

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT



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On behalf of Inspiring Business Performance Limited

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BACKGROUND

Situated in Broadclyst, East Devon, Clyst Vale Community College was founded in 1960 becoming a Community College in 1974 when Devon reorganised its schools. The College gained a sixth form in 1984. Clyst Vale Community College converted to become a stand-alone academy in April 2011. It is an average size college, with just over 1000 students on role. It has had specialist status for science, mathematics and computing since 2005. They achieved accreditation from Exeter University as a Thinking School in 2012.

During the past year, the College has re-structured its organisation into 4 'schools'; which include all ages of pupils, integrate teaching and non-teaching staff in delivering a 'whole school' approach to raising student attainment, and provide more effective pastoral support.

At their last Ofsted inspection in July 2013, inspectors decided that the College required improvement in some aspects of teaching and learning and student achievement. The College management team, Governors and staff are actively addressing these issues; particularly through their application of Thinking School practice and more focused leadership and management.

The College was accredited to the Investors in People Standard in July 2004 and achieved the Gold award in February 2011.

SUMMARY

It has been a challenging year for the College – moving forward from what was a disappointing Ofsted inspection last July. Whilst many schools in that situation may have devoted all their energies into 'fixing' issues raised by Ofsted, you seem to have successfully 'dovetailed' short-term actions to raise attainment in particular areas with your longer term strategy to use Thinking School techniques to achieve a more holistic and sustainable approach to developing the 'whole child'.

You asked me to gain feedback on a variety of liP related themes that are relevant to how well the College is progressing as a Thinking School - an educational community in which all members share a common commitment to giving regular, careful thought to everything that takes place. These themes are:

Theme 1: How well is the College workforce integrated within the 4 Schools structure?

Most staff feel that the 4 Schools structure is now delivering real benefits for your students and for how staff are able to support them. There is an increasing sense of being 'one team' in each School; engaging all roles in achieving your goals. It is not without issue, however; concerns focused on support for particular year groups and the consistency of approach across the 4 Schools.

More generally, you have a positive culture of engaging staff in major College developments, which has helped staff to 'buy in' to this and other changes. People

recognise that openness, trust and respect underpin the environment within Clyst Vale, which supports a 'whole team' ethos.

- Opportunities for further development have been identified, covering:
 - Closing the 'loop' in the consultation process
 - Reflecting on the 4 School experience
 - Engaging students in strategy development
 - Strengthening the 'one team' ethos.

Theme 2: Does Thinking School philosophy permeate all aspects of the College?

Staff and Governors clearly 'buy in' to the Thinking School approach. They feel that it links well with your College ethos and provides a more sustainable approach to helping students achieve their full potential. Thinking School philosophy also sits well with your people strategies – celebrating diversity, effective recruitment, etc.

Whilst there is a strong focus at present on raising attainment, staff do not feel that this is at the expense of creativity. They feel encouraged to reflect, challenge and use their initiative in driving forward improvement. People are clearly committed to delivering success.

Staff are working hard at present to raise attainment and deliver the Thinking School agenda. Senior and middle leaders are proactive in recognising the contributions of your team members and people generally do feel appreciated for the effort that they are making. Motivation is high and morale is certainly improving over the last two terms. There is definite pride in what is being achieved.

- An opportunity for further development is extending your provision to support Health and Wellbeing.

Theme 3: How well does the Student Achievement and Intervention Forum (SAIF) and data management support colleagues to help students achieve?

SAIF is providing a generally effective system, which enables staff undertaking a range of roles to pinpoint where students are in terms of their current achievement and to identify appropriate interventions to move them forward. Expectations for staff working with this system are clear, although people commented that it does work better with older students due to the greater depth of data to draw on.

Staff feel well supported in using the system, both from those with a leadership role and also by the data management team. A 'coaching culture' is clearly evident in how people are supported with their continuing development, including with SAIF. People are generous with their expertise and time when sharing knowledge and good practice across the College team.

You boast a wide range of talent within the College. Your 4 School structure and Thinking School approach encourage and give people opportunities to 'take a lead' and utilise their talents in supporting students' achievements. People in a variety of roles feel that they are being supported to achieve their own potential at Clyst Vale.

- Opportunities for further development focus on:
 - 'Process' issues.
 - More efficient use of time.

Theme 4: How effective has Habits of Mind training been in strengthening the culture of continuous learning with the College?

