

CASE STUDY



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE | South
West

VICTORIA ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

“The Investors in People Bronze Award is a celebration and recognition of the hard work and continuous learning of pupils, all staff, Governors and active parents. It is a tribute to their hard work and commitment, for the benefit of the children in their care and for the wider community”.

Kevin Duggan
Headteacher

BACKGROUND

Size:	43 employees 250 children
Sector:	Education
Location:	St Budeaux, Plymouth
Status:	Most recently recognised 2009. First recognised in 2003. Achieved Bronze in 2009.

THE ORGANISATION

Victoria Road Primary is a LA funded school catering for children aged 4-11, serving the local community in St Budeaux, a suburb of Plymouth. The school role is approximately 250 children. Sure Start and Early Birds Nursery are also on the same site, providing advice and childcare for children between the ages of 0 and 4 years. They have a 60 place nursery and approximately 40 staff. The school site has undergone major redevelopment in recent years. The work was completed in summer 2006 and has created a fantastic environment for the children to learn and develop. There have also been significant changes in the school's team during the past two years.



Kevin Duggan

- **Improved SATS**
- **Staff are now in the best frame of mind they have ever been.**
- **Communication has improved**
- **Gives the school credibility.**

THE CHALLENGE

Headteacher, Kevin Duggan, has a philosophy that everything the school does should lead to school improvement and be measurable in the way it affects the school. Roles have changed considerably over the years and Kevin was determined to put money and time behind improving and developing his people with various milestones along the way. Kevin commented: "Despite the challenges of past years and the changes in staff, we have striven to improve SATs results over the last three years, whilst not losing sight of the need for the highest aspirations and for opportunities to provide the best learning available to us all. Equally, we have continued to support each other's learning, build supportive teams and empower leadership through a trust and distributed approach. Our basic tenet is that Staff Performance Management review identifies needs which feed into the School CPD commitment and are clearly identified in the School Improvement Plan.

Funding for training is allocated around what is needed by individuals as agreed in the cycle for their own professional development, but equally what has been identified as a need and priority for the school. Where gaps are identified, funding is provided. This aims at continually raising standards."

Kevin asked himself 'how can people's strengths be best used?' and 'has this action actually improved teaching and learning? – children must benefit'.

As with schools generally, budgeting is always an issue and there is likely to be even less money available over the next couple of years. The School Governors expect budgets to be justified more robustly. Kevin was caught between continuing CPD for his people at the level he feels necessary and justifying the costs to the Governors. Kevin was able to demonstrate to the Governors that, with Investors in People in place, teachers' capabilities are identified and utilised and he can trust them to carry out a number of roles. Kevin was not with the school when they first achieved Investors in People in 2003 but, when he became Headteacher, he decided to continue with Investors in People because he believed it was a valuable professional and national accreditation for how people work. It gives the school credibility.

THE STRATEGY

A key strategy employed by the Headteacher to drive forward improvements within the school has been to promote 'dispersed leadership', where members of staff in a wide range of roles are encouraged to take on responsibility for leading activities within the school. The school's CPD Policy provides a clear overview of their strategy to support staff development and ensure that their approach delivers benefits for the school and individuals.

THE PROCESS

CPD was identified as an essential part of staff development. Training costs are often inhibitive and, in consultation with staff, Kevin came up with innovative ways to provide CPD for his people. One such way was the implementation of mentoring and coaching instead of formal training programmes. This has been very effective, especially through peer support and team teaching. Kevin has found sending staff along to the Networking Clubs, run by Investors in People South West, to be greatly beneficial. He always assesses the real benefit of training - it must reflect the school improvement plan. Funding is geared to an individual's needs and also to progress generally – at the end of the day it's all about what the children need.

When Assessor, Clive Tabiner visited the school leading up to their most recent assessment, he was able to advise them on how to make the paper chase less onerous but more effective. He also introduced them to Train to Gain. The school had meetings with a Skills Broker and are now in the process of signing the Skills Pledge.

People have confidence in their relationships with each other and all were keen to be involved with the Investors in People assessment. They found Clive demanding and challenging but felt this was a good thing and they liked him! Clive gave advice on how the Governors could be more involved and advised on how CPD is an integral part of the business and of benefit to the children. With the advice Clive had provided to the school during the advisory stages, they were well prepared for the assessment and did not have a large amount of work to do to reach the standard required to reach Bronze level.

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) provides an overview of the school's strategy for improvement, and detailed action plans are produced for taking forward particular areas. Staff are involved in contributing to plans, through regular staff and team meetings which include all team members and through individuals compiling action plans for their particular areas of responsibility. People are familiar with plans appropriate to their roles and understand the overall school priorities for improvement. Objectives are discussed and agreed for individuals through the Performance Management Review (PMR) process.

THE RESULTS

The current process has stabilised the workforce. Morale is good and this is reflected in the Investors in People report. Staff knew what to expect and were not threatened by the Investors in People assessment. They recognised that it supports their CPD. When staff at the school were first introduced to Investors in People in 2003 there was a feeling of 'what are Investors in People doing to us?'

This has now changed and staff welcome the assessment seeing it as a positive tool to celebrate peoples achievements. The improving SATS results demonstrate the improvement.

Communication has improved – it was very much paper based. Now there is an increased level of face to face communication including 1:1s and team meetings. There are both senior leadership and middle management roles in the school so staff know they don't need to go to the Head all of the time. There is a culture of openness and trust.

Staff are now in the best frame of mind they have ever been. This year has been a turning point for 'dispersed leadership'. The Headteacher doesn't need to spend time chasing to get things done. Staff feel involved in both the consulting and planning stages. Kevin is generous with release from class for CPD, subject leadership and also with Work life balance. His people are ambitious and he wants to keep them!

The success of schools is measured in two ways.

- Attainment – mega results based on prior attainment – the top 10% of schools for Contextual Value Added Progress
- Achievements – measures children's progress

Victoria Road Primary came top of the Plymouth league tables for achievement, otherwise known as 'Contextual Value Added', in 2008 and 2009.

The School Governors recognise the benefits of Investors in People in keeping the school moving forward and in the future, the school would like to concentrate on two further areas for improvement and reach Silver level.