**Cantell School**
**Minutes of the Whole Governing Body Meeting**
**held on Thursday 14th May 2026**

| **Present:** | **In Attendance:** |
|---|---|
| Glynis Alexander (Chair) | Ian Creswell, Deputy Head, Item 8 only |
| Julian Bryant | Harriet Phillips, Assistant Head, Item 3 only |
| Emma Bradshaw | Karen Huelin, Year Leader, Year 8, Item 3 only |
| John Draper | Michelle Burt, Clerk |
| Ben Hiett | |
| Peter Hilditch | **Apologies:** |
| Nicola Hunt | John Groves |
| Bhupinder Siran | Harry Kutty (Head) |

63/26 **Declaration of Business Interests** **Action**

There were no Declarations of Business Interests.

64/26 **Admissions Policy**

Following information provided by Governors on suggested amendments to the Admissions Policy, Ian Creswell explained, that although it had gone through AI, a lot of the content is tied to Southampton City Council and can't be changed. Ian added that he agrees that there were a couple of errors in terminology and grammar, which he has amended and he has spoken to Southampton City Council about including a section on the right to appeal, which will be added to future versions of the policy.

Governors APPROVED the Admissions Policy.

65/26 **Year 8 Update**

The Chair welcomed Karen Huelin, Year Leader for Year 8 and Harriet Phillips, the Assistant Head linked to Year 8, to the meeting.

Harriet explained that she had moved up with the current Year 8 from Year 7 at the start of the academic year and that Karen had moved from Year 11 to look after Year 8 and follow them through to Year 11, which Harriet thinks is brilliant.

Governors NOTED that there are 271 Year 8 students, including Thrive, which is a big year group and made up of 114 girls and 157 boys. Karen added that Year 8 is just behind Year 11 for the number of Pupil Premium students at just below 47%.

54 students receive SEND support (20%) and over the last two weeks four referrals have been made to L2L - Harriet added that 8 students are on a part time timetable, including 2 that are in L2L.

**The Chair asked why these students had gone into L2L.** Harriet explained that this was because they either needed a similar provision to what they were receiving in primary, or they had a conflict of interests with other students.

Harriet reported that there had been 26 starters during the year and 27 students had left and that there are 5 sets up twins, 4 of which are identical.

Signed by Chair: Date: 9th July 2026

Harriet informed Governors that after the Year 7 transition into Year 8, they saw a decline in attendance from 94.7% in Year 7 to 92.3% for the year to date, which is not uncommon as there tends to be a bit of turbulence. Girls' attendance has dropped the most from 94.1% in Year 7 to 90.8% year to date. Harriet commented that this is an interesting group, with 5 girls on a part-time timetable – the reason seems to be due to the odd days off for medical issues. **Action**

Boys' attendance has only seen a slight drop at 93.3%, compared to 95.2% the previous year and SEN students have dipped from 93.06% to 87.6% for the current year and PP students are down by 4%, but are now back on the rise, although it has been quite difficult to work with their parents.

Harriet outlined a few student case studies; some have a history of school avoidance and some have medical issues that are being supported by outside agencies. Harriet also drew Governor's attention to the holiday codes, commenting that there had been another four holiday requests this week from families that you wouldn't normally expect to take holidays during term time. When the parents were contacted, they said that because their child is in Year 8, it doesn't matter as much – Harriet commented that it also probably the only holiday that they can afford.

Harriet said that there were five students in Year 7 who had ongoing medical issues, who took regular time off for their severe medical needs – one of these students has increased their attendance in Year 8, but the others have long term conditions that are monitored by outside agencies and the hospital.

Harriet reported that the two areas with attendance below 90 (SEN Support and PP) are monitored regularly, including weekly meetings and regular meetings with parents – they also try and identify patterns in absence, which is part of the system that is used across the school, which includes sending letters home and support with bespoke timetables where necessary and communication around sanctions.

Harriet explained that attendance letters are sent to parents, with 163 having been sent so far this year: Letter 0 – 66, Letter 1 – 51, Letter 2 – 21, Letter 3 – 16

Out of the 16 who were sent Letter 3, only 9 attended the meeting, where conversations were held to identify the lessons the student is struggling with, and changes were made to their timetables. Some parents didn't realise that their child had had so much time off, and it is made clear that we aren't there to penalise them, but their child needs to build good habits now. Karen added that every morning, the Year Leaders, including herself, make phone calls home to find out why students aren't in school, which is also a safeguarding call and they try and get the student to come in.

