

Commercial in Confidence

Investors in People

Post Recognition Review

**Redbridge High School
Fazakerley**

26 February 2008

**Carole Ashcroft
Assessor**

***On behalf of Centre for Assessment and Recognition (NW) Ltd
North West Quality Centre***

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Introduction

Redbridge High School was awarded recognition as an Investor in People in November 2001 and was successfully reviewed against the Standard in February 2005. This Assessment took place on Monday 25 and Tuesday 26 February 2008.

Recent changes and challenges

There has been a change of Headteacher since the previous Review took place. The Head is fully committed to the Principles of the Standard having led his previous School to recognition. The cleaning staff are now 'contracted out' and a new senior teacher took up post following a retirement. The most recent OfSTED Inspection gave an overall rating of 'outstanding'.

A member of the support staff now represents them on the Governing Body and one of the challenges the School faces is a high turnover amongst the support staff.

Another uncertainty is 'Building Schools for the Future'. Consultation has taken place in Liverpool on the re-organisation of mainstream provision and the possibility of Special Schools being co-located with mainstream. It is expected that the results will be known by the end of this academic year.

Scope and sample

For a School with 48 members of staff, the national sample guidelines are 28% to 50%, which is between 13 and 24 people.

The Assessor selected 17 people for interviews, which was 35.4% of the total. In addition, there was an interview with a member of the Board of Governors.

Executive Summary

The following is a brief summary of what is reflected in the main body of the Report.

- ▶ That the pupil is at the centre of everything was evident during all of the interviews.
- ▶ Everyone is fully committed to the ethos of the School and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. They are also very happy in what they do and rejoice in each step a student makes.
- ▶ This is a whole-team effort and is fully recognised as such, with all staff appreciating and valuing the contribution of others.
- ▶ OfSTED has rated the School as 'outstanding' in all four areas, an improvement on its previous rating of 'very good'. Also noted was the level of achievement versus the unusually low level of funding.
- ▶ Staff feel that that the School has effective leadership and direction and that people matter, are consulted and encouraged.
- ▶ There is a strong belief that everyone's suggestions and ideas will be listened to and that people are allowed to try things. There is also an acceptance that if an idea is not feasible, it is still welcomed and that the reasons why not will be explained.
- ▶ The questionnaire eliciting views on School priorities is very good practice. This is followed by an all-staff day to discuss these and staff commented upon the value of the day.
- ▶ The Headteacher conducts the 'one to ones' with the administration team. This reinforces the valuable contribution they make to the School.

Findings against the additional objectives

There were two further objectives:

To review the implementation of the points for development which were suggested following the previous Assessment.

- ▶ Some of the points had been addressed, for example, the higher profile of the School priorities and meetings with support staff. The incoming Headteacher has also introduced other improvements.

The School would welcome feedback on whether staff consider that their views and ideas are welcomed and if they feel that they are now more involved in the School Development Planning Process.

- ▶ People were fully convinced that senior staff valued the views of all staff and were always prepared to give people the autonomy to develop their ideas. Interviewees talked about suggestions they had made individually or as part of a team in meetings and there were some good examples of how ideas had been adopted and had impacted upon students and the School.

- ▶ The School Development Planning Process was seen as inclusive, encouraging and 'user friendly'. The questionnaire was commented upon positively by people as a real opportunity to put forward what they thought. The School Planning Day took this further affording staff an opportunity to discuss the plans and priorities with staff from other 'bases' and this provided opportunities for team building. The planning process ensured that people understood the priorities, their role in achieving them and that they do have an element of ownership.