Habits of Mind (HOM) have captured the imagination of many staff that I met during this visit. Support for this aspect of the Thinking School approach, in terms of staff development, has been very positive. Most people feel comfortable with using HOM techniques and recognise real benefits in doing so; however there remain questions about consistency with their effective use across teams.

Support for more general learning and development (L&D) is very strong across the College. Many people are active 'self learners' - they take responsibility and are motivated to push the boundaries of their learning. The concept of Trios, recently introduced, is viewed positively by teachers, although it is 'early days' to have delivered substantial learning outcomes.

Your proactive 'learning culture' is cause for celebration in the College and many staff that I met adopt the HOM approach for supporting their own continuing development.

- Opportunities for further development related to this theme include:
 - Enhancing L&D for support roles
 - Further use of Trios
 - Coaching and mentoring
 - Measuring success.

Theme 5: How effective are College leaders (Governors, Senior and Middle Leaders) supporting your workforce to successfully deliver Thinking School outcomes?

There is consistent understanding of expectations for leaders within the College, in terms of how they should be supporting their teams with the Thinking School agenda and also in raising student attainment. Appraisal and ongoing dialogue with SLT link members for example, encourage regular reflection on performance and support continuing development.

Most line managers are doing a very good job in supporting their teams through the challenges that you face. SLT also are viewed very positively by most staff – certainly in the collective sense, but also reflecting on individuals within the team. A few requests for more 'leadership' rather than 'management' from SLT were made.

Overall, Thinking School and application of your people strategies to support that agenda, are seen to be paying dividends in driving forward students' achievements. People also feel confident that as a College, you continue to improve how you support your team – better communication was a common viewpoint. There is a healthy consensus that you remain a 'great place to work!'

- You might consider the following opportunities for further development:
 - Building effective leadership and management skills
 - Developing the capacity of the Governing Body
 - Measuring the impact of people strategies
 - Using staff feedback to improve practice
 - Student behaviour.

My visit to Clyst Vale was, once again, a very interesting, informative and enjoyable experience. I have been inspired by how you are using Thinking Schools to support childrens' development. My sincere thanks to all your team members that took part in this assessment for their enthusiastic participation, and to other staff with whom I came into contact for their welcome, hospitality and assistance given.

RECOMMENDATION AND NEXT STEPS

Recognition against the Investors in People Framework

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for Assessors by Investors in People – United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills, I am totally satisfied that Clyst Vale Community College meets the requirements of the Investors in People National Standard and you have again achieved a Gold award level, having satisfied 174 evidence requirements in total (see the Outcomes Table below). Many congratulations on your achievement.

Investors in People accreditation is granted indefinitely, with a proviso that an interaction is undertaken within 18 months of accreditation and a full assessment takes place no greater than 3 years apart. We will discuss your continuing strategy for using liP at our Improvement Planning Meeting, scheduled for 10 a.m. on Friday 28th February 2014.

FINDINGS FROM THIS VISIT

Please note: sections in italic type are illustrative comments made by staff during this visit.

OVERALL FOCUS: HOW WELL THE COLLEGE IS PROGRESSING AS A THINKING SCHOOL.

Theme 1: How well is the College workforce integrating within the 4 Schools structure?

Engaging staff and stakeholders with your 4 School strategy.

(Links to indicators 1 & 7 of the liP Framework)

- The transition to the 4 School structure, with its vertical approach to pastoral support, generates a range of opinions – many expressing the benefits of this structure, but also with reservations about particular aspects, especially when comparing it with the previous year group system. On the ‘plus’ side, people commented:
 - Older students acting as role models for younger children.
 - Staff become familiar with a wider range of students.
 - There is an increasing sense of ‘connection’ across the College and particularly between roles.
 - The Co-tutor role is very beneficial.
 - There is still the ability to ‘overlay’ essential horizontal elements within the structure, for example, with year group assemblies.
 - Sports day with school teams was ‘brilliant’.

‘I think that moving to 4 Schools was a bold decision by a college that is generally cautious with change.’

- On the ‘minus’ side, issues raised included:
 - A need to operate in a consistent fashion between each School (this is perhaps a result of recent changes within the HOS team).
 - Time to deliver effective pastoral support seems to be the biggest issue that everyone recognises (and this is consistent within most schools) – particularly when reflecting on the HOS and ATHOS roles, but also for those with a tutor role, when the pressure is on teaching staff to deliver curriculum focused results.
 - The 4 Schools need further reinforcement with students.
 - The ability to support particular cohorts may be diminished in the vertical system.

