

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE FEEDBACK REPORT

The Sweyne Park School



Key Information

Assessment Type	Assessment – full framework
Investors in People Specialists	Clare Laidler Gwen Carter-Powell
Visit Dates	7 th & 8 th March 2013
Assessment Enquiry Number	ENQ – 88035-CYKfV8

Conclusion

The Sweyne Park School continues to meet the evidence requirements of the current version of the Investors in People Standard. We are pleased to say that recognition is therefore maintained for a further three years. The school also meets a range of additional evidence requirements from the full framework as identified in Appendix 2 and is therefore accredited at Gold level.

This assessment has scoped in the full framework of 196 evidence requirements and was undertaken by 2 specialists as required by the Investors in People Centre. The evidence collated from our interviews with people has found that 196 evidence requirements have been met leading to an award at Gold level.

This award acknowledges the exceptional way the school continues to invest in people in building skills and approaches to enable the school to fulfil the values and priorities of the school and the needs of the pupils.

Milestone Dates

Minimum review of continuous improvement	September 2014
Date of Next Full Assessment	March 2016

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Introduction

The Sweyne Park School is an 11-16 community comprehensive school based in Rayleigh, Essex. At the time of this assessment the school is planning for a change to academy status from 1st April 2013.

Feedback

Values and Culture

The culture at The Sweyne Park School is exceptional and comes through positively in so many ways when visiting the school. Although on the face of it, this appears very natural and it is, there is a very well oiled set of principles and working structures behind this, honed over many years. The 'RESPECT' philosophy was mentioned consistently as a means of appreciation, a value base on which to provide high-level education and a definition of the expected interaction between people.

Although this culture has been well embedded for many years things have moved on considerably since the last review. There is now a much stronger shared appreciation of just how positive the school is and people throughout the school are much more conscious, committed and justifiably proud to be part of it with a firm understanding of the role they play.

As an external observer of the school over many years, the continued organisational progress is a casebook example for establishing, building and perpetuating a culture so conducive to learning on all levels.

The team spirit is encouraged by a number of cross departmental and school wide practices, many of these having been in place for years.

People described countless ways that they felt valued by managers and peers and there is no doubt in people's mind that their efforts are highly valued. One aspect mentioned by several people was how clear communication is with clear strategies, effective methods of review along the way and appropriate ways of acknowledging. People said they knew where they stood, had a strong appreciation of their own progress and achievements and felt wholeheartedly comfortable with their development paths.

There is no doubt in people's minds about the commitment throughout the school in connecting peoples aspirations and skills and there are many examples of people who have been able to develop their career by progressing with routes to achieve the best for the school and provide creative opportunities for people which ultimately move them forward and provide stepping stones into progression. As a result, the school has a highly attuned group of staff who not only work effectively in their own field but are very much part of the whole school community with a role to play in perpetuating the well established and embedded links which ultimately secure pupil success.

Although this report refers to the staff at the school, all of the values and strategies encompass the whole school community and beyond and there is inclusivity when it comes to the ethos. Staff understand their own role in engendering the school values in all they do for example in their interactions with pupils and there are well established strategies to provide people with the understanding and approach they need to do so. The school ethos is

measured continuously on a number of levels and there is an ongoing dialogue and discussion about this,

Pupils and staff are regularly involved in community-based activities and this is very much encouraged and supported. *Enhancing the Spiritual, Social, Moral & Cultural Dimension* is a school aim and focus is on encouraging pupils to develop skills and understandings which is viewed as central to their education.

Sharing good practice is very well developed throughout the school. It not only happens informally but there are many scheduled and well organised forums and structures to provide time and clear definition for people to learn from each other. The co-ordination of sharing practice within the school is exceptional meaning that people are clear of their own strengths and areas for development and willing to share and learn from each other to help their own development and ultimately improve practice throughout the school.

The developments mentioned in the last report regarding the 'thinking school' have gone from strength to strength. The tools and approaches being piloted and taken on three years ago are now a way of working and the impact culturally is tangible. People interviewed talked in much more reflective ways and had stronger appreciation of their own strategies in learning, understood what they needed and where to access the required support. They also described how they work with pupils and team colleagues in discussing their learning strategies and performance management.

"I love working here, it's the simple little things that seem to make a huge difference"

"Support staff are as included as everyone else, we are one team"

"I feel I have a choice, I am asked what I need and I know this is listened to"

'This is simply an amazing place to work'

Values and Culture Further areas for development

- There has been good progress for the team of Learning Support Assistants who support pupils in the classroom. There are just a few instances where the relationship between teaching and non-teaching staff in classrooms could be more mutually beneficial. This is largely reliant on the teacher and the Learning Support Assistant valuing the importance of each other's needs in order to provide the best possible approach for all pupils.
- Some staff mentioned they would like a refresher on the thinking tips.

Performance Strategies

There is a strong synergy in the appreciation of what is expected. The plan on a page, well established and highly valued communication structures across and within departments and the enthusiasm and commitment of staff all play a part in ensuring discussion around performance are effective and instrumental in driving school focus.

