Cantell School
Minutes of the Whole Governing Body Meeting
held on Thursday 5th February 2026, 5.30 p.m.

Present:
Glynis Alexander (Chair)
Julian Bryant
Harry Kutty (Head)
Emma Bradshaw
John Draper (left at 7.00 p.m.)
John Groves
Ben Hiett
Peter Hilditch (left at 7.55 p.m.)
Nicola Hunt
Bhupinder Siran

In Attendance:
Jonathan Mullan-Clark (Student Experience Lead) – Item 3
Ian Creswell (Deputy Head) – Item 4
Rhys Fehners (Assistant Headteacher) – Item 5
Michelle Burt (Clerk to Governors)

Apologies:
None

36/26 **Declaration Pecuniary or Business Interests** **Action**

There were no declarations of Pecuniary or Business Interests.

37/26 **Trips and Visits**

The Chair welcomed Jonathan Mullan-Clark, Head of Student Experience to the meeting. Jonathan explained that one of the areas he has been looking at is trips and visits, which is a very important area for student development and the goal is to maximise student participation.

Jonathan read out the vision for trips and visits at Cantell, which included the ambition for every child to take part in multiple trips and visits across their time at Cantell School, to broaden their horizons and to provide context to in-class learning and develop the social experience of Cantell students. Some students haven't been on any trips or visits and as a result, Jonathan is now tracking how many they go on

Jonathan presented the trips and visits data for 2024/25, which excluded the student experience trips, such as the OAA Days, Survival Days and Fine Dining Experience. Jonathan explained that Year 11 always attend less because they are focussed on their exams, but the aim is to maximise the experience for Years 7 – 10 and to make it more equitable, they want to support staff to provide more choice for students, to devise a more equitable way of selecting students, whilst empowering staff to arrange visits and to know their roles.

Jonathan's actions had been to review the trip planning form, review how parents/carers can sign up or demonstrate interest for a trip and devise a strategy to review ongoing trip attendance. Jonathan presented the new trip form and explained how it works, enabling staff to access everything they need, to ensure that it's not the same students attending trips, on a first come first served basis. Jonathan added that he has also updated the planning policy, and staff find it much easier to know what to do and that himself and Katy Odell are available to speak to, which has given them more confidence.

The paperwork also includes a Common Risk Assessment, which is always a time-consuming part of planning a trip. Jonathan informed Governors that he has also devised an Expression of Interest form for parents to complete.

Signed by Chair: Date: 26th March 2026

Jonathan explained, if there are more students who want to go on a trip, than the number of places, he asks whether places can be increased, and if not the following are given priority: **Action**

- Pupil Premium and/or SEND students.
- Students who haven't attended a trip that academic year, or a residential trip throughout their time at Cantell.
- Students who intend to study a related subject at KS4.
- Students who have previously shown interest in a trip.

Jonathan highlighted the Student Selection for Trips list, provided to staff, to enable them to track which students have attended trips and those that haven't.

Jonathan pointed out that in the 2024/25 figures, there was a clear decline in the number of Year 7s attending trips and he is currently investigating why this was, but the other year groups had mostly stayed the same and Year 9 had attended more trips. Unfortunately, it hasn't been a positive start for Year 10 in 2025/26, with attendance dropping to 62% and there needs to be a boost to the number of Year 8 and Year 7 trips compared to the previous year.

Jonathan informed Governors that next he will be looking at how to get parents involved and is putting together a document which provides an overview of all the trips and visits that take place in an academic year and he will take the data from this and create a menu of what trips students can expect and the academic link for each trip.

The Chair asked if the list of trips is published in September or July. Jonathan replied that the menu goes on the website for the new academic year, and he'd like to send the updated list out in September, so parents and students are empowered to select trips.

A Governor said that he is very impressed in the increase in uptake from last academic year, is this because there are more trips, or because the capacity is better? Jonathan responded that the number of trips is a little higher, but they are better at identifying the students who have or haven't been on trips, which has made a difference and should help to close gaps. The Head added that Jonathan reports on this at the Ext SLT meeting and is able to question Faculty Leaders on particular groups, and is able to challenge and hold colleagues to account, which helps.

