



**Commercial in Confidence**

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

**REVIEW REPORT**

for

**Chepstow School**

Prepared by:

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Investors in People Assessor

On behalf of:

Investors in People Wales

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## **Contents**

Introduction

Review Objectives

Executive Summary

Findings against the Organisation's priorities and objectives

Strengths and Areas of Good Practice

Continuous Development

Outcome

Continuous Development Plan

## **Appendices**

Appendix A            Overview of Evidence Requirements Met

## 1. Introduction

This report has been produced following the Investors in People Review of **Chepstow School** carried out on behalf of the Wales Investors in People Quality Centre. The report reflects on the findings of the review and highlights areas of good practice identified, in addition to those areas recommended for further development.

I would like to thank **Jacky Wilson, Deputy Head-teacher** for helping to arrange the review and all the staff at the school for their openness and co-operation during the interview process.

## 2. Objectives of the Review

The agreed objectives were to provide feedback on the appropriate aspects of the Investors in People Standard that relate to the school's over-arching priorities. In particular, the changes that have been made to the management structure following the appointment of the new Head-teacher and the new initiatives that are being implemented in response to recommendations made at the January 2012 Estyn inspection.

In addition, we agreed that the Review would focus on the following:

- The effectiveness of the new management structure and the impact it has had on the development of leadership at the school.
- The effectiveness of change management and quality assurance in the creation of a culture of continuous improvement.
- The effectiveness of CPD, particularly coaching and mentoring, the use of talents and expertise within the school and how well best practice is shared.

As usual, the Review process would also;

Establish the organisation's current status against the requirements of the Investors in People National Standard;

Suggest continuous improvement/development areas within the context of the Standard, to help the organisation improve performance;

Identify particular strengths and/or good practice, demonstrated by the organisation;

Review progress made against development recommendations following the organisation's previous Review.

## 3. Methodology

A planning meeting was held on **18<sup>th</sup> December 2012**.

The on-site assessment took place on **16<sup>th</sup> April 2013**, where interviews were conducted with a total of **17** people.

#### **4. Executive Summary**

The new Head-teacher has initiated a dynamic transition agenda which is driving a complete change of culture and setting the school on a structured course towards success. She is an inspiring leader with a clear vision and ambitious aspirations for the school. The change process has been “fast and furious”. The vast majority of staff have embraced the changes, welcomed the opportunities for development and are fully engaged in the new initiatives. The changes are having a positive impact on outcomes, staff confidence, morale and the school’s reputation amongst stakeholders.

I am pleased to report that the School presented positive evidence for each Indicator of the Investors in People Standard.

#### **5. Findings against the organisation’s priorities and objectives**

##### **Changes to the school’s management structure since the appointment of the new Head-teacher and the impact of the new Initiatives implemented in response to the 2012 Estyn inspection:**

The Head-teacher and senior staff recognised the need for a swift change of direction following the January 2012 Estyn inspection. The new Head-teacher has a clear vision for the school and has created a learning environment where people share a common sense of purpose.

The new management structure has initiated a holistic approach to developing leadership and team working which ensures that the school makes the most of talent. Much has been done to address the recommendations made by inspectors. New initiatives have built on existing best practice and used the expertise of staff to devise innovative projects aimed at improving quality, raising standards and ensuring a renewed focus on teaching and learning.

Staff spoke enthusiastically about the initiatives and provided examples of the impact they are having on standards and pupil engagement. They are clearly proud to be leading the way in Wales with projects such as “Achievement for all”. Staff also highlighted the changes made to the way data is being used to monitor and manage both individual staff and whole school performance. This is helping to improve standards and team working. In addition, the introduction of Learning Champions is aiding the school to pioneer new pedagogies which are improving pupil engagement.

A more robust approach to self-assessment has ensured that all staff have a realistic understanding of the school’s current quality status and the key priorities identified for driving improvements. Most importantly, the new initiatives are helping to raise staff confidence and the prospect of an imminent inspection is viewed with a fair degree of optimism.

