Cantell School
Minutes of the Whole Governing Body Meeting
held on Thursday 27th March 2025

Present:
Glynis Alexander (Chair)
Bhupinder Siran
Emma Bradshaw
Harry Kutty (Head)
Julian Bryant
Matt Bunday
John Groves
Peter Hilditch
Nicola Hunt

In Attendance:
Ian Creswell (Deputy Headteacher)
Rhys Fehners (Deputy Headteacher)
Michelle Burt (Clerk to Governors)

Apologies:
John Draper
Ben Hiett

35/25 **Declaration Pecuniary or Business Interests** **Action**

There were no declarations of Pecuniary or Business Interests.

36/25 **Welcome to New Governor**

The Chair welcomed Bhupinder Siran to his first meeting and asked him to say a few words about himself. Bhupinder informed Governors that he used to be a pupil at Cantell, and is very happy to be here and pleased to be involved as an ex-student and to lend what expertise he can.

Governors and staff introduced themselves and explained their role/link Department.

37/25 **Attendance and Behaviour Update**

Attendance
Ian informed Governors that he had recently attended a DfE Conference, where he presented the information provided for Governors today. The conference was attended by other schools and he had shared some of the things they do at Cantell.

Governors NOTED that 99.9% of schools update their attendance live via the DfE, which provides schools of a live picture of where they are. Ian added that there are around 3000 secondary schools in the country, and only 50 of these have got their attendance back to where it was before Covid – the rest are below pre-Covid.

The Head asked whether Ian knows anything about these schools. Ian responded that some of the context is whether they are from deprived or better off areas.

Ian presented the live attendance dashboard to Governors, commenting that the current attendance for all students at Cantell is 93.1% (4th Decile), compared to 94% attendance pre-Covid, which means that Cantell is 0.5% below this figure. Ian added that the average for other schools is 3% below pre-Covid, so Cantell's attendance is 1.5% above other schools.

Cantell has 43% FSM, with attendance up from pre-Covid, at 89.5% (3rd Decile). Non-FSM is at 95.5% (1st Decile), which is in the top ten nationally, although both categories are above national.

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025

Ian informed Governors that whilst it is nice to know the national figures, at Cantell they are more interested in the students and as such, a main area of focus has been the students who are taking one or two days extra off on a regular basis – nationally this has resulted in 2 million days lost attendance. **Action**

Ian explained that there are 67% non-FSM students, who have 96-97% attendance, which is at 47% for FSM students. These students are dealt with through daily conversations, to get the message over. Parents have been informed about their child' attendance level and what the impact of lost days is on outcomes. Ian added that the other end of this is those students with serious absence at below 50% - which has increased.

Ian explained that Persistent Absence is at 17.1%, compared to 14.5% pre-Covid, with National at around 22%.

The Head explained that they want attendance as high as possible, with absences as low as possible.

Ian added that there are 32 students at Cantell with Persistent Absence, with attendance below 50%. Ian explained that he met with the new EWO (Education Welfare Officer) last week and she was hugely impressed by the lack of students to talk to at Cantell, compared to other schools – although all of these students below 50% attendance, have plans in place.

The Head commented that post pandemic attendance and absence have been a big issue for all schools, but those from deprived backgrounds have been hit most, which will only increase, whilst this situation remains. Governors need to look and question all the time about deprived students and FSM students – the indicators are going the right way, but the point should be to get as many of these kids in school as much as possible.

Ian informed Governors that it is all about relationships, which is how they get them in. At the start of the day there are two lessons, where Year Leaders chase up any absences, including those that the Year Leaders know might take a day off. The chasing is carried out mainly by phone or text, but Year Leaders follow everything up with written communication. Letters can be very powerful, but can work both ways and Ian has told the Year Leaders, that no letter can be sent, that might be a surprise.

The Head agreed that they want a good reaction from parents and when they have a parent who tends to be vexatious, complaining about attendance, they are able to go through all the levels of communication.