Jonathan commented that with the menu format, you can see whether there are less trips in a certain year group and how this can be balanced out.

A Governor asked whether the list is students who have applied. Jonathan responded no, these are students who have been on a trip, so staff can identify students, including those that haven't been on a trip.

A Governor asked, if you identify a few students who haven't ever been on a trip, but haven't shown any interest, what would you do to encourage them to go on a trip? Jonathan explained that he speaks to the Year Leaders, who have built positive relationships with their students, to identify who hasn't been on a trip and to approach them about attending, by having some positive dialogue with them.

The Chair asked how many of the trips are free? Jonathan responded, most of them, the only ones that have a cost are residential. Some parents donate the cost of a trip, so they can maximise places, but a lot of the time, this is used to pay for the transport.

The Chair asked whether payment plans are provided? Jonathan said yes, and they do what they can to support parents.

A Governor asked whether the dip in Year 7 is usual? Jonathan explained that he only has two years' worth of data, but yes potentially, because Year 7 are less confident – this is something he is looking into and he has challenged the Faculty Leaders about how many trips that can organise for Year 7 later on in the year, for the whole year group. **Action**

A Governor asked whether the data provided is the percentage of students that have been on at least one trip. Jonathan said yes, minus the OAA and Survival days. The Head added that they are ambitious for students to have at least 3 trips a year.

The Governor commented that there has been a monumental increase in Year 9. Jonathan agreed, commenting that this is a result of his list. The Head added that the level of tracking hasn't happened before, but they have always looked at how may trips take place, but it wasn't as sophisticated as this. The Head added that if he was on an Ofsted Inspection, he would be very impressed!

A Governor asked whether this new policy ties in with the Equalities policy. Jonathan said yes, they have to look at PP, SEND and Social Economic, as well as BML.

A Governor asked whether the staff that attend trips is tracked. Jonathan said that they do ask Faculty Leaders to look at this and staff workload.

38/26 **Attendance & Behaviour Update**

Attendance

Ian explained that the data he will be presenting is for half way through the year, as of 23rd January, compared to the same period the previous year. Ian added that attendance for 2025/26, as of the 23rd January was at 92.6%, compared to 93.4% in 2024/25. This is due to the flu season happening two weeks earlier, compared to 2024/25, when people were ill during the last week of term.

The 0.8% decrease is due to an increase in the use of C codes this year, along with more students being on a part time provision in L2L. The C code is also used for students who have had emotional difficulties getting back into school, who are part time, to build them back up and get them back in.

.

Ian explained that there are also twice as many G codes in the first term this year, for families who were overseas. Each case is reviewed carefully on their needs and particularly if we are told there is a family emergency. Families are asked to provide their initial flight bookings, as their flight will have been booked at the last minute and if they provide this, we don't put the absence down as unauthorised, or start the penalty notice process.

Ian added that there has also been an increase in I codes and a slight increase in 0 codes. He will also be carrying out an audit of the C1 and C2 codes to make sure they are not being overused, as this is the biggest increase.

The Head asked Ian to provide a national comparison. Ian explained that national attendance is currently at 92%, which is the same as this point last year. Cantell is 0.6% above the national figure this year.

The Head commented that what he wasn't aware of, and he has asked for some research in the city about vaccinations, is that Southampton is the worse area for

uptake on vaccinations and as a result the School Business Manager, will be doing some more work on this. The Head added, as Governors, we need to understand if the school is doing as much as it can to get students in, or if there is nothing else we can really do.

The Head added that Brian Lightman was in yesterday, and his report is glowing about our work on attendance. **Action**

Ian informed Governors that he has been looking at ways of working with parents, and Brian Lightman and him came up with an idea around what we can expect from parents, and what they can expect from the school, in terms of support. The Head added that they will be doing lots of work on EMSA, because it is a ticking time bomb, with students not being able to come into school with anxiety and although there are a number that could come into school, parents and parent groups are saying they can't. The Head said that his view is that the best place for children is in school.

