

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE  
REVIEW REPORT**

for

**Griffithstown Primary School**

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**On behalf of:** Investors in People Wales  
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## **Introduction and Context to the Review**

Griffithstown Primary School is a medium to large primary school situated in the small village of Griffithstown on the outskirts of Cwmbran town, operating in the Torfaen County Borough Council. In 2008 Griffithstown Infants School and Griffithstown Junior School amalgamated to create Griffithstown Primary School, and at the time of Review has 412 pupils and 69 staff and governors.

The school has undergone significant changes in both its structure and its leadership since it's last assessment in December 2011. In June 2014 the school completed an Estyn Inspection, a process that results in a Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP), providing a key focus for the schools improvement activity. As a result of the Inspection outcomes, it was agreed to conduct the Investors in People Review against the Standard Framework.

The school appointed a new Head Teacher in April 2014 – Mr. Nicholas Blackburn, who has been leading the implementation of the PIAP in preparation for a further inspection, planned for June 2015.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Investors in People Specialist conducting the Review would like to thank Mr. Blackburn and his staff, for the friendly welcome to the business during the review planning meeting and the two days he spent onsite. The coordination of the onsite days was very effective and efficient, and the hospitality extended was first class. Please thank everyone for their effective participation, enthusiasm and openness during 'one to one', pairs and group discussions, which were conducted in a very positive spirit. Everyone showed a genuine commitment to the school and an admirable passion for providing the highest standards of education for the children, something to be highly proud of.

## Review Objectives

Discussions for the preparation of the Review centred around the schools' implementation of its PIAP and also the culture change that was being introduced by the new leadership team under the direction of the Head Teacher. There was particular emphasis on a drive and desire to provide the very best education possible for the children attending the school, working in partnership with the key stakeholders involved.

It was agreed to assess the whole operation against the core Investors in People Standard, with a view to building practice against the wider framework moving forward.

The objectives for feedback, agreed with Mr Blackburn at the review-planning meeting, were as follows:

- 1. A new management team has been recently installed at the school, with a new set of goals and objectives. The organisation would like to use the liP Review process to provide feedback on how the individuals in the team are feeling about the challenges ahead, specifically in terms of leadership, and where they would like to be in 18 months' time, after the team has been working together and had an appropriate amount of time to implement change.*
- 2. Since the previous liP Review in December 2011 there has been variable progress in the organisation's people strategy, evidenced by a less than impressive result at a recent Estyn Inspection. This has resulted in a 'Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)' being written and implemented by the new Head teacher Mr. Blackburn. The organisation would value feedback on how the people feel about the PIAP, and how confident they feel about the actions in place to improve its performance by the time the next inspection takes place in June 2015.*
- 3. As part of the new approach introduced by Mr. Blackburn since him taking on the Head role in April 2014, the organisation is embarking on a culture change programme, which is aimed at empowering the staff to improve their own areas of practice. The organisation would like to assess how the people feel they are empowered to improve their practice and how they feel about the investment in their training and whether or not they think it will benefit their careers.*

## Summary of Key Strengths and Good Practice

The key strengths/points of good practice highlighted by the Review were:

- **Highly motivated staff committed to the schools vision, mission and aims** – during the interview process with the staff at the school there was a complete commitment demonstrated to the schools mission to *‘Inspire, Challenge and Achieve’*. This commitment was evidenced at every interview with every staff member involved in the process. The motivation to succeed and improve was impressive, demonstrated by some of the following feedback received;

*‘... I love working here, and I get a real feeling that we are part of something special ...’*

*‘... we are improving all of the time and I like it...’*

*‘... we do work hard and sometimes long hours but its not a problem, it’s manageable and I know we are getting better...’*

*‘... since the new Head has arrived it’s been a different place and a very positive environment to work in ...’*

*‘... there have been huge improvements – it’s great ...’*

Much of the feedback received during the Review demonstrated a real change in emphasis over the past nine months. People verbalised an increased level of involvement, which they felt had an increase in their levels of motivation.

- **Opportunities for staff to improve the schools standards** – the PIAP (which is essentially an action plan) has provided the school with the framework to improve its performance. In addition to this action plan the Head Teacher has implemented a strategy to give all staff at the school the opportunity to improve both their, and the schools standards, through a combination of developmental vehicles. For example they have increased the levels of PPA time for teachers, partnered with an ‘exemplar school’ nearby to share best practice and provided bespoke training for leaders in performance management skills, to mention just a few. Some of the comments recorded were;

*'... I get support to develop myself in my role whenever I need it...'*

*'... we now get whole school training which is fantastic ...'*

*'...I really enjoy going to the exemplar school, which help me realise that we are doing pretty well and on track to be at least as good as them...'*

*'... a key and significant part of my role is to develop the skills of the staff to provide the very best education we can for the children...'*

*'... I'm given regular management time now and I know I will be supported if I want to do more development ...'*

*'... it's great to be out there again ...'*

During the Review it was evidenced that spending resources on developing the people was regarded as a high priority area and a significant contributor to the schools improving performance.