Ian informed Governors that 2845 letters have already been sent this year, compared to 2185, the previous year.

A Governor asked whether the information sent out at the start of term, goes out every term. Ian confirmed that this year, it is being sent every term, with the next letter due out after Easter.

Ian explained that there is an internal programme for several PA (persistent absence) students, who don't want to be in school, to get them back in, where most of them come back in via Wellbeing and other straight into mainstream. Ian added that they are also looking at SEN needs for these children, so adjustments that are needed can be made and Ian will be meeting with the Year Leaders to get a clear idea of who they need to focus on.

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025

Ian reassured Governors that they are constantly look at attendance every day and where it currently is and what the trends are and if there is anything that they need to so. Year Leaders and SLT Links pick up any issues and meet fortnightly, the EWO also comes in termly. **Action**

The Head commented that Ian was invited to attend the Attendance Conference by the person at the DfE who runs a Rise Team, to help particular areas and to be asked is an absolute privilege, and incredibly impressive. The amount of tracking and knowledge is incredible and the constant evaluation is very impressive. Attendance is one of the biggest challenges we have, but we know if we get bums on seat, we will do well and the Head said he is so proud that attendance is so strong at Cantell.

A Governor asked if Ian had picked up any good practice at the conference? Ian explained that some of the schools involved are attendance hubs and it is hard to compare. Cantell is a complex school, and there are different challenges in different schools. The schools at the conference were all at different stages of their journeys and some are at 80% attendance, which is where Cantell was about 18 months ago when they had a reset because attendance was getting worse. They looked at 3 years before Covid, when attendance was better and which students needed to be look at.

The Staff Governor asked whether there are any common factors for absences. Ian responded that some of it is due to parents working from home, and people still taking an extra couple of days when they are ill, which they got used to doing during Covid. Emotional and social SEND is also and issue and 56% of the students with persistent absence having SEN needs, compared to 20% across the whole school.

A Governor asked whether Ian finds, post Covid, that families are taking their children out for holidays? Ian responded that they don't really take time out for holidays, it's mainly to visit families abroad, particular around Christmas, Easter and the summer holidays, because it is cheaper. Although this is changing as the fine are going up.

The Head informed Governors that they don't authorise any absences for going abroad, but they are sensitive, as a lot of children have grandparents abroad. They don't authorise leave, but they will look attendance to see whether it is poor or strong and whether they should be fined. Ian added that if they decide not to fine the family, they get a warning not to do it again, but it is difficult as it could have a massive impact on students with attendance below 92%.

A Governor commented about parents working from home, as there is another side to this, as a parent is able to change the day they stay at home with a sick child, so this is a shift because if they were in the office every day, their child would have to go to school. Ian agreed that it is a different picture to primary schools, because if a parent works, they have to send their child to school.

The Head added that there is an absolute correlation with absence – Fridays are vert quiet because people work from home and there are less students in school.

<u>Behaviour</u>
Ian explained that External and Internal suspensions are tracked over the year and at the moment there are 121 External suspensions compared to 110 the previous year. Looking at patterns, Year 10 to 11 figures were high last year and Year 9 to 10 were also quite high – these are students who were more affected by Covid.

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025

The Head asked how this compares to tracking nationally. Ian responded that figures at Cantell are below national – there are more days lost due to suspensions in other schools and the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions are growing nationally, which Ian is able to track on a government website. **Action**

The Head said figures are broadly the same as last year, although some of the internal suspensions are due to students not accepting the sanctions put in place, even when reasonable adjustments have been made. If the student is SEN, they are often put somewhere else in the school, such as Wellbeing, but if they refuse, a marker has to be put in, but they are expected to carry out the original sanction that they wouldn't do before. This is however a low number, and Ian will bring the number of students who have been suspended to the next meeting.

