

# Cantell Maths and Computing College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116469
<b>Local Authority</b>	Southampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	296307
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Carnaghan

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	988
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Phil Hand
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Ruth Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Violet Road Bassett Southampton SO16 3GJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	02380 323111
<b>Fax number</b>	02380 322433

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Cantell Maths and Computing College is a specialist college. It has an above average proportion of students from minority ethnic groups. The largest groups are from Indian, African and white (other) backgrounds. Approximately one in five students do not have English as their first language, about twice the national average. This proportion is increasing. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, the most significant areas of need are behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Cantell Maths and Computing College provides a satisfactory education. The new headteacher has brought a powerful air of improvement and this is widely shared amongst students, staff and parents. The positive impact of recent changes is starting to be evident in a number of areas, such as attendance. However, it is too soon for better provision to have raised achievement and standards.

Students' standards as they leave college are below average. Their achievement is satisfactory given their below average starting points. The college monitors performance well to ensure that no-one lags behind and this is generally effective. However, the college acknowledges that its resources are not keeping pace with the increasing numbers of students at an early stage of learning English. Those who have received support make good progress but this is proving increasingly difficult to maintain.

Students correctly feel they are well supported and cared for and speak warmly of the good relationships with their peers and teachers. However, the academic guidance they receive, while good in some areas, is inconsistent across the school. As a result, some students are unclear about what they need to do to improve. Students' personal development is good. Opportunities to work collaboratively and numerous vocational initiatives ensure that students' preparation for the future is effective. Behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding and this promotes improved learning.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are some inconsistencies between subjects and this lowers achievement in areas like information and communication technology (ICT). Some lessons are too teacher directed and provide too few opportunities for students to work independently. In contrast, the Year 7 'Competency Curriculum' is outstanding in developing a broad range of study skills. The curriculum is good. It recognises the many and various needs of students and initiatives, like increasing vocational opportunities and providing stimulating learning experiences. These developments have done much to engage students' enthusiasm and improved attendance, which is now broadly average. For example, the introduction of a hair and beauty course has reduced absence and raised the achievement of White British girls.

Parents are largely supportive of the college and welcome the more informal approach of the new leadership. They have few concerns. One typical comment is, 'I have felt a surge of positivity with the arrival of the new head'. The college's specialist status has had a limited impact on raising the quality of teaching and students' achievement. However, it has been used to improve the curriculum, enhance resources and increase the college's engagement with the local community.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. They have benefited from the fresh approach of the new headteacher. She has radically re-organised the senior leadership and has started to empower middle management. She has done this by engaging a broad consensus of opinions, so that staff have closely shared values and priorities. Governors provide thoughtful, perceptive support. They share in the thorough self-evaluation activities that give the college a very clear view of strengths and areas for development and its future direction. These strengths and the improvements already made mean that the college has a good capacity for further improvement.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Build on initiatives to improve classroom practice and ensure more consistently good teaching to raise achievement, particularly in ICT.
- Increase the support available to students who are at an early stage of learning English to enable them to achieve to their full potential.
- Ensure that all students have a clear understanding of their current standards and of what they should do to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Students start college with below average standards. Their achievement is satisfactory and they leave Year 11 with below average standards. Students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties achieve as well as their peers. However, resources to support students who are at an early stage of learning English are over stretched and some do not make as much progress as they could.

Improving attendance is having a positive impact on students' achievement. Evidence from the college's thorough tracking of students' current progress indicates that standards and achievement are slowly improving. Achievement in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. The innovative Year 7 curriculum, introduced last year, provides a good launch pad for students' learning.

Students in Key Stage 4 achieve satisfactorily. The college's specialist status has not led to improved achievement in mathematics and ICT and, while targets for these subjects have been rigorous, standards are no better than in other subjects and achievement in ICT lags behind. This is largely because of difficulties in staffing. The college analyses variations in students' achievement carefully and acts to address any concerns. For example, the achievement of students of Indian origin was lower than expected in 2007 but effective support has ensured that the current performance of this group is similar to that of its peers.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students enjoy college life and this is demonstrated in their consistently good or better behaviour in lessons and around the college. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection as a result of rigorous actions by the college and is now average.

Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. The college is an ethnically diverse, relaxed and friendly community where students relate well to one another and to staff. Students respect the diversity of heritage evident in the college. This is celebrated in an extensive series of students' murals displayed throughout the college. Students are aware of the importance of leading a safe and healthy life, choosing healthy food options in the canteen and participating extensively in the many sporting and dance activities provided.

Students happily take up a large range of responsibilities in the college community. The college council has been instrumental in bringing about change in a range of areas. For example, altering the setting arrangements in physical education and improving canteen food.

Students contribute well to communities outside the college. As well as charity fund-raising, they involve themselves in activities such as taking the college's pops orchestra to a local special needs school for a concert. Students' satisfactory basic skills in numeracy and literacy and their ability to work co-operatively, take leadership roles and other responsibilities equip them well for their future working lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use this to plan effectively, using an appropriate range of resources in a safe environment. Good behaviour and excellent student teacher relationships enhance an effective collaborative approach to learning and ensure that most lessons run at a good pace. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching. Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better in all subjects, except ICT.

