

# INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT PITCHEROAK SCHOOL



## Key Information

Assessment Type	Assessment
Investors in People Specialist Name	Richard Tomes
Visit Date	26-27/11/2015
Assessment Enquiry Number	ENQ – 97755 – GT40N4

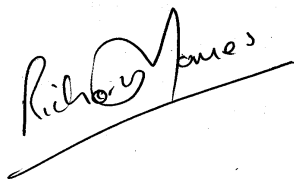
## Conclusion

Having completed a further assessment I am pleased to conclude that Pitcheroak School continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Standard and should be accredited for a further 3 year period.

As ever it was a delight to spend some time in your school and I congratulate you on maintaining your accreditation. It certainly feels that the school is at a new stage in its evolution and there will be great things in store for the future. I wish you continued success on your journey.

## Milestone Dates

Review of Continuous Improvement Plan	May 2017
Date of Next Full Assessment	November 2018



Richard Tomes  
Investors in People Specialist

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## Introduction

Pitcheroak School has been accredited for some time, but there have been some personnel changes since the previous assessment. In particular there is a new headteacher and deputy headteacher who have set out a plan for some change in the school ultimately with the goal of attaining and Outstanding outcome from Ofsted.

## Strengths of the Organisation

There are a number of aspects of Pitcheroak that are impressive and the more noteworthy of these are detailed below.

- The work being undertaken on medium term planning although demanding will result in there being greater clarity on the detail of what is to be achieved. Also, involving staff in carrying out this work should ensure ownership of the targets.
- The 'Golden Thread' links the high level strategy to individual targets which helps people understand how what they do contributes to organisational success.
- Communication is now better and adopting Gmail is a simple but effective development.
- Review processes are very effective which means that performance is kept under scrutiny and remedial action promptly implemented.
- Leadership and management of the school has become more effective through the development of the SLT. Leadership within the school is more distributed.
- Support and guidance is offered to people to progress their careers.
- Managers take positive action to support and guide people on their development and there is some action that takes place to identify those with potential and encourage them to progress.
- There are a wide variety of opportunities for people to learn and in house sessions are considered to be effective and appropriate.
- People's commitment to making the school a success is very strong.
- Many people feel valued.
- Staff feel able to make a difference.

## Purpose and Values

A 4 year plan (2015-18) is in place and this along with supporting documentation makes what is to be achieved by the school and its people very clear. This contains more detail than previously, for example differentiation. There have been changes to the structure of the school resulting in a larger SLT who take primary responsibility for producing the headline with some input from other staff. All teaching staff who have subject specialisms have been involved in producing medium term plans (not previously undertaken) which ensures there is greater depth around what is to be achieved. People have received some guidance on how to complete this task and say they have had a conversation around; "*where do you see your subject going over the next 12 months?*"

The Head also undertakes a mid year review of progress against the plan and Governors are kept appraised of what is being achieved.

There is a 'Golden Thread' between the plan and what is expected of people and everyone is able to describe how their personal objectives relate to the success criteria for their 'team' and the school as a whole. This helps ensure there is clarity over what is expected of people and they understand the impact of their contribution to the organisation. There were a few people who maintained that what was expected of them was less than explicit, but these were in the minority and it maybe that some Heads of Department need to offer clearer guidance.

People say that communication within the school has improved with a Monday morning briefing for all on what lies for the week ahead and also a cascade of the SLT meeting on a Thursday. Most are able to attend these meetings and where not information is passed on. There was also comment that the People welcome the feedback they receive from these meetings and say they feel well informed about the strategic direction and thinking as well as operational necessities that need to be addressed.

Quite a number of people made reference to volumes of work and the need to put in a significant amount of time in at home. One commented that her child said; *“you’re always working Mom.”* Another teacher said; *“I’m finding it tough, the workload and hours are immense.”* A slightly counter comment from one person was; *“it’s hard work, but it pays off.”* Although not part of the core Standard you may wish to look at the extent to which this is an issue and consider any health and wellbeing issues that could result.

## Building Capacity

At the heart of learning in the school is the Performance Management system and observation and feedback which is a significant component. To add further rigor and objectivity to this process and external person has been brought in to support this. There are some that feel a little uncomfortable with this approach which is geared to help achieve an Outstanding Ofsted outcome at a later date.

Staff are able to confirm that learning needs that are identified through Performance Management and/or other discussions are attended to and as should be expected in a school the development of skills and gaining of knowledge is afforded a high priority. A programme of learning has been set by the Head and there are sessions each Wednesday for all staff. People also lead sessions on their area of interest or specialism for others and as one person said; *“there is a lot of training that goes on for people here.”* There was also comment from people that they found collective learning and development sessions both relevant and helpful.

Those that are more experienced in the school say that they are encouraged to help and support others and there is clearly a culture where knowledge and learning is freely shared between staff.

Some people have had the opportunity to attend coaching and mentoring training and they comment that this has been helpful in how they guide and develop others. This all points to continuous learning being well embedded in the school and that it follows a blended approach so that people are able to access learning in a variety of formats.

There is evidence to suggest that the strengths and talents of people are recognised and opportunities are discussed regarding how these can be used to good effect for the mutual benefit of both individuals and the organisation. Career paths are discussed with people and there is encouragement for people to progress. One individual spoke of a manager saying to them of a post that had become available; *“why aren’t you applying, you are well suited to that job.”* Another comment was; *“I was supported and encouraged to apply for a new role and it’s been brilliant.”*

Those that have joined the school as NQTs speak of a disciplined approach to support their formative learning which included; being allocated a mentor, weekly progress meetings, regular observation (two way) as well as the opportunity to attend courses, workshops etc. One person commented; *“I learned a lot during the year and I felt well prepared for my first year as a ‘proper’ teacher.”*

People new to the school (teachers and others) were able to describe effective induction processes that includes; mandatory training, meeting other staff and leaders, support and guidance with reviews of progress and a check that all aspects had been covered. People also said that middle managers in particular will ask; “*how are you settling in?*” which they felt opens the door to raise any issues or concerns.