A Governor asked whether this is about to explode, or has it already happened? The Head responded that it has already started, but will get worse. They have to stand firm, but it's all about the kids and what we can do for them, with reasonable adjustments, such as students going into the Support Hub, rather than lessons.

A Governor asked whether this is about parents not wanting their child in school some times. The Head responded that it can be not at all. Ian added that it is about trying to get parents to understand – a lot of parents are using AI to send emails to school and the main issue is around building relationships with them. The Head commented that there are some great examples of young people, who have some sort of EMSA, whose parents have worked well with us.

The Head informed Governors that the summary is that it is a minefield and we are navigating our way through it to the genuine cases, it is very difficult, but we have to do it and we work with each one, case by case.

A Governor commented that some parents are open to influences and this has an impact on their children.

<u>Behaviour Points</u>

Ian explained that behaviour points are slightly higher at 3889, compared to 3724 at the same point the previous year. This is mainly due to a new behaviour point for students who forget to bring in their PE kit.

Ian informed Governors that he provides a report every month to SLT, with lots of data, that breaks this information down and they have seen that homophobic language has significantly declined from 25 the previous year to 9 incidents this year so far, so the message have worked. Racial abuse is also going down and sexual messages have halved.

A Governor commented that Year 8 and 10 had the highest behaviour points last year – this year, last years Year 8, is now Year 9 and they kind of mirror each other – are you encouraged by Year 7. Ian responded that Year 7 is really strong and settled, and Year 8 are more settled this year. Year 9 are interesting because we have had a lot a lot in L2L (11), which affects figures. Year 10 is the last Covid year and Year 11 need a lot of pastoral care. The Head added that most of Year 11 are lovely, but there are a few who are significantly draining and we haven't seen so many for some time.

<u>Internal Suspensions</u>

Governors NOTED that Internal suspensions are currently at 84, compared to 137 for the same time the previous year.

The Head commented that the Government is now saying that we have to keep children in school, with an assumption that this isn't already happening. The simple fact is that we only suspend students for health and safety reasons, or if we have parents that don't respond. Ian added that they always do an internal suspension first, but there are some cases, that don't comply with this, and they have to do an external suspension as the last resort. Ian added that those Governors who have sat on a Student Disciplinary Committee Panel, have seen how much work they put in.

Action

External Suspensions

External suspensions are at 73, compared to 96 the previous year (5.56%/5.89%), compared to 8.9% nationally at the same point, so we are significantly below national.

Permanent Exclusions

There has only been one so far this year, compared to 2 at the same point last year. Ian explained that most parents don't contest the decision of the panel, and are supportive and thankful for the work the school has done for them. There has been one that did contest the decision and it was reheard by an independent panel, who upheld the decision – this is very rare and so are the permanent exclusions.

L2L

Ian explained that 65.2% of all suspensions are from L2L and they are the same students on most occasions, and most are SEN. L2L is an onsite provision in school that aims to improve academic attainment, behaviour and attendance through small group working/interventions designed to keep pupils engaged and prevent permanent exclusion.

The Head asked Ian to talk about lates, because it is important that we look at late to lessons. Ian explained that late to lessons overall is 3.3%, compared to 3.5% the previous year. This is mainly the current Year 11, who are making the choice to be late and there is a simple way of dealing with this. A report is run every two weeks and any students on the list have to attend a social time catch up, which they are hoping will have an impact.

The Head asked Ian to provide some data on late to lesson for the next WGB meeting, as it is something they have worked on a lot, and it is interesting for Governors to be aware of what is wrong, and what work has taken place in this area.

Agenda – WGB 26.3.26

39/26 **Assessment Data/Year 11 Progress Update**

Rhys Fehners presented a Year 11 Update at DC1 and Assessment data for all years.

