Cantell School
Minutes of the Whole Governing Body Meeting
held on Thursday 9th July 2026

Present:
Glynis Alexander (Chair)
Julian Bryant
Emma Bradshaw
John Groves
Ben Hiett
Peter Hilditch
Nicola Hunt
Harry Kutty (Head)

In Attendance:
Sarah Bradshaw (School Business Manager)
Ian Creswell (Deputy Headteacher)
John Draper (Observer)
Michelle Burt (Clerk)

Apologies:
Bhupinder Siran

72/26 **Declaration of Business Interests** **Action**

There were no Declarations of Business Interests.

73/26 **Attendance Update**

Ian drew Governor's attention to the Executive Summary sent out with the meeting papers for the first 5 terms of the academic year, 2025/27 and outlined the following:

- Attendance is 0.4% above national, against similar schools. Ian explained that Cantell is now ranked 7th, but he is unable to tell Governors who the 6 schools above are.
- PA (persistent absence) has remained broadly the same for 3 years – 3% better than national and is strong.
- Severely persistent absence is 1% better than national and has broadly been the same for the last 3 years.
- Days lost to suspensions is significantly below national at 40% less.
- Against Gov statistical neighbours, Cantell is 1.1% higher and in the top 7 or 21 schools. Ian explained that this information also outlines similar schools they can go and look at to see what they are doing. The Head added that London schools have been disregarded, but Ian will be visiting Holly Lodge school in the West Midlands, to see what they are doing.
- Against Gov statistical neighbours we are 5.6% better for PA (persistent absence) and in the top 4 of 21 schools. Ian commented that PA is where their real strength is and with PA at 20%, this is 5.6% lower than the median attendance of similar schools and 25% better than national.

Ian explained the factors that affected attendance:

- Poorly attending year 11 cohort at 30% PA.
- PA rates for June 2026 were at 3.04% compared to the probable national figure of 3.95%, which might be higher or lower, or remain steady.
- E Codes (suspensions) up to June last year, National was at 0.28% and Cantell at 0.17%, which is positive.
- G Codes (unauthorised family holidays) at 0.45% were 0.13% higher than last year and 30% higher than national, which were not holidays, but students visiting family.
- R codes (religious observance) at 0.18%, was less than the previous year, but still 3 x national.
- C2 codes (temporary reduced timetable) is a new coding brought out by the government and Cantell is in line with national for its use of this coding. The reason for reduced timetables is to get students to reengage with education and to provide

others with a phased return and to prepare students who need to regular, to avoid being out of school. Ian explained that there are no figures available for 2023/24 as there was no code available and therefore no data, which at that point was included in the other C codes. **Action**

- Attendance trends by year group – Ian explained by comparing this year to last year, by year group, attendance overall was at 92%, with 10% PA and 1% severely PA – this is 20% of all students, with 1 in 5 below 95%.
- Ian explained the last couple of years, attendance at Cantell had been better than national, but was affected by last years, Year 11, who had higher national absence and higher than national PA, which pulled the attendance figures down overnight.
- Ian explained that one of the biggest issues that affects attendance is the flu season, which came earlier last year, compared to the previous number of years, between September and December, which made a big difference.

The Head commented that he is doing a lot of work on vaccinations, because Southampton has the lowest take up for flu vaccinations in the country and he is liaising with Public Health to inform them that we will be doing our own thing in school.

A Governor commented that the flyers sent out by the LA concerning flu jabs are very passive. The Head agreed, adding that you also must opt in not out, and their messaging is very poor.

Governors NOTED the pupil group comparison provided

- Attendance for all students for 2025/26 up to Monday 25th May was at 92% compared to 90.9% for similar schools.
- FSM was at 88.9% compared to 86.4% in similar schools, and non-FSM was at 9.45% compared to 93.7% and SEN, 86.4% compared to 84.7% and non-SEN was 93.7, compared to 92.6% in similar schools.
- Non-FSM children attendance was at 93.7%, compared to 92.6% nationally and SEN at 86.4% compared to 84.7% nationally.

