

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT

for

HERTSWOOD ACADEMY

Key Information

Assessment Type	Three-year assessment, core Standard
Investors in People Practitioner	Jeannette Stanley
Assessment Dates	11/01/2016– 13/01/2016
Assessment Enquiry Number	ENQ – 94837 – ZL4PK3

Conclusion

Having conducted the assessment in accordance with the UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES) and EMB Excellence Ltd guidelines, I am very pleased to confirm that Hertswood Academy (Hertswood) continues to meet all evidence requirements of the core Investors in People (IiP) Standard. Hertswood is an organisation that truly embraces the spirit of the Standard and is to be congratulated on the significant achievements and progress made since its last assessment January 2013.

I wish to thank Hertswood for the accommodation and hospitality kindly provided over the assessment visits. My thanks go to all people who took part in the IiP discussions for their enthusiastic, honest and open feedback; special thanks must go to Tora Hodge for ensuring that the assessment flowed smoothly and trouble-free.

Milestone Dates

Review of Continuous Improvement Plan	July 2017
Date of Next Full Assessment	January 2019

Jeannette Stanley, January 2016

Investors in People Practitioner

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1 Introduction and organisation background

Hertswood is a school described during the assessment as being on an “*upward trajectory*” under the inspirational leadership of the Headteacher (in post since January 2013) and his extended leadership team. Rated as “Good” by Ofsted in 2014, the school has demonstrated year on year improved exam results and is recognised as the most improved school in England for GCSEs exceeding national standards for English and Maths; furthermore the school is in the top 10% of schools in the country for progress at A-level.

These impressive achievements have been made within the context of an ambitious vision that Hertswood has defined for the students and for the community it serves. Hertswood’s vision is clear and unambiguous and it is to make the academy a “*world-class institution*” – “*aim high, achieve excellence*” is its motto.

Hertswood clearly understands the return on investing in people and its impact on student success and is actively associated with the Meller Educational Trust (MET), a group of Hertfordshire academies striving for academic excellence and committed to providing “*outstanding training opportunities for staff*”. The MET has defined a collaborative vision statement “Aspiration, Compassion and Excellence”.

Accredited with IIP for many years, Hertswood is widely recognised for the quality of its CPD provision and is a member of the Advanced Learning Alliance. The school is also accredited with Arts Council England Gold, Sports Mark and Healthy Schools.

2 Findings against the Standard

Leading

Hertswood is without doubt and successful and innovative school with a clear focus on becoming a world-class academy; its vision includes a complete new build and move into brand new premises on one site. Construction plans have been drawn up and approval is under-way.

Aligned to the vision, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) pulls together a number of key strategies for improving performance with priorities identified for raising attainment, as well as for teaching and learning to ensure that students “*are engaged in their learning and able to make the best possible progress.*”

To make sure that the SIP is successfully implemented the Headteacher and SLT have fostered a culture of empowerment and involvement and these core principles reach out to all stakeholders to capture their feedback for plans moving forward.

Having established a consultative approach to strategic planning with professional partners and stakeholders in the wider community, Hertswood continues to benefit from shared resources and networking opportunities for *“nurturing talent and expertise”*. As such, the school is aiming to become the flagship for the Aspire programme, driving an impetus of continuous improvement and raised standards for teaching and learning thus moving from “Good” to “Outstanding”.

The Headteacher described how the strategic vision is developed with the Governing Body in partnership with the MET. Objectives moving forward from “Good” to “Outstanding” are autonomy and CPD supported by a *“Growth Mind Set”*, an impetus for moving forward to achieve success by developing the right learning techniques and learning outcomes.

The SIP is outcomes-based and everyone’s objectives, teaching and support-staff’s alike, directly linked to its implementation. *“My role is to facilitate all the strategies in the SIP to allow them to happen with the minimum disruption.”* Described as being on an upward trend the SIP is a rolling programme of targets defined and communicated by the Headteacher with a planning process is open and inclusive. People consistently work collaboratively together to develop strategies and interventions for cohorts and individuals.

Feedback indicated that high levels of autonomy exist in all areas of the school and at all levels: *“The leadership is hugely trusting – we’re not micro-managed in any way”*.

In terms of communication, consultation and engagement all of which are high on the leadership’s agenda, arrangements described include a wonderful array of opportunities for people to come together to share knowledge and take things forward. To name but a few; regular meetings are calendared to maintain an overview such as faculty and year-team meetings, as well as academic and pastoral boards for *“pulling all the threads together”*. People confirmed professional, two-way dialogues taking place in which people clearly have a voice and constructive, upward feedback is valued.

Supporting

Feedback at interview revealed the many different kinds of support people receive from managers to help them improve. Hertswood’s culture was often referred to when asked *“like a family – you can honestly go to anyone and people are only too willing to help you, there’s always someone.”* Support mechanisms described varied greatly, often innovative and flexible, and included a wide mix of formal and informal arrangements.

Following individual lesson observations feedback is consistently provided and if appropriate followed by further coaching, training or CPD activities. A great emphasis is placed on people sharing their expertise and knowledge through coaching, as well as in the various trainee and NQT mentoring programmes that exist. Other methods include the shared use of the staff-room where again dialogues are often inclusive and people are willingly to help and support each other.

Moreover, after any relevant CPD event learning outcomes are shared with colleagues either in faculty, year-team meetings or planned INSET. Hertswood tries to deliver most of its CPD activities internally as this is not only cost and time efficient, it is also specific and tailored to need.