People also confirmed that where appropriate and helpful they are able to attend external learning opportunities that support their personal learning needs as well as that which contributes to their role within the school.

## Leading and Managing People

There was comment that there had been changes for the better in how the school is led, referring to both the quality of people and the structure and composition of the SLT. Everyone confirms that they receive regular updates on discussion that takes place at SLT meetings so they are well informed of the strategic direction as well as any operational imperatives that may need to be addressed.

Reference was made to the Head and how she is viewed as an inspirational leader committed to ensuring that the school achieves greater success and that students are able to have the best possible opportunities made available to them. She has also recognised that at times there can be need for external support and has brought in education ‘experts’ to support her and others in the school.

The Head is clear that in order to progress and achieve what she wants for the school there needs to be a command and control culture for the medium term before allowing people more freedom and devolved responsibility at a later date. As is to be expected some people struggle a little with this approach and would welcome the opportunity to move to a more participative approach. Comment was also made about middle leaders in the school and how they are a valued source of guidance and support. Several people observed that when needed they would always make to time to discuss situations with people and help in their resolution.

People say that performance management is handled well in the school and that line managers ensure that people receive constructive feedback along with helpful guidance for how they develop and improve further. Use is made of the phrase “*even better if...*” to ensure that people receive positive strokes for what they have done well but also that this leads to a conversation about aspects that could be improved further.

Performance management is on offer to everyone at the school with TAs saying that it is a positive experience and as with others includes the agreement on objectives to be pursued that benefit both the individual and the school. They also say that they are made to feel an integral part of the learning team whose performance and development is considered important with their contribution being valued.

## Engagement and Involvement

As a result of staff (primarily teachers) having responsibility for aspects of the curriculum people do feel engaged in how the school moves forward and progressing their own area of interest. There is a degree of consultation with people on a variety of matters but as has already been mentioned the Head and SLT make the majority of major decisions and communicate these to people.

There was comment from some of the TAs that they felt encouraged to put forward ideas and suggestions and that their contribution was equally well regarded as that of others in the school. Whilst this related more to day to day operational issues rather than strategic development it was clear that people feel engaged in the organisation and that they are able to make a difference.

### Reward and Recognition

Many people comment that the school is a very rewarding place to work saying that the students are *“fantastic”* that there is a strong camaraderie amongst staff and generally staff feel their contribution is appreciated. One person observed; *“I’ve been here x years now and it is the first job that I have enjoyed”* and someone else said; *“it’s a lot better than \*\*\*\*\* (her previous employer)”*

A number of people gave examples of positive comments they had received. One said the Head had said to her; *“thank you, we can’t do without you. You are doing a great job.”* Another said: *“the Head of Department is always praising me, she said I was doing a fantastic job,”* Several staff also made reference to receiving cards at Christmas and Easter that contained messages thanking them for their hard work and contribution.

### Performance Measurement and Improvement

As is the case within education there are national parameters around which performance should be measured and an established framework in which to record student attainment. Staff contribute to the compiling of this data and the information is discussed during performance reviews with staff and Governors.

The ambition is that an Outstanding Ofsted judgement will ultimately be achieved and improvement strategies have this as their focus. External specialists have been brought in to help develop excellence in teaching and learning and offer staff objective and dispassionate feedback on their performance. There are some staff who appear a little unsettled by this and unclear about the purpose and it may be helpful to explain again to people the improvement strategy that is evolving.

### Continuous Improvement

It is in the nature of education that there is a focus on how to improve on previous best and Pitcheroak is no exception. Many people are able to describe how they are engaged in activity aimed at raising standards and improving outcomes. Learning and development is a key element within the improvement strategy and it can be seen for example how the Wednesday training sessions have an impact in the classroom. Similarly, Performance Management whilst having a competence focus is also concerned with improving the quality of teaching and learning which impacts on the outcomes for students and the school.

The view of the majority of people are that there have been a number of areas in which the school has improved, which include; better defined policies, the fabric of the building, much more training and overall it feels a better place to work.

Whilst it could be seen that the improvement strategy is still work in progress with the end goals still to be realised what can be seen is that there are structures and processes in place to identify where improvements may be needed and determine how these can be achieved. It is also evident that people are committed to the success of the school and how they can make a contribution to this.

## Appendix 1 – Continuous Improvement Plan

Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions - How	Potential Benefit - Why	Priority - When	Solutions/Support Available - Who
School Strategy	At the start of each term there could be a 'state of the nation' address to all staff reminding them of the goals being pursued, what has been achieved and what is still to be done.	This will help ensure there is clarity and transparency of the aim and vision and lead to people understanding their contribution.	High	
Leadership and Management	Develop those leadership competences (knowledge, skills and behaviours) that you want to see adopted by all leaders	This will ensure that there are common approaches to leading and developing people and can be used as the 'yardstick' against which performance can be measured and development needs identified.	Medium	
Work Life Balance	Ensure that people have a workload that is manageable without the need for significant 'homeworking'	Reducing levels of stress and anxiety does ultimately lead to people being more productive and effective	Medium	



## Appendix 2 – Assessment results summary

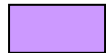
### The Investors in People Framework

#### The Evidence Requirements

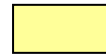
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The Indicators	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																								
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	10	✓	✓	✓																											

The number of evidence requirements met is all 39 of the core Standard

Key:



The Core Investors in People Standard



Your Choice from the Investors in People Framework



Not part of the Investors in People Framework