



15th December 2023

Dear Parent, Carer or Guardian,

As we approach the end of another term and the much-anticipated Christmas break, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey we've shared together with our students and families. There have been countless moments of achievement, growth, and pride that have defined this term, making it truly remarkable. Attempting to capture all the accomplishments in a single letter would be an impossible task, but I wanted to highlight the palpable sense of pride that resonates throughout our Cantell community. This, evident in abundance at the Christmas Concert yesterday evening!

One of the most heart-warming aspects of this term has been witnessing the genuine pride our young people are taking in their achievements. Whether it's excelling in lessons, participating in extracurricular activities, or demonstrating compassion and support for each other, the spirit of accomplishment is alive and well at Cantell. It is both a privilege and an honour to witness our students grow and develop in an environment that is safe, caring, and warm.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the exceptional 180+ staff who continue to go above and beyond for the Cantell Family. In a post-pandemic world, we are all working 25% harder to maintain the same level of provision as before. The dedication and good cheer exhibited by our staff are truly commendable, and I want to express my sincere thanks for their unwavering commitment to our students' success.

This week, the cards and gifts from parents and families were particularly touching. Your generosity and thoughtfulness did not go unnoticed and were warmly welcomed by our staff. It serves as a reminder of the strong bond we share as a community and the collective effort required to navigate the challenges presented to us.

Teaching and Learning have been the cornerstone of our focus this term, encapsulated by the theme 'Creating Experts.' Our passionate and dedicated teachers have played a pivotal role in imparting key knowledge and skills to our students. The disciplinary literacy posters, emphasizing how students can embody expertise in each subject area, have been a valuable addition to our approach.

Dr. Helen Squibb's involvement in quality assuring our student voice process was a significant highlight. Her positive comments on the embedded nature of student voice activities across all aspects of school life reflect the genuine opportunities our students have to contribute and make a difference within the Cantell community.

The emphasis on reading aloud, learning journeys, and attack words continues to enhance the overall learning experience. The Jolabokaflokk tradition, marked by Dr. Nazneen Ahmed Pathak signing a copy of her book 'City of Stolen Magic' for every student, added a delightful touch to our term-end celebrations. I hope you enjoy the Reading Guide provided and find joy in reading the book over the holiday break.



While celebrating our successes, it's important to address some practical matters. We have observed a decline in students having the correct equipment, particularly pens and rulers. Your assistance in ensuring your child comes to school well-equipped with the necessary items listed will greatly contribute to a smooth learning environment.

Homework completion rates approaching 80% indicate a commendable commitment to extending learning beyond the classroom. Homework Clubs remain available for additional support, and we encourage continued collaboration between parents and teachers to foster a positive learning routine.

Looking ahead, the Future Focus & Options Evening on Wednesday, 21st February, is a crucial event for Year 9 students and their families to explore available options. Representatives from colleges, universities, businesses, and training providers will be present to provide valuable insights.

Cantell Careers Week, in collaboration with NatWest Bank, will commence on Monday, 11th March, offering students across all year groups opportunities to engage with presentations and workshops from local and national companies, helping them envision life after Cantell.

For Year 10 students, the enthusiasm for Work Experience has been remarkable. Please support your child in completing their choices online via the EBP website or arranging an Own Placement directly with a business to ensure they don't miss out on this exciting venture.

On top of awarding house points and sending virtual postcards, we have rewarded students in a variety of ways this term, including weekly EMPOWER hot chocolates, postcards, house rewards (including house colour socks and T-shirts), chocolate coins for students in the Gold and Green groups for CTLs this term, 'Pick and mix' sweets for our top 50 house point earners (awarded half termly) and reading rewards (including a celebratory film afternoon and Millionaire Reader Hoodies). Our ever-popular pizza lunches will be arranged for all Gold group CTL students in the new year. Will this be the year I get some slices myself? 😊

Our Empower skills of: Leadership, Organisation, Resilience, Initiative, Innovation, Independence, Communication and Entrepreneurship continue to work hand-in-hand with our Cantell C values to underpin your young person's school experience. It has been a delight to see so many of our students be nominated for a Friday hot chocolate as a result of them demonstrating these skills both in and out of the curriculum.

This term, our Year 10 students have undertaken their first two Empower Days. The first focussed on 'Me and My Community' exploring what it means to be a respectful global citizen and how to make a positive contribution to society as well as the role of the judicial system, while the second day – 'Me and My Future' - saw the students learn CPR, how to navigate challenging obstacles they may face as young people as well as exploring how to form positive and safe futures in their relationships. The days really add to our student's understanding of the World around them and how to navigate it once they leave school.

Our Student Experiences got off to an amazing launch with our Horizon's Fair, where students explored our broad extra-curricular offering. With 80 clubs on offer, such as speed-cubing, Lego, cricket and so many more students left feeling inspired to get involved in extra-curriculars all across the school. With our



upcoming school show "Oliver!", there were even more opportunities for our rising stars to take part - and we really look forward to watching the finished performance in the spring term.

So far this year we have had over 30 trips and visits take place, bringing the learning alive for our students. This has included Year 7 students attending the pantomime, Year 8 students taking part in experiments with LifeLab, and an unforgettable trip to London to watch Hamilton for students in Year 9.

Our House System remains ever competitive, with lots of competitions already taking place in our first term, such as aerial fitness, an athletic dodgeball tournament and the exciting quiz event. Students will celebrate their House success in their festive Friday assembly where further house points are on the line.

We look forward to the life-changing experiences that our students have to come in 2024 and beyond.

Finally, to our Year 11 students, it has been a busy term and they have achieved so much. In September, we kicked off with our Welcome Back Assembly and promised Year 11s it would be a busy term. And it certainly has been! From personal statements and college applications through to mock exams and personalised feedback, our Year 11s have embraced this busy period with enthusiasm and maturity. As well as making great academic progress, Year 11s have ordered their Leavers Hoodies and have begun shaping the 2024 Cantell Prom.

At a time of year when many of us are thinking about Christmas dinner recipes, it is important to consider the recipe for Year 11 success. There is one ingredient for which there is no substitute. Excellent attendance! Last year, students with attendance of at least 93% secured GCSEs that were 2 grades better than those with attendance below 93%. 93% attendance should be a minimum. Nationally in 2022, workplace absence was 2.6% (which obviously equates to 97.4% attendance). It is therefore vital that we work together to support our young people to prepare for life after Cantell by maintaining good levels of attendance.

We take our duty of care for the safety and wellbeing of our students very seriously both in and out of term-time. If you are concerned about anyone in our Cantell family, please contact our safeguarding team at any time at: safeguarding@cantell.co.uk

In closing this letter and as we approach the Christmas break, I wish each member of the Cantell Family a joyful and restful Christmas break. May it be filled with moments of warmth, laughter, and reflection on the achievements and growth we've experienced together.

Warmest regards,



Harry Kutty
Headteacher