**Some of the comments made at interview include:**

*“I inherited a traditional school. I am trying to create opportunities for people to do things for themselves, take the initiative”*

*“People are doing some brilliant work.”*

*“The vision has changed. It is about teaching and learning. We are more child centred.”*

*“The Head is very focused on what we need to do and has her finger on the pulse.”*

*“The Head is very sharp and focused. It has come as a shock to some people. There is so much going on but behind it all is a simple message – we are putting learning back at the heart of the school.”*

*“Claire is bold and not afraid to take difficult decisions.”*

*“Everyone believes we are going in the right direction.”*

**The effectiveness of the new management structure and the impact on the development of leadership:**

The new management structure has had a profound effect on the development of leadership at the school. It has enabled leadership in its broadest sense to emanate from any and every level. Staff have been empowered to take the lead on initiatives and supported to develop their leadership skills. This has created a wide range of opportunities for staff to contribute to quality improvement strategies and their implementation.

The management structure has been simplified; everyone has a role in teaching and learning. Staff have been encouraged to take on new roles and responsibilities and have done so with great enthusiasm. They report that they have been provided with greater ownership of tasks and activities. Staff are more accountable and involved in planning and decision making. Team working has improved as staff have been encouraged to work across boundaries and to focus on achieving whole school targets. There is wide recognition for particular skills and expertise. A culture of aspiration and creativity has emerged. This is being harnessed and developed by the Senior Management Team.

As the new structure is further embedded, it will be important to have clearer lines of responsibility and accountability to ensure staff are fully aware of reporting procedures and where they can best access support.

**Some of the comments made at interview include:**

*“Anyone can lead anything they like providing they have a plan and as long as it is evaluated.”*

*“We are much clearer on our individual roles.”*

*“Staff can see things are better. They are recognised for what they do and there are more opportunities for progression.”*

***“People are working very hard. They need reassurance. Some are slow to admit that they are struggling and they need to know its ok to ask for help.”***

***“I am not sure we have a clearly defined leadership team anymore. I think it could be more structured and visible to students. So much has happened and is happening.”***

**The effectiveness of change management and quality assurance in the creation of a culture of continuous improvement:**

The Head-teacher is an inspirational leader who thrives on challenge. She has moved quickly to initiate change and to establish a quality assurance process that is comprehensive, robust, self-critical and honest. She has ensured that all staff understand that effective self-evaluation is critical to facilitating strategies and initiatives for continuous improvement.

The Head-teacher has a positive attitude and is good at recognising and harnessing talent. She believes in her staff’s ability to rise to the challenge and to achieve beyond set targets.

Senior Managers are consultative and adopt a consensus approach to change management. They communicate well and listen to staff. Ideas are welcomed and many of the new initiatives have been suggested by individuals at staff meetings and ad-hoc discussions. Staff are encouraged to trial different methods and techniques.

At the heart of the programme of change is the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Challenging targets have been set and progress is monitored frequently and thoroughly.

The pace of change has been very fast. A few members of staff have been reluctant to engage in the process and managers are working hard to break-down the barriers by focusing on the positive and celebrating good practice. The majority of staff are motivated, enthusiastic and excited to be part of the change process. They are paving the way forward and leading by example.

While the Senior Management team are seen to be very supportive and encouraging, there is a need to review the pace of change and to ensure stress levels are managed effectively, particularly amongst staff who are slower to adapt. Although staff recognise that there is much to be done and that performance improvement is continuous, some feel that there is a need to take more time to consolidate and embed new initiatives.

The Performance Management process has been strengthened and the use of the Blue Wave Swift system is helping staff to be more reflective, self-evaluative and self-critical. This is a powerful tool, enabling individuals to drive performance improvement. Particularly effective is the expectation that each member of staff agrees three levels of targets; individual, departmental and whole school. This ensures a whole school approach to performance improvement and encourages empowerment and inclusion.

The establishment of a House system is still a work in process, however, staff feel that it will promote team-working and the sharing of best practice. People believe that the structure will enhance the school's mentoring culture as well as pastoral support for pupils.

