

Assessment Report

Investors in People assessment report for St. Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Undertaken by
Bill Twiss
on behalf of Investors in People North of England

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Commercial in Confidence

Introduction

St. Patrick's Catholic Primary School is a very successful school that is highly valued by the parents, children and its community. The children succeed because of the rich and diverse curriculum and many opportunities to take part in events, productions and sporting activities. The school is judged as outstanding and has many externally assessed accreditations for its work. It is always over-subscribed with about 220 children on roll and a thriving nursery for the youngest children as they take their first steps into formal education. The school's mission and values are firmly rooted in *"Peace, Love and Understanding."*

The school employs 38 people and 14 of them took part in discussions about its Investors in People practices. A member of the Governing Body contributed to the assessment. This meets the sampling guidance given by the United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills for a school of this size.

Outcome

St. Patrick's Catholic Primary School meets the Investors in People Standard. On behalf of Investors in People North of England, I would like to congratulate it on this achievement. The discussions were interesting and it was a pleasure to talk to members of the team about their work, successes and their aspirations for the future. I thank everyone for their contribution.

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AN OVERVIEW – WHY IS St. PATRICK’S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL an INVESTOR in PEOPLE?

Indicator 1 Improvement Planning:

The school plans well and people are fully aware of its values, mission and drive for improvement from its already outstanding status. The values are firmly rooted in the school’s Christian ethos; people reflect them in their daily work and ensure that the school is a fully inclusive and welcoming place for children, families and the community. People are very clear about the school’s priorities and are well-engaged in detailed planning for their day to day work. There is a strong focus on the St Patrick’s way of doing things which gives the children a great learning experience, not just through lessons, but also through high quality pastoral care, sport, music, the community and extra-curricular learning.

Indicators 2 and 8 Learning and Development Strategy and Actions:

St. Patrick’s learning and development is well-ingrained in its culture. It enables people to learn and keep up to date by bringing together resources including: a budget, professional expertise, knowledge exchange and learning by research and doing. Learning and development is effective and recent examples are: equipping people with the skills to develop new approaches to assessment, offering play and life story therapy to other schools and learning about the changes to the inspection framework. People confirm that access to learning and development is inclusive and that they are encouraged to take up opportunities that will have a positive impact on the children. The school uses in-house expertise well and sees more potential to do so as it develops its middle managers.

Indicators 3 and 7 Ideas, Equality and Empowerment:

The school serves an area that has a rich diversity of backgrounds. It reflects this diversity in the way it works making everything it does for the children inclusive. People confirm that this culture extends to staff and that learning and development is based on needs related to individual and school objectives. The school encourages and welcomes ideas and uses them well to innovate, bring creativity to the curriculum and to offer the children valuable experiences outside of the school. There is excellent practice in using people’s strengths, talents and interests to develop performances, for example, in music or arts, Eco work and in providing an exceptional range of after school clubs. People feel able to put ideas forward and constantly rise to the challenge of making a great school even better for those it serves.

Indicators 4 and 5: Leadership and Management Strategy and Effectiveness:

The school is well-led and is judged as outstanding by the Office for Standards in Education. Its previous headteacher recently retired and another leader secured promotion to another school in the city. The governors appointed the school’s deputy and this created opportunities for other leaders to move up or take on additional responsibility. People have confidence in the leadership and management of the school and value the continuity it brings. People believe that the move is positive and will continue the drive to sustain improvement.

Indicator 6 Reward and Recognition:

The culture of recognition and reward goes well beyond pay and conditions. The achievements of the children, standing of the school in the community and positive team work are great motivators for the staff. People value the support and recognition they receive from peers and value the celebrations that the school holds when it is successful and at key times of the year like the end of term or at Christmas.

People see feedback from parents, the community and the achievement of awards and successes in competitions as an important part of the school's reward and recognition strategy.

Indicator 9 Performance Measurement:

The school uses data very effectively to assess how well each child is doing. From this it sets the next steps for progress and puts appropriate support in place for children who need extra help with their learning. People see some challenges in assessing post-levels and are confident that practice will build and be moderated so that judgements are secure and consistent. The Governors take an active role in monitoring the school and have a clear picture of its achievements. This year the school has achieved great results at the end of Key Stage 2 tests.

Indicator 10 Continuous Improvement:

The school sees it as a great challenge to remain outstanding. People know that innovation and evolutionary change are the ways to achieve more. There are many examples of improvements including: improving the ambience of the premises, making marking more consistent, introduction of an APP for communicating with parents, developing extra-curricular activity and embedding the new curriculum. Everyone seen is totally committed to the success of the school and feels that it is a great place to work.