- The Average Attainment 8 score for the current cohort is 101.5, compared to 102.5 in 2023/24, which is only slightly below national.
- CTLs are based on an average of Effort, Behaviour and Homework and are placed in different groups, Green, Gold, Yellow, Pink and Red. There are currently 83 Year 11 students in the pink and red groups, which isn't seen in any other year group and as a result the green and gold groups have lower student numbers that other year groups.
- The Average Attainment 8 score based on the best 8 qualifications, for Year 10 is an average of 4.36 and Year 11 has increased to 4.48, which is positive.

Rhys outlined what is happening with the key groups, explaining that 10% of the cohort are in the high KS2 band, but the lower groups will unfortunately pull down the results for these students.

Signed by Chair: Date: 26th March 2026

- Governors noted that that Year 11 7+ English & Maths was at 11.8% at DC1, compared to 9.2% during the exams in 2024, so is predicted to do better – this is an area that his being worked on because the middle and lower are bringing this down because we don't have the top end.
- 5+ English & Maths is looking like 33.7%, compared to 45.8% the previous year. which is a difference of 12% from the previous cohort.

Rhys explained that from the start of the year, targeted LAs have taken place, to provide targeted help and interventions, and those students that fall behind in English and Maths are getting additional stamina sessions and reading and writing. **Action**

Maths intervention is based on current needs and are individualised for students, which starts after DC1 when it is most needed and there has been more of a push with English, with two walking, talking mocks – one for English Language and one for English Literature.

The Chair asked whether any improvements have been seen? Rhys responded that it is a short window, but teachers felt it was going well. The Head added that part of the difficultly in English is marking – it is clear that the team want to throw everything at this year group, but they also have to think about staff welfare.

Rhys added that the point of the walking talking mocks is to help students – the teachers are right there on the spot during the mocks and the students are able to take their exam papers away, with the post it notes to use later. Recently there have also been two other revision sessions to help students – this was for English Language and English Literature, which 163 students attended.

The Chair asked how many of the lower band students attended. Rhys responded that he was unsure, but could find out. Next Meeting

Rhys explained about the Panel meetings that were held by himself and the Head for 60 students over two days before Christmas, which parents were also invited to attend. Only 50% attended, but they wanted the parents to know where their child currently is and to discuss how they could support them and what the school needed from them, such as their child being in on time. **The Head asked what Rhys thought the rate of students attending these meetings was?** Rhys said he thinks it was around 75% and some of the conversations really worked well with some students.

The Head said that some students have improved their attendance following these meeting and they are happy to be doing this. Rhys added that there are however, still some that will say all the right things at the meeting, but not push through – this year's group doesn't seem to have the same back up from their parents.

A Governor asked about prior attainment and how this is quantified without SATs. Rhys responded that when students start Year 7, we do our own internal CATs (Cognitive Ability Test) tests. **The Governor asked whether this has the same bench mark for other groups.** Rhys replied yes, CAT tests are carried out every year for Year 7.

Rhys reported improvements in science, although a big increase is always seen towards DC2, because of what they are taught in lessons at this time of year. There is however, no comparison to 2023/24 for Triple Science, because of the range of different subjects, but the department are still predicting some good outcomes for their students.

Rhys informed Governors the following for the EBAC subjects:
- Languages – APS of 5.32 (5.34 in 2024) with 7+ predicted at 16.3%.

- Humanities – APS of 4.84 (4.78 in 2024), with 7+ at 21.7%.
- Open Bucket – APS – 4.48. Rhys commented that students are struggling more this year, so this category won't be as high as in previous years.

A Governor asked in relation to HPPA, is any comparison carried out with other comparable schools at the same points to see how they are predicting their outcomes. Rhys replied that they aren't able to see other schools data until results day. At the moment they use SISRA, but the problem is that we use CATs for prior attainment, and other schools might use other systems. The Head added that the High Prior Attainment for higher would be positive, but not for middle or lower, and compared to other schools it is higher, but is still a relative weakness.

