



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR

ST. JAMES THE GREAT SCHOOL

UNDERTAKEN BY

GEMMA GRACE
INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSOR

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

December 2002

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Introduction

St James the Great School is a co-educational Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Primary and Nursery school in a residential area in Thornton Heath, Surrey. It offers education for children aged 3 to 11 years old. The school is an impressive building with quite recent extensions including a beautiful nursery and a still to be finished Oratory, which will be used for class services and quiet time for the children.

Stephen Beck, the Headteacher has been in post for 13 years and is supported by 61 members of staff and a board of Governors which is made up of Foundation Governors appointed by the Bishop, Parent Governors elected by the parents, a Teacher Governor elected by the staff and a non-teaching staff Governor elected by non-teaching staff. The atmosphere within the school is one based very strongly on the importance of the community with staff, governors and parents all working hard to maintain the caring family based tradition and aiming to achieve high standards in education.

The school motto is 'Discere Cum Dei Amore' – 'Learning with God's Love' and the school feels that this sums up its main purpose and aim. The school's mission statement states "Gospel values and traditions and beliefs in the Catholic Faith are at the centre of the school's ethos".

The school educates children from the two parishes of St Andrew's in Thornton Heath and St Bartholomew's in Norbury. Each class has a nominated Chaplain from the Clergy of these Parishes.

The school was awarded Beacon status in January 2000, the Quality Mark in July 2000 and a Community Use Kitemark in September 2002. It is also currently working towards Artsmark and Sportsmark recognition.

Executive Summary

The assessment followed the assessment plan apart from some substitution of staff not available but in each case the substitution was relevant and suitable. I was also able to attend the weekly staff briefing before school started and to have a tour of the school at lunchtime which was useful as it gave me a real feel for the school and the atmosphere within in it. The children I met appeared very well mannered and happy.

At the end of the onsite activity I was delighted to be able to confirm to the Headteacher and the two Deputy Heads that I would be making a positive recommendation to the Capital Quality Recognition Panel that St James the Great School should be recognised as an Investor in People. I gave them initial feedback on the evidence I found during the assessment under the four principles of the standard, commitment, planning, action and evaluation.

The main strengths I found within St James the Great which support my decision of a positive recommendation are:

- ❑ Very strong leadership from the Headteacher and the two Deputy Headteachers
- ❑ Clear and effective planning
- ❑ A very committed and professional team of teachers and support staff who are all very supportive of each other
- ❑ Strong and effective communication between staff, parents, governors and children
- ❑ Very effective use of resources for training and development
- ❑ A very strong feel of the school being one team with common aims.

Words consistently used by staff and governors when describing the school are friendly, supportive, caring, with a genuine open door policy. People are very proud to be part of St James the Great School. I would like to thank everyone at the school for making me feel so welcome. I would also like to thank the people I interviewed for their enthusiasm, honesty and openness.

The table below shows the levels of strength of evidence I found against each of the 12 indicators of the Investors in People standard.

Indicator	Good evidence	Sufficient evidence	Some evidence	No evidence
1	✓			
2	✓			
3		✓		
4	✓			
5	✓			
6	✓			
7	✓			
8	✓			
9	✓			
10		✓		
11		✓		
12	✓			

Recommendation

Having carried out the assessment process rigorously and in accordance with the guidelines provided for Assessors by Investors in People UK, I am satisfied that St James the Great School meets the requirements of the Investors in People National Standard.

Signed: 

Assessor: **Gemma Grace**

Date: **9 December 2002**

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

COMMITMENT

AN INVESTOR IN PEOPLE IS FULLY COMMITTED TO DEVELOPING ITS PEOPLE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Indicator 1: The organisation is committed to supporting the development of its people

- The strategies which are in place to support the development of staff include the performance management system for teachers, the induction process, the training policy and planning and staff meetings. These strategies are very much strengthened by the close and supportive line management which exists in the school. The Leadership Team is seen as very supportive and approachable.
- Belief in commitment to development is strengthened for new members of staff by training and development being encouraged at interview stage and throughout induction. Commitment to development of staff is stated in the staff training and development policy.
- All development is focused on the needs of the individual but must also always be in the interests of the school and the achievement of its objectives.
- Managers were able to give examples of how they support the development of staff such as ensuring induction happens and works for the individual and for the team, people getting reviews on time which are valued by staff and managers and by providing great encouragement to all members of staff to develop their skills.
- All staff believe in the school's commitment to their development because they are told about it and they see and experience it happening. The whole culture within the school supports the belief in commitment from senior management.