Ian added that the number of suspensions is tracked on a daily basis, but they are fighting a national trend. The positive picture however is with Permanent Exclusions – there were 5 last year and 2 this year so far. Ian added that permanent exclusion is a last resort when everything else has failed, or there are no alternatives for the safety of the school.

The Head said, on the other end of the scale, if you do something wrong in a classroom, you get a warning and then a behaviour point and are then removed from the class. There are anywhere between 45 – 70 of these calls daily, which is really low compared to the number of students in school. The level of tracking carried out on a daily basis includes behaviour points, QA and what the Year Leaders do, along with sanctions – it is staggering.

Ian informed Governors, that they also track mediation and importantly, mediation is down on last year at 800 calls, compared to 1000 the previous year, which shows that things are getting better, with issues not getting to the point of calling for mediation. The Head added, if Governors come in to have a look around, they will see a good level of concentration and only low-level disruption. Ian agreed, adding that Governors should also come and have a look around L2L and see the alternative curriculum.

A Governor asked if there has been any fallout from the vape camera trial. Ian responded that the cameras are outside the toilets, but you can see who is having conversations and who is around. The school has a wand to detect for any vapes. Ian reassured Governors that there has been no negative feedback from parents.

The Head said that we are one of only a handful of schools to keep student toilets open all day and there aren't a big number of students going into the toilets and vaping, but they go into the cubicles, which makes it difficult. The cameras started off with a high hit rate, but it is now really low, although the Head doesn't think this will stay because they are already finding ways to get around it.

A discussed took place around other substances that can be present in a vape, which has led to medical attention being required in the past. A local shop seems to be an issue, selling these products to students. **In response to a question, the Head confirmed that they are working with the police on this issue and the LA Governor said that the LA is already ware of this shop, but needs to wait for its licence to be refused.**

38/25 **CTL & Year 11 Progress Update**

Rhys provided a Year 11 (DC2) and CTL update up to March 2024.

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Rhys explained that there are no Progress 8 measures this year due to students not sitting KS2 exams during lockdown, although they did their own internal data once the students were at Cantell. **Action**

Rhys outlined the Average Attainment 8 score for DC2 which are 4.58, compared to 4.65 for DC1, and although this is a slight dip, Rhys is confident that everything will be fine, as there was a slight dip at the same time last year.

Rhys explained that it has been hard to measure how a student is doing without P8, along with the fact that there are only 9% High Prior Attainment students this year, compared to 19% last year. If there were more Higher Attainment students, it would push the Average Attainment 8 data up – there are however, more lower-level learners this year.

The predictions for High Prior Attainment students at DC2 for Attainment 8 are 7.29 (9% cohort) compared to 6.59 (19% cohort) in 2024 and mid attainers 5.24 (64% cohort), compared to 4.73 (52% cohort) in 2024. Rhys commented that the key message is, if we keep going as we are, we will do well for our students.

Rhys outlined the predictions at DC2 for English and Maths and English and Maths combined, commenting that one of the most significant figures is 5+ English, which at 47%, is above the same point at DC2 in 2024 (38%).

The Head agreed that this is one of the most significant figures – English predictions have been an issue previously, and are now more secure. Rhys agreed, adding that the English team are much more confident than last year with their predictions and have based all their work on the marking after the mocks, which gives them an idea of where they should be.

The Head said, they did this last year, what is different? Rhys replied that the checking and challenge in the teaching groups is different this year, which has given then more of an idea of where they are and has led to significant grade differences

Rhys informed Governors that Maths is also really strong and consistent, with the same predictions as last year, and the team is confident in where they are. English and Maths combined has had a small drop, compared to last year, but they are nearly at the same point.

Rhys explained that staff meet every two weeks to go through the students and to ensure they have all the interventions they need. They constantly review students to try and make a difference.

A Governor commented that there isn't a massive increase on 4+ compared to last year, but there is for 5+. Rhys responded that this is because they target the students, with a teacher supporting them and moving them on with their key skills. Rhys added that they will continue to provided targeted support for these students, which has been slighted altered this year. Saturday sessions continue, and they quite often get support during tutoring sessions, or P7 for borderline students who might not do so much revision as they need to.