Work in Progress and Development Plans

The school is completing its first development plan under the leadership of the recently appointed headteacher. It is clear about its core priorities for improvement and will build on the good practice in place to sustain its performance. The development areas in its people practices are:

- Continuing to support the staff so that the school continues to improve and is prepared for its next OFSTED inspection. People feel that it is doing this well and are also aware of the changes to the inspection framework
- Making sure that *"nothing slips"* and that the school retains the richness of the curriculum that is creating a love of learning throughout its medium and long-term priorities
- Ensuring that, through its planned middle leadership development, it builds on people's enthusiasm and aids retention of its rising stars through interesting and stimulating work
- Building on the good practice in engaging parents in the life of the school by offering different activities for them and by continuing the open and welcoming practices in the school
- Empowering the committed and enthusiastic team of Teaching Assistants so that they are involved in subject leadership

Going Beyond the Standard:

The school's Investors in People practices are robustly in place and if the assessment had gone to the detail and depth required for a Beyond the Standard bronze, silver or gold review, there are practices that would contribute to this. In summary

- Strong stakeholder engagement and involvement
- Excellent focus on community and the school's responsibility to it
- Diversity and talents within the workforce
- Innovation
- Inspirational leadership
- Delegated and distributed responsibility

- Excellent use of data or key performance indicators
- Strong commitment to success
- People take pride in St Patrick's and see it as a great place to work

The Investors in People 6th Generation Framework will be launched in September 2015. It will still offer the opportunities to work towards silver, gold and platinum levels and will work through maturity levels of Developed, Established, Advanced and High Performing. More information will be available as the Framework is launched.

FOCUS for the REVIEW

School Development Planning

"It is a really good school for training; I would definitely say it's one of the school's strengths."

We plan well in advance and make sure everyone is on the same page from the start."

"We use INSET well to look at plans and how we can contribute to them."

The school takes a very inclusive approach to its development planning for continuous improvement. It consults widely with staff and is acutely aware of the need for a relentless drive for improvement. Its plan is nearing completion and one of its key priorities is to develop the role of its middle managers so that they take a lead role in subject development and become in-house coaches for their areas of expertise. People feel that communication of plans and priorities is good and as a result, they are well aware of their team and individual contributions to school successes. Throughout the planning culture the school keeps a strong focus on stakeholders' needs, always putting the children first.

At the detail level people plan well together and the Teaching Assistants appreciate being involved and having a say in how plans are formulated. In Early Years, for example, the team plan each Wednesday at their meetings and display Next Steps on the wall so that this is an easily accessible planning reference tool. As the new curriculum develops, people across the Key Stages take a lead role in planning it and reviewing how well it is working. Where there are individual or additional needs for children who need extra help, skilled teachers work well, often in consultation with other agencies and staff to plan for such needs.

The team confirms that in service development days are used well to communicate plans, identify the roles in making the plan happen and to check on progress. As a result, people understand the overall objectives and key performance indicators on matters like attendance, children's progress and effective use of the Pupil Premium.

The Governing Body is active and contributes to the planning process as well as monitoring it. They bring a range of skills and talents and use them well to monitor and question progress. The committee structure works and supports the school's work on the curriculum, staffing or finance, for example.

Continuous Improvement Achievements and Successes

"From where they start and where they get to, we can take pride in the children's progress."

"Open and accessible; willing to chat about anything we can improve."

"One of our priorities is to keep focused on assessment to make sure it's secure and we are confident in our judgements."

Throughout the discussions, there is a very definite commitment to continuous improvement. The team is like a family and works cohesively for the common purpose of helping the children achieve their best. The school achieves excellent results; many children join with under developed skills, especially in speech and language and leave having met or exceeded national expectations. The team knows that everyone's contribution is crucial to this great achievement. The inspiration to do well comes from the top. The blend of experience, newer staff and the professional development culture combines to make the majority of teaching and learning consistently outstanding. This is, of course, fully reflected in assessment and test results.

There is no doubt that the school and the community see academic achievement as important and they also believe that it is about much more than this. Consequently, the school offers much more. It sets very

high standards for behaviour management and succeeds in maintaining a calm and welcoming atmosphere that helps children enjoy their learning in and out of lessons. It is constantly working to further improve attendance for the few families that fail to appreciate the value and importance of a good education. The team use their talents and interests well. They willingly and often voluntarily run well-attended after school clubs, support the rise and shine club and give the children a wonderful range of opportunities in art, music, sport or languages. There are, for example, delightful displays of the children's photographic work on a World War 1 theme and of their talents in making images from dried flowers as part of an Eco project. Much of the school's work in these areas regularly achieves externally accredited awards.