Potential areas for development

The School implements a range of good practices and has no particular weaknesses. The following are suggestions and observations which might be considered:

- ▶ In the area of administration, the financial systems are operated by one person. It would be advantageous to ensure that this expertise is shared for the benefit of the School. This would be important in the event of absence and would also provide flexibility and be developmental for the other member of the administration team. **(Indicators 2 and 8)**
- ▶ All agree that the input of the Learning Support Team to lessons is invaluable. The lesson observations are primarily designed to provide teachers with feedback. Learning Support Assistants gain feedback from these observations to varying degrees. It might be motivational and beneficial to devise a structure that also enabled the Area Head to give formal feedback to them also. **(Indicators 3 and 5)**
- ▶ There were perceptions from a very small number that some things were learned via the grape vine. The School strives to ensure that there is a good level of communication but some things are confidential and also the minutes of meeting do not necessarily give the full picture. This is offered as an observation. The School may wish to consider if any further action might be required. **(Indicator 3)**

Post Recognition Review – Outcome

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for assessors by Investors In People UK, the Assessor was satisfied beyond any doubt that **Redbridge High School** continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Standard. On behalf of Centre for Assessment & Recognition (NW) Ltd the Assessor would like to congratulate **Redbridge High School** on this achievement.

Next Review

Redbridge High School has requested that its next Review should be in February 2011.

Carole Ashcroft
Assessor
26 February 2008

Findings Against the Standard

PLAN

Developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation.

An Investor in People develops effective strategies to improve the performance of the organisation through its people.

The clear purpose of Redbridge High School is to provide a happy and positive learning environment and to ensure that students who are leaving are well supported in their transition to adult placements. Also encapsulated in the School's Aims are the provision of a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum which includes 'Access' and a range of Further Education opportunities.

The School Priorities/Plan are developed with the involvement of all members of staff. Senior people described the process which involves each person receiving a questionnaire providing them with an opportunity to comment and present their own views and ideas. This was followed by an all-School day during which staff were able to discuss the issues and the findings were then fed back at the plenary session. Those interviewed had enjoyed the day and considered that their input was sought and welcomed.

At team level, there are regular Base meetings to discuss areas within the short-term plans.

Targets are set for student achievement and these are linked to external accreditation. There are individual plans for each student to encourage and monitor their progress.

To determine the objectives for staff, there is an annual performance management/personal development plan process and those interviewed confirmed that these helped them to also think about any related training needs.

It was explained that there are 'constant' staff training priorities and that 'refreshers' are delivered regularly. These include 'Approach' and 'PECs' (Picture Exchange Communication system) training in dealing with students with profound multiple learning disorders.

Other key areas were identified as ADSAN, which is a new system that teachers are not yet completely familiar with and TEACCH (Training and Educating Autistic Children with Communication Handicap). Staff development is completely focussed upon enabling the students to learn and achieve.

To meet the development needs of the School and staff, there is a staff development budget and other resources include in-house trainers, mentors, twilight training sessions and involvement in the wider Special Schools Partnership which arranges development days to respond specifically to the needs of those Schools.

Staff outlined their planned and recent development activities and highlighted how they expected to put the skills into practice:

"We are having someone come in to talk to us about Rectal Valium. We have children who need this"

“A priority is the Duke of Edinburgh Award. I have done one day’s training and have another to do”

“Autism. I learned a lot from that like how certain colours stop autistic children from concentrating. We have started coming in black and so it helps them”

People considered that there is a very encouraging atmosphere:

“I could go and ask anyone anything. They come to me for ideas and I do the same”

They talked about being encouraged to think about ways in which they might develop and said that for the Special School’s event, the sessions to be provided were pinned on the notice board and staff were able to ‘sign up’ for the ones which would be beneficial to them.

Senior staff emphasised that all staff took part in the annual review process and were able to attend the INSET sessions. There are people who are funded by the Local Authority but they are considered to be members of Redbridge staff and are included in all of the meetings and staff training events. One manager mentioned that base meetings are held on Wednesday because this is the time when the two part-time staff are both in together.

People were convinced that the School would continue to support the development of the team and were very aware that the ‘nice to haves’ were not really an option, demonstrating an appreciation of financial constraints. All felt that the School did an outstanding job, despite the lack of funds, an observation which was also made by OfSTED Inspectors.