Action

The Governor said she was wondering how the Year 6, who were affected by Covid, were affected across the city. The Head said that he had spoken to some Heads about Year 11 and some say that they are challenging and others say they are ok – the difficult thing is their commitment to learning, which has slipped and this is affecting more students and their families.

The Staff Governor commented that he has two groups, and there are few HPPA students and he appreciates that this is hard. The Head agreed that they are working hard and doing what they can.

A Governor asked how this manifests itself? The Head responded that within a group there are a significant minimum of students, who are causing a lot of low-level stuff – these students are apathetic and we are having to drive them. It feels like we are putting in a lot for them, such as P7. It should be quality first teaching and interventions to support, but it feels like we are having to put in more interventions, which some don't attend if they're at the weekend.

The Chair asked what are their excuses for not turning up for their interventions? Rhys responded that some say they fell asleep, but there are various reasons. The Head added that years ago, there would have been someone in school phoning to get them in, but we haven't had to do this in recent years.

A Governor commented that his personal opinion is that students will only get something out of a session, if they want to be there. The Chair agreed that at some stage they will have to take responsibility and perhaps realise what is best for them. She asked whether they are a generation that expect other people to do it for them? The Head agreed that there is a lot of students who are like this – we spoke earlier about EMSA and there are a lot of things that if we don't step up for these young people, who is going to? All the work we do is just tougher and we just have to cope with it.

The Staff Governor said that what we do as a school is fantastic, but he believes the curriculum isn't fit for purpose and he can see how overwhelming it can be. It is not particularly, from his point of view, an enjoyable exercise, teaching the curriculum and he can't wait to see what happens when the new curriculum comes out.

A Governor asked whether the curriculum has been mentioned by the DfE. The Head said yes - we are able to work with the content and add to it, but only a bare minimum. The Head added that the current economic system is also more challenging for the school.

The Governor commented that schools are being expected to do more, but there has to be a trade-off – where is the compromise going to be if we step up. We want to look after staff as well as students, and we don't want staff to wear

themselves out. The Governor asked the Head whether there are any plans for 1 in 1 out in terms of staffing. The Head responded that it is difficult, because they want to do the best for the young people and he doesn't think there is anything they do that isn't for their benefit. Small efficiencies can be made, but what staff do for students, is what makes the school and allows students to be happy and thrive.

Rhys informed Governors that Year 10 is completely different and with a P8 of 0.54, is just below the national comparison. There are only 50 students in the pink group and the gold and green groups comprise around 65% of students. Green makes up 31% of this and the picture for Year 10 is completely different, with A8 of 5.01. The Head added that the 5.01 is the first time we will have gone over 5 and with the SISRA P8 of 0.54, we are doing half a grade better than any other similar school. **Action**

Rhys highlighted the following data as of DC1 for Year 10, 2026/27:
7+ Eng and Maths – 13%
5+ Eng and Maths – 49%
4+ Eng and Maths – 71.6%

Rhys commented that the APS for Science is low at 4.40, but there is a trajectory they go through during their course as they haven't done a lot of the course work yet.

Rhys informed Governors that Year 10 is in a good place and the predictions are strong.

A Governor asked whether there is a difference between the year groups. The Head responded that there are so many variables, but this year group just stands out. The variable could be what happened in the primary schools, or the Covid factor, there are so many different things, but there is more stability in this year group and they may go above national.

Rhys informed Governors that in Year 9, 52% of students are in the top gold and green groups and the assessment data from DC1 is pretty much in line with the target and most subjects are broadly in line with where we want them to be. Rhys pointed out the subjects in red that are slightly below target, which may be because in subjects like Art, they are setting their targets too high, which is being investigated to get them back in line.

History which is another subject below target are now making sure that they contact students straight away, when they are not doing well and after a conversation with Music, it appears that the issue is caused by Year 8 & 9 boys, who struggle with the subject and who need to be pushed to be enthusiastic and challenged to exceed.

The Head informed Governors that it would be helpful for them to see a comparison in this data and the big thing is the CTLs, which are huge and shows where students are going in terms of achievement.