Development areas

Indicator 2: People are encouraged to improve their own and other people's performance

- There is very strong evidence of people being encouraged to improve their own performance. Training and development is part of the culture within St James'. The environment within the school is one of sharing of experience and knowledge amongst staff.
- New staff or those with gaps in their knowledge are encouraged to shadow more experienced staff to learn from them. The school uses shadowing particularly for

Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) when they either shadow a teacher or maybe pair up with another LSA which encourages learning from both parties.

- “Managers encourage you to be proactive in identifying training”.
- The school is very good at encouraging development sometimes thinking outside direct aims of the school and looking at the wider development of the person. An example of this was supporting a member of staff to go on an externally funded two week educational visit to America to learn more about Information Technology. The school has benefited from the visit in a number of ways including the individual sharing the information and enthusiasm she came back with.
- The Beacon status of the school has meant that there are more formal links with other schools eg staff from St James’ go to work alongside teachers at other schools with different and difficult issues. It is good for their professional development and for St James’. People are encouraged to support and in doing so also learn from the schools they support. A member of staff said that she has found it very interesting becoming more aware, for example, of teaching dual languages.
- An LSA said, “We are all encouraged to look at possible training we might need. Also the training co-ordinator is very good at putting information in pigeon holes if she thinks it might be relevant or useful”.
- A teacher was encouraged by the Head to become an Advanced Skills Teacher. The school now releases her one day a week to work in another local school with a very different intake to St James’. She is very proactive in sharing with others what she learns from the experience.
- To support the introduction of the numeracy and literacy strategy some staff went on the training and then came back and ran sessions for the rest of the staff.
- All staff confirmed that there is always a lot of sharing and great support for all in the staff room.
- Sharing of ideas and techniques happens because many of the classes are semi-open plan with 2 classes and 2 teachers working in them as the school is a two form entry school. The LSAs also recognised this as helping them learn and share with the other LSA in the parallel class.
- During the Monday morning staff meeting I attended time was taken to run through the new power saving system on the school’s IT system. This was done simply and very practically with a lot of support given and offered for any future queries.
- There is a computer course run by a teacher on Fridays for parents and staff attend too.

- “The PE Teacher came to me with a brilliant course on dance which she thought might be relevant for the work I am doing with the children”.

Development areas

- Although there is already a lot of sharing going on sometimes due to the close relationships on the staff more opportunities to share experience could be created by having it as an agenda item at the weekly staff meeting or at one of the other regular meetings.

Indicator 3: People believe their contribution to the organisation is recognised

- The performance management system gives recognition of contribution to teachers and the more informal review system works for support staff. Reviews are used as an opportunity for managers to give feedback to individuals and as a time to identify any training and development the person needs or is interested in.
- The Leadership Team meet with LSAs every half term. Also teachers are very active in observation and if they perceive an area for development for an LSA they will discuss it with them and support them in meeting the need. LSAs meet with Head at the end of the year to review how things have gone and always get feedback from him then which is more formalised than the informal feedback throughout the year.
- An LSA told me that she knows she is definitely appreciated for the work she does and felt it was shown in words but also in the school giving her more responsibility because of their confidence in her.
- People feel valued for what they do and the recognition they get causes behaviour to be modelled thereby helping to build the supportive culture within the school. “Colleagues are very good at making me feel valued maybe after an assembly”.
- “The Head always thanks us. He is very good at that”.
- A manager said, “It is part of the culture here to make every person feel valued it. I make a point of it”.
- At the Monday morning meeting I attended the Head made a point of thanking the person who had worked on the Artsmark submission and read out a supporting letter for the submission from someone associated with the school, which was glowing in its praise of all staff and pupils and the work they have done which supports the submission. The Head said, “You can all pat yourselves on the back for this”.
- In the last Ofsted report in 1999 it was mentioned that the school should raise the quality of all the teaching to the level of the best by implementing classroom observations. This has been addressed by the school with all teachers now getting observation and constructive feedback. “Feedback from classroom observations

made me feel good but also gave me some suggestions about what I could do differently". A teacher thought that it would be useful to be able to suggest what she would like an observer to focus on for feedback.

- Governors visit and are always made welcome. The Chair of Governors said, "at a classroom observation I am looking at what is taught and how it is taught and how it relates cross curricular and to encourage staff".
- The Headteacher has his performance management with three of the Governors and an external adviser. He agrees personal targets and discusses his own development with them.