Governors NOTED that Combined Science is looking really strong and the current prediction at 7+ is in line with the previous year at 11%. Combined Science at 4 and 5+ has seen a slight drop, but interventions are in place to support students.

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025

Triple Science this year is a mixed ability open subject group because it is a very popular subject, which is moving forward in every subject and for every indicator, although some students may only get a 4 due to it being a mixed ability group and again students in the 5 and 4+ groups will be targeted for support sessions during P7 and during the Easter holidays. **Action**

Other EBACC predictions are shown below:

- EBACC Languages – APS of 5.39 for 7+, compared to 5.34 the previous year. Rhys commented that it is really hard to compare because of the cohort, but if they are able maintain at this level, they will achieve strong results for the students.
- EBACC Humanities – 3.777 for 7+ compared to 3.21 final outcome for 2024.
- Vocational subjects have had the biggest drop and there is a list of students to target for intervention.
- BTEC Sports has very good predicted results and as the subject is now complete, some of the students can be released to attend other lessons.
- Latin – predicted APS of 5.39 compared to 5.34 in 2024. Only 7 students attend this subject. Rhys commented that he will make sure that students successfully complete paper 2 this year.

Rhys handed out a list of interventions to help students get the best results they can, including P7 and Easter and Saturday revision sessions. Rhys added that after Easter P7 will be extended to 45 minutes.

Rhys said that a big thank you to all the staff involved who go above and beyond for all our students.

CTL Update

Rhys explained that teachers grade their students 1-4 for behaviour, effort and homework. Homework is graded slightly different as students who complete less than 50% of their homework get graded a 4 and a 1 if they submit 90%+ homework.

Rhys added that although the Gold CTL group is increasing, the number of students who don't complete their homework does have an impact and continues to be a focus for parents, who have been told that 50% homework completed is not good enough.

Behaviour and effort have improved, but unfortunately, homework has brought everything down.

39/25 **Minutes of the Meeting held on the 12th December 2024**

Governors AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on the 12th December 2024 as a true record of the meeting, which were signed accordingly by the Chair.

40/25 **Matters Arising**

29/25 Sharing of Governor Visit reports

The Head thanked Governors for visiting their link areas, which is always valuable.

The Head explained that departments share the reports of visits in a number of ways, some Faculty Leaders send them out to their teams, such as in Humanities, and some share the highlights in their Faculty Briefings on a Wednesday morning.

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41/25 **Governor Visit Reports** **Action**

Maths

Emma reported that she visited last week and found it really useful to follow up on things she had seen on a previous visit, to see any progress.

Emma reported that they had looked at:

- The continued progress in work to address gaps identified in the year 6 syllabus that are being addressed in Year 7.
- Support for KS3 interventions, using resources not solely focused on numeracy, but which helps to support dyscalculia. The Faculty Lead had explained that progress has not been as quick as they would like, but they are ready to use a new test which provides a students' 'maths age' to support students who are struggling.
- The Maths department has recently had a Subject Development week and as a result the Faculty Leader is developing a new 8initiative that is an extension of the work to develop expert knowledge to get students writing, reading and communicating like mathematicians.
- They also spoke about Year 11 progress generally and the predicted results are looking reasonable.
- Emma also visited the Thrive Hub, to look at their range of skills, which are often at primary school level. It was interesting to see a group of Year 8 students, whose teacher had explained their different ability levels. Emma informed Governors that she recommends visiting Thrive to see the different range of kids, which is good.

The Vice Chair encouraged Governors to visit their link areas, and Thrive as it is a good way to get an insight into areas and so see how things change. Staff are always welcoming and when you visit a classroom the students don't blink an eye and just carry on as if you aren't there.