Support is also provided in the form of leadership and management development and Hertswood clearly understands the link between effective leadership, management and high performance. Defined leadership capabilities reflect the school's culture and as such roles have been created in the form of the new Leading Practitioner and Senior Teacher posts to develop best practice, as well as provide support for further progression. Last year five middle leaders completed the NPQML and five new candidates are doing the same this year.

Development pathways exist for all staff at all levels. Everyone is entitled to apply for learning and development and a high number of non-teaching staff have progressed to become fully qualified teachers through School Direct, there is also much professional support provided for PGT and initial teacher training placements.

Support for learning and development is one of the approaches adopted by the school's leadership to reward staff and show how much Hertswood values its people. Other arrangements include the staff's recognition-scheme; constructive feedback is given following lesson observations and in performance management. Praise and thanks are regularly communicated in faculty and year-team meetings and the leadership ensures time is made available for anyone who wishes to discuss any matter as they role-model an open-door leadership style to ensure people have direct access to the SLT and that support is constantly available should it be needed.

Learning and development is made available to everyone in Hertswood through BlueSky, the school's performance management and CPD system that supports both the SIP's implementation and continuous improvement. All line-managers have access to BlueSky, all performance management and lesson observations are recorded on it including LSAs and it links everyone's targets straight through the school, for example, 70% A*- C. The leadership scrutinises CPD applications and closely monitors spend against budget.

There are many strands that feed into the school's development strategy and include long-term development, for example NPQML, there is also a wide range of learning options delivered by Lead Practitioners, regular INSET, elective training and a mandatory programme of training that supports trainees and NQTs. Senior managers described how a generous training budget supports training and professional development and other resources include the specialist expertise available within the MET. All learning is pre-evaluated and supports continuous improvements aligned to high performance. Clear learning objectives are set and learning outcomes are shared, as mentioned. A recent hot topic focused on the quality of feedback to students.

Improving

Since the last assessment Hertswood has demonstrated considerable progress in developing a culture of sustainable success. The school has achieved impressive results under the Headteacher and the extended SLT and some of the highlights include:

- A clear vision and shared passion to become a “*world-class academy*”.
- A new staff structure supports staff development and nurtures talent.
- A culture of empowerment and autonomy fosters improvements and success.
- Great emphasis is placed on developing leadership capability.
- Middle and senior leadership development is extremely well supported.
- An extended leadership team role-models best practice.
- Talent is nurtured and very well supported - ultimately improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Approaches for recognition and reward are inclusive and flexible.
- Development pathways exist for all people in all areas of the school.
- A successful Ofsted inspection in 2014 resulting in “Good” drives an impetus to “Outstanding” and excellence
- The performance management system is now fully inclusive.
- BlueSky is well-established and advancing towards “self-serve”.
- A complete new build will bring the Upper and Lower schools together on a single site with improved communication and support for House groups.
- Many opportunities are available for shared learning within the MET and Alliance.
- A substantial investment in people provides a clear return on investment both in terms of staff retention and improved exam results:

Staff turnover for the last two years has been consistently held at 8%.

Exam results GCSE % 5 A*-C including English and Maths:

2012 - 36

2013 - 46

2014 - 52

2015 - 61

The list is not exhaustive.

Moving forward, mention was frequently made during interview to conclude that people have confidence in the leadership, that Hertswood will continue to invest in staff development to provide a world-class educational environment through outstanding teaching and that all staff are role models for learning.

3 Next steps

Hertswood is required to undertake an interaction with the liP Practitioner within 18 months of this assessment. The scale of the activity may range from a discussion with the senior leadership team on progress against current people strategies and any challenges the organisation may be facing, through to a full assessment.



Appendix 1 – Continuous Improvement Plan

Business Issue – What	Suggested Actions - How	Potential Benefit - Why	Priority - When	Solutions/Support Available - Who
Structuring work.	When evaluating support staff structure required for single site, new and smart ways of working, ensure all non-teaching staff are involved in the design of interesting work and roles to avoid duplication, as well as ensure clear accountability, flexibility and pathways for progression.	Ensures clear accountability, encourages ownership and innovation. Supports a culture of inclusion, value and respect.	ASAP	SLT and people in non-teaching posts.
Empowering and involving people.	As above.	As above.	As above.	As above.
Delivering continuous improvement.	Leaders encourage people at all levels to look to the outside world to bring knowledge into the school to improve performance.	Supports development of leadership skills at all levels as well as reinforcing, supporting above two suggested actions with potential benefits.	As above.	As above.
Accreditation against liP 6.	Develop strategies and approaches, with guidance and support to move from liP 5 to liP 6.	Provides a benchmarking framework for high performance and sustainable success with clear performance levels.	Within next 18 months.	SLT and Jeannette Stanley

Appendix 2 – Assessment results summary

The Investors in People Framework

The Evidence Requirements

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
The Indicators	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓													✓	✓								
	2	✓	✓	✓	✓																								
	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																							
	4	✓	✓	✓																									
	5	✓	✓	✓	✓																								
	6	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		✓															
	7	✓	✓	✓																									
	8	✓	✓	✓																									
	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																							
	10	✓	✓	✓												✓													

The number of evidence requirements met is **45**

Key:



The Core Investors in People Standard



Your Choice from the Investors in People Framework



Not part of the Investors in People Framework