Development Areas

- The amount of classroom observations has increased and they are greatly valued by staff but it is felt by a number of teachers that they would benefit from more. Consider how other senior members of staff could do observations which could also be developmental for them.
- Introduce the planned formalisation of reviews for all support staff because although the current informal system works formalising the system could really focus LSAs more on their individual development and ensure consistency of constructive feedback.

Indicator 4: The organisation is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in the development of its people

- The amount of development that happens across all teams at all levels supports the perception of equal opportunity. There is genuine belief from the top in equality of opportunity to development and the inclusion of all staff in the performance management or informal review system, the improvements to communication, the induction process and the working relationships between teachers and LSAs, the Inset Co-ordinator role and the open atmosphere within the school.
- The approach to staff development is very much linked to the school's mission statement of Gospel values, traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Faith being at the centre of the ethos of the school. The staff development policy confirms that "training and development will be made available to all staff in a fair and equitable manner to provide appropriate and effective personal training and development in an endeavour to ensure job satisfaction, high levels of expertise and progression of staff in their chosen profession. Through this approach we seek to consolidate and improve whole school performance by developing the effectiveness of staff both individually and as members of a staff team".
- The planned extension and formalisation of support staff's reviews will help to identify individual needs and to encourage further development.

- Other opportunities for development available outside the standards fund and other budgets available for staff development are listed in the Staff Development Policy which is available to everyone including Diocesan Course Opportunities, LEA Course Directory, Cluster Groups and visiting other schools are among the list.
- A recent Inset was the whole staff visiting the National Gallery for the day to support school objectives and in line with the Artsmark submission. To support equal opportunities the school pays LSAs for Inset days.
- The school had training on able and gifted children last year and has offered it later this year to all staff plus staff from other schools to share the learning.
- The Inset Co-ordinator role is key in supporting equality of opportunity. She puts information individual's pigeon holes in the staff room or passes possibly relevant information to the curriculum co-ordinator's pigeon hole for consideration.
- A governor confirmed that once he had 'signed up' he was "bombarded with training opportunities!"

Development areas

- The formalisation of the review system for all support staff will support equality of opportunity by giving each individual regular time with their line manager to discuss their individual needs and for the manager to highlight possible development opportunities.

PLANNING

AN INVESTOR IN PEOPLE IS CLEAR ABOUT ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES AND WHAT ITS PEOPLE NEED TO DO TO ACHIEVE THEM

Indicator 5: The organisation has a plan with clear aims and objectives which are understood by everyone

- There is a written School Improvement Plan covering 2002 to 2005 which is well set out with targets, aims, objectives and success criteria. Staff know what St James the Great School wants to achieve.
- The school is seen as having greatly improved in communicating and it is getting it right in the communication of its aims and objectives to staff. People know what is expected of them through the School Improvement Plan, relationships in class and the staff room, weekly staff briefing, white board and pigeon holes in the staff room.
- An LSA said that it is very clear cut what the school is trying to achieve and what the class teacher is trying to achieve which is discussed and communicated through the week by week lesson plans.

- The Monday morning staff briefing I sat in on was very well attended by staff and was obviously a very useful update on what was going on in the school that week and a look at things up to end of term. It was informal in its presentation with people feeling very at ease to input where necessary. Everybody also got a printed page of the information discussed. The office run a rota to ensure cover so that they all have the opportunity to go. As soon as the representative comes out they give a quick run down on what was covered to the others in the office.
- As well as the weekly briefing people mentioned year group meetings and the termly LSA meeting with the Leadership team as useful for giving direction.
- The Head has great confidence in the office staff knowing what is going on in his absence.

Development areas

Indicator 6: The development of people is in line with the organisation's aims and objectives

- The commitment to training and development is very clear within the school. It is known by staff and management alike that all training has to be for the good of the school as well as the individual. There are good links made in the staff development policy and the School Improvement Plan.
- People know why they are having training and development and can see how it is linked to their individual development and the school's aims and objectives often due to discussions with their managers or colleagues.
- The Nursery Manager said, "I went on an Arts course to support me in putting together the Artsmark submission. We went for the gold award – we always aim high".
- People are going on FLS (Further Literary Support) course to support a Government initiative to enable level 4 achievements in SATs.
- An LSA said, "I have asked to have some enhanced ICT training because I think the children know more about it all than I do now and it will really help me support them in class! My name is already down for a course since I asked for it".