Rhys talked through the data for Year 8, where 64% of students are in the green and gold CTL groups and Year 7, where there is a big difference, with many more students, 78%, in the green and gold groups.

The Head said that he wanted to point out that whilst not achieving top, English is also in the red for Years 8 and 9 and Governors need to know more about KS3 English and perhaps have a deeper dive. The Head proposed that the Faculty Leaders for English be invited to a Governor meeting to talk through some of this data and what will happen next. **Agenda Item WGB Mtg**

Signed by Chair: Date: 26th March 2026

Rhys explained that for the next data collection, Kat Cox will meet with Year Leaders to set up the CTL groups. This information will then go to SLT, who will decide which students to invite in for a panel meeting – at the moment, this is students in the pink group, who are invited to discuss how they can change their CTL next time. Kat Cox also talks to students in a LA Expert - Kat will talk students through their reports and the gold and green groups will be invited for a reward.

The other students will get the message on how they can improve their CTL and what they need to do. The Head said that this is a great idea in terms of supporting young people to understand their CTLs and talk about their next steps. The Head added that they felt that the majority of students don't know their CTLs, because their parents don't have these conversations with them and it was agreed that they will make time for those students who don't have this support, but it is a challenge. **Action**

A Governor asked whether there is any correlation between the attainment scores and the CTLs. Rhys confirmed that there is and CTLs include homework, which is a big issue.

A Governor commented that Exceeding and Excelling are difficult for parents, because they don't know the difference between the two. The Head responded that they are in the process of reviewing this and they hope to devise a much simpler system for staff, students and parents.

40/26 **Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11th December 2025**

Governors APPROVED the minutes of the meeting held on the 11th December 2025 as a true record of the meeting, which were signed accordingly by the Chair.

41/26 **Matters Arising**

All Matters Arising are on the agenda.

42/26 **Two Week October Half Term**

The Head reported that following the results of the consultation with staff, parents and students, he is now recommending a two-year trial for a two-week October half term, starting in 2027.

The Head commented that this now seems to be direction that a lot of schools are going, with schools such as Woodlands and Highfield, having already made this decision.

Jonathan Mullan-Clark has held student voice meetings with Year 7 – 9 students and there was strong support over all year groups. The parent consultation had 332 responses, with 72% in agreement.

The Head added that to negate issues around child care and SEND, they are working with a company called Testlands on offering child care during the first week of the holiday, targeted at Years 7 and 8, although it will be available for all years. The cost will be subsidised – the lowest Testlands can charge is £25 per head, which the Head will try and get down. A budget will be available for pupil students and mean tested parents will be able to access the child care at a very reasonable price - £6 - £10, with a budget of approximately £8,000 to support the finances.

Governors noted that 63.7% of staff were in favour and the Head explained that they are planning on putting three of the INSET Days into the October half term, which staff don't need to attend, which then leaves around 15 hours of CPSD for staff to make up.

The Head added that some staff were concerned about how this would be recouped, so they have decided to reinstate the morning Teaching & Learning briefings and hold a one hour twilight session, made up of 30 minutes in the hall, and 30 minutes in their own areas, as it is important for staff to come together once a term and for himself to be able to speak in front of staff, which currently only happens once a year – this adds up to around 15 hours in total. The Head confirmed that the two key INSET days at the start of the academic year will remain.

A Governor asked whether the Head has gone back to staff to see what the response to these arrangements are. The Head said no, because he doesn't want a lot of toing and froing, but he knows that there is some concern, as staff don't yet know where the time to make up would be coming from. **Action**

The Staff Governor commented that he had been in the neutral zone, but is now feeling more positive now he knows about the limited impact on staff. The Head responded that staff feedback was included in the decision.

The Staff Governor informed the meeting that the morning briefing breakfasts have been very positive, along with the carousels, which can be much more effective. The Head responded that this will be a mix and match approach, but keeping the CPD quality and work life balance. Staff will finish at lunch time on the last day of term on the Friday, rather than the Wednesday, but they will get a totally extra week off and will only have to do some morning meetings and 3 one-hour sessions over the year.