Senior staff strive to engender a leadership culture which is directly linked to whole School standards. The Headteacher described what was expected in terms of leadership qualities. These were:

- Be a source of information
- Be an active and positive role model
- Listen to people and involve them
- Advise staff and act fairly and sensitively
- Monitor progress and be prepared to challenge

There was a common understanding across the School about the role of the line manager. Others highlighted as important:

- Fairness, listening and encouragement
- Bringing out the best in staff
- Recognising strengths and helping to improve weaknesses
- Giving feedback
- Good communications

Two staff have been encouraged to undertake the ‘Leading from the Middle’ programme and people with line management responsibility cited the management development events they had attended, for example, ‘Dealing with Difficult Staff’, ‘Strategic Leadership’ and also Away Days and meetings with the Heads of other Special Schools.

Do.

Taking action to improve the performance of the organisation.

An Investor in People takes effective action to improve the performance of the organisation through its people.

The Area Heads are involved in 'Team Teach' and so staff are able to learn from them in a very practical way. Conducting lesson observations provides a platform for giving constructive feedback and the Heads and staff described reviewing how the lesson had gone, encouraging staff to evaluate their own performance, identifying what had been successful and what they might do differently.

The senior team act as coaches and mentors and also run training sessions. The Deputy Head was training other staff in 'Approach' during the Assessor's visit.

People were very comfortable with the style of management. They said that senior staff were very approachable, understanding and encouraging and this was obviously motivational. They felt that there was a team spirit and typical comments included:

"You are always listened to and asked what resources you need"

"Lesson observations are really useful and it's nice to have the feedback"

"They should listen, be approachable and fair and that is what they are. They take time when you have a problem"

"I hadn't been here very long and I needed reassurance and she did that by talking me through things"

A common theme throughout the interviews was 'the pupil is at the centre of everything we do'. The progress made by the students and their enjoyment of the lesson was everyone's 'raison d'être' and staff knew that what they contributed made a difference. This was supported by examples, such as:

"It's just knowing that you've helped them to achieve. It might be a small step but it's a great one for them. I work one to one with a pupil and I feel great when he has had a good day"

All were justifiably proud of the results of the OfSTED inspection and knew that the Headteacher recognised the contribution that each person had made:

"He held a meeting in the staff room to tell us how OfSTED went and we had a celebration. He also involved the students in assembly"

General comments were:

"Whenever you do anything well, you are told"

"We get treats like tins of chocolates and meals"

"The Governors will also tell us and we value the Learning Support staff. Things wouldn't happen without them"

Senior people explained the opportunities they created for staff to enable them to put forward suggestions and ideas and to contribute to priorities and decisions. The questionnaire and the Day on School Priorities are amongst the processes implemented. Others described were the Base meetings, staff meetings, performance reviews and an open door policy.

Staff themselves confirmed that they knew that ideas and suggestions were welcomed and appreciated and that they were encouraged to try things out which they thought might work. They outlined:

"We have a more collaborative approach to schemes of work. We need people to talk about what has worked and what needs to change"

"I was talking to the Deputy Head and I suggested that we set up a lunch-time beauty club for the girls and she is letting me look at developing it"

The School implements a range of solutions to ensure that individual staff members receive the support and training they require. For Newly Qualified Teachers, there is a formal induction and mentoring process with regular observations and feedback. There is a set programme for all new starters and senior staff are involved in delivering parts of this. Those who were comparatively new to the School talked about how they were helped to settle in and learn what was expected of them:

"I had observations and weekly progress meetings with my mentor"

"I started in Play Week. That is hectic and all systems go but a lot of fun. I was involved straight away, getting the students ready for the production, getting them fed and then changed ready again"

Several people, particularly new staff, mentioned that it is a happy place.

Experts are brought in to deliver sessions on particular subjects, for example, Rectal Valium and a number of people talked about the Merseyside Day and the inspiring talk by a national expert on Autism from which they gained much and they had started to put elements of this into practice.