The frequency and profile of meetings and forums establishes a principle of encouraging input as well as providing updates.

Performance is targeted with individuals and teams describing very explicitly what is required. There is an integral continuous improvement culture whereby people are encouraged and trained to 'challenge the norm' with well embedded practices for doing so, usually involving a series of steps along a plan do review basis.

Conversations related to performance whether in teams or as 1:1's are clear and constructive. The school is a wonderful example of how effectively positive performance management can engender a way of working where everyone naturally wants to strive and perform and gains a tremendous sense of personal achievement and acknowledgement for doing so.

The mechanisms for briefing were described as working very well; this includes the staff and department briefs as well as the bulletin, which is a highly valued means of communication.

The use of data continues to improve and there is progress in the way teaching outcomes are reviewed to help identify alternative or additional strategies to help the pupils achieve. This data also enables effective evaluation and review of people's strengths and opportunities for development. With the identification of achievement and strengths as a whole school, this is effectively used as a signposting for sharing skills and knowledge throughout the school.

Many people undertake detailed planning and they are comfortable with doing this having been well trained in the techniques and approaches that work well for the school. This is a seamless activity with leaders of teams and departments having autonomy to impact on their own areas in line with school based priorities.

Although clearly a lot of work goes into planning and evaluation, the school manages to achieve a very easy way of reviewing progress and there is an established and well-embedded range of processes and language in doing so. The school is highly effective in pacing and leading performance whilst engaging everyone in the commitment to continue to improve. People are supported to achieve and this is geared around their particular needs.

'The bar is set high but there are so many useful tips and strategies that this is made easier and no one is expected to do the impossible, everything is about improving on what you have'

'The general aims and the detailed plans are well circulated and discussed so we all know what our priorities are and there are really good communications around progress'

'I have learnt to plan and whatever I do in my life I will never forget the value of effective planning'

'The headteacher plans for the worst and this means we will always be okay'

'We can challenge the way things work here, often, it's normal practice, not taken defensively or personally, we are very constructive and positive'

'The performance management is different this year, the professional development sessions link with the performance management, this is a vast improvement'

People Strategies

People are central to everything at Sweyne Park and there is careful and detailed planning to ensure messages, activities, learning events, school based priorities and decisions involving the school are all in line with school principles and priorities.

Learning and development continues to be a priority and the school has continued to engender a highly comprehensive series of interventions provided and supported by the school team. Coaching is commonplace for all and approaches are well engendered and regularly utilised throughout the school.

There is a fundamental understanding of people and this is effectively used to motivate and play to people's strengths in supporting them to achieve and prosper. This is the approach with pupils and staff.

Wellbeing needs have been fully taken into account and again, activities are just the way things are in the school. The resounding message was that the school cares about people and their health and wellbeing. This is an area that has moved on considerably for Sweyne over the years. The ethos has now developed to a point where commitment and loyalty is extremely strong and people are wholeheartedly trusted and encouraged to consider their work life balance needs in order to live fulfilling lives. In what can be a hectic timetable, people said the headteacher is very good at gauging the energy levels and making decisions to either cancel the odd meeting or find alternative ways of reaching a point. This is acknowledged and really appreciated.

'He will cut back on things if we are up against it, he is really good at picking up on the mood of people and the workload coming up'

'There is always a relevance to everything'

Many interviewees described how they were able to develop their career with careful planning of the steps they needed to take to achieve their aspirations. This is strongly encouraged and widely enabled. This is not just for the odd one or two people as in many organisations but it is part of the ethos and everyone is encouraged in this way.

The additional benefit of encouraging people to take on lead roles was described as 'enhancing my role and providing great opportunities which I wouldn't have had otherwise'. A

number of teaching and support staff have taken on additional responsibilities and received payments along with encouragement for doing so.

There were frequent comments related to 'learning all the time' and many examples of learning which included informal shadowing, show and tell as well as training and conferences. There is a high level of confidence internally about learning as well as teaching each other. CPD is supported by well co-ordinated delivery by staff and this is seen as an effective and highly relevant way of developing skills throughout the school. This also recognises the skills that people have.

The performance management process for teachers has been updated and feedback was that this is helpful, focused and motivational – with clear linkages to other ongoing activities in learning and development.

Significant changes have been introduced to the performance management process for support staff and this has involved the introduction of competencies, which make much more sense in gearing discussions and aspirations around performance. Support staff were involved in this process and feedback was that this has really improved things and "opened up discussions about performance"

Some of the people who had joined the school recently said the recruitment had given them everything they needed to know about the school and they mentioned how delighted they were to be successful in the selection. One person mentioned how delighted they were to be shown around the school by pupils.

