



Notes on SIP visit to Cantell School on 29th September 2022

Report to Governors

Prior to the visit I reviewed the draft SEF and provided some suggested amendments to a very strong document which accurately reflects the quality of education at Cantell.

The programme for my first SIP visit of the academic year consisted of the following:

1. Attendance at SLT and pastoral briefings and ELT meeting
2. Observation of the CPSD enrichment day , lesson A empower lessons and student voice session
3. Meeting with newly appointed staff including Head of Interventions.
4. A learning walk and observation of breaktime.
5. Meetings with SLT to discuss attendance and behaviour including visit to learning to learn facility.
6. Performance management review for Headteacher with Chair of Governors. (Documented separately)

Key points from the visit:

- The examination results speak for themselves representing a significant milestone in the school's improvement journey. I am convinced that the significant uplift is evidence of the impact of the vast amount of work over a period of years to develop the quality of teaching and learning, the planning and sequencing of the curriculum and the robust self-evaluative work taking place in all departments . The focus on PP students has clearly paid off with significant improvements in their attainment at 4+ and 5+ English and Maths. All of this sterling work is now reaping strong benefits. Results have been analysed in detail and areas for further development identified. SENMH students are perhaps the most challenged group post pandemic as is the case nationally.
- Further to the appointment of a new leader for CPSD substantial progress is being made to embed all aspects of these important aspects of the curriculum into a coherent plan across the full 5 years of a child's education encompassing enrichment days, assemblies, national days/weeks and lesson A empower activities. This has been carefully mapped out in order to ensure that all students experience the full range of topics. This is ongoing work and the team of staff are meeting regularly to develop it further.
- The content of the enrichment day provided a stimulating range of activities on topics including careers, work experience entrepreneurship and cyber safety. These were led by a combination of school staff and external speakers and I saw some sessions of high quality. Feedback from the student voice session was very positive, recognising and valuing the importance of learning about these matters though in some lessons there were a small number of students who were not fully engaged in the activities (see bullet below re new staff). Booklets and planners provided for students are of high quality and the content of lessons are supported by resources which make them easily accessible to non specialists. **An area for development they helpfully highlighted was to look into**

what is covered in primary schools to build in appropriate progression to maintain appropriate challenge.

- The involvement of some 10 colleges in sessions which help students to plan their next steps is extremely strong. The EBP also ran sessions helping students to plan work experience. **I have shared a guide on virtual work experience which could enhance (not replace) the face to face experiences by giving access a wider range of high quality opportunities.**
- The new staff I met were enthusiastic about the climate in the school, the support and guidance they are receiving from senior leaders and line managers. This compared very favourably with their experiences elsewhere. It is the quality of this provision that perhaps explains the fact that the school is fully staffed with specialists unlike many others. **However, some staff who have joined the school from elsewhere have not benefitted from the high quality CPD and initial training provided to those who are not new to Cantell. The impact of this which I saw in a number of lessons was development needs in some of the basic classroom skills such as the introduction of tasks and clear explanation of precise requirements. In these lessons some students did not always take part actively in pair discussions or start promptly when a task was set. This is fully recognised by leaders who are working intensely to address the urgent needs of these staff. I suggest revisiting some of these classrooms on a future visit.**
- **A suggestion newly appointed teachers made was to reduce the number of different ICT platforms that are in use as this is cumbersome and time consuming especially at the beginning of lessons when logging in. When teaching in different classrooms they made the point that laptops would be much more practical than desktops which need to be logged into separately**
- The new post of intervention manager is an important development which, alongside developments in assessment practice will facilitate targeted and sharply focused activities with potential to have rapid impact. I shared some resources with the member of staff to assist with this.
- As in previous visits behaviour of the students was extremely good and the atmosphere during break and lesson changes calm and orderly. The Number of behaviour points in the daily SLT review was very low indeed and reflected the strong response to low level disruption and consistent follow up to on breaches of expectations. This level of presence, involvement and support by the SLT is exemplary and is highly valued by staff who know that they can focus on their teaching without disruption and develop positive and relaxed relationships with students. It is worth emphasising that these high levels of support do not exist many other schools and are a key factor in the high morale of staff.
- The refocusing of the CAP facility into a learning to learn centre to emphasise reintegration as a core purpose is a positive development which already seems to be having an impact. I met a student who was pleased to already be accessing a large part of the mainstream curriculum while retaining the support of some time in the centre where the modified curriculum gives students access to creative and vocational options as well as core content. The 'reflection room' for students temporarily removed from specific lessons provides the opportunity for silent supervised study covering the same content as mainstream lessons using Google classrooms so that they do not fall behind. Although a fairly high number of students were in this facility during my visit the

expectation is that numbers will be much lower as students settle back into the school routines after slipping back during the COVID period.

In conclusion the school remains in an extremely strong position with high staff morale, a very high level of oversubscription for places and a strong feeling of belonging amongst the students in an environment in which they are happy, comfortable and safe and know that their teachers are doing everything they can to aid their progress. The next stages of the school's development will focus on further work to develop the students' ownership of their learning working more independently and drawing on their own curiosity to deepen their understanding. This involves high order teaching skills which I am certain Cantell's excellent staff will be able to employ. As always it was a pleasure to witness such excellence.

Date of next SIP visit : Tuesday 22nd November

Brian Lightman

Other suggestions for leadership team:

1. I would recommend that someone takes part in the free Careers Leader Training provided via the Careers and Enterprise Company and also investigates the extensive resources they provide. Details can be found [here](#) . The school is not yet using their COMPASS+ software which enables schools to map the activities students experience across the 5 years and the extent to which Gatsby Benchmarks are being met.
2. I am sure that the school will have no difficulty meeting the requirements of the new provider access legislation. However it will be important to map this out and incorporate it into the CPSD programmes. Details [here](#).
3. I have shared the guide to virtual work experience I produced with the CEC and PiXL by email to Rhys but it can also be downloaded from the PiXL Futures website.
4. You may already have this but I came across this [cyber-safety training](#) which all staff and trustees are required to complete and certify in the trust I belong to. It was quite good.
5. You might find the PiXL Reading resources useful.
6. Through my involvement with [Schools of Tomorrow](#) I am doing some work on student agency with John West Burnham and others. The book 'So what now' by JWB and Malcolm Groves John Catt 2022 could be of interest as could their other publications Flipping Schools and Leadership for Tomorrow. They are also launching a student voice programme called Ambassadors for Tomorrow. I have details but this is not a hard sell! I don't have a vested interest.