**A discussion followed as to whether a report, showing the different reasons for absences is available and whether this could be presented by the reason for absence.** Karen responded at the moment all absences are recorded on the student's individual record. **Governors agreed that it would be good to see personal circumstances, so they can understand where help is needed.**

Harriet responded that this is why communication with parents is needed, but by the time Letter 2 goes out, it is almost too late. Phone calls home are made, but by the time a reason for absence is known, those that take the odd day off, are usually into Letter 3.

**A Governor commented that before Covid, from a work point of view, members of staff with a cold would have come into work, and it was tolerated, post Covid, people were told to stay at home – but it has now changed with people being encouraged to come in – have you seen a pattern of students staying off with**

**colds?** Harriet responded that they had seen this through Covid, but more students now come in with colds. Karen added that some children don't cope so well with colds, and don't want to be in school and there are some parents who still work from home who are happy to keep them at home with them. **Action**

**A Governor asked whether there is a category such as available or not available, so the student can be removed from the system because nothing can be done.** Harriet responded that there are authorised or unauthorised absence codes and if they fall below the threshold, it is understood that the Educational Welfare Officer will be notified who will investigate the reasons behind the absence, meaning the family may not be penalised for having time off. **The same Governor asked whether attendance figures also include authorised absences?** Harriet responded, both authorised and unauthorised. **The Governor commented that it would be interesting to see what the figures look like with the authorised absences removed.**

Harriet explained that 33 students have had 11+ broken weeks - these are students who haven't attended a full week. Some students have improved and moved up to the orange or green groups, others have got worse and moved into red. Harriet added that all of these absences are for various reasons and staff continue to work closely with these students.

Governors NOTED that 8 part-time students still receive support and are checked in on regularly, with an aim to reintegrate them back into school. Karen added that they try lots of different things on an individual basis, day by day, to get them back in.

Harriet explained that late to lesson has been one of the biggest challenges this year, as it is affecting learning time. There is a whole school system looking at lates, with parents being informed of how many minutes late to lesson their child is, and how many minutes learning they are missing – last term this affected 40 students in Year 8, now reduced to 26. These students may only have been late for a couple of minutes, so some of their break has been taken away as a sanction. Students are also sometimes given a leave lesson 2 minutes early card, which has helped.

Harriet outlined the next steps which is to:

- Continue with communication to parents.
- Close the loop on previous attendance panel meetings.
- GCSE ready meetings to begin in September.
- Early identification of those students who would benefit from Work Experience in Year 10.

Governors NOTED a total of 1388 behaviour points for the year so far, compared to 984 the previous year. Harriet commented that it's not unusual to see a dip in behaviour during Years 8 & 9, which usually improves in Year 10. Harriet commented that they are not shocked by these figures, but it is quite sizable. Harriet added that this is a year group that like to talk and it is the only year group where you have to wait for them to get on with things. Most of the behaviour points are for talking too much, with other behaviour on top.

Harriet explained that girls have accumulated 262 behaviour points between them, for the year so far, for a variety of reasons, but mostly for talking. Boys have accumulated 1126 behaviour points for the year so far, with 12 boys gaining 296 between them and a smaller number picking up a lot of points.

**The Chair asked what the reason for the talking is.** Harriet responded that there's no particular reason and Karen added that they just can't hold it in, it's nothing to do with the lesson.

Harriet added that four girls joined Cantell in Year 8, who are responsible for half the behaviour points, which is outlined in the top ten behaviour points for Year 8, outlined in the presentation, and unfortunately, she has had to send a neglect letter because the parents haven't communicated with the school. Harriet explained that some of the behaviour points are for not bring in PE kit two or three times knowingly, and for walking away from homework Support. Harriet added that out of the 43 girls with one or more behaviour points this year, 30 of them are PP with some really hard to reach families. **Action**

84 boys have picked up one or more behaviour points in the year and a lot of the boys in the top 15 are SEN, who you would expect to wobble and make mistakes, but staff work with them so they don't amass too many behaviour points. Harriet explained that meetings are held with all the boys and their parents, and they are offered respite places in L2L, on a part-time timetable – there are 25 students who do a lot of work wit Nick Guise-Smith and Kelly Swain – Kelly's work with these students is bespoke to them and is also 1:1, which should help them a lot.

Harriet explained that sanctions are not 'one size fits all', they always consider a student's circumstances so students aren't sanctioned unnecessarily. Karen added that some students are told about their sanctions 24 hours in advance, so they are prepared, and some do theirs during social time, as they can't attend 3.00 – 4.00 p.m., so they do it in school. All students understand about consequences. Harriet commented that they also offer rewards for two weeks as an incentive, such as playing football, which has just been reinstated.

