



Cantell Maths and Computing College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116469
LEA Southampton LEA
Inspection number 285266
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Pauline Robins HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Violet Road
School category	Community		Bassett
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Southampton SO16 3GJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380 323111
Number on roll	1183	Fax number	02380 322433
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Samuels
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2004	Headteacher	Mrs Ruth Johnson

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

When Cantell was inspected in 2004 it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in June 2006. The inspection was carried out by one HMI and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Cantell is situated to the north east of Southampton, close to the city centre and the University of Southampton. It gained specialist school status in September 2003, for mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). This coincided with the opening of new accommodation built on the same site as the original school. It is slightly larger than other secondary schools of its type. It serves a socially mixed area, including some districts with high levels of social deprivation.

Although the students have a wide range of ability, their standards on entry to the school are marginally below those found nationally. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is approximately 23% and increasing. In addition to a higher than average proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds there are a number of students who are refugees or asylum seekers. Approximately 25% of all the students have learning difficulties, which is above the national average. However, only four students have a statement of special educational need which is low. The school includes a specialist 24 place unit for students with specific learning difficulties. In addition the school offers its own provision off-site for more challenging students and on-site provision for vulnerable students. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is 25% which is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

This is a satisfactory yet rapidly improving school which already has some good elements. It now offers good value for money and has very good capacity to improve. This is as a result of the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and the good senior managers who are turning the school around. The processes for self evaluation within the school are rigorous and they know their strengths and weaknesses. Understandably, when making some of their own judgements about their performance, the school has been overly cautious.

Although there is still room for improvement, all the areas for development identified during the inspection are already in the process of being addressed by the school. Standards are improving but remain below average and girls are not performing as well as the boys. The poor attendance of a minority of students is having a significant detrimental effect on both their attainment and achievement. The quality of teaching has improved but it is not yet consistently good because it does not always involve students enough in their own learning. However, the classroom management strategies used by teachers are effective and consistently applied.

Systems within the school are robust. The monitoring of student progress is developing rapidly, enabling teachers to target individuals or groups of students for additional support. However, the assessment of EAL students lacks rigour and the targets set for students with learning difficulties are not sufficiently clear and concise. The systems for monitoring and supporting attendance are a particular strength of the school. Relationships are good and there is good quality care for the students with a high level of staff commitment to their well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise the standard of teaching to that of the best and offer students a greater opportunity for independent learning
- further develop the programme of staff professional development and accountability

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are marginally below national expectations. The 2005 GCSE results were below average but the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above continues to improve. Results in national tests for students in Year 9, in 2005, were also below average and show a small decline from the previous year. Analysis of results over time for students in Year 9 and Year 11 indicates some fluctuations but the trend is improving. Girls do not do as well as boys. There are also fluctuations in departmental results. In Year 9, in 2005,

both mathematics and science came close to reaching the targets set for attainment at Level 5 and there were good results at Level 6. English results were close to their target and were an improvement on those gained in 2004. A significant minority have poor attendance records and this depresses overall attainment. Those students who do attend regularly achieve at least satisfactorily.

The school has now successfully developed detailed and robust assessment systems. School data clearly shows that examination results in 2006 for Year 9 and Year 11 students should be an improvement on those gained in 2005. The new assessment and monitoring systems have enabled the school to identify groups of students who need extra help and support to gain examination grades that more adequately reflect their ability. This support has been provided. Though issues relating to some poor attenders remain, the school is on course to meet its targets and most students are achieving at least satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The students' personal development is satisfactory. Relationships are good. Most students get on well with each other and their teachers. They enjoy school life. A Year 8 student commented, 'Because it is a calm and friendly place and you can hang out with your friends, there is less bunking off now because adults are always checking and this helps stop intimidation.'

Students are well aware of reasons for adopting a healthy life style but need to take more responsibility for doing so. Many attend clubs, though younger students asked for more regular and formal School Council meetings.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is sound. Students have good social skills and are keen to talk about their work. Most treat the code of behaviour with respect; few are removed from lessons because of disruptive behaviour. These incidents are meticulously recorded and analysed, and appropriate action is taken.

Though figures remain well below average, attendance is improving slowly, particularly in the older year groups. This is because of several strong and creative initiatives. Staff track where each child is at any particular time in school using careful checking procedures. The school has worked diligently on trying to improve attendance, but the impact of this is slow to have an effect.

Aware of those less fortunate than themselves, students take part in fund raising activities like the Tsunami appeal which supported the rebuilding of some schools and help the local community in several ways working, for instance, with the Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme. Sound business links help them prepare for the world of work through enterprise projects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school is fully aware of what the strengths and weaknesses are in teaching because it monitors and evaluates lessons rigorously. Though satisfactory overall, the quality of teaching and learning has continued to improve since the school was placed in special measures. In the best lessons, learning is closely linked to assessment criteria. Students know exactly what is expected of them and what they need to do to improve. In an outstanding Year 9 English lesson, students had a mature grasp of language and the work was pitched at an appropriate level for all. Students were involved in learning throughout and, as a result, made very good progress.

