#). I also recommended updating the school website to reflect the range of trips etc.*

- Student leadership opportunities are an integral part of the student experience offer with them being empowered to take an increasingly proactive role in many different activities. In order to empower them to lead sessions/workshops etc. we talk about ways of supporting them for example by giving them a framework for their presentations. The interns provided by Southampton University will be able to help with this. *It will be important to move rapidly to a position where full benefit can be derived from their involvement.* Though the Schools of Tomorrow programme representatives will be able to take part in a national and international student conference. *As a further development students could be invited /supported to set up their own groups to be actively involved in topics they feel strong about. Examples that have been successful in other schools include racism, gender issues, health and wellbeing or topics within the wider community such as safe routes to school, care for the environment etc.*
- Date of next SIP visit . Wednesday 27th November tbc.

Brian Lightman