A Governor asked about non-teaching staff and what happens on an INSET day. The Head explained what happens during an INSET day, such as attending a carousel, a CPSD breakfast and them coming together in the hall.

The Governor said he agrees with this proposal in principle, but from a financial point of view, the costs will go up every year – is the school confident they can afford it. The Head said yes, they have a buffer of around £8,000 - £10,000. **The Governor asked if this wasn't spent in this way, what would it be spent on?** The Head responded that they carried out a cost benefit analysis, and the cost was justified and comes from a number of different budgets, so it won't make a dent. A lot more outreach work is taking place, which staff are being paid for, and there is enough left over to pay for things like this.

The Head informed Governors that the Trust Headteachers spoke about the process at their recent meeting and they are now saying that they will be thinking about it and many of the other primaries might follow.

A Governor asked whether there has been any negatively from any of the primary schools. The Head said that it's been mainly positive, everybody is saying that they need to look at it. **The Governor agreed that it would make sense if the whole Trust do it together and have a two-year trial.** The Head said, it may not be all of them, but Cantell is having a two-year trial to make sure all the aims are met.

A Governor said that when they spoke about it previously, the Head mentioned the benefits to students and teachers – is he able to predict any reduction in cover costs. The Head said yes, they will be hoping for a cost saving, although they have already cut cover costs anyway.

The Governor asked what other figures will the Head be looking at to quantify the decision. The Head responded, staff and student sickness. He thinks that staff

will start thinking that they will be able to go aware during October half term on a cheaper holiday.

The Head recommended the proposal and timeline to Governors for approval, adding that he would like to meet with staff on Monday to announce the decision. Parents would then be contacted by letter and students will be informed via an assembly. The Head added that he will also email the Aspire Headteachers and will make it clear that the feedback had been very positive.

Following a show of hands, Governors UNANIOMOUSLY AGREED to the proposal for a two-week October half term from the 19th – 30th October 2026.

43/26 **School's Policy on Mobile Phones** **Action**

The Head reported that from January 2026, the Government are saying that schools should ban mobile phones by default, a decision that Ofsted will following in its guidance. The Head added that the criticism is that phones disrupt learning, cause safeguarding issues and affect children's mental health, which is based on a narrow point of view. Following research from the BMJ, there is no strong evidence that bans improve mental health, sleep or behaviour and that any bans are just a stop gap and don't build digital skills and their recommendation is for a rights-based, digital literacy approach.

The Head explained that Cantell's current policy is to allow phones before and after school and at social times, only in designated zones indoors, and never in corridors. Robust sanctions are also in place and for persistent offenders, there is a term ban. Students are also encouraged to use their phones for educational purposes, such as looking at their timetables, homework and wellbeing. Although there are some young people that are constantly on their phones, so it can be a challenge to enforce.

The Head informed Governors that there is a wide variation in parental responsibility, in particular home phone rules. As such, the school's role is to support parents with guidance with clear messaging on restrictions and online safety.

A Governor agreed that it is fiendishly difficult to manage children's phones, with a lot of people needing IT support and he can see why a lot of people think it is too hard. The Head agreed that at a bare minimum, parents should be aware of what their child is doing, however, when phones are used correctly it is great and you can't be a member of society if you don't have a phone.

The Head said that the vast majority of students at Cantell use phones in the right way and are educated on how to use phones responsibly. The Head added that everything they do at Cantell is based on respect and trust and this direction from the Government, seems like dictating.

The Head informed Governors that he wants to continue with the policy already in place because he doesn't want a policy to fit a minimum of students and as such the next steps will be to:

- Formalise a standalone policy
- Strengthen digital literacy and wellbeing education
- Expand parent workshops and guidance
- Carry out an end-year review against the updated guidance.

The Head explained that he is therefore proposing to Governors that they continue the way they are and for Governors to sign off the draft policy, with a review at the end of the year.

