

Assessment Report

Investors in People assessment report for St Mary's Catholic Academy

Undertaken by
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On behalf of Investors in People North of England

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Date: 09 & 10/02/2015

Commercial in Confidence

Introduction

St Mary's Catholic Academy is part of the Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust and is a Roman Catholic co-educational comprehensive Academy for students between the ages of 11 and 16. Within the Trust they are joined by Christ the King Catholic Academy who share the premises and St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy. Both of these are primary delivering an offer across key stage 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Since the last review the Academy has had significant investment with much of the site being rebuilt to extend the accommodation to house the relocated Christ the King Academy and the community chapel.

The Academy has acquired a number of accolades including Microsoft academies accreditation, Healthy schools award, RE quality mark in addition to Investors in People. They are also a strategic partner to two national teaching schools.

St Mary's has been recognised as an investors in people organisation since 1999.

From a workforce of 160, a sample of 20 staff were chosen for interview, which represented 12% against an IIP UK (CES) suggested sample of 10- 18%.

The onsite interviews took place on the 9th and 10th February 2015 with feedback to the senior team at the end of the onsite activity.

Objectives for the Assessment

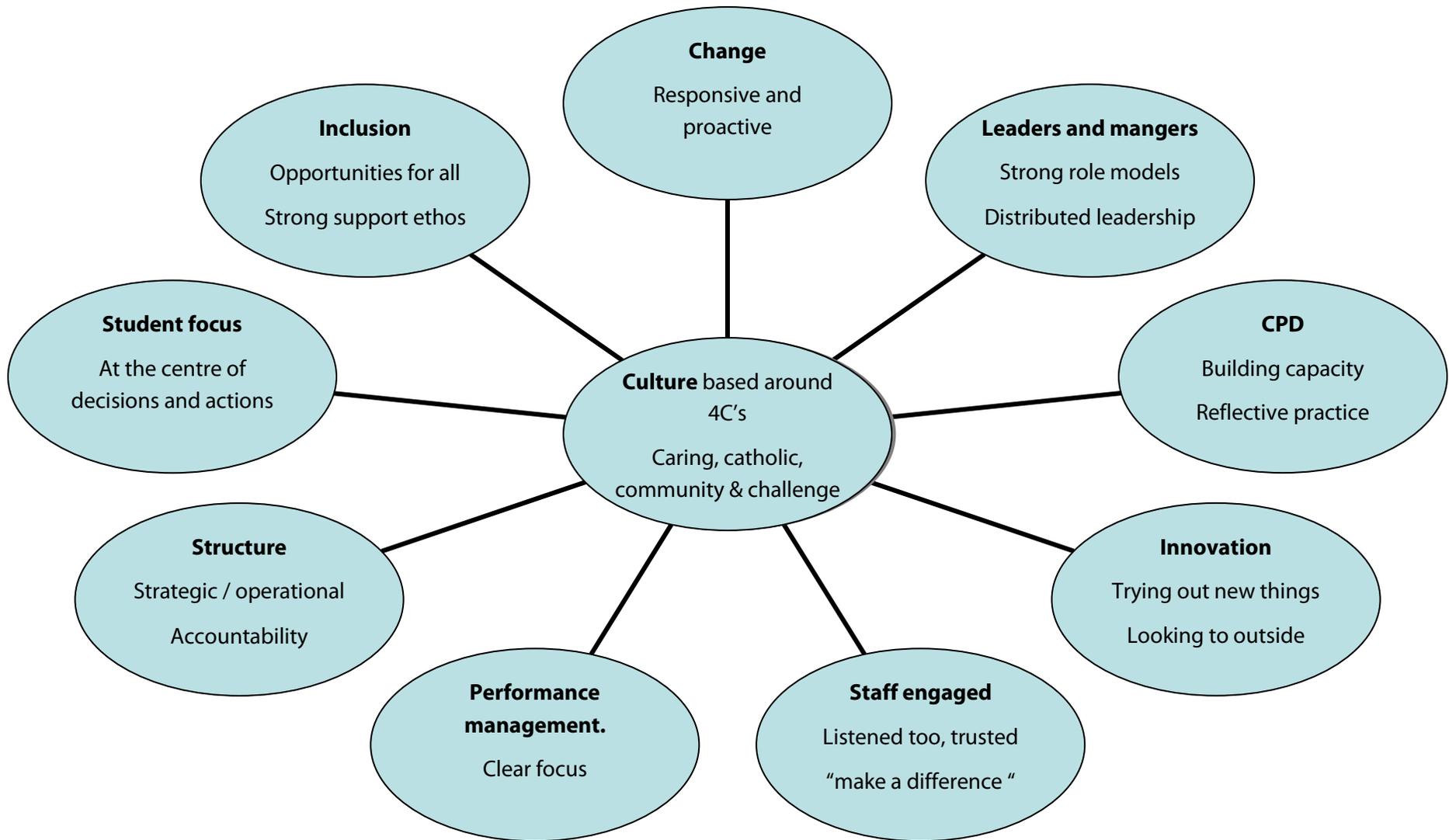
Improving GCSE / A level results

Developing and strengthening the Catholic ethos Of the school.

Outcome

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for assessors by the Investors in People Commission for Employment and Skills, the Assessor was satisfied beyond any doubt that St Mary's Catholic Academy continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Standard. On behalf of Investors in People North of England the Assessor would like to congratulate St Mary's Catholic Academy in this achievement.

The next review will be due by January 2018 with a half way interaction in July 2016.



Executive Summary

Ethos. The Academy has a fast pace with the way it is organised and lead. With the positive ethos based on Christian values, the college, with its stakeholders, applies these principles throughout their activities and in how they carry out their roles for St Mary's Catholic Academy. This underpins the ambition of delivering strong results and positive impacts on the pupils resulting in the staff being committed to achieving the high ambitions. The result of this is that people continue to go the extra mile in effort and time. It was clear that everyone lived and breathed the values which were reinforced through the 4 C's. Community, Caring, Catholic and Challenge.