‘We need more consistency across the Schools, for example in using Habits of Mind.’

‘How the 4 Schools impact on the day to day running, I’m not sure. Until the 4 HOS are established, it will be difficult.’

‘The 4 School approach is moving in the right direction and there are a lot of positives, but I think that someone needs to oversee pivotal year groups.’

- Some comments made by staff on the perceived pressures on peoples' time:

'I feel that a lot of the tutors don't get enough time to bond with their children. Responsibilities get moved on to the HOS and ATHOS.'

'The HOS work very hard, but there's too much pressure on management of the system. There's not enough time to deliver, in addition to teaching responsibilities.'

- People recognise that much consultation goes on, both with staff and other stakeholders, when these strategic changes are being planned. This approach is very much part of your College culture, both within departments and on a whole College basis. Whilst people recognise that there is good consultation internally within the College, they also appreciate that much is driven by external stakeholders, over which the College has little influence.

'We had quite a bit of input with our manager regarding the changes. The support that she gave us was brilliant!'

'At school briefings, Kevin (Principal) discusses changes and seeks staff input. People are not afraid to contribute their views. For example, with Trios – they were postponed a term due to the pressure we were under.'

'There's wide involvement in communication and decision making – it's not just "top down".'

- However, as is sometimes the case when people are asked to give their input, if they do not see that directly influencing the outcome, then their view on the effectiveness of the consultation process is somewhat tarnished. A particular issue raised relevant to 4 Schools, was the removal of the afternoon tutorial time.
- The union representative that I met was very positive about their particular engagement with SLT and involvement in effective consultation.

'We're quoted as being a "model school" at our (local) union meetings.'

- Several staff recognise that you reflect on how you communicate as a College and seek their views so that this continually improves.

'We recently had consultation on communication from Kevin. He sent out a grid of how it should work and our feedback was welcomed and led to some improvements. He's very open.'

People working together as a 'whole College' team.

(Links to indicators 5 & 7)

- Whilst some staff regret the move away from the year group structure, particularly if they were part of an effective cohort team; many people at this visit expressed their views that the 4 School approach has brought new opportunities for them to feel a valued part of the whole College team. This is especially strong for those in non-teaching roles.

'It encourages everyone to feel part of the whole school and that you're involved in student achievement. It's nice to be involved with and respected by students.'

'We need each other – we're in this together; melding pastoral and curriculum – they're not separate issues.'

- However, from a College 'community' perspective, one or two people did feel that there are drawbacks.

'The closeness of teachers with students in their year group is not as strong now.'

- Reflecting on the Co-tutor role, those undertaking this role felt very positively about their contribution and the strengthening of relationships with colleagues across their School.

'I'm definitely more involved in the whole School team. It encourages everyone to feel a part of the whole College, for example, with the curriculum and student achievements.'

'It gives us the opportunity to feel part of the wider School community. I feel it's brought quite a lot to the College – we identify more as a "family" and it gives the children an extra "push" and more pride.'

'As a tutor, the system supports me very well. The HOS and ATHOS are very positive and bend over backwards for you. It's a good team.'

- Several staff (including middle leaders) commented that particular cohorts need special consideration within the vertical structure – year 9 for options and year 11 for GCSEs. There is some feeling that these needs are not being adequately addressed yet within the 4 School structure, with some uncertainty regarding who provides that overview or drives forward priorities for those year groups. This uncertainty over responsibilities can also impact on more 'operational' aspects of pastoral support.

'I do worry that some year groups tend to get forgotten in the vertical system; years 7 & 8, for example. Year 9 focus on options and years 10 & 11 are covered by SAIF. Perhaps it's just the time of year.'

'It can be a bit confusing, for example, with reporting. You have to look up which School a student is in on the SIMS and then find the HOS. Previously you went straight to the Head of Year. It can be a bit confusing who is in charge of what.'

- Overall, the majority of staff involved in this review gave a 'thumbs up' to the 4 School system. It is still early days and, as described above, there are a number of issues that require further work; but benefits are being realised, both for students and staff.

'It works well on so many different levels – it broadens the support for both staff and students.'

'4 Schools seems to work well on strengthening the whole school community.'