A Governor commented that he feels that taking mobile phones away from young people would be to their detriment, because if used properly students can learn from their phone. The Head responded that there is a lot of dialogue going on, which is all so nuanced, but out of 13,000 students at Cantell, the majority only use their phones at the start and end of the day and at break times - it is about the opportunities we are providing them with, by having a policy that is fair for all our students.

A Governor agreed with the Head's take on it, if its not a problem for the school and having spoken with staff, he agrees with the principle of the Heads direction and policy of giving responsibility to the students. The Head added that they will also have conversations with parents.

A Governor agreed that the problem is not students having a phone in their bag, it is the amount of time they are on their phones at home and another Governor agreed that not banning phones is the right thing to do. **Action**

Governors AGREED to continue with the current policy in relation to mobile phone use in school, based on respect and trust and to come back to the issue in September.

The Chair asked whether the Head will be informing parents that phones aren't being banned at Cantell? The Head said that they will be telling parents that this is the policy and it is based on trust and he will also be speaking to staff to get their view.

44/26 **Policies for Approval**

Governors APPROVED the following policies:

- Looked After and Previously Looked After Children.
- RSE
- Equalities

45/26 **Governor Link Visit Reports**

<u>Computer Science</u>

Emma Bradshaw reported that she had recently had a very interesting visit to Computer Science and spoke to Joe Tait about his new role, teaching Key Stage 4 Citizenship and Politics and Joe said he feels confident and that Computer Science is not suffering because of his new role. Computer Science itself is thriving and staff are doing all the right things – Joe also said that the trainee teacher David McCarthy, had been a very big asset.

The Head informed Governors that even though there was no vacancy, this member of staff is great, so the policy is to get people in and work the system around them.

Emma said that they had also discussed that the Computer Science Curriculum is under review by the Government and she had observed a couple of lessons and it was really interesting to see the use of the Blooket platform in both classes.

Emma added that although unrelated, she had a conversation with Joe about his wife being pregnant and wondered whether there is a school maternity/paternity policy. The Head responded that the Staff Handbook outlines what is available and suggested that this be an item for the next Staffing Committee meeting in May. **Staffing Agenda Item – May 2026**

Emma also enquired about policies that are not statutory and therefore not on the school website. It was agreed that all policies would be available to view on **WGB Agenda Sept 2026**

GovernorHub and that the policies spreadsheet would be brought to the September WGB meeting.

46/26 **Chair's Update**

The Chair reported that she had been in to school early today and had joined the Ext SLT meeting - it was really good listening and speaking to the Faculty Leaders.

47/26 **Staff Governor Election**

The Chair reported that she had sent a message to staff back in January and had included the information that Julian's term of office would be ending in February, and that an election would be needed. Julian had indicated that he is happy to stand again, but there will be some information coming out for staff, including a letter from herself, so they will have to see what happens.
Governors thanked Julian for everything he has done for the school in his role as Staff Governor. **Action**

.

48/26 **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

49/26 **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 26th March 2026, 5.30 p.m.

That concluded the business of the meeting. The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

Page No	Minute Number	Item	By Whom	By When
5.	38/26	Ian Creswell to provide data on late to lessons.	Ian Creswell	WGB Meeting – 26.3.26
6.	39/26	Rhys Fehners to confirm how many students in the lower groups attended the English Literature and English Language revision sessions	Rhys Fehners	Next Meeting
8.	39/26	English Faculty Leaders to be invited to WGB to talk through their data.	Clerk/ Agenda	Next Meeting
12.	45/26	Maternity/Paternity – Staff Handbook	SBM	Staffing Committee Agenda Item – May 2026
12.	45/26	The Clerk to put all policies on Governor Hub – statutory and non-statutory, for Governors to view.	Clerk/ Agenda	Next meeting
12.	45/26	Policy spreadsheet to be an agenda item for September meeting.	Clerk/ Agenda Item	September 2026

Signed by Chair: Date: 26th March 2026