Karen outlined what a typical day looks like for a Year Leader, including behaviour meetings and looking at behaviour points – they also hold CTL panel meetings looking at behaviour and attendance and parents are invited in to talk about these issues and how to turn things around.

**A Governor mentioned that in a previous table, a list of meetings was presented, which were all during the day, which must be hard for a lot of people.** Harriet agreed, but a lot of parents phone in and make a different appointment for later in the day, and we try and accommodate people.

**A Governor asked whether parents are offered teams meetings.** Karen replied that they are, but the trend now seems that parents want to come in to school and have their child at the meeting, so they are part of the process, however, Teams meetings could be an option. **Another Governor agreed that it could be an option to get parents to attend if they work.**

Harriet informed Governors that parental engagement is a challenge, and read out a list of different reasons why parents aren't able to come in, and what interventions are offered to help, such as home visits.

Harriet talked Governors through the next steps – what's the 'hook' for Year 8, which includes:

- Identifying 10-12 students who can be supported more robustly by Nick
- Closing the loop on previous panel meetings
- Using respite places in L2L once Year 11 leave
- Setting for Lesson A going into Year 9
- GCSE reading meetings to begin September
- Early identification of those students who would benefit from Work Experience in Year 10.
- Shorter timescale rewards
- Meetings with the Head (PP)

Signed by Chair: Date: 9th July 2026

Harriet added that this Year 8 cohort have been very sparky, but in a good way, and lots of teachers have enjoyed teaching them, although there are still a small group of boys and girls they still need to work with. **Action**

**The Chair asked how this links up to the student's educational knowledge, is it across the board?** Karen responded that non-pupil premium students are attending, and there are only 2 HPPA students that fall into this group, the interventions mainly concentrate on Pupil Premium students and it is mainly SEN students who are struggling. Harriet agreed that although their attendance is lower, it is improving.

**A Governor commented that what is being discussed, seems very familiar – in Primary they try to have a successful transition into Year R, but the real problem is the transition from Year R into Year 1, and it seems a similar pattern at Cantell and he wondered whether more could be done to prepare students for Year 8.**

Harriet responded that she hasn't really noticed the issues with Year 8 before, but this year, Year 8 are different to Year 7 and Year 9, and so far, they haven't got to the bottom of it. **The staff Governor commented that a lot of it is down to the parents and a Governor agreed, as she has heard from other parents that they view Year 8 as a comfortable year and that Year 8 students have said that they 'lock in' at Year 9.**

**Another Governor commented that to be fair, behaviour points are really positive, especially for girls, which means that almost all the girls are mainly perfect.** Harriet agreed, adding that staff know the girls they are working with really well, and this is something that we need to hold onto.

**A Governor asked Harriet and Karen if they are staying with this year group into Year 9.** Harriet informed Governors that Karen is staying with them through to Year 11, which will be really beneficial. Karen agreed that it will be good to build relationships with these students and parents, so they know who to go to. Harriet added that the SLT profiles for next year haven't been agreed yet.

**A Governor commented that previously they had been informed that Year 8 are likely to be similar to this year's Year 11 cohort – she asked if there are any concerns about the work that will need to be put in for them?** Karen responded that it has been interesting looking at the group of 25 students identified, and what interventions we can put in for them – if it works out this is something they might need to put in for Year 8 every year. When meetings are held with parents, they are told about choices and making the right choices.

**A Governor commented that the level of details and analysis Harriet and Karen have gone into is amazing and the knowledge they have about their students is really impressive – if anything is going to work, knowing the cohort so well and putting all this in place, will give them the best chances.** Karen agreed, adding that she really wants to see how this pans out, as they might have to put more interventions in during Year 11. Harriet added that they want to get to know the students and their families, and their backgrounds, so they know 'why' a lot more and because students at Cantell are more than a grade better than at other schools, which is something they want to embed into all systems and structures.

**The Staff Governor commented that one thing that doesn't come through is what you do to reward students who are behaving themselves – does this build a narrative that this is a bad year group – what are you doing to defend the narrative, such as the Head's Hot Chocolate reward, CTL pizzas and theatre trips.** Harriet agreed that this is correct, as it's so easy to say that this is a negative year group, and they are not.