- **Effective leadership style** – whilst still in its first year of implementation, the new approach to leadership was demonstrated to be having genuine impact, witnessed during the Review process. Many comments observed during the Review were compared with the schools' environment one year previously. When asked to find words to describe the prevailing leadership style at the school, the following words were recorded;

*'..organised..', '..balanced..', '..approachable..', '..positive..', '..driving..',  
'..personable..', '..change-focussed..', '..supportive..', '..consistent..',  
'..clear..', '..challenging..'*

During the answers to this question, not one negative word was observed throughout the whole Review process.

Many viewpoints were expressed that the improvements in the school performance was, in the most part, down to excellent leadership. Observations made supported these viewpoints, for example all key stakeholders were given the opportunity to contribute to the schools' vision and mission, the schools' mission and aims were clearly understood by everyone interviewed, and people spoke in detail about how their roles contributed to the aims of the overall organisation.

Another important observation supporting this area of best practice was the people's complete belief that they are on track for a much-improved result at the next Estyn Inspection later this year. They all expressed a clear involvement and understanding of the PIAP and said they were really enjoying being part of the improvement process.

The managers interviewed from the leadership team expressed clear views about the capabilities they need to take the school forward by leading, managing and developing their staff.

- **Selection and introduction of the leadership team** – One of the key areas that was deemed 'unsatisfactory' at the latest Estyn Inspection was 'how good are leadership and management?' As a result a new leadership team has been selected and implemented. This team comprises of five people including the Head Teacher. Of these five people, three are new to the leadership team. The Review process revealed a careful, thought through and considered process for the selection of this team, together with a strategic introduction of its team members. Some comments;

*'...this is a perfect time for me in my career, it could not have worked out better. I feel ready and am looking forward to the considerable challenges ahead...'*

*'...I've now got the confidence to take this next step in my career, the time is the right and the school is on an upward trend...'*

*'...this is my first time in this particular role and my introduction to the role has been excellent...'*

*'...its taken a while to put this team together and now it will provide the platform to make the next stage of improvements...'*

*'...the selection of this leadership team has been very carefully considered and looks ideal in its make up...'*

Again there were examples of best practice evidenced in this area. The induction activity for one of the leadership team members involved phased introduction into the environment a number of weeks before taking on the role. Another example was the planned introduction to the role over a full nine months of developmental work, benefitting both the individual and the schools' improvement strategy. Great examples of visionary leadership and people management.

## Feedback against Agreed Objectives

**Objective 1** - *A new management team has been recently installed at the school, with a new set of goals and objectives. The organisation would like to use the IiP Review process to provide feedback on how the individuals in the team are feeling about the challenges ahead, specifically in terms of leadership, and where they would like to be in 18 months' time, after the team has been working together and had an appropriate amount of time to implement change.*

The term '*management team*' stated in the objective above is now referred to as the leadership team. All five members of the leadership team were interviewed during the Review process. Without exception, the feelings expressed towards the challenges ahead were positive, optimistic and enthusiastic. A real sense of motivation and determination to improve and succeed was present during all the interviews. These feelings expressed were combined with a realisation that the challenges ahead are both significant and demanding, yet all people interviewed said they found this motivating and felt well prepared. Things that were said;

'...feel good about the progress we are making and being part of the leadership team is great ...'

'...we now have a good leadership team in place and can have a much better inspection this time ...'

'...we have got a lot of progress to make and we are well on the way to achieving our aims ...'

'...the children are the most important part of the school and they are already benefiting from the changes we are making...'

'...there is a demanding workload on all of us as teachers, but the workload is manageable and necessary to ensure the children get the best education...'

There was also a definite understanding that the team will take a little more time to embed and grow together in their new roles. There was a view expressed that the already high levels of personal development can be continued and focused to improve their management and leadership skills under the guidance of the Head Teacher.

When asked about where they would like to be and expect to be in eighteen months time as a leadership group, the following is a selected extract of the comments that were observed;

‘...we understand our own and each other’s roles and are all confident in them. A strong team that works together with no divisions. We take decisions together and trust each other completely...’

‘..working well together with delegated leadership in other aspects. Everybody taking responsibility for further developments for the benefit of the school overall...’

‘...a leadership team that knows its roles and responsibilities, embedded in evaluation, leadership and standards. All the staff are happy in their work and the children are getting the very best education available. A team that engages in networking, enjoying change and are clearly visible around the school...’