People who had recently or are currently NQTs talked about well-structured support with a co-ordinated regime of observations and associated interventions. Others talked about ongoing discussions to consider strategies based on results and/or particular challenges

'My first GCSE class helped me understand how to structure two years with them and there are so many different styles and types of teachers here, we are encouraged to learn from others'

The structure of the way people are able to connect with others who may be able to pass on skills has improved significantly. Whilst this has always been encouraged and supported, CPD arrangements supported by the VLE provide a system for matching needs and expertise. There are a wide range of teaching approaches and rather than just a set of resources, these are actively used and role modelled so others are encouraged to apply these in practice and coached to do so.

'Teamwork is excellent here'

'I've had such support here. I've been exposed to different areas and have learnt from them all'

'As we move on in our careers, and this is a school where there is certainly and opportunity to do so' there is continuous and detailed discussion to help us, there is never any pressure but if we want to climb we are given the support to do so'

'The headteacher is open with everything, we know him really well and if he's not worried we know we will be ok. We trust him completely'

People Strategies Further areas for development

- Although some mentioned being involved in some way in the recruitment of new team members this may not always be the case. It may be worthwhile to look at, where possible, enabling team members to meet shortlisted candidates where possible. Not in a formal sense but where possible, informally. For example perhaps team members could meet and greet candidates or have a coffee with them in the staff room when they come along for interview. Alternatively just be introduced where possible.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and Management is exceptional - managers truly enable people. There are key and high level skills that are well established and recognised.

There were many examples of people taking lead responsibilities that extended their knowledge and experience and very much their leadership on specific projects. These examples provide very good evidence of a means to build confidence and team building skills.

People described receiving helpful and constructive feedback saying this had been instrumental in their learning and development. People said they were not only able to develop as a result of this ongoing input but that they learnt the skills of giving feedback in this way, helpful for all sorts of conversations with pupils and colleagues.

People truly feel empowered and are confident in taking the lead. The extent of leadership throughout the school has continued to grow whereby this is now an important and positive aspect of the culture. The school is not fundamentally reliant on one person or one team. There is little doubt that there are many people who would 'step up' and fill the day-to-day shoes of the leadership team in any crisis. This is another sign of effective leadership.

Although there are very effective working structures, essential in the smooth running of any school, the leadership in Sweyne is unassuming and highly polished.

The leadership team are certainly seen as role models as are many other people in the school. Throughout the interviews, people praised colleagues and shared stories of how they had made a difference to them and how they learnt from them.

An area that has moved forward since the last review is the way leadership and development works across departments. This will be encouraged further by the CPD activities and developments with the VLE, which help to identify and co-ordinate skills. Although there has always been a degree of this, it has been led very much from the top. Now people are able to make their own linkages and this is being strongly encouraged by line managers.

'I cannot imagine a more supportive senior team, there is always someone to go to and this is not just that people are there if you need them, this is an active process and it feels really supportive'

'Unlike some schools if you are a manager here there are very clear responsibilities and these go way beyond tasks'

'I have utter respect for my manager, he is open to ideas, there are no hidden agendas, I can talk openly and I feel encouraged, I feel really valued'

'My line manager is great, its very subtle and she leads me to draw my own conclusions'

'Whatever way he choses to do it – it is usually the right way'

Continuous Improvement

Establishing CPD on the VLE has increased the ability to build on capacity and ensures the responsibility for learning is held and maintained by staff members.

Improvements in the way the learning support team works and the performance management of team members has improved consistency in approach and enabled further integration with classroom activities.

The changes to the performance management process for support staff have helped people to reflect on skills rather than tasks. This opens up discussions relating to performance and has helped people to see the value of interventions such as appraisal.

Changes to the teaching performance management has created much more focus and established a process with more immediate and obvious relevance to learning. This has been computerised and there is now an option for line managers, staff and those co-ordinating learning and development for the whole school to collate information on which to base planning and progress checking.

Assessment for Learning improved with improved methods of measuring and shared appreciation by more staff throughout the school.

The thinking school has transformed a wide range of approaches which link with how people learn. This means for example that people are better at asking questions, this is useful for pupil and staff interactions and we had many examples of how this had 'switched a light on for people'.

'When you change as a result of development it is noticed and acknowledged'

Continuous Improvement Further areas for development

- There are more plans for developing information as part of the CPD element on the VLE, which will enhance the opportunity for evaluation on many aspects of performance and development.

Appendix 1 – Continuous Improvement Plan

Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions - How	Potential Benefit - Why	Priority - When	Solutions/Support Available - Who
Values and Culture	<p>Continue with the good progress on integrating teamwork within and outside the learning support team.</p> <p>Refresher on thinking tips.</p>			
People Strategies	<p>Consider recruitment possibilities and develop greater consistency in teams for what is possible in meeting team members</p>			
Continuous Improvement	<p>Ongoing development of data on VLE which will help evaluation of CPD</p>			

Appendix 2 – Assessment results summary

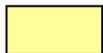
The Evidence Requirements

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10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓														

The number of evidence requirements met is
Key:



The Core Investors in People Standard



Your Choice from the Investors in People Framework



Not part of the Investors in People Framework