All were able to highlight the shared vision and how they individually and collectively contributed to the achievement of this. At the start of each year all staff have the opportunity to discuss and contribute to the strategy and plans for the coming year so everyone is committed to achieving the same goals.

Everyone was clear on their role and what was expected of them. Team meetings have become the central focus of updating and reviewing progress harnessing the team's efforts within the bigger picture. At an individual level this was also outlined within job descriptions and reinforced through development, individual support and CPD meetings. The clear outcomes of this way of working has been improved flow of information, sharing best practice, staff having full ownership and understanding their accountability resulting in greater levels of employee engagement.

"There are high expectations on us to deliver and lots of support and guidance if we need"

The values are fully embedded and integrated into systems, processes and custom and practice within the Academy and as such was clearly evident in how people worked.

"Knowing everyone is taking part and working to the same standard is great to see and really spurs us on"

"Following discussions we have become much more targeted with our intervention groups and it's using our time and resources so much better."

"We all pull together to make it happen. We look out for each other and I know I make a difference as part of my team"

Inclusion is taken very seriously at the school. There is a very strong focus on identifying and overcoming the barriers to learning and in many instances this involves a tailored approach to supporting the children. The pastoral support is given a high profile to ensure that children's needs and concerns are met to enable learning and to raise aspirations for a better future as in the growth mind-set programme. While a number of these initiatives are relatively new it is anticipated from early signs to have a positive impact on inclusion, learning and achievements.

This inclusive approach for children was reflected in how staff were managed and supported throughout their working lives. While a clear structure was in place in terms of communications and support it was flat to ensure everyone had access to and were supported in a fair and consistent way.