One of the consistent features during discussions was that people struggled to come up with ideas for improvements moving forward, suggesting that the current approach is about right.

**Objective 2** - *Since the previous liP Review in December 2011 there has been variable progress in the organisations people strategy, evidenced by a less than impressive result at a recent Estyn Inspection. This has resulted in a ‘Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)’ being written and implemented by the new Head teacher Mr. Blackburn. The organisation would value feedback on how the people feel about the PIAP, and how confident they feel about the actions in place to improve its performance by the time the next inspection takes place in June 2015.*

It was not possible to spend time at Griffithstown Primary School without being aware of the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP), which is a clear focus for the schools improvement activity. The PIAP is a highly visible action plan and the subject of frequent and regular discussions between staff, management and other stakeholders (e.g. – school governors). During the interviews everyone, without exception, was able to explain what PIAP was and able to give some detail about its content.

The evidence observed from the Review process suggests that people have been involved and included in the PIAP from the very start and have been tasked with its delivery in their everyday work. The staff interviewed expressed an appreciation of the clarity that the PIAP affords them in their work, helping to decide priorities and also facilitating discussions around the ‘best way to do things’. The staff demonstrated feelings of motivation by the PIAP and the vast majority of comments were focusing on the clarity and drive that the plan gives them. A selection of comments;

‘...I have been through the PIAP with a fine toothcomb and now understand it all well. We know our roles, the systems we have in place and the processes we use to deliver our services. We feel much more secure now and I’m very confident that we will get a much improved result at our inspection later this year...’

*'...been through the PIAP, and we're more involved in its governance. It is very detailed and focuses on all the key areas such as extended writing etc. I'm pretty confident that we'll be okay, the job descriptions are in place, target setting is in place, processes are in place and there's been a change of leadership – yes, we'll be okay...'*

*'...the PIAP is very clear and pinned on more than one wall around here, its even behind you there..... I have no doubt that our inspection later this year will result in much improved outcomes...'*

*'...we are getting better standards and there is much more shape at the school over the past year or so, I think the inspection in the summer will be much better than the last one...it will then be important to start thinking about the next improvements'*

*'...from a Governors point of view, I'm delighted with the improvements the new leadership team are making and I'm sure we are going to get a good result from our next inspection. We could make more use of the Board of Governors...'*

From the Review process it was clear that confidence is already high in terms of the actions in place to deliver improvements in performance by the time the next inspection takes place in June 2015. It was observed that much of this confidence stems from the clarity of the action plan together with the inclusive leadership style that is deployed in the school, and of course, improving results.

**Objective 3** - *As part of the new approach introduced by Mr. Blackburn since him taking on the Head role in April 2014, the organisation is embarking on a culture change programme, which is aimed at empowering the staff to improve their own areas of practice. The organisation would like to assess how the people feel they are empowered to improve their practice and how they feel about the investment in their training and whether or not they think it will benefit their careers.*

This objective is about the schools culture, the prevailing leadership style and the impact of the increased investment in people's development. Again the Review process produced very consistent evidence regarding empowerment of people. Everyone felt confident to take their own decisions, and expressed that they get full support when they need it. They also said they were enjoying the freedom to express themselves at work. They felt this style of leadership was enabling them to grow in their roles and deliver the improvements that they are targeted with.

All staff interviewed consistently said that they have been given training and development opportunities, particularly in the past year or so and they were benefitting from this. Many of the people interviewed demonstrated a thirst for learning, when discussing this area and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to improve their skills. They also believe that this will continue and look forward to further progressing their careers and being part of a successful school in the future. Some of the comments recorded in this area included;

*'...we're getting whole school training now, which is uplifting for everybody...'*

*'...my career is at a point where I can take the next step and build on the experience I have already gathered so far and I'm getting the opportunities to develop my skills...'*

*'...I'm pretty much trusted to make my own decisions in getting the equipment I think is needed to do what is right for the school. My ideas are always taken on board and acted upon...'*

When discussions progressed to the point of how their development is beneficial to their careers, the vast majority of people felt that it had a positive impact. It is recognised that not everyone has the aspiration to get to the next upwards step in their careers, however all the interview evidence produced, ranged from highly positive benefit to a small section who were happy that their careers were in a good place.