The school welcomes ideas and innovation. The children have recently appeared on BBC television in a performance of their singing. It has successfully introduced Forest Schools and is introducing peer massage to help the children stay calm and de-stressed. Looking forward, it is introducing after school provision so that working parents can engage more with the school. It is keen to keep control of this within the school and is offering extra hours to some of the support staff.

St Patrick's has had a very successful and positive inspection of its Religious Education provision that summed up the school well by describing it as an oasis in the community. As result of the school's successes, standing and reputation, it is always over-subscribed.

Engagement and empowerment of the entire team

"There are never any issues with trying new things out."

"We have good relationships with the teachers – there is no us and them and everyone feels valued."

"One of the things I noticed very quickly is how well people get on with each other and enjoy working here."

It is immediately apparent when visiting the school that people take pride and responsibility for their work. The welcome given by the office team and the care and attention that the premises staff give to the grounds and building set a very positive tone. Seeing the vast array of awards and trophies confirms that staff's commitment to giving the children an exciting range of learning experiences. The displays of work and the calm atmosphere in the school are further testimony to the skilled team.

People readily take ownership for the after school clubs and often volunteer to run them. The team is keen to take responsibility for visits and trips and the school benefits from having trained people for minibus driving. The empowerment culture extends well into learning and development and people have readily risen to the challenges of subject co-ordination, one to one or group intervention work and work with families through learning mentoring and home visits.

Individuals use their talents well throughout the school. People try different ideas for engaging parents that include coffee mornings, workshop sessions and Welcome Wednesdays. Parents are welcome to attend all assemblies. The team uses ideas for display well to showcase the pupils' work. Individuals take ownership of their development, often sharing knowledge with colleagues, taking part in networks or researching their subjects and ideas. As careers develop people engage with new opportunities, for example becoming a member of the senior leadership team or in co-ordinating phonics across the school. The empowerment culture extends beyond the teachers and Teaching Assistants with the administration staff simplifying procedures to avoid duplication and the premises staff undertaking painting work to avoid the costs of using a contractor.

Impact of new leadership roles at the senior level

"One of the good things is that the school always responds quickly to any concerns from the parents."

"We have a can do philosophy and it is all about the children."

"The vision and values haven't changed and the appointments are positive for the school."

The school's leadership team works well together and brings a wealth of professional knowledge, people skills and innovation to the way it operates. The previous headteacher retired last Christmas and the Governors were keen to appoint a head with the commitment, values and style of leadership that would lead and evolve the school to even more. Following a robust recruitment process, the school appointed the former deputy and elevated one of the senior team to Acting Deputy Headteacher,

These moves have been very positive for the school because;

- The styles and attributes of both complement each other
- People trust and respect them and see them as inspirational for the school and the community it serves
- They are very well-versed in the vision and values of St. Patricks
- They know and understand the children well and the needs that result from such a culturally rich and diverse community
- They value team work and see everyone's role as impacting on what the school achieves
- People see consistency and like the way in which change is considered and evolutionary rather than revolutionary
- They care about people and have *"been there and done it"* and are seen as good role models for development and continuous improvement

Through the school's culture of distributed leadership, it is planning more middle leadership development that will see emphasis on subject leadership and middle leaders acting as co-coaches to their colleagues. The school is also planning to engage the Teaching Assistants in this development so that they add to their already extensive knowledge and maintain the positive relationships with the teachers. The school is keen to see people's careers develop is not afraid of giving people responsibility, even if this means they may move elsewhere for promotion. As part of its people development culture, it offers placements to those training for the profession.

There is not the slightest hint of complacency anywhere in the school and people are committed to the challenge of high performance. They feel that the leadership team supports them well.

6th GENERATION INVESTORS in PEOPLE FRAMEWORK

The consultative and in depth review of the Investors in People Framework is nearing completion and will be launched nationally in late summer, 2015. It will move from ten key evidence themes to nine and will be based on three key principles of: leading, improving and supporting. It will allow the school to be assessed against developed, established, advanced and high performing practices. Your Investors in People Practitioner will be in touch before your next review to discuss this in more detail. Broadly the new framework will focus on:



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