"The Academy is good at presenting opportunities and raising the aspirations of the children who come here"

"Everyone is classed as an equal, you are not treated any differently no matter who you are"

Communication was considered excellent and included morning briefing, staff meetings, nights, communications boards, memos, debriefs, inset days, directed time, team meetings and planning and evaluation meetings, all of which were highly structured and focused. Communication was cited as a major factor in the success of the Academy and everyone was able to clearly describe how they knew and understood what was expected of them.

Everyone described how team meetings were open and honest discussions where they could put forward ideas and contribute to discussions, new activities or projects which would lead to a decision. The result was that everyone understood why decisions were taken and the factors involved. Hence, creating much greater levels of commitment to working as one team, for the collective good of the Academy.

It was evident that as the teams have worked together in the past few years, and as the Head Teacher has evolved the roles of the people to meet the changing needs of the children and the Academy there is a leadership style to devolve and share responsibility to the team. Many examples were given where staff had come forward with ideas and suggestions for making things better because they were committed to the vision of the Academy.

Linked to the strong ethos of consultation and involvement, people felt recognised and listened to. The majority felt valued through being trusted to do things, being given extra responsibilities or opportunities which made the most of their own personal interests and passion and many described how they were excited about having their ideas taken on board and supported as they were put into practice. This has led to some excellent opportunities for all staff to be able to develop leadership skills and promoting working across the whole Academy.

"The Academy recognises achievements through a range of ways including, feedback in staff meetings, being given the opportunity to do new and different things, being listened to and by being trusted to get on with it."

"we have system redesign TLR's which are temporary flexible opportunities to engage more of the team in leading projects and activities which further develop their skills and aid the Academy goals."

Leadership and management were seen by the staff to be very strong and many referred to the leadership team as being ambitious for the Academy and their students, driven, focused and very supportive. All line managers demonstrated high levels of capability in their current role of getting the best from their staff to support the children. Everyone had clear expectations and understanding of the role of a manager and without exception all spoke highly of their manager in making things happen, and in getting the best out of them.

The Leadership team and the Directors (Governance) are conscious that, without wanting to curb the enthusiasm, the impact on sustainability and potential of burn out is high. The Head has been proactive in this area and has ensured that through the way jobs are structured and the quality calendar that time is maximised with the onus on only doing things which impact on the performance of the pupils and the school. The Leadership team are constantly reviewing systems and procedures to ensure that the maximum support is there for all and barriers are removed to create efficiency. The staff, in all of the interviews, felt supported through excellent teamwork, good communications, relevant development, and this matched the strategy and expectations of the organisation.

Distributed leadership has been developing over recent years and is clearly evident throughout all areas of the Academy where through the cascade of targets and responsibilities, all staff were able to describe the priorities and their lead person. The middle managers integral to the leadership of the Academy are increasingly taking greater ownership of their target areas, and being strategic in the longer term development of their team and their curriculum area.

To take leadership to the next level, leaders and managers would benefit from understanding what good practice is, and developing their conscious competence so that they can achieve higher levels of self-awareness, self-management, personal reflection and effectiveness.

While managers have clear understanding of their role through their job descriptions and the cascade of priorities from the Academy Development Plan; the capabilities with how they undertake their roles could be further enhanced.

The capabilities can also support performance management, professional development, career planning, as well as recruitment and development at all levels. The wider framework suggests that capabilities are defined and clearly understood by all staff for now and in the future to reflect the changing needs for how leaders and managers will need to further their skills, responding to anticipated changes.

"The Head is not afraid to challenge for the greater good of the children"

"The leadership is upbeat, moving forward, dynamic, open to ideas, leading by example, hands on....."

"The SLT are well oiled, approachable, on the ball, and always visible and back us up."

"We have a very strong middle leadership team. There is lots of information exchange, sharing of good practice, willingness to help each other. "

"If you want to do a project you put a proposal to SLT and if they feel it will have a positive impact on the children it will go ahead"

"The Head is fabulous, he knows what hard work we do and will always know the best solution to help and recognises all the good work going on"

"They definitely empower you here to grow. I have lots of autonomy".