Before moving on to ideas for improvement, the Reviewer wishes to record just one more quotation from one of the discussions, which was;

*'...I have absolutely no doubt that in the fullness of time, this will be one of the best schools in the area, if not in the whole of Wales...'*

## **Ideas for Continuous Improvement**

To support ongoing improvement and future strategy of the business, it would be useful to consider the following areas for continuous improvement:

### **Against the Objectives**

It is clear from the agreed objectives for the Review that the focus at Griffithstown Primary School centres around new leadership, the post inspection action plan, and an inclusive and empowering culture all geared towards providing improved education for the children who attend the school. The following would support achievement of the objectives outlines;

- a) Consideration be given to structured on-going development of the new leadership team in terms of their leadership and management skills and also their effectiveness as a team developing together. A solid foundation has already been established through the excellent selection and introduction of the new leadership team. This offers the ideal platform to design further development.
- b) Consideration be given to developing a set of management or leadership competences, or something similar, that the managers could develop and set standards of excellence to support the schools ambitions.
- c) Think about how communication to the lower levels of the school (teaching assistants) could be improved, potentially as part of the development of the leadership team in their management skills.
- d) Consider setting specific people development and leadership targets over the next 18 months, these could be designed in-line with the Investors in People 18 month interaction, including challenging your aspirations with the liP Framework.
- e) The PIAP is a successful vehicle in providing clarity for the people, particularly giving a focus for improvement. Consideration be given to evaluating why and how the PIAP does this and using the outcomes to establish an internal self-evaluation process, that is able to take a practical approach to leading improvement work moving forward.
- f) The review confirmed a culture of inclusion and empowerment where staff are given responsibility for their own learning. Consideration be given to naming this culture so that staff are more aware of the opportunities they have under this excellent climate for development.

- g) Consideration be given at some point within the medium term to talent management and succession planning for the sustainability of the schools' continuous improvement activity.

### **Other areas for consideration**

Other areas outlined through the discussions may support the business further transformation of its culture, performance and success:

- h) During the review staff talked with passion about their roles and how much they enjoyed the improvements being realised. At the same time they spoke of high workloads and some examples of long hours working at home in addition to school time. Consider the value of a formal 'Wellbeing' initiative that is aimed at giving all staff the opportunity to achieve a healthy work-life balance. One such programme is available on the Investors in People 'Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Guide'.
- i) To support the previously mentioned idea regarding structured development support for the leadership team, consideration be given to introducing leadership mentoring as a recognised development process. This could be an internally delivered process, started with the leadership team and cascaded, when appropriate, throughout the organisation.
- j) The review observed some excellent practice when introducing new employees to the school. It might be worth thinking about capturing this practice in a more formal way to ensure it is shared and repeated for future appointments.
- k) One interesting observation for the Review was the view commented on previously in this report; 'we could make more use of the Board of Governors'. The next idea for continuous improvement is to link this comment with the previous idea regarding mentoring. Consideration be given to The Board of Governors as a potentially valuable mentoring resource.
- l) Many good practice areas were observed during the Review that satisfied aspects of the Investors in People framework 'Beyond Standard'. Consideration be given to a wider application of the standard to support the improvement activity moving forward.

## Outcome

Having carried out the review process rigorously and in accordance with the quality assurance guidelines monitored by Investors in People Wales, I conclude that accreditation as an Investor in People has been achieved. Achieving the standard represents a true commitment to your staff and demonstrates that you have a solid foundation of good practice.

Accreditation is valid for 3 years but within the revised approach to working with Investors in People, a follow up review is required within 18 months of your last review visit and I look forward to working with you again. This review provides a point of measure for your progress against areas of continuous improvement and ongoing impact of liP on your organisation. This interaction is flexible, and can be customised to your needs aiming to add value at a minimum cost.

Investors in People Wales will keep in contact with you to support your preparation for this activity.

Assessor signature:



On behalf of Investors in People Wales

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015

Date of interim review: May 2016

Date of 3 year Review: December 2017

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE - CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

<b>Organisation Name:</b>	<b>Griffithstown Primary School</b>	<b>Date of interim Review:</b>	<b>July 2016</b>
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<b>Area for improvement (Identified in specialist's report)</b>	<b>Action proposed</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>By whom</b>
Structured on-going development of the leadership team (possibly including management competences)			
Communication at lower levels in the staff structure			
Review success of PIAP and build lessons learned into on-going self-evaluation process			
Review progress of culture change to inclusion and empowerment and build on success			
Talent management and succession planning			
Wellbeing programme to support 'work-life' balance			
Introduce an 'Internal mentoring' programme for leadership team (use Governors as a resource)			
Formalise 'induction' process to capture good practice			





**APPENDIX A: Review / Review Evidence Requirements Results**

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

- |                |                |                    |
|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 39             | = the Standard | <b>Key:</b>        |
| additional 26  | = Bronze       | Y = Selected       |
| additional 76  | = Silver       | N = Not selected   |
| additional 126 | = Gold         | P = Possible       |
|                |                | X = Not applicable |

Total number in this Review / review:

\* Shaded area indicates core standard

	Indicator										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>1</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	Y	Y	Y		Y				Y		<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	Y		Y						Y		<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	Y				Y						<b>6</b>
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