

**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE  
CASE STUDY:  
Sir John Colfox School – Bridport,  
Dorset**

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**INVESTING IN PEOPLE TO DELIVER QUALITY EDUCATION**

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Size: 65 teaching staff and 44 support staff  
Sector: Education  
Location: Bridport  
Status: Initially recognised 1998. Successful re-assessment January 2008



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**Overall impact**

“Investors in People has encouraged us to develop well thought out systems of planning training needs linked to school and performance management objectives, assessing the value of training courses, and using this evaluation to inform planning for the following year.

IIP is important, as an external assessment of our systems provides a more honest and objective view and so enables us to make changes as required. It also provides a regular reminder of the need to focus on good practice”.

*Kay Taylor, Headteacher*

**The organisation**

The Sir John Colfox School is an 11-18 comprehensive school serving Bridport in Dorset and the surrounding area. It is a truly comprehensive school, taking students of all abilities and interests. There are currently 65 teaching and 44 support staff.

The school has made considerable changes to the organisation of the school curriculum, introducing a fast-track group of approximately 60 students in each year group who complete Key Stage 3 in two years and begin GCSEs in Year 9. The school has also introduced BTEC courses in Sport and the Performing Arts, and has provided some curriculum choice for all students in Year 9.

The school was first recognised as an Investor in People in December 1998

## The challenge

Sir John Colfox School became involved in IIP as a means of focussing staff development. 'We believe that the most important resource in the school is its staff and that it is important to provide appropriate training for them, both to enable them to best fulfil the school's priorities and to provide the career development opportunities to which they are entitled.'

## The strategy

The Learning Research Group began four years ago as a means of encouraging staff to reflect on different methods of teaching and learning. All staff on the group are volunteers. Membership is open to teaching and non-teaching staff. Numbers increase every year with approximately 20% of staff now being involved.

The group has formed teaching trios, where three staff jointly plan lessons, teach each other's subjects (in order to focus on students' learning rather than subject content) and observe each other. This has been a very valuable method of training staff to try out different teaching methods in order to improve students' learning.

A further activity, in a different trio made up of staff who teach the same group of students, was to choose a specific teaching strategy which the three teachers each used in their own subject area, again observing each other's lessons. This was to encourage skills transfer across subject areas. Again, a useful method of staff training in different styles of teaching.

Further trios focus on coaching – within the trio one member is the coach, a second the person being coached and the third the observer. During the course of the year, roles will rotate so everyone experiences all three roles. The person being coached identifies the focus for the coaching. This is to encourage reflection within a non-judgemental framework.

One idea put forward by the LRG was the creation of a parallel Student Research Group; the SRG is now in its second year. Within this framework and following training students have observed lessons taught by the teachers on the LRG and provided feedback, a further way of encouraging staff to reflect on their teaching. Staff who have taken part in this have found it a most interesting way of seeing their lessons from a students' point of view and have made adaptations to their lesson planning because of this.

## The results

Investors in People assessor, Angela Riley reported that Staff development is planned and organised, and its impact evaluated, in a particularly meticulous and integrated way. Because the systems are so thorough and well-thought-through at every level, people have a very clear understanding of what their development activities have achieved for them, their team and the school as a whole. Particularly impressive was the Review of Staff Training with contributions from all Heads of Department, including the Business Manager on behalf of the administration team.

Angela was particularly impressed by the way in which the support-staff team leaders meet to consider how as a group they can best support the work of the teaching staff. As a truly cross-cutting group, their contribution is essential to the operation of the school.

All staff, regardless of the staff grouping to which they belong, displayed a huge commitment to continuous improvement, and everyone is 100% committed to helping students maximise their achievement.

The Learning Research Group provided evidence against virtually all the Investors in People indicators (this is one of the hallmarks of really good practice). The Group is encouraged to think laterally, producing ideas that they then "lab-test" in a safe environment before they are introduced to the whole school. It is a way of developing talent and encouraging both creativity and strategic thinking.

*March 2008*