Development Areas

- Closer explicit cross referencing between the School Improvement Plan and training planned could help individuals see a direct link between their development and contributing to the school's success.

Indicator 7: People understand how they contribute to achieving the organisation's aims and objectives

- The staff meetings, year group meetings and informal discussions in class between teachers and LSAs are key to helping people understand where the school is going and how they contribute to it succeeding. Joint working between teachers and the LSAs for the needs of the SEN child ensure LSAs feel very much part of the success of the school.
- Staff confirmed that there have been improvements in communication within the school and with parents.
- There is great respect for all individuals in the school and for their part in the whole success and there is a very strong feeling of being part of a team. It is a very sociable school which helps people to fit in quickly. An LSA said, "I always feel part of the school as a whole. There is no 'them and us' attitude here".
- "We are one team as a school. If a wheel falls off we all pull together to put it back on again!"
- "The ethos here is like a magnet. You are all drawn towards it".

Development Areas

ACTION

AN INVESTOR IN PEOPLE DEVELOPS ITS PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY IN ORDER TO IMPROVE ITS PERFORMANCE

Indicator 8: Managers are effective in supporting the development of people

- There are some very effective managers within St James the Great School who understand and are committed to their role of supporting the development of staff.
- There has been a restructuring of the Leadership Team which has moved from there being one Deputy Head to two. One for KS1 and one for KS2. They and the Head meet weekly and have half day review and planning sessions away from the school which they find very valuable.
- The Head described the current team of staff within the whole school as being the best and closest he has known in his time at the school.
- The last Ofsted report recognises the Headteacher as being a "very effective and strong leader who is well supported by governors and senior staff in developing and managing the school".

- Performance Management and reviews of support staff are performed only by the three members of the Leadership team who are each very well respected by staff. This helps to ensure consistency and content of reviews.
- There is great awareness of it being difficult for people to develop management skills in a small school with only three people in Senior Management roles. As a result the school encourages senior teachers to become Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs) and to work at other schools and to lead working groups. One of the ASTs is to go on a Certificated Senior Management course which will give her more knowledge of the senior management role and enable her to do more class observations.
- A manager gave the example of a teacher having a very bright child in her class so the manager suggested some books which would be useful for the child and to encourage a relationship with the mother of the child to support the child's development in that way too.
- There are many examples of people describing how their manager has supported their development. Some are described above plus a teacher saying, "The Head is very aware of my strengths and weaknesses and if I have done something positive that he knows I won't have been comfortable doing he always makes a point of congratulating me and giving me feedback".

Development areas

- Consider how further development of senior teachers could help the school achieve more class observations for the benefit of teachers and LSAs.

Indicator 9: People learn and develop effectively

- The induction process has been improved and is now well planned and carried out. Induction works for NQTs due to a structured approach and the very supportive atmosphere within St James'. "There is always someone approachable to ask who will always give you time".
- NQTs are given a mentor who gives advice and help with planning lessons. They are also there as discipline back up especially when the mentor is the parallel teacher. I was given examples of the mentor having given the NQT opportunities to do new things like plan a prayer service. NQTs have release from class once a week and are observed in class every half term.
- "I am getting more support than I thought I would. Particularly helpful because my mentor is the parallel teacher in same year group".
- A teacher said of their mentor, "I couldn't have got through it without her!"
- The Deputy Heads are also seen as very supportive to new teachers.

- New staff are invited into school in the term before for a day and if they are coming from college they might come for a week. For all new staff the close, supportive and very sociable atmosphere in the staff room and in class is an essential part of feeling very much part of the school very quickly and feeling able to ask anyone anything they do not understand.
- A new LSA had had a meeting with the Head who took her through what was expected of her and the overall picture. Within a few weeks she felt very comfortable in the role and had had great support from the teacher who has responsibility for Special Needs.
- Governors get a starter pack from the Borough including information on joining the Association of Governors. Also the Chair recommends a book on "Effective School Governing". The school bought a copy for each of the Governors. At their first few meetings an experienced governor will sit beside new governor to help out with the many terms and acronyms used in schools.
- Training and development are planned between the individual and their manager. All training must be of benefit to the school as well as the individual and staff all knew what was expected of them. People gave examples of training and development and what they had learnt as a result such as:
 - "I am already using what I am learning at the Friday computer session with the children in class. It has helped me and through it, it is helping the children".
 - Following the whole staff Inset to the National Gallery people came away having far more of an insight into how to use art with the children – this was linked to Artsmark. The LSAs felt they could use what they learnt if they accompany classes in the future to galleries to enable the children to see more into the pictures and extend their learning.
 - An LSA said, "I went on a first aid course and it has really increased my confidence in knowing that I will know how to respond".
 - There are examples of people having training linked to management qualifications and other courses such as finance courses and certificated first aid training.