Signed by Chair: Date: 9th July 2026

**A Governor said that she is sure that this is not unique to Cantell, and must be a similar picture at other schools in the city.** Harriet responded that she doesn't have any data to back this up, but from friends who teach Year 8 in other schools, they tend to have issues in Year 9. **Action**

**The Chair commented that Year 8 have always been an issue, as it is a plateau year. Students have an exciting start in Year 7 and Year 9 is exciting, because they are moving on, Year 8 is a funny year.**

**The Chair thanked Harriet and Karen for their excellent report.**

*Harriet and Karen left the meeting at this point.*

Following the Year 8 report, a Governor posed the following questions:

**Question 1 - because Governors don't live in a school environment, some of the data provided is difficult to understand, and he wondered if it could be shared in a different way, so Governors can understand the detail they need to see, perhaps by having a narrative alongside a table.** **Head/ SLT**

Following a discussion, in which Governors agreed with the point raised, they suggested the following options:

- Data to continue to be sent as an appendix, but when a presentation is made, headlines to be provided, to help make sense of the data, which is still needed to back the headlines up.
- When Ofsted visit, it would be useful to have two-page summary, to allow Governos to talk in depth about some of the issues.
- Introduce some standardisation to reports.

Governors agreed that staff are doing an amazing job, but is the lack of being in the educational sector, that means they don't understand some of the data.

The Chair said that she agreed that the headline points of a topic for clarification would be very useful.

**Question 2 – it is great to see what teachers are doing at Cantell, and that they are trying to accommodate all the different needs that students have, but this accommodation won't be available when they get older and go into Higher or Further education and work – at what point should this accommodation be less, to help students to be better prepared? What he hears is that there is less resilience and less perseverance, and it is worrying that the government want us to be parents to these students – is it doing them any good to have this level of support?**

Following a discussion, Governors agreed the following questions:

- What is being done for students to build resilience for when they leave.
- Maybe be provided with some sort of matrix to see what work has been done with students as they move through the Year groups.
- It seems like there are a high number of students who don't get any behaviour points compared to the other end who get a lot – but what is the size of the group in the middle?
- What does the cohort of students who have received rewards look like, in term of groups such as pupil premium. **Head**

**The Vice Chair said that the question can definitely be passed on to the Head to respond to, which might develop the conversation and Governors agreed that it would be good to hear more - the Chair agreed to take it to SLT.**

66/26 **Matters Arising** **Action**

All Matters Arising are either complete, on the agenda, or for future agendas.

67/26 **Peer to Peer Review Report, 15th April 2026**

Governors NOTED the report of the Peer-to-Peer Review, which took place on the 15th April.

68/26 **Governor Link Visit Feedback**

Several Governors advised that they will be arranging their link visits this term, including Emma, who will be visiting Maths, who commented that they are a well oiled machine, and she asked Governors to let her know if there is anything they'd like her to raise.

69/26 **Chair's Update**

The Chair reported that she often attends SLT meetings, which are always interesting. The SLT are very good and relatively young and keen, and are invested in what goes on. They have good relationships with the rest of the staff and do a fantastic amount of work.

**A Governor asked about succession planning.** The Chair responded that she has spoken with the Head about this, but as they are all young, it is up to them to progress from one level to the next. Ian and Claire's only way to progress would be to leave and become a Headteacher somewhere else, and the others could do the same for a Deputy Head role – all of them have come through the system at Cantell, and appear to want to stay.
**The Governor asked, if someone does leave, is there a plan in place for consistency in the running of the school.** The Chair responded that she wasn't sure.

**The Vice Chair commented that because there is a large number of SLT, with a common purpose, and with the Head's leadership, they all aware of the direction of the school and although there is a lot of them, there is a clear understanding of where the school is going. The Vice Chair said that he feels that if one person dropped out, there are others that can take on the work, as they are all very knowledgeable of each other's roles.**

A discussion took place about the route from Faculty Leader to the SLT, with the Chair summarising that there is a whole growth level, that is ready to move up, and these people have already been offered the opportunity to look at things outside their roles.

The Staff Governor agreed that you just have to look at the retainment of the capable people in these roles, who choose to stay at Cantell – the Faculty Leaders are very capable of moving up and moving on to other things, and have already been promoted from within, which is a sign of a healthy organisation.

70/26 **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

71/26 **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 9th July 2026
That concluded the business of the meeting, the meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.

Signed by Chair: Date: 9th July 2026

| Page No | Minute Number | Item | By Whom | By When |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. | 65/26 | Request for data to be shared in a different way, so Governors can understand the detail they need to see, perhaps by having a narrative alongside a table. | SLT/ Presenters | Future meetings |
| 6. | 65/26 | Are students' different needs being accommodated too well at Cantell, as this won't be available when they get older and go in to HE, FE or work – should this accommodation be less to help students be better prepared. | Head | Next meeting |

Signed by Chair: Date: 9th July 2026