**Some of the comments made at interview include:**

***"Staff have the data now and they are challenged on what they are going to do about it. It creates innovation, new ideas."***

***"The use of I Pads is transforming teaching strategies and improving lessons."***

***"Changes have had an impact on progress, teaching and learning and they are stretching and developing our teaching skills."***

***"The pace has been fast. It has changed the culture here. I find it a great place to work."***

***"This is a good school to work at if you want to progress. There is a good balance between driving improvements and support."***

***"I feel valued and I am rewarded for working hard."***

***"This is an exciting place to be!"***

***"Communication is generally good but there needs to be more of it, especially when there are abrupt changes to events or initiatives."***

***"It has been very full on but we are miles away from where we have been."***

***"The massive change has been that everyone is now focused on continuous improvement. There is a new level of efficiency at the school. The use of data has made us think and implement intervention strategies. There is no excuse for not knowing what has to be done."***

**The effectiveness of CPD, particularly coaching and mentoring, the use of talents and expertise within the school and how well best practice is shared:**

The policy of using home grown skills and expertise for INSET activities has helped to build confidence, the sharing of ideas and to facilitate change. People value the opportunity to learn from colleagues. It is an efficient and effective way of developing staff.

The school has embraced coaching and mentoring and support for staff is very good. A number of staff have been able to acquire learner coach qualifications which are helping to build expertise in this important development tool. Not enough use is being made of TLAs in the development of coaching skills; they have more experience of one-to-one support for pupils than classroom teachers and may be able to take the lead in-house coaching training sessions.

The new approach to leadership and its impact on team-working is effectively facilitating the sharing of best practice. Improved class room observations and the priority given to improving teaching and learning have enhanced constructive feedback. People are encouraged to

recognise good teaching and to learn from the best. Focussed sessions such as “what is an excellent lesson” provide targeted support for both the experienced and new teacher.

Managers are good at recognising ability and putting it to use. Staff are encouraged to develop their strengths and to share knowledge and expertise with colleagues.

**Some of the comments made at interview include:**

*“The Bluewave Swift system is accessible to all and provides instant feedback. Although it is quite new, it is already improving things.”*

*“All staff are given opportunities to develop and improve their skills.”*

*“Performance Management was a process before, now it is a tool for professional development. It is taken more seriously.”*

*“Nearly all the staff development activities have been INSET sessions. They have been more of a team approach which means we discuss things openly and support one another.”*

*“We have cohesion and things are starting to gel. Through our INSET sessions we are learning that anything is possible. We are going in the same direction now and we are very much on the up.”*

*“Observations are more frequent and we get constant feedback. We are very confident about the next inspection. We are very clear about what constitutes excellence.”*

## **6. Identified Strengths and/or Areas of Good Practice**

The key strengths and/or points of good practice, highlighted by the review were:

**Leadership:** - a strong and inspiring Head-teacher, capable managers and the holistic approach to the development of leadership skills are all having a positive impact on transforming performance. Leaders have vision. They have created a shared sense of purpose and have adopted a democratic approach to devising strategies for continuous improvement that have inspired energy for change.

**Performance Management:** - an effective and very thorough process of ensuring staff’s development needs are identified and met. An excellent process for setting challenging targets and ensuring ownership.

**A creative and innovative workforce:** - energised by the change management process and inspiring leadership, staff are enthusiastically developing projects that are aimed at improving standards, pupil engagement and increasing pupil numbers. This is an exciting work environment, a hive of activity and innovation. People enjoy their work and want to contribute as much as possible. They give their time freely and are keen for the school to succeed.

**A positive “can do” attitude:** - Staff have become confident in their abilities and are positive about the future of the school. People are proud to be working at the school and believe in its success.

**Evaluation processes:** - leaders make good use of data to underpin self-evaluation processes. Peer Reviews are effective in involving staff in peer assessment. The whole school has an open and mature attitude to self-assessment and constructive criticism.

**Using strengths and talents** – the Head-teacher is very good at recognising and harnessing particular talents, expertise and interests. People are encouraged to extend their range of work and take on new responsibilities. Senior Managers are keen to create progression opportunities for staff and plan development activities accordingly.