Ian explained what next:

- Keep attendance as high as possible, by taking up flu vaccinations and challenging the odd days off by students. They are also looking at the reward side of attendance.
- Year 8 (will be Year 9) staff will be focussed on the shifting 5% of the whole cohort (13 students), who are currently at 85-90% to above 90%.
- Luan Jupes role will be adjusted to compensate for SCC relaunching their Education Access and support process. Ian explained that himself and the Head had met with the LA that morning, to get reassurance that Cantell's PA students will not be disadvantages and that they will still get the support they need. Ian added that it was a friendly meeting and provided more clarity of what services they can use.

The Head added that September -December is critical and it would be good to understand what the targets are for each year group in terms of attendance and what the progress is. Sarah Crawford is helping Ian, and it would be good for Governors to know what the impact is.

Ian responded that he would want to see the progress on the 93/94/95% attendance groups. The Head added that Governors might not be aware that the target for Year 11 is 93% and suggested that Ian provide this meeting for Governors in the new academic year.

Ian agreed to provide the figures for where they want attendance to be by Christmas for the next meeting and the Head asked if Ian could also provide an update on his visit to Holly Lodge School. WGB Agenda 17.9.26

Signed by Chair: Date: 17th September 2026

74/26 **Thrive** **Action**

The School Business Manager explained that currently there are Year 7 & 8 Thrive cohorts in school and more children will join Cantell between now and 2028. The current Thrive groups are based on Level 3, and the new Year 7 cohort arriving in September will be based on Level 3, with the then Year 9 cohort, moving into the CTC.

The CTC will then be moved into a portacabin, which will be prepared over the summer holidays, allowing work to be prepared for the Thrive extension.

The School Business Manager showed Governors a map of where the portacabin will be located and how it will be accessed by staff and people outside the school community. The portacabin will have its own toilets, aircon, and a kitchenette and will be a permanent building. To allow space for the portacabin, some of the L2L outside space will be used, but the School Business Manager explained that they will ensure that L2L has what they need

The School Business Manager informed Governors that she has been assured that the portacabin will look good, but she hasn't any visual pictures yet – the portacabin will also create exam space for whoever wants to us it.

By 2028 there will be 50 Thrive students in school, and Cantell will be the biggest inclusion base in the city – the School Business Manager informed Governors that 2M LA funding has been received to build the extension.

The Chair asked how they know there will only be 50 students? The Head responded that there is an agreed number of 10 for each year group, so they know the total number will only be 50 – they have also been guaranteed this additional income.

The Chair said that often what happens is that the LA says we are doing a good job and want to send more children. The Head responded that they cannot because we won't have the capacity as the new building will not just be for Thrive, it will be part of the school.

The School Business Manager showed Governors some pictures of the extension, which will be in an alcove at the front of the school. The floor plans are open and there will be multifunctional spaces. The School Business Manager showed plans for each floor of the extension, which will probably be for two years groups on each floor.

A Governor asked how the floor plans will work. The School Business Manager responded that there will be three full floors, plus the bottom level, will be used for office and shared spaces. **The Governor asked what the total square meter is.** The School Business Manager responded that this information isn't available currently, but the Head said that they can find this out.

The Governor asked if the cost for the extension is the full 2M? The School Business Manager confirmed that they have 2M, but the cost of the extension will be 1M. The Head added that there are other things that they want to do outside.

The Staff Governor asked whether the crossed area on the plans is the lift? The School Business Manager said yes, but it is the existing lift, with the toilets next door.

The Head asked whether a new lift will be installed? The School Business Manager responded that they had investigated a lift, but it was very expensive. It also meant that there would be additional space available with amenities on all levels. The outside space will provide an area for taxis to park and an entrance in keeping with the main school entrance, so the extension will look like part of the school.

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The School Business Manager explained that they hope to complete for September 2027, with the aim of starting the build in November this year, bearing in mind the December closure. The issues currently are caused by the PFI and the progress trough the RIBA stages 1-4, which includes planning permission and the design of the plans. They are currently at RIBA stage 4, which has been stalled for a long time as it has been tricky to get everyone to do what they need to. There is a project manager in place, but there have been issues, and they have now got a new one. **Action**

A Governor asked whose responsibility it is to get them to do what they should? The Head said that the School Business Manager pushes, and there are weekly meetings, but the red tape is ridiculous, and it is very challenging. The Head commented that hand on heart, will it be ready for 2027, no.