Potential for ongoing development

Effective consultation

- Whilst the opportunities for people to contribute their opinions about planned changes are numerous and do engage your workforce; several comments indicate that people are less sure about how their input actually influences decisions made. Whilst staff do not expect that decision making should be a totally democratic process, it might be worthwhile communicating more explicitly why particular decisions have been reached, particularly if they may be at odds

with the views given by a number of staff during the consultation process.

- You ask staff to reflect on how communication might be improved within the College – perhaps you could extend this to seeking their views on improvements that might be made to consultation arrangements.

Reflecting on 4 Schools in practice

- Whilst staff feel that HOS must be reviewing the benefits / continuing issues with the 4 School structure now that it has been in place for some time, they are uncertain as to what has evolved as a result of this reflection. Staff also feel that it would be useful to undertake ‘whole school’ reflection on such an important change, in order to guide continuing improvement to the structure.

‘We need a “big chat” as a whole school, which we had at the beginning; but SLT need to use the information.’

‘We have School team meetings and can give our feedback to the HOS who takes that to the HOS meetings, but then what?’

Engaging students

- Whilst you are proactive in soliciting the views of a range of stakeholders to support your strategic planning, comment was made that you could make more use of feedback from your students to identify areas for improvement.

One team

- One or two support staff commented that a small minority of teaching colleagues still hold a more ‘traditional’ view of their roles, which makes them feel less valued than they deserve, considering the wide range of support activities they undertake with students and the skills and experience that they have built up. Leaders across the College need to be reinforcing the ‘whole College’ team ethos and promoting a strong message of respect for all within the College community.

‘Some teachers can tend to “look down” on support staff and that’s evident in some departments – it can stem from the HOD. Children pick up on that and it can affect their respect for you.’

Theme 2: Does Thinking Schools philosophy permeate all aspects of the College?

Understanding how the Thinking School approach will help the College to achieve its vision.

(Links to indicator 1)

- Staff across the College and Governors, have strong affinity with the Thinking School approach. People feel that it integrates very closely with your ethos and in what they firmly believe – that a holistic approach to child development is essential in order for them to fulfil their potential.

‘Thinking School directly relates to our ethos and I see the link with how I manage my team.’

‘It’s one of the things that I love about Clyst vale – we’re about developing the whole child.’

- Staff in all roles feel that they can contribute to progress with the Thinking School agenda.

‘We’ve always tried to adopt that way in our support role, but now I see it definitely working more in the classroom. I welcome that – developing independent thinking skills.’

‘Thinking Schools has really helped me as a teacher – you can pick out what you feel will be useful. I do think that the philosophy is right.’

- Your support for staff, for example through training activities, is welcomed and has facilitated their engagement with this strategy and its application in their work.

‘There is clear direction, especially with the Thinking School. The training day went down well and I’ve used a lot since.’

‘The essence of Thinking Schools is great. The training day at the start of the year was excellent. However, it needs reinforcing frequently and the whole school needs to be involved.’

- People clearly understand that Thinking Schools is a strategy for the long term and will require continuing investment for a number of years in order to optimise the impact. However, they do not see this as being separate to the College’s short term priority, which is achieving more consistently successful attainment levels.

‘The drive for increasing attainment is entirely compatible with Clyst Vale’s “softer” values.’

- Staff are familiar with your College Improvement Plan and their particular Subject Improvement Plans, and feel engaged with your improvement planning processes. Governors indicated that they feel more involved with your current CIP – it is more focused on key priorities and progress is monitored more readily. Access to meaningful data has also been improved, which helps strengthen their engagement with school leadership.

- Social responsibility is an important consideration with the College. Linking in with Thinking School philosophy and also to the 4 School structure, consideration for your students, staff and local community underpin your culture. Your concern for environmental sustainability is also apparent, for example, through recycling strategies and current work on reducing your carbon footprint.

Aligning College ‘people strategies’ with Thinking School philosophy.

(Links to indicator 3)

- Thinking School philosophy does inform the recruitment process, both from the perspective of those competing for positions (Co-tutor recruitment is a good example) and also those staff engaged in the recruitment process for their teams.

‘It’s a very fair process – you couldn’t ask for more. You can be involved in the process and the focus is about getting the right “fit” with the College ethos.’