42/25 **Safeguarding Update**

The Chair reported that she had recently been into school to carry out a Safeguarding Review as the Safeguarding Governor, and as part of this, had looked at the Single Central Register. No issues had been identified.

43/25 **Minuets of the Finance and Staffing Committee Meetings held on the 20th November 2024 and the 12th February 2025**

Governors NOTED the minutes of the Finance and Staffing Committee meetings held on the 20th November 2024 and the 12th February 2025.

44/25 **Finance and Staffing Committee Terms of Reference**

Governors APPROVED the Terms of Reference for the Finance and Staffing Committees as RECOMMENDED by the Committees.

45/25 **Policies**

Governors APPROVED the following policies:

- Health & Safety
- Medical Needs
- Pay Policy
- Business Continuity Plan

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025

46/26 **Headteacher Update** **Action**

The Head reminded Governors that it is a year to the day since the last Ofsted Inspection and he wanted to go through where they are now, using the headings from the Ofsted Report and the last four reports from Brian Lightman. The Head explained to Governors that although the role of SIO is no longer required by the LA he feels it is important to continue with the visits from Brian.

The Head read out the relevant section in the Ofsted report and Brian's reports for each of the headings below:

Quality of Education

In terms of quality of education, year on year we are continuing to grow and develop.

Behaviour and Relationships

The Head said he would like Governors to think about what they have heard today and what they see when they visit and hopefully, we will have seen and felt this.

Personal Development

The Head said in terms of personal development, they have done as much as they can to develop well rounded young people and to provide them with as much information of what's going on in the world, with all the views possible and the whole perspective of what is going on and what is a challenge.

A Governor asked whether they have seen any friction between students. The Head responded, not directly, but indirectly. There was a spate of graffiti in 2016, which is happening again – but sanctions have been put in place, but there is no correlation between 2016 and now, but what this young person says and does enables other young people to say these things. There haven't been any students falling out with each other and this is because we talk about situations all the time.

Leadership and Management

In terms of the Peer Reviews, Siobhan and Claire will talk about these at the next meeting, but the whole process has been really valuable. The cross learning between primary and Cantell has been brilliant and a maths expert from one of the primary schools spent some time in the maths department at Cantell and she was blown away and also provided some really good tips.

In terms of where we are, there is a continual improvement. When Ofsted came in we weren't planning for an outstanding grade, but when they said we could be, we thought it was good for our staff and students and everyone in the community.

The Head informed Governors that they are also expanding Student Leadership and he would like Governors to challenge them on how they are doing this and how it is going. As part of this, students have recently started going into a local care home and it is amazing how they have bonded with the old people.

Careers and Post 16

We are industry leaders in this area, but we don't stand still and it is amazing the number of companies that come in to talk to our young people.

Staff Development/Staff Wellbeing

The Head explained that this is always a focus. A wellbeing survey was carried out recently and as a result a working party has been created from different people in the organisation.

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025

SLT have also been looking at staff briefings during the week, which since 2016, when they were necessary, have taken place twice a week. The question is whether these are needed now and perhaps having them once a week would be better, with the time given back to staff. **Action**

The Staff Governor commented that time to carry out some more collaborative work in faculties would be good, so having this time back would be useful.

The Head said that they are really excited for the future, but are aware of some of the challenges ahead:

1. Disappointment with Ofsted as there is till going to be massive accountability in the city, which stops some of the creativity in the industry and as a result, lots of teachers are leaving – although it is different at Cantell, where we have more experienced teachers. This is expensive, because they want to stay and we are penalised in terms of NI. But we wouldn't want them to go anywhere else.

2. Funding challenges – we are facing huge cuts and the DfE are telling us we need to make financial changes. The pay increase is not funded and we need to find this funding and will need to make some tough decisions. The Head added that they are already looking at staffing for the next 3 to 10 years and are discussing legacy.