Lessons are well planned and teachers manage their students well. However, in some lessons, teacher introductions and whole class activities mean that some students are not involved quickly enough in individual learning activities. In one lesson, the long introduction about coursework requirements meant that some students started to lose interest because they were not involved quickly enough in individual learning activities. In some subjects the use of ICT to enliven lessons and stimulate students is underdeveloped. The quality of marking is inconsistent between subjects and students are not always being told what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. Based on an accurate process of self-evaluation, the school has made changes to the curriculum. As a result, the curriculum is playing a major role in enabling the school to raise standards.

The school has widened the choice of vocational options in Years 10 and 11. Working in partnership with training providers, the school will be able to offer courses, on site, which are of greater appeal to girls. The school has rightly identified a large proportion of this group as being at risk of disaffection.

The curriculum allows groups of students to focus on areas of learning, which are restricting progress. Additional lessons for literacy and numeracy are provided, while Latin is now offered as part of some student's literacy development. This has led to improvements in students' learning. A few students, who are not fully engaged with their learning, take part in a successful alternative curriculum, which is delivered through off site provision and includes developing their work related learning skills.

Satisfactory improvements have been made to the provision for the school's personal social health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme. The school recognises the importance of this area in helping students to develop their attitudes to learning and is making appropriate plans for significant improvements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to the care of students. Child protection arrangements are strong and careful attention is paid to health and safety within the school environment and on educational visits. Arrangements for safeguarding students are regularly reviewed. Teachers are now more available to support students during lesson changes, break and lunch times. This has helped students to feel more secure. One student said that while three years ago she was afraid to come to school she now feels totally safe.

The school has good systems for the guidance and support of students through option choices and career decisions. Students agree with this judgement and feel that this aspect of PSHCE and tutor time is useful. There are good arrangements for the academic guidance and support of students. The annual academic review gives students an opportunity to discuss targets, which are then reviewed on a regular basis. This enables them to keep a clear focus on what they need to do to improve. However, students with learning difficulties and disabilities do not work to targets, which are clear and concise. Also the assessment of progress for students with English as an additional language lacks rigour.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's outstanding leadership and drive for improvement have been instrumental in bringing about the major changes which are in progress within the school. She is well supported by a new and very able Headteachers Leadership Team (HTLT). Together they provide a clear direction for the school. They have an accurate picture of the strengths and areas for further development which have been arrived at through close monitoring and a rigorous programme of lesson observations. The staff and students have confidence in the HTLT, especially in the headteacher, to take the school forward. One of the strengths of the headteacher is her ability to recognise and make best use of the strengths of her staff.

The quality of middle managers is improving and becoming more consistent. This is the result of a rigorous and well documented process of departmental review, supported by good senior team line management. Staff who are new to the school, at all levels, are well supported. The staff report that they feel empowered to carry out their duties and are clear about what is expected of them. They successfully use a training model which takes existing good practice and share this throughout the school.

An Interim Executive Board (IEB) is now in place which is very successfully supporting and holding the school to account. The chair of the IEB knows the school well and his breadth of educational understanding gives the board a clear direction and purpose. Very good working practice has been established between the IEB and the HTLT which

has resulted in innovative, yet appropriate, strategic plans for at least the next three years.

The strength in leadership and management and the rapid progress made by the school since being placed in special measures, indicate that the school now provides good value for money and has a very good capacity to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Students

As you will know by now your school no longer requires Special Measures. I would like to congratulate you all as the last two years have required a lot of hard work from everyone involved with the school. Thank you all for welcoming the inspection team, particularly during our last visit. You were very keen to tell us about all the improvements and the confidence you now have in the headteacher and the staff. One of the most important things is that you now feel safe and enjoy coming to school.

Some of the things we particularly liked about Cantell: * There are clear systems for monitoring the work of the school and the students which ensure that things continue to improve. * There are good relationships between students and between staff and students. * Staff are committed to caring for and guiding students and are available at all times of the day. * Your headteacher is doing an outstanding job and is very well supported by the senior management team.

Some of the things where there is still work to be done: * The quality of teaching is much improved, but all teachers need to be as good as the best and give you more opportunity to be involved in your learning. * The programme of staff training and monitoring should continue to be developed. * Finally something that is down to you. Attendance for some students is way below what it should be. The school is doing everything it can to help those students, but poor attendance is having a very bad effect on their grades and on the overall results of the school. This is where you can really make a difference. At the moment we have judged Cantell to be a satisfactory school, but there are many bits that are already good. We think that with your support Cantell can be a good school in the very near future and has the potential to be outstanding.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Robins, on behalf of the inspection team

H M Inspector