Development areas

- Ensure the induction process for staff other than NQTs remains consistent. A small point on this is to ensure people always get a copy of the staff handbook when they start.
- Consider more cross team shadowing as part of induction to help build a better understanding of how the whole school functions.

- Consider how NVQs as a whole or just modules of, might be useful for some support staff in the future planning of individual development.

EVALUATION

AN INVESTOR IN PEOPLE UNDERSTANDS THE IMPACT OF ITS INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE ON ITS PERFORMANCE

Indicator 10: The development of people improves the performance of the organisation, teams and individuals

- The continuing commitment to the development of all staff shows how important development is to St James the Great School. There are examples of how individuals have improved their performance as a result of development which can be taken through to team and then organisation level.
- The more formal planning of training ensures that the development of staff is linked to the overall performance of the school. It is known and believed in that, without development of staff the school will not succeed and develop as planned.
- A teacher said that if a course is particularly expensive the priorities of the school as a whole are looked at to decide the benefit of the training.
- Evaluation is quite informal in some cases which is fine but could be more formalised eg by being a fixed agenda item on Key Stage meeting agendas or staff meetings. People do usually feed back if they have experienced something of interest often at the weekly staff meeting.
- One member of staff knew nothing about IT and as it is a high priority for the school they went on relevant courses and have won an award in recognition of their skills and enthusiasm. They also led on setting up the school's very impressive computer suite.
- The Inset Co-ordinator keeps a file of all training undertaken to enable evaluation of any areas of needs to help plan and implement in the future.
- The school evaluates training and its impact at Performance Management reviews supported by teachers having to keep CPD (Continuing Professional Development) records. Classroom observation is also used to evaluate changes in skills and attitudes.
- "We've had a PE session after school – the PE co-ordinator asked how useful was that for KS1?"

- After the maths sessions run on written calculations for the LSAs the learning was evaluated by the LSAs at their next meeting. The teacher who ran the sessions was given feedback.
- Headteacher reports to Governors include feedback on training and development undertaken. The KS1 and KS2 co-ordinators always add to this feedback at the meetings.

Development Areas

- Make it an agenda item at staff meetings to evaluate training and development.
- Use training application forms to also evaluate the outcomes for the school and the individual. It is often useful if they are the same form to keep the planned focus.

Indicator 11: People understand the impact of the development of people on the performance of the organisation, teams and individuals

- The understanding of the impact of development is shown in the continuing commitment and investment in development by the school and the often necessarily inventive use of resources for training by using other forms of development as well as training.
- Senior Management have a very good grasp of the costs and benefits of training. The Head's report to Governors was described as very useful and being a living document as it is always augmented by the Head and the two Deputy Heads with real life examples
- Reporting against training budget could maybe be extended to see direct links between individual's objectives, the school's objectives and the outcome for both, as a direct result of the training and to assess value for money.

Development areas

- Improve recognition of the real investment made by the school in all development invested in by extending the reporting against budget. Make more explicit links between the training plan and the School Improvement Plan which will help provide the information and would make useful and interesting reading.

Indicator 12: The organisation gets better at developing its people

- Continuous improvement is central to Investors in People and I found a number of very positive improvements made to the approach to developing people.
- Communication is recognised as having been addressed and improved.

- The extension and support of the classroom assistant role.
- The induction for LSAs has improved.
- The premises and the opportunities they offer are seen as a big improvement.

Development areas

- In line with striving for continuous improvement staff need to describe what you have done as a school to improve development activities whenever improvements are needed. Each principle of the Investors in People standard needs to be considered ie commitment, planning, action and evaluation.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Continue to build on the incredibly strong and supportive culture of St James the Great School. Consider and address the areas for development highlighted in this report. They are mostly ideas which could strengthen communication, management effectiveness, individual development and evaluation for the good of the individuals, the teams and the school.

Next Steps

- Draw up an action plan to consider addressing any areas for development highlighted in this report.
- Feedback to all staff the findings in this report.

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