"People here go above and beyond because they believe in what they are doing and want the best for the students"

"We always find a way to manage things so it suits everyone "

"I am proud of the things I have been able to put into place and the impact it has had on the progress of the children"

Performance management has been consistent and strong. All staff related to having regular discussions and appraisals where they could discuss issues around their work and how they understood and contributed to the continuing success and reputation of the School. There was also a strong informal communication system and the managers would be readily available for all staff during the day. There was a very strong focus through all performance management and professional development about the child being the central focus and ensuring / evidencing impact to improve outcomes for the learner. The opportunity here is to enhance the current performance management systems with features which are specific to St Mary's Catholic Academy and capture / reflect the values and behaviours which make a difference to performance and impact on the children.

The performance management programme within the Academy delivers a strong cascade of objectives clearly linking the strategic plans to individual targets through the teams and curriculum areas. Individuals are clear about their responsibilities and have strong accountability and ownership of these. Performance management discussions and weekly updates are used to support individuals in developing the skills to deliver their targets which contribute to taking the Academy forward and to stretching their skills and offering career progression.

"The Head saw I could do it before I could see and believe it myself"

"The Academy is not happy to stand still, they are always looking forward and celebrating success which makes me feel great to part of it."

The Academy operates a relatively flat structure, the team are close knit and the leaders, through performance management, are clearly understanding of the interests, skills and abilities of all the staff. In interview, many of the staff described how they have always had an interest in certain things and the Academy has used this passion/ interest to support the continued development of the students and progress towards maximising the opportunities for them.

People were able to relate to each of their three performance management targets and how their achievements would impact on quality of teaching, impact on pupil progress and creating a positive climate for learning. People were enthusiastic about their learning opportunities and goals and it was clear that for many it aligned with their personal aspirations.

CPD on offer is varied and specifically tailored to the current needs of the school. All those interviewed referred to the development on offer as second to none and related to how it has informed their practice and changed the ways they carried out their roles within the school.

The Academy has developed their own programmes to further enhance the skills of the workforce and line managers are strong role models for high performance working. As such the team have progressed rapidly contributing to the marked increase in expected results for this year's students, creating a strong baseline for future years.

Overall, it was clear that the commitment to people development was linked to the provision of a range of learning and development opportunities, structured planning and evaluation processes. Importantly, there was clear evidence of relevant outcomes relating both to individual development and the performance of the School.

Succession planning activities have been put into place on a number of levels. The management team have been proactive at spotting talent and through a nurturing process have developed skill, knowledge and expertise of a number of staff to further their careers, enhance and enrich their job roles and to supporting the whole team in encouraging team development.

Through developing people from within and identifying individual's talents and working to their strengths, there were many examples shared with the assessor where people had progressed during their time there. They all spoke of having had opportunities to do different roles which had contributed to improved flexibility and improving their skill base and confidence and had made a significant impact in improving the outcomes for the students which attend.

People were able to see career development / enhancement opportunities within the Academy and were confident of support and guidance being available through their career.

St Mary's takes the learning organisation approach to developing the skills and expertise of the teams. Many interviewees described themselves when they first started working with the Academy and the journey they had been taken on. In many instances people believed that through discussions and performance management the leadership team could see a potential and nurtured and encouraged people to continually do more to stretch and challenge themselves.

Many people were supported in learning, and those interviewed could give examples of the widening of the breadth of their development and/or qualifications. Staff spoke of how their learning had been geared to their own aspirations and strengths and therefore the training programme allowed for a range of development activities. The assessor was often told in interview about personal aspirations, which were closely aligned with the Academy and how development was planned to support them. When asked how this development would support the School, people were clear on how their planned development would enhance the provision they could offer to the students and their families within the wider community.

"If you want the opportunity to do more and progress, this is the best place to be."