- The Thinking School approach is a very inclusive approach – one that welcomes and celebrates diversity and creativity. This is an aspect of Clyst Vale that your staff value and is central to your ethos. When facing challenging Ofsted requirements to improve, some schools adopt a very ‘directed’ approach to raising standards. Whilst there is certainly more focus on key priorities to deliver improvement within the College, staff feel that this does not stifle their inherent creativity.

‘Clyst Vale really does value diversity – in its widest sense.’

‘I don’t feel that I need to be “regimented” in my thinking. I do feel empowered.’

‘We all know the priorities for Ofsted and have the same goals, but we can go our own way to achieve higher attainment. Children are diverse – you have to take a holistic view for their development.’

- During a time when much change is progressing within the College, your approach to promoting a healthy work-life balance is appreciated by staff. Whether through the provisions of your policy governing this, or the practical support evident within teams; people, despite the increasing pressure on their work time, feel that they can achieve a healthy balance.

‘People are stressed, but we are so supportive of each other.’

‘At a practical level, there’s a very positive consideration of health and wellbeing.’

“Give and take” is planned into the timetable, for example, if you do a period 6.

Meetings are distributed evenly and fairly. Managers do look out for you – it’s how we are.’

Enabling and supporting people to to think reflectively, critically and creatively; driving forward improvement.

(Links to indicators 3, 5 & 7)

- As noted above, staff in all roles feel able to draw on their skills and experience, and that of their colleagues, and find ways of delivering improvements that use their creativity and initiative. This can be undertaken without the fear of failure if anticipated benefits are not realised first time. Staff certainly feel trusted and well supported to make decisions regarding students’ learning.

'It's part of normal working for me. I can come up with strategies for supporting students. It's a very open environment for that. You can be honest with your colleagues, reflecting on how things are done and adapting your approach.'
'I can take responsibility for driving forward Thinking School techniques in; how they can be used and integrated into the curriculum, and ensuring consistency across my classes. They work incredibly well at A level and it's been a solution to some of the problems that we've had.'

- In harmony with Thinking School philosophy, staff enthusiastically challenge the status quo if they perceive that better ways of working might be found. It is evident that you have a culture of continuous improvement across most areas of the College.

'We've adapted the SAIF measures to work in our department – it gives better feedback to the HOSs, with less focus on just the numbers. (Senior Leader) is happy with that.'

'There's less stigma now to raising your hand and saying "I'm struggling with that".'

'We have to do things differently – we haven't more time to put in.'

- Encouraging people to reflect on performance in order to support improvement is recognised across your team; whether through formal appraisal (which many feel is a 2-way process), through Trio activities, or more informal feedback. People are open to this reflective activity (even where they may have had misgivings about increased lesson observation). Almost everyone that I met expressed a very strong commitment to driving improvement across all aspects of the College.

'We all go the extra mile, for example, putting on extra sessions for students. We all look out for each other – it makes you want to come to work!'

'I can't think of anyone in this school who isn't committed to delivering the goods. It's a school that you can be proud of!'

Recognising and valuing people for the hard work that they put in.

(Links to indicator 6 & 7)

- You work hard at Clyst Vale to value your staff for their efforts and contribution. Whilst your ability to reward staff is limited (although you use the Teachers Standards points framework, where appropriate) and there are never adequate financial resources to reward support staff adequately; you are proactive with using a variety of methods that focus more on the 'recognition' element. Staff certainly appreciate this and find your approach motivating.

'Financially it's very tight – they couldn't do more to reward us.'

'This is a school that values its staff. Colleagues also value each other. We do celebrate our successes.'

'Donut days are really good. Management are very good at saying "well done".'

'We're making recognition more explicit' (e.g. through the Governors' Commendation).

- Although staff do feel valued; when the pressure is on many people, those with a leadership role need to be continually on their guard - ensuring that they do all they can to maintain this positive feeling within their teams.

'Kevin is very active in thanking people. I like his weekly bulletin – he puts in the effort to make you feel valued. Some HODs could be a little more proactive like that.'

'We're working hard and have a cohesive team, but we're still feeling a bit "beaten up" (post Ofsted).'

- There is a very strong feeling of pride in what you are delivering at Clyst Vale, right across your team, including your commitment to being a successful Thinking School.

'I'm proud of Clyst Vale. It's known as one of the better schools in the area.'

'I do feel proud. Every day I get up and think "yes! School." I'm very fortunate.'