The Chair asked whether the extension will be for the 50 students? The Head said yes. The School Business Manager added that the extension will be part of the main school business, and belongs to the school and therefore, mainstream will be able to use it at any time.

The Head agreed that the purpose is to enhance student experiences across the school, and it is therefore open to them and Thrive students can also use mainstream facilities at any time – it should work both ways. The Head added that the LA understand this and their recent audit was pleased with how students thrive at Cantell.

The School Business Manger explained that they will also be able to use the project as an example of how to exit the PFI, and how the school will manage when they are out of the PFI, which the LA are happy with.

A Governor asked, if it isn't complete by September 2027, and the next 10 students come in, where will they go? The Head said that they will look at contingencies and look at creating spaces for these students in school and also in outside space – this is a high-level conversation that will be needed with the LA. The School Business Manager added they probably know it won't happen by September 2027, so are look at other options.

The Governor commented that the plan is to get this started over the summer months because a lot of the works will have to be done in term time. The Head said that because of where it is, it can be cordoned off and a conversation has taken place about noise – they have August, September and October, so it needs to be pushed through in three months.

A Governor asked internally, can students in Year 7 access level 3 and how do they access SEN internally? The School Business Manager explained that they will be able to use the lift.

The Governor asked whether there is an internal staircase in the extension? The School Business Manager said no, they decided to have bigger classrooms rather than a staircase. There are staircases next to the lift, which will also give the students a sense of being included in the main school.

A Governor commented on the approaching exit of the PFI contract – Cantell is one of the early PFIs and there are others across the city that are also due to finish. Are you getting the support you need from the partners? The School Business Manager explained that they have appointed someone for this and things have started on the exit – people are also coming in to look at the building over the summer, which will be managed by Mitie, but it is also in the school's best interest to do this as well. The School Business Manager added that there has also been a recent

audit of the PFI, and they have been held to account on a number of things – things are in the pipeline. **Action**

A Governor said, given the extreme heat, which is predicted to continue, is aircon included in the new build? The School Business Manager confirmed that it is, and it has been costed for and will be factored in. **The Governor responded that anything that can be done to keep students in school is good.**

A Governor asked whether it would be viable to just keep part of the school open? The Head said that there are reasons why they should, but they don't have enough rooms of this type in lots of areas. On the Wednesday of the heatwave, people were melting, and it was 33 outside, on the Thursday, it was worse, so once they have a multitude of airconditioned rooms, it will be a different story. They did however look at the children of critical workers who wished to remain in school.

75/26 **Minutes of the meeting held on the 14th May 2026**

Governors AGREED the minutes of the meeting on the 14th May as a true record of the meeting, which the Chair signed accordingly.

76/26 **Matters Arising**

65/26 Student needs

The Head said that this is a good suggestion and he spoke to Bhupinder, to ask for more context. As a result, he has asked Faculty Leaders to look at what they do over and above and whether it could be to the detriment of young people, and they came back to say there is 10% that they might challenge. But they said that they needed to do a lot of these things because our students are from deprived backgrounds, with different challenges.

So, it is a good focus point for us, because we do go above and beyond for students and there are some things we would change, but we will continue to do our best for our young people.

A Governor commented that it is more about the systems and things we must do. Another Governor added that raised this initially because staff are always being asked to do something, and it is not sustainable.

65/26 Data

Governors NOTED that Ian Creswell provided an executive summary with his presentation earlier in the meeting, which will now be the standard in the school and the Head said that he has been clear with staff not to create any new data for Governors, but to pre-empt this with a narrative in their tables, rather than creating anything else.

77/26 **Election of Chair and Vice Chair 2026/27**

Governors unanimously APPROVED the appointment of Glynis Alexander as Chair of Governors and Peter Hildtich as Vice Chair of Governors for the Academic year 2026/27.

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78/26 **Appointment of Committee Chairs for 2026/27** **Action**

Governors unanimously APPROVED the appointment of Peter Hilditch as Chair of the Finance Committee and Nicolas Hunt Chair of the Staffing Committee for the Academic year 2026/27.

