



Lightman Consulting  
Education Consultancy Services

### **Report to parents from School Improvement Partner:**

The role of the School Improvement Partner is to visit the school several times each year as an external pair of eyes and critical friend supporting and challenging the school to build on its strengths and address and areas for improvement.

The focus of my visit in October 2025 was the school's SEND and behaviour support provision. I met with members of the SEND team and senior leaders and visited the various support facilities as well as mainstream classrooms and outside areas during breaks. **My main conclusion from the visit is that the school's systems and procedures for supporting the learning of all students is of the highest quality.**

Cantell is a truly comprehensive school committed to providing the highest quality of education for all of its students who come from a wide range of backgrounds. The recent Ofsted report and the impressive examination results are a tribute to this.

The school has invested heavily in its commitment to inclusion providing an exceptional offer and degree of support meeting the needs of an extremely wide range of young people. During the day I visited all facilities including the wellbeing room, the support hub, the sensory rooms and the Thrive classrooms. These high-quality facilities and the skilled staff provide an exceptional level of support rarely matched in other schools. Where possible students who are able to access the mainstream curriculum are enabled to do so.

Students using these facilities and meeting me in a student voice session were highly appreciative and told me how all of these support systems helped them to access their learning. The focus on self-regulation is having a big impact with strong systems to ensure their consistent implementation. Importantly these systems enable those students who need to leave the classroom temporarily are able to access the various support locations or simply have some time out of the classroom within clearly defined parameters and boundaries before retraining to continue with their learning.

The first year of the 'Thrive' facility has clearly been a great success and it was a pleasure to see the children so settled and comfortable in this learning environment enjoying their learning, feeling so secure and being so well taught. The decision to develop this into year 8 and beyond in future years together with the funding for new build is creating much needed provision of exceptional quality. SLT are well aware of the staffing implications of this development and planning is well underway supported by additional funding from the local authority. .

One of the major strengths of Cantell School is the excellent behaviour of all of its students. It is important to emphasise that the support for such a range of children also has a very positive impact on the learning experiences of the majority of children who do not need

such support. This means that, as on previous learning walks, children were engaged in all of the lessons we visited where there was a calm, relaxed and settled atmosphere free of disruption. **In this way Cantell continues to be a truly comprehensive school catering for those students who can access the highest GCSE grades as much as for those for whom other educational outcomes are more suitable.**

The systems in place for dealing with any behaviour issues are very strong and consistently applied. As seen in previous visits all behaviour points etc are followed up promptly and effectively by the relevant staff and the direct involvement of the senior leadership team. The difference now is that the enlarged excellent multi-disciplinary team is extremely well placed to identify and deal with those behaviours that arise from a need for specialised support and those which simply need to be dealt with through normal sanctions etc. I am sure that this has been a major factor in the reduction of behaviour points, suspensions etc.

In summary Cantell is becoming a sector leading centre of excellence for SEND students whilst continuing to build on and further the outstanding quality of education recognised in the last Ofsted inspection. Far from a sense of standing still the commitment to build further on these strengths remains relentless. I see practice at Cantell which is of unusually high quality compared with other schools, not least because of the exceptional quality of senior and middle leadership.

Brian Lightman October 2025

Note:

Cantell's School Improvement Partner Brian Lightman's has worked with Cantell School since 2016. His broad experience in education spanning 46 years has included 2 headships, school inspector and General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders from 2010-16.

Now a self-employed education consultant he has a wide ranging portfolio which includes working with individual and groups of schools, providing support for leadership development and school improvement.