



Notes on SIP visit to Cantell School on 29th March 2023

Report to Governors

This was my first visit since the Ofsted inspection during which I had been invited to a very positive meeting with the lead inspector who was clearly recognising the many strengths of Cantell School as the excellent report reflects. My warmest congratulations to the whole team.

The programme for this SIP visit consisted of the following:

1. Joined SLT briefing including presentation of English development week outcomes.
2. House Assembly
3. A learning walk
4. Update with head
5. Meetings with SLT/key staff focused on pastoral, curriculum, assessment, reading, CPSD and student leadership
6. Debrief

Conversations during the day focused on building further on the many existing strengths of the school and seeking to look outwards in order to draw on ideas and effective practice from other schools. We discussed possible visits for staff to other schools and I have provided some suggestions and contacts.

Key points from the day:

- What stood out with the assembly with year 8 was the warm and relaxed atmosphere characterised by the style of presentation by the staff and the enthusiastic engagement of the children. This felt like a very good example of the 'Cantell family' atmosphere and was a pleasure to see.
- I visited lessons with some of the more recently appointed teachers. We visited a particularly strong lesson in Science. As is always the case at Cantell student behaviour and engagement is strong. Coaching and mentoring are supporting these colleagues to develop their skills in the classroom further.
- Staff feedback from the English development week were highly appreciative of the process and commitment to the SLT. Since the first round of these a year ago the faculty had very much taken on ownership of the process resulting in a very helpful report with strong areas of focus to take forward building on the very strong feedback from inspectors. This process was a very good example of how middle leaders have been supported to develop their leadership skills to fulfil their roles at a very high level. It is also evident that ECT teachers are also being empowered to take the lead on developments which values their expertise and is beneficial for their departmental colleagues.

- The curriculum website has now been completed to provide comprehensive access to staff encompassing schemes of work, resources, feedback from learning walks and much more. Access to all subjects has been provided to all subject leaders to foster further the spirit of collaboration enabling staff to learn from each other and spread best practice. Parents have access to relevant parts of this in PDF format. *We discussed further ways of supporting parents to make proactive use of this resource to support their children.*
- Homework support sessions operated at the end of the school day support students in a non-punitive way.
- Oracy as a whole school focus. Potential schools to visit proposed. We discussed way of building on this so that students become more independent and confident.
- New appointment of reading/ phonics specialist made.
- An additional librarian appointed to develop further the use of the library and introduce another library point on the school site.
- The CPSD day programmes have been significantly redesigned and improved following feedback from staff and students. The model now in place was extremely well received by students who were much more positive than in previous feedback. Staff and visiting speakers noted the much higher levels of engagement of the students.

Potential areas for further development discussed:

- *Further involvement of employers and consideration of virtual work experience (guide shared with Harry). An opportunity could be to link this to the planned development of the freeport which could be a powerful curriculum project.*
- *Further work to empower parents to make full use of the curriculum resources on the website in order to support their children in their learning.*
- *Consideration of further broadening of the curriculum offer through project based work/qualifications or introducing some themes across subjects. Links shared. This could develop further the work on debating to incorporate more formal debates on topical issues arising from subject content.*
- *Clarifying the lines of communication/responsibility between the head of interventions and the SENDCO as the enhanced phonics support introduced.*
- *Further opportunities to develop student leadership building on the extensive existing roles such as reading ambassadors and buddies, peer researchers etc. to develop activism groups on topics students identify and feel passionate about such as climate change or ones that the school would like their input into. Example of a school doing this discussed. (Fairfield) Schools of Tomorrow Ambassadors for Tomorrow programme discussed.*

Date of next SIP visit: June 7th .

Brian Lightman

Links and contacts.

Schools

- XP school Doncaster Video <https://www.edge.co.uk/news-and-events/podcasts-and-videos/above-all-compassion-the-story-of-xp/>
- XP school website <https://xptrust.org>
- Greenshaw Learning Trust Visit to be arranged to Henley Bank and Yate Schools focusing on oracy, pupil talk and questioning wsmith@greenshawlearningtrust.co.uk Will is very keen to facilitate this and possibly a reciprocal visit at a future date.
- Fairfield High School Bristol <https://fairfield.excalibur.org.uk> Student leadership. Assistant Head Cashan Campbell CCampbell@fairfield.excalibur.org.uk Interim Head is Amanda Bridgewater ABridgewater@fairfield.excalibur.org.uk
- Stratford upon Avon School Head is Neil Wallace NWallace@StratfordSchool.co.uk
- I haven't visited Ladybridge High School but the head (who I know) is engaged with rethinking assessment and is hoping to introduce the HPQ. The 'Ladybridge Way' looks interesting <https://www.ladybridgehigh.co.uk> .

Other links:

- Higher Project Qualification (HPQ) <https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/projects/project-qualifications/PQ2-7992/specification-at-a-glance> Equivalent to higher level GCSE and graded A*-C. I have confirmed that this is the current specification. I have checked with AQA about the currency of this qualification.
- Information about further qualifications focused on leadership skills of students offered by SLQ <https://slqskills.org/qualifications-programmes>
- Schools of Tomorrow www.schoolsoftomorrow.org
- Education Employers Charity (who run Inspiring the Future and Primary Futures and help with careers fairs etc. Database of thousands of volunteers . Charlotte Thurston Director of Programmes (family link disclosed) I have emailed her and she is keen to help. Charlotte.thurston@educationandemployers.org
- Rethinking Assessment website – useful blogs etc. Piloting new approaches including models of pupil profiles for report more broadly to parents and record a wider range of achievements. <https://rethinkingassessment.com>
- PiXL has produced debating cards on a wide range of topics.

Next visit 7th June.