



Notes on SIP visit to Cantell School on 26th March

Report to Governors

As with my December visit this one was arranged to coincide with a second peer review focused on Maths, the use of the teaching and learning ingredients to create subject experts and transition. As in December my role was to observe and provide an external perspective and feedback on the process for Cantell which can be read alongside Mark's report of the review.

Apart from the review I joined the morning SLT briefing. An 'empower' day was also taking place with year 10 focusing on topics including mental health, first aid, fake news and substance abuse. It is good to see that these important topics and the associated risks are being given the profile they need. We also discussed difficult decisions needing to be made to balance the budget which is disappointingly going to have an inevitable impact on some of the aspects of the experiences Cantell offers its students. Clearly the SLT is looking to mitigate this as much as it can. Behaviour and attendance figures continue to be extremely positive.

As with the December review this one was extremely useful for all parties and the feedback from my last report still applies. Specific impressions from this one were as follows:

The opportunity for detailed and rich professional conversations between two members of the Cantell SLT, the Head of Maths and the three colleagues from Mansbridge, Bevois Town and Mount Pleasant was extremely beneficial for all participants. Colleagues were happy to speak openly about what they felt was going well, aspects they found challenging etc. These conversations as well as what they saw during the day provided valuable insights into Cantell for the primary colleagues and really useful food for thought for the Cantell staff. This meant that both the Cantell staff and the primary colleagues went away with ideas and action points at the end of the day enhancing the capacity of each of the schools to develop and improve further. The opportunity for the primary colleagues to spend a day at Cantell gave them a chance to see how the school has built on the excellent work they do in their schools and their feedback and impressions were very encouraging confirming the effectiveness of the school's transition work.

Mark will report in detail about the specific findings of the review but from my SIP perspective I would offer the following thoughts:

- The school is very lucky to have an excellent Maths team with an outstanding leader in charge. Catherine's input to the day was excellent.
- As in previous visits I saw some really impressive teaching and relationships in the classroom. For me an areas to build on further as a takeaway and perhaps consider on a future visit were oracy and how pair/group work is set up in lessons.
- It was particularly helpful to share experiences and the expertise primary colleagues have in teaching SEND students.

- Relationships between students and staff really came across strongly and particularly the high regard in which they hold their teachers. It was no surprise when I noticed the recent newspaper articles about Cantell being one of the happiest schools. These relationships are clearly a massive motivator for students with a big impact on their engagement with their learning.
- We discussed the fact that children do not use money as they did in the past and the impact this has on Maths teaching. It highlights the importance of financial education which appears to have been recognised in the ongoing curriculum review and is a topic students had talked about in previous visits. I understand that aspects of this are included in the CPSD curriculum but wondered whether this might be worth revisiting?

In conclusion this review confirmed much of what we already know about Cantell and triangulated the internal evaluation that routinely takes place. Nevertheless it also identified some useful pointers to build on existing strengths as well as further strengthening relationships and collaborative working across the trust.

In terms of further development I definitely think that this model is worth continuing and building on. It is very beneficial for Cantell staff going into the primary schools and it might be worth considering how any other Cantell colleagues could be involved in future reviews. If not in the reviews themselves perhaps other opportunities for visits in both directions might be helpful.

Date of next SIP visit: 4th June

Brian Lightman