Coaching and mentoring are both used in a focused and directed way to maximise the time and ensure the greatest impact for learning and developing. The Academy has a strong culture for coaching and it was evident in many informal relationships as well as those co-ordinated through the school. The formalising and evaluation of the approaches would support the Academy in ensuring and qualifying how effective these methods are in terms of identifying outstanding practice, enabling people to tailor their own solutions to create excellent practice linked to qualitative impact within their professional practice.

The ethos of nurture and support which was strong for the children was mirrored for the workforce and this was evidenced through individuals describing how they had developed their careers to date with the Academy and how the Leadership team as a whole had encouraged them to follow lines of interest which have resulted in benefiting the Academy and the individual. The teach, coach model is an excellent example of where outstanding practice has been used to maximise impact of development, engaging with staff and creating true ownership and commitment to improving the outcomes for the children.

People were empowered within their own job roles, with a positive impact on the children being the central focus. This has resulted in self-managed teams where everyone had ownership of the issue, the solution and the journey. The strong performance management has been key in enabling this and in monitoring the outcomes and impact.

"The Academy has helped me in so many ways, I have been encouraged to try new things, and the support there is brilliant. You are never on your own and people are so helpful and supportive whatever the issue."

"My HOD knows my aspirations and works with me to get there for the children and for my career"

"We have all been asked to deliver some CPD to our colleagues"

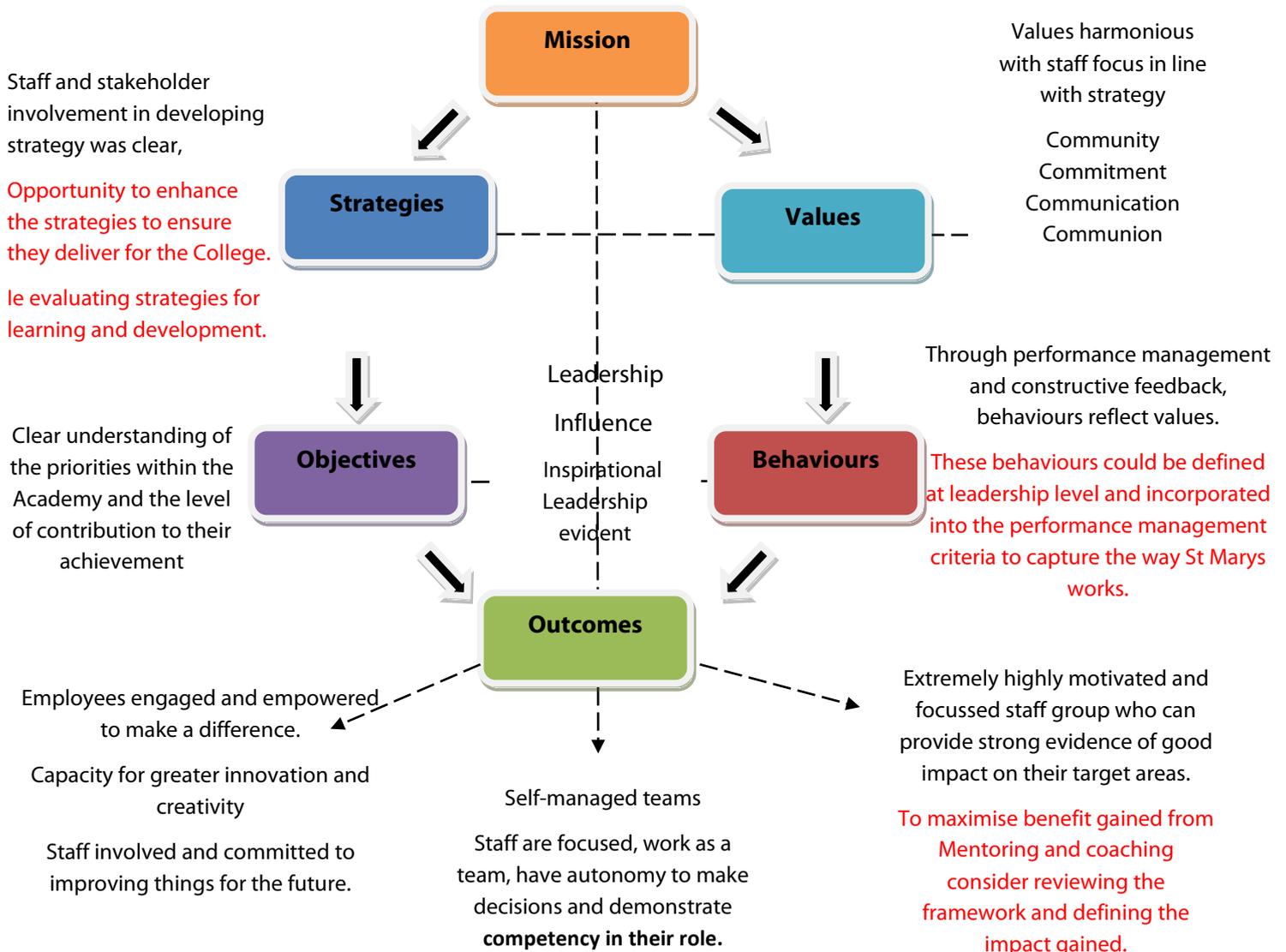
"We all know each other's strengths and weaknesses so help to support each other"