Staff also deliver training sessions and a School priority is to get another member of staff accredited to deliver 'Approach' training to give flexibility and to ensure that staff are able to access this early in their career with the School. The INSET requirements have been revisited and re-scheduled to make the timing of the events more 'user friendly' to capture as many staff as possible.

People gave specific examples of the knowledge and information they had gained:

"I did one on Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties. It gave you ideas to use and a lot was about socialising. We were given exercises to use, such as massage while telling a story. We are now using it in the Base and they love it"

"I attended the Literacy one and it was very good. It was about making big books more interactive. We took the Nativity Story and we gave the pupils different bits of the story to draw, colour or write, depending upon their ability"

The School monitors the effectiveness of its investment in staff development through lesson observations, performance management and ultimately what it helps the students to achieve.

REVIEW

Evaluating the impact on the performance of the organisation

An Investor in People can demonstrate the impact of its investment in people on the performance of the organisation.

One member of the senior team said *'we have a budget for staff development but we tend to spend more than that'*. The School's resources are tight and so the amount allocated to training and development is monitored. Supply cover is funded out of the budget and other resources include staff time spent on induction, coaching and mentoring, the delivery of training and attendance at networking meetings and events.

Senior staff were asked for examples of how the School's investment in the learning and development of staff had paid dividends. The following were cited as overall benefits:

The School was rated as 'outstanding' by OfSTED Inspectors

The School has gained the Inclusion Mark and has retained the other Awards it had previously acquired

Pupils are achieving an average of 75% of their set annual targets

The high levels of satisfaction demonstrated by parents on the progress made by their children

In specific terms, they highlighted the impact of particular aspects of training. These included:

Staff development and enhancing their knowledge of ASDAN as a form of accreditation means that students are now able to access this provision and can have validation for what they achieve. It is also recognised and used in mainstream. The School is an outreach support provider and ASDAN will help to provide a link.

Training in PECs and TEACCH had led to a better visual structure in the classroom. The children can see their own individual timetable and can relate to it. It is also used at home. Stress levels are reduced, behaviours is better and communications have improved.

The interviews with other staff illustrated how what they had gained from their development had resulted in performance improvements, for example:

"I had training on SIMS. It was to be able to input the absences and get the printout at the end of the month. It is quicker. When we sent the annual absences in, we used to have to count them all in the book. Now you just pull it off the computer"

Asked about any changes made to ensure that effectiveness is assured, the Headteacher outlined:

Administration staff now have a one to one meeting with the Head and have their own section in the School Development Plan

All staff are now able to complete a questionnaire to comment upon School priorities

There are greater links and partnerships with outside organisations which benefit both students and staff. This includes co-ordinator's meetings to talk about assessment and moderation and to share ideas

The School has introduced ASDAN as an accreditation of what is achieved by students in Further Education and staff are being coached and supported in implementing this

The new weekly briefing sheet, through which all staff are made aware of what is happening in the School that week

There is a new form which encourages teaching staff to evaluate their own performance when having a lesson observation

Following feedback, a package was put together for the training of support staff around working with children with ASD. There were after School and half-day sessions resulting in the Learning Support staff setting themselves a target. It is now a model for other Special Schools and the training is being rolled out to teachers.

The School has implemented some of the suggestions following the previous Review, for example, raising awareness of School priorities by displaying them and giving a copy to staff.

The interview programme testified to the improvements described and people mentioned:

"I feel more involved now and I think that we are better organised"

"There is more encouragement for Learning Support to be staff governors. I am now a Governor "

"As a whole team, we have had a really big input"

Conclusion

Redbridge High School continues to build on previous achievements and provides an 'enriching' experience for students who are supported and encouraged to achieve whatever is within their capabilities.

The School meets the full requirements of the Investors in People Standard.

Carole Ashcroft

Assessor

26 February 2008