79/26 **Mobile Phones**

The Head thanked Ben for his steer on a couple of points in relation to policies, 50% of which had been accepted and amended. The Head added that it is valuable information, as there were a few areas that could have been missed – thank you.

Governors NOTED the Mobile Phone policy and the other information provided, including the FAQs sent to staff and parents in relation to the new rules for mobile phones.

A Governor asked about breaches, and how long a ban would be for a third breach. The Head explained that the ban would be for a whole term, but there will be termly resets. **The Governor asked this would mean the ban would last until January, at the start of the following term.** The Head confirmed that this is correct.

The Governor said her other question around phones currently being used for learning and as a teaching aid in lessons, as her son has said that phones are used for projects in several subjects. The Head responded that they would use computers, laptops etc, but not phones.

The Governor asked what about Geography field trips. The Head said out of school is fine.

The Head explained that it is a policy of trust, based on constrictions, and whilst he agrees students are disadvantaged by having a no phone zone, bans in the past have been low – but we also don't want children to be disadvantaged. Year planners are being brought back, and careful thought has been given to what the issues might be, such as students not being able to play strategy games during break, and as a result they have spoken with children about how they will cope, and they say they will be fine.

They will also be bringing in more board games, and tabletop games and they have thought about how to replace phone use with other things.

The Governor said, from a staff point of view around enforcement, if students have a phone that goes off and they get it out, and although we have the FAQs, what if it is happening when that person is busy? The Head said it doesn't happen now, maybe sometimes in classrooms and it is mainly accidental. The Head is not worried about lesson time and is more worried about students who make mistakes and have consequences, and students worried about getting behaviour points and having to deal with this.

A Governor agreed that it is break and lunch time when these mistakes might happen. The Head agreed that this is correct and is why they will have a week's grace. The Head added that they don't want to have pouches, as students have said that they put other things in rather than phone, but he does see the value of being notification free for 6/7 hours because it is a distraction. There are good and bad things about this, but for it to work, it must be consistent.

A Governor commented that the feedback builds into the Matter Arising about building resilience and getting used to rules, and fits into the whole conversation about life and its rules. What he has got from the policy, is the work that has

been put into this. The Head responded that they have also given out a lot of information to students. **Action**

The Staff Governor asked about P7. The Heda responded it is at the teacher's discretion, as a lot of students attend P7, after 3.00 p.m.

Governors APPROVED the Mobile Phone policy.

80/26 **Finance & Staffing Committee**

a) Finance & Staffing Committee Minutes – 20th May 2026

Governors NOTED the minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committees held on the 20th May 2026.

b) Budget, 2026/2027

The Head informed Governors that they have been notified of a 6.5% pay increase for staff. 3.5% for teachers, and 3% for support staff, over two years.

The Government are currently saying that schools will only have to fund 1%, but the budget includes 3% - the government are now saying that it might be 1.75%, although we will still be in a position that we have overbudgeted.

The Chair of the Finance Committee added that they always budget for the pay increase, but not for contribution by the government, so the budget being provided takes this all into account.

A Governor commented that they can only do this for so long. The Chair of the Finance Committee agreed, because the gap gets bigger, which isn't a good position to be in.

Governors APPROVED the Budget for April 2026 – March 2027 as proposed by the Finance Committee at its meeting on the 20th May.

81/26 **Brian Lightman, SIP Visit Report – June 2026.**

Governors NOTED the report of Brian Lightman's visit on the 9th June 2026.

The Chair reported that she had met with Brian during the visit, and everything was positive. Brian is very thorough about what he does and likes to come to Cantell and he gets a lot out of our students and walking around school. The Head added that there isn't anything that Brian is worried about, although we can always to better – it was a positive meeting.

82/26 **Policies for Approval**

Due to requested amendments, it was agreed that the amendments would be made and the following policies would then be emailed out to Governors by the Clerk for approval:

- BYOD
- Maternity Procedures
- Paternity Procedures
- Acceptable Use
- Charging & Remission
- Employee Loan
- Finance Manual

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- Freedom of Information
- GDPR

Action

83/26 **Governor Attendance Records for 2025/26**

Governors NOTED the attendance records for the current year to date.

