

Inspection of a good school: Cantell School

Violet Road, Bassett, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 3GJ

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 February 2023

Outcome

Cantell School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are rightly proud to attend Cantell School. They feel happy, safe and well cared for. Pupils enjoy being a part of the 'Cantell family'. They like the school's diversity. As one pupil said, 'It is a very vibrant place to learn.'

Pupils benefit from a high-quality education. Staff have very high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. These expectations are consistent among staff. Staff model the 'Cantell Cs'. These are the values of challenge, cooperation, courtesy, commitment and creativity. Pupils learn the importance of these values and demonstrate them consistently. Their behaviour and attitudes towards learning are exemplary. Pupils who struggle to manage their conduct are supported well by the excellent pastoral team.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. Pupils show high levels of respect for staff. This is because they know that staff value them and care about their education. Pupils build long-lasting relationships with each other. They enjoy spending time together and thrive on the many opportunities they have to create friendships, including at social times. While bullying sometimes happens, pupils are supported well to ensure that it is resolved quickly and it comes to a stop.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have rightly focused on the quality of the curriculum in recent years. They have ensured that the curriculum in every subject sets out the important knowledge and skills pupils will learn. Leaders have ensured that learning is logically sequenced. Consequently, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different subjects they study build gradually over time.

In key stage 4, pupils choose one of three pathways. Staff support pupils, in discussion with parents and carers, to make sure that the curriculum is right for them. There is more to do to increase the number of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate pathway. Some initiatives are sparking pupils' interest in the study of languages, such as the recent project with GCHQ about the work of language analysts.

Pupils benefit from a consistent approach to lessons. Carefully selected activities ensure that pupils' learning is broken down into smaller chunks. Teachers explain and demonstrate new learning with clarity. They ask pupils lots of questions to check that they understand what they learn. Teachers regularly revisit important content so that it is lodged in pupils' memory. If teachers are in any doubt, they support pupils until they have grasped the content.

Pupils are supported well in their learning. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers receive helpful information about pupils' needs along with useful strategies to use. They make subtle adaptations to their teaching to make sure that all pupils learn effectively. One parent, who summed up the views of many, said, 'They see the individual and celebrate diversity.'

Reading is rightly a priority for leaders. Staff understand the importance reading has for pupils to be able to cope with the demands of the curriculum. Staff get to know pupils' reading abilities when pupils join the school in Year 7. They identify pupils who need help quickly with their reading. Staff provide support to these pupils, including phonics support. Consequently, pupils read with confidence and fluency. The 'reading ambassador' and 'reading buddies' schemes provide regular opportunities for university students and older pupils in the school to read to pupils.

Pupils are prepared well for the future. The personal development programme is carefully planned to ensure that pupils learn about important topics that they need to know as they move through school and beyond. There are regular opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work and find out about different careers. Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs they can attend, and many take advantage of them.

Governors, Aspire Community Trust and the local authority work together well to support the school. Each of their roles and responsibilities is clear. Governors support and challenge leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The processes to keep pupils safe work very well. Staff receive regular training. As a result, they understand the risks facing pupils, including the issues they face locally. Staff know what to do if they have concerns. In these instances, they take immediate action. The safeguarding team ensures that concerns are followed up rigorously. Strong partnerships with other agencies mean that pupils and their families receive timely support. The personal development programme ensures that pupils are taught about risks

and understand how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have trusted adults whom they can talk to if they have worries.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	116469
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10240783
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Glynis Alexander
Headteacher	Harry Kutty
Website	www.cantell.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cantell School is a founding member of Aspire Community Trust, a cooperative trust in Southampton.
- The headteacher is also the chair of Aspire Community Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematic, modern foreign languages, art and design, and history. They discussed the curriculum with leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector held a virtual meeting with the school's independent school improvement adviser, two representatives of Aspire Community Trust and a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with a group of 14 parents at their request to discuss their experiences of the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised behaviour, bullying and racist incident records.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the comments made by those who responded.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with the safeguarding team and spoke with pupils and staff. They scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with governors. They scrutinised child protection records.

Inspection team

Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Rodin

Ofsted Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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