"I am absolutely inspired by everyone here; they are all fantastic at different things and I learn from them all"

Summary of key findings in conjunction with the alignment model

In connection to moving the organisation forward, there was some excellent evidence of lateral alignments being observed at St Mary's. These have been noted against this model, in line with continuous improvement suggestions which have also been highlighted in the appendix at the back of this report.

All staff were clear on the mission: -



Continuously reflecting on how the organisation's operation fits with the alignment model would not only ensure that St Mary's Catholic Academy moves forward with its people in order to meet its objectives but will also ensure that maximum alignment was achieved in order to continuously deliver its standard of teaching and learning to its children and local community. From this table there are observations which indicate the opportunities.

NB – in line with the new ways of working with Investors in People there will be a chargeable contact in 18 months' time. This contact will be an agreement between yourselves and the assessor, and based around your needs and the priorities of St Mary's Catholic Academy

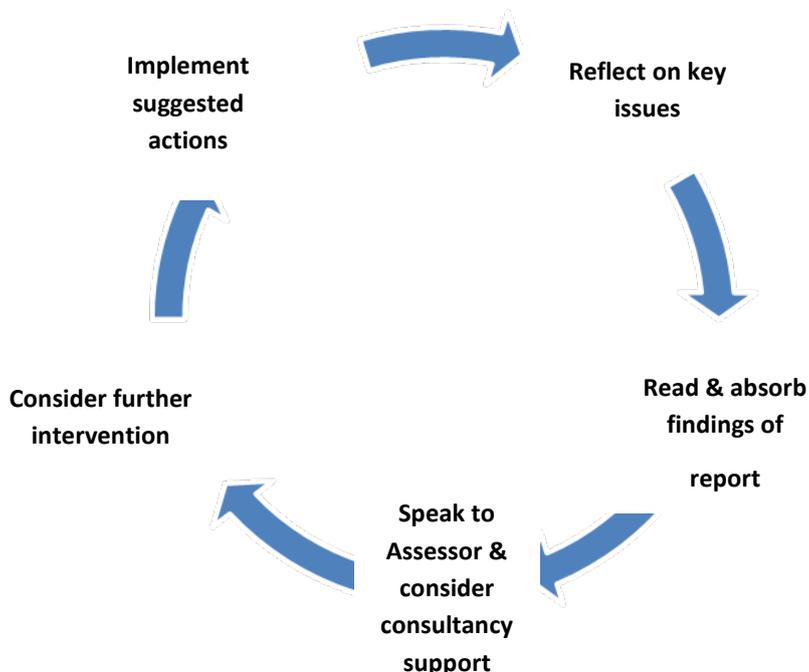
Possible opportunities might be

1. Top up assessment against the Extended framework with the aspiration of world class performance
2. Facilitating the identification and development of the leadership behaviours
3. Coaching session with a senior manager

These are only examples based on our conversations; by June 2016 you may have other things you wish to discuss further.