A variety of learning styles is evident in most lessons, resulting in good student engagement. However, some lessons are too teacher led and offer too few opportunities for independent learning. The use of marking and target setting is inconsistent but the precise use of comprehensive assessment data in Year 11 has facilitated the raising of standards and achievement for that year group. Self- and peer-assessment is used effectively in most subjects. Students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties receive satisfactory support, with work carefully adapted to match their needs. The support of students who are gifted and talented has been a recent focus of development and this has resulted in higher levels of challenge and therefore improved enjoyment and achievement.

Not all students at an early stage of learning English receive enough support in lessons because the college has too few teaching assistants and this acts as a brake on higher standards and achievement. However, the college works effectively to involve parents in supporting these students' education, employing translators to liaise on curriculum and assessment matters.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers a good range of academic and vocational courses. The recent comprehensive curriculum review has initiated a number of improvements which have resulted in a wider range of opportunities to meet the needs of all students. Thematic teaching in Year 7 and a modular approach in Years 8 and 9 in humanities, technology, ICT and business are engaging the students very well and are beginning to raise standards in Key Stage 3. The recent expansion of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 in association with other providers, including child development, hair and beauty and leisure and tourism, has increased participation rates and students' enthusiasm. This has also played its part in reducing the number of exclusions. The introduction of new subjects like geology, along with study support classes and the focus on gifted and talented students has increased the number of educational choices available.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities including residential visits, day trips and regional and national competitions. The college has enhanced its curriculum through an increasing number of partnerships with local colleges and other work-based learning providers. Effective planning is in progress to introduce new vocational courses, including the new Diploma.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Procedures for child protection and health and safety are thorough and regularly reviewed. Staff are vigilant and risks carefully assessed. Effective training ensures they are well acquainted with relevant policies and procedures. Rare cases of bullying are effectively dealt with. Staff are committed to supporting and advising students. Learning mentors in Year 11 are particularly effective and their close involvement is greatly appreciated by students. The Year 7 base and curriculum provides a supportive environment for incoming students.

Systems for tracking progress are well developed. Students know their general academic targets. However, the quality of target setting for individuals varies and, while good in some areas, especially Year 11, some students do not always receive enough information about what specific areas they should improve in order to reach the next level.

The college's good contacts with parents have brought rewards in achievement, in attendance levels and in the resolution of behavioural matters. Students' welfare benefits from the wide range of external agencies which work closely with the college. Students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties receive satisfactory support. The college's 'satellite' units for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very effective in helping students re-engage with learning.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The new headteacher and recently strengthened leadership team have a clear focus on raising achievement by improving all aspects of provision. Good self-evaluation has led to a greater emphasis on monitoring and review and a clear understanding of what needs to be improved and how this might be achieved. New initiatives and leadership teams, although coherent and well managed, have not been in place for long enough for their full impact on achievement to be clear.

Monitoring of teaching and learning and links with continuing professional development are managed well but this does not, as yet, ensure that the overall quality of students' classroom experience is consistently better than satisfactory. The college has an emphasis on inclusion, but the issue of support for students who are at an early stage in using English has yet to be resolved. Middle managers are well supported by senior leadership and are now more accountable and effective, particularly in setting challenging targets, monitoring performance and identifying specific outcomes.

Financial and other resources are appropriately managed and deployed and the college site is well used by the community. The college's contribution to community cohesion is good. Students work well together, playing a valuable part in local and wider initiatives. Relationships with cluster schools and local organisations are particularly beneficial. Specialist status has benefited curriculum initiatives and improved students' personal development. The wider aims of specialist status are not being realised as impact on standards in mathematics and ICT has been limited.

Although the governing body has only recently been re-established, many governors have experience of serving the college. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas

for development are supportive, well informed and able to challenge the leadership when required.



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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

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

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

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

07 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Cantell Maths and Computing College, Southampton, SO16 3GJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited the college recently. All of us enjoyed our conversations with you and admired your maturity and courtesy. Overall, Cantell provides a satisfactory education. You told us how much you enjoyed school and this is certainly evident in your good behaviour and the warm relationships that you have with one another and your teachers. Your personal development is good. Part of the reason for this is that you are well cared for by a committed team of teachers.

Another strength of the college is the curriculum, which is good. The new developments in Year 7 and more vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 all provide more interesting experiences for you. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Calm and purposeful classrooms are a strength, but the quality of teaching can vary and some lessons do not give you enough chances to work independently.

Many of you said how much you liked the open approach of the new headteacher and felt the school was improving. We agree, but leadership and management are judged satisfactory until they have improved achievement and standards. At the moment, standards are below average and achievement is satisfactory but there are signs that, with everyone's hard work, this is improving. I have asked the college to concentrate on three main areas to be improved. It should:

- improve teaching and learning to raise standards and achievement, especially in ICT; you can contribute to this by working your hardest
- provide more support staff for students at an early stage of learning English
- give all students a clearer idea of how they can improve their work.

Once again, thanks for all your help, it was a pleasure meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

John Carnaghan

Lead Inspector