**Coaching and mentoring** – is widely used and is effective in supporting staff development, sharing knowledge and developing skills.

## **7. A summary of some suggestions that you might like to consider as part of continuous improvement.**

**Coaching Skills:** - this is clearly an important and effective component of your staff development strategy. You may want to make more use of your TLAs as you continue to develop your coaching programme. They will have expertise that can be harnessed and shared. Investigating new coaching qualifications as they become available and sourcing new techniques via e-learning sessions may also help.

**Managing initiatives:** - there is a lot going on! As you continue to develop new initiatives, it will be important to ensure that staff continue to have a clear understanding of the priorities. Too many activities and targets can lead to people becoming over-whelmed or side tracked. While most of your team find this an exciting and vibrant work environment, there is obviously a balance to be maintained. Make sure you build in some time to consolidate and embed new initiatives.

As you continue to encourage leadership within the school, you may need clearer lines of accountability and referral to manage the volume and diversity of activities and projects.

**Eliminating barriers to change:** - as you are aware, some people take longer to “get on the bus”- to use your Head-teacher’s analogy! It is important to ensure that leaders continue to target support to avoid division between those in the “front seats of the bus and those who are at the back.” I think your chances of engaging all staff are good, particularly if you give people the time and space to absorb new ways of working. It might be an idea to use your effective “Flip learning” techniques with staff. The considerable progress made by the school over the last year is having a positive effect and you are right to focus your energies on the hardest to engage.

**Staff well-being:** - keep an eye on stress levels. You have a packed agenda and although people are generally enthused, motivated and “up for the challenge”, there are bound to be underlining stresses that people need to talk about. Ensure that you have a mechanism for people to talk about their issues that is accessible and confidential. Nobody wants to fail and some will be reluctant to admit that they can’t cope with the pace of change.

**The Investors in People Framework:** – . I would urge you to use the IiP Framework as a tool for continuous improvement and if budgets allow, consider pursuing Gold, Silver or Bronze, for your next review. The IiP Framework is particularly relevant for managing change and has some clear

links to the Estyn Common Inspection Framework. The IIP UK web-site [www.investorinpeople.co.uk](http://www.investorinpeople.co.uk) is a useful source of reference.

## **8. Outcome**

Having carried out the Review process in line with the quality assurance guidelines monitored by Investors in People Wales, I recommend that **Chepstow School** should continue to be accredited as an Investor in People.

Assessor: **Rosemary Grimshaw**

On behalf of the Wales Investors in People Quality Centre

Date: **16<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

Date of interim Review: **October 2014**

Date of three year Review: **April 2016**

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE - CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

<b>Organisation Name:</b>	<b>Chepstow School</b>	<b>Date of interim Review:</b>	<b>October 2014</b>
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<b>Areas for Development</b> (as identified in the Assessor's report)	<b>Action Proposed</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>By Whom</b>
<b>Coaching Skills</b>	Continue to investigate new qualifications and techniques as they become available. Consider involving TLAs as leads in CPD activities on coaching.	October 2014	Leadership Team
<b>Managing initiatives</b>	Consider building in more time to consolidate and embed new initiatives. Review the need for clearer lines of accountability and referral as leadership is developed across the school.	October 2014	Leadership Team
<b>Eliminating barriers to change</b>	Review techniques for targeting the staff that are harder to engage.	October 2014	Leadership Team
<b>Staff well-being</b>	Review how you managed the balance of challenge v. Stress.	October 2014	Leadership Team
<b>Investors in People Framework</b>	Consider using the wider IIP Framework as part of your on-going school development strategy and perhaps "go for gold" at your next review!	October 2014	Leadership Team



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**Appendix A: Assessment/Review Evidence Requirements Results**

Please use the key to refer to all the evidence requirements addressed by this assessment/review.

39= the Standard  
 Additional 26 = Bronze  
 Additional 76 = Silver  
 Additional 126 = Gold

- Key:**
- ✓ Met
  - Not applicable
  - X Not Met
  - Not assessed