Conclusion

Continuous improvement & Way forward



I would like to congratulate St Mary's Catholic Academy on its achievement with Investors in People. The Assessor would like to thank Mr Kenny Kinnear for the excellent organisation of the review and the materials available. Thanks also to all the team for being very welcoming, and honest in their discussions with me.

It was a pleasure to undertake this assessment and St Mary's Catholic Academy should congratulate itself on how it is striving to make as much impact on the lives of the children it deals with and creating a more positive outcomes and opportunities for their future lives. It was clearly evident the staff were happy in their roles and have a great passion and commitment to improving the outcomes for those within their care, their families and the wider community.

The opportunities provided by the Standard are now much more flexible and I look forward to working with you in the future to maximise the potential.

Heather Beattie

Investors in People specialist

11th February 2015

Continuous Improvement Plan –

Business Issue	Suggested Action(s)	Potential Benefits / Impact of Taking No Action	Suggested Priority Level	Potential Solutions / Support Available
What	How	Why	When	Who
<p>Define behaviours which underpin the values which are currently implicit and the ways of working.</p> <p>Define the capabilities of the leadership team for the future</p> <p>Consistency in performance management</p> <p>Dealing with Change</p>	<p>Clarifying the key behaviours and what they look like at different levels.</p> <p>Define generic behaviours for future leaders</p> <p>Ensure all associate staff have the opportunity for an appraisal linking their role to targets feeding into the Academy Development plan.</p> <p>Champions allocated to guide and support others through change</p> <p>Use of task and finish groups to explore opportunities and</p>	<p>Benefits:</p> <p>Integrated with other strategies will support recruitment, professional development, performance management, etc.</p> <p>Development and Career opportunities.</p> <p>Devolving responsibility to key members of the team</p> <p>Succession planning</p> <p>Identify ways for further improvement to leadership style and maximising the contributions of the wider team</p> <p>May identify further opportunities for improvements</p>		<p>Client to:</p> <p>Access tools and templates (e.g. management skills matrix) on liP Interactive as well as hints and tips for managing staff effectively, which can be found by logging onto: www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Home/index.html</p> <p>Consider the IIP academy – on line resource and development support for leaders and managers. (brochure left at feedback meeting)</p> <p>Consider the Health and wellbeing model</p> <p>Materials off websites can be used to assist in supporting change and the self-development of managers.</p> <p>Assessor to :</p> <p>Discuss any consultancy support the centre</p>

Business Issue What	Suggested Action(s) How	Potential Benefits / Impact of Taking No Action Why	Suggested Priority Level When	Potential Solutions / Support Available Who
<p>Extend the levels of creativity and innovation</p> <p>The learning organisation</p>	<p>how the logistics of how it might work in the Academy.</p> <p>Support individuals and teams in taking risks</p> <p>Explore measured risks and as a team define the parameters for taking risks along with the reporting and reflective learning activities to match.</p> <p>Harness the informal mentoring and coaching which currently takes place to ensure it is used to greatest impact and in the most appropriate way.</p>	<p>Creating self-managed teams</p> <p>Creativity and innovation.</p> <p>Strengthening team dynamics as the needs of the Academy change.</p>		<p>can offer to further these recommendations</p> <p>An example of capabilities has been left with the Academy for consideration in how it might support the team moving forward.</p> <p>idg to</p> <p>Send further details</p> <p>-- workshop opportunities for Health and wellbeing and full framework.</p>

Delivered by idg, the licensed delivery partner for the North of England

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