   All of the pots of funding from Covid have now finished and the Head said that they are trying to do the same work without it, but there is a fine line between what we can do everyday and what we can pay staff to do. We still have a lot of good will from staff, but the Head is concerned if they ask too much, this will eventually go.

3. Recruitment – is generally positive, but there have been challenges over the last year because the same number of teachers isn't coming through and in most areas the targets for trainee teachers has been missed by 25% or more.

4. Retention – remains really positive, but mainly because we do a lot around staff wellbeing, such as staff breakfasts, but the number of teachers leaving the profession is scary.

A Governor commented that when he was on the Staffing Committee last year, people were leaving for personal reasons, not because they weren't happy at Cantell, is this still the case? The Head said yes, that is correct

5. Supporting Vulnerable students – the Head commented that Cantell is another emergency service and social worker and whilst the gaps in services exist, we will feel the effects.

6. SEND – is huge in terms of EHCP provision, mental health and anxiety. The CAMHs list is huge and it is left to us to put things in place and support these students.

The Head said that a lot of stuff needs to happen in school to help kids to grow, but some parents expect the world from us and say that some things are unacceptable. As a result of this, we have an increasing amount of phone complaints about systems and structures, and this is higher than ever. The Head added that they don't want complaints, but out maybe 5, 4 will be vexatious in some way and angry for the sake of arguing, which takes a lot of time.

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025

Regardless of how small a complaint is, it is dealt with through the complaints policy and an investigator is appointed who will write it up and present it to the Head. This takes time and takes the member of staff off their core business, which is frustrating, but it is reassuring that we don't get the number of complaints that other schools do, because they take up a lot of resources and staff time. **Action**

A Governor asked whether extra resources need to be allocated for staff to deal with complaints. The Head responded that the investigating officer will be a member of SLT and unfortunately, it takes up their time, which cannot be given back, but the Head said he is mindful of the other jobs they have to do.

A discussion took place about the current situation in relation to young people seemingly being unable to hold a conversation without it escalating and how important it is that this is addressed as it leads to young people being isolated and unable to face these challenges as adults.

The Head explained that students at Cantell complete a wellbeing survey, and if any issues are identified, the student is picked up and it is dealt with. The Year Leaders have been told that they need to push back sometimes to see what it is a student wants and how they feel, but to come back if it happens again.

A Governor asked about the recent news article about Cantell being the happiest school in Southampton. The Head responded that he tries to avoid this type of thing, although they have always had good press coverage from the Echo, but is cautious if it goes on the website, because a lot of people make negative comments about how Cantell used to be.

A Governor commented that because Cantell is outstanding, she wonders whether parents think nothing happens at an outstanding school and are shocked when something does – this could be down to parental expectations.

Another Governor added that parents are invited to come in and see the school, any day and any time of the day, when students are out in corridors and not just in lessons and they have always been transparent. The Head agreed, adding that Cantell is a very diverse comprehensive school, with students from different background and people would be blown away by what some of our students have to go through.

The Vice-Chair agreed that if you choose a school based on an Ofsted grade, it is down to you – you should come and visit to see what it is like.

The Head responded that for him it is more than this, but he believes that strong leaders coming together in schools work, although there will be some challenges moving forward.

In response to a question regarding whether Cantell's sports facilities are offered for community use, the Head explained that they bring in around £250,000 - £300,000 every year and could probably do more. The facilities are very important and the Head said that he wants the local community to be able to access them and doesn't' want to put the prices up.

47/25 **Any Other Business**

A Governor requested that a member of staff for Boys Mentoring be invited to a future meeting and it was agreed to add this to the July meeting agenda. Clerk

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025

48/25 **Date of Next Meeting** **Action**

Thursday 22nd May 2025, 5.30 p.m. in the CTC

That concluded the business of the meeting. The meeting closed at 7.40 p.m.

Page No	Minute Number	Item	By Whom	By When
10.	47/25	Boys Mentoring – agenda item for July meeting	Clerk	July meeting

Signed by Chair: Date: 22nd May 2025