84/26 **Proposed Governor Meeting Dates for 2026/27**

Governors APPROVED the meeting dates for 2026/27.

85/26 **Governor Link Visit Reports**

SEN

The Link Governor for SEN reported that he had been in today to visit Thrive and SEN and had had a full tour of some of the areas. It was interesting to see how they are running the area and moving the Thrive students through each year and the improvements to the main SEN room and three smaller rooms. Matty Taylor was there and some of the registration staff.

Whilst he was there some wellbeing students came in and wanted to see their regular member of staff and they were concerned that they weren't there – this emphasis the need for the same person to be there as they need some stability, although Matty Taylor seemed to be doing a good job.

The Thrive students weren't in their rooms, because they were in PE, but it was good to see the room. The Link SEN Governor said that when Governors talk about the building work, it was very clear that students will benefit from the facilities.

Some students were in the sensory room and there was a sense that Thrive being there is a benefit for the other students in mainstream and there is a feeling that with new students coming in, Rachel Bridges will be able to put students in the right areas and also that parents are aware of the provision and are putting in requests to come to Cantell. Because of the provision, so there is a lot of reputational evidence on what we are doing. It was good to see that everything that is was seen in action, so it is well worth a visit.

Maths

The Link Governor for Maths reported that when she was in, the Head took her to see some of the Transition, which was a great opportunity to see something else in school – and walking through the school, it was interesting to see what the Head has to deal with. It was eye opening to see the realities of leadership in a school, but good to see how it was dealt with. In Maths, the Link Governor asked Catherine what she feels is good about her team, she said it was consistency and working in a consistent manner.

English

The Link Governor for English reported that she visited the department last week, which was a busy week due to Transition and Year 10 being out on work experience.

The Link Governor said that she discussed staffing with Pru and Sarah and how the department is coping with long term absences. Sarah said that there had only been five weeks during the year, without any absence, but the team had coped well and the models they are using would be good to the share with other departments. Sarah reported that they are pleased with the staff they have got and pleased with the new staff who have started.

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They also visited Thrive and did a learning walk around a Year 8 lesson. The department is also planning more trips and visits, encouraged by Jonathan Mullan-Clark, with two visits planned for next term, and they have also had a visit by an author. In the recent Peer Review, it outlined a visit from a colleague at one of the local primary schools, who had said that they could see a step up in the department in terms of annual assessment preparation. Reading Buddies also has a new leader, as Nina is leaving, Megan is taking over. **Action**

86/26 **Head's Final Round Up**

The Head informed Governors that they have spoken a lot about AI and as a result he has done his round up in the form of an AI review, picking up the themes of the Peer-to-Peer reports for the year, along with Brian Lightman's reports. He asked Governors to think of their visits to school, and whether the Cantell in the presentation, is the Cantell that they know

87/26 **Chair's Update**

The Chair commented that Governors have been brilliant this year and have supported each other and the school, and hopefully they have got a lot out of the year. The Chair said that she looks forward to next year because we have a good solid group of people behind us to support and to widen our own knowledge.

Three Governors met today for a panel meeting, which they don't like to do, but is necessary – the Chair thanked those who attended for coming in.

The Chair thanked Governors for a wonderful year.

88/26 **Goodbye and thank you to John Draper**

The Chair reported that John has been a Governor at Cantell since 2015 and has been a softly spoken, strong presence, who could be relied on to find the information the others were searching around for. Whatever you say, it's from the heart, and you make people like you, and we will be sorry to say goodbye.

John responded that with all big changes in life, it's very mixed -being a Governor at Cantell has been such a benefit to Swaythling school and for him it's been a professional benefit, working with Harry who is a colleague and a mentor and a friend.

John added that he'd like to thank Governors and finally he would like to say a big thank you particular to Harry and Cantell and good luck and every success in the future.

89/26 **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

90/26 **Date of Next Meeting**
Thursday 17th September 2026
That concluded the business of the meeting, the meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.

Page No	Minute Number	Item	By Whom	By When
2	73/26	To provide the figures for where they want attendance to be by Christmas	Ian Creswell	November meeting
2	73/26	Provide an update on visit to Holly Lodge School in the Midlands.	Ian Creswell	November meeting

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