Potential for ongoing development

Developing your approach to Health & Wellbeing

- In a busy environment, staff often feel under increasing pressure and consequently their health and wellbeing might become adversely affected (even if this is not currently an issue). Some resources that might help you to stay on top of this:
 - ACAS has published a useful booklet that gives organisations ideas that can promote a more positive work-life balance
<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1283> .
 - For teachers, <http://www.tes.co.uk/worklife-balance-whole-school-teaching-resources/> offers a range of resources that may help them to reduce pressures on their working time.
 - You may find it helpful to use the Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award to 'benchmark' your approach. Go to:
<http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Needs/healthandwellbeing/Pages/Home.aspx>
 - Some other useful resources on this topic:
 - EEF – Work Organisation Assessment Questionnaire:
<http://www.workorganisation.org.uk/howto/woaquestionnaire.pdf>
Faculty of Public Health – Creating a Healthy Workplace (Guide for Practitioners and Employers):
[http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/r%20_healthy_workplaces.pdf](http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/r%20healthy_workplaces.pdf)
Healthy Performance: <http://www.healthyperformance.co.uk/>

Theme 3: How well does SAIF and data management support colleagues to help students achieve?

Clarity of expectations for achievement.

(Links to indicator 1 & 6)

- Overall, SAIF is viewed very positively by staff as a system to support students to achieve their potential. People certainly understand expectations for student attainment, for example with 'Best 8', and seem to have a clear picture of how individuals are progressing.

'SAIF pinpoints expectations for students. You can see at a glance. It's very useful - to identify the levels that children are working at so that you can tailor your approach.'

'I'm very clear regarding expectations, through TPRs and SAIF levels. You can identify which children to watch - it really works and helps them achieve their expected grades.'

- It is seen to be more effective for students in higher year groups as there is greater history of data to draw on in order to make more accurate predictions of achievement.

'I don't find it easy to grade years 7 & 8 and also to predict GCSE levels at that age. For later years, it's much more useful.'

- There are still questions of subjectivity within the grading structure, for example, with 'safe marking'; however, moderation is seen to limit the potential effects of this.

How staff are supported in utilising data and delivering appropriate student interventions.

(Links to indicators 5 & 8)

- Many people commented on how well they are supported by middle leaders and other colleagues with utilising the SAIF system and delivering interventions that meet the needs of their students. There is a definite 'coaching' culture within the College that underpins this support, and the Thinking Schools approach has reinforced this. People are encouraged to develop their own skills, often through experiential learning, but with colleagues always available to support and guide them.

'I get great support from my lead tutor and also from the HOS and ATHOS. They're encouraging me to do more and more. It's very much a coaching approach from them – you learn from your experience.'

'We share our learning and support is there across the team, for example, through a "team teach" approach. We also use our training days to work in groups and share good practice.'

'Thinking Schools has a "teacher as coach" ethos to support childrens' self-learning.'

- Whilst support from leaders and colleagues is always willingly offered; again, people do recognise that colleagues face a lot of pressure on their time, considering the range of activities that are included in many roles.

'Support for pastoral is coming together. My HOS is brilliant. However, I think that the ATHOS role has too wide a remit – too many tasks to fulfil. They work so hard!'

'For some Co-tutors, there can be difficulties with the logistics – freeing them up from their "day jobs".'

- Staff across a variety of roles seem to be very comfortable with using data to support childrens' learning and attainment. Those responsible for managing data are seen to be doing an excellent job in making it accessible and meaningful for their colleagues.

'The data meets my needs as a teacher and a tutor.'

'Data Management is just brilliant – we can use data very effectively to support childrens' learning.'

'SAIF facilitates a common effort – a team approach. Conversations cascade to all levels in the School so that we can deliver appropriate interventions.'

Making the best use of peoples' talents in order to optimise students' achievements.

(Links to indicators 3, 4, 5, 8 & 9)

- There is widespread recognition across the College that you have a workforce that boasts a wide range of talents, both in terms of expertise and experience. You are actively utilising these talents to help raise student achievements, and staff in all roles certainly feel encouraged and supported to 'take a lead' in aspects of their work and also in contributing to wider College initiatives.

'The HOS trusts my judgement to use my skills and experience in order to decide on appropriate interventions. I feel that the College is good at playing to peoples' strengths.'

'I do feel encouraged to take a lead with students – to use my initiative.'

'You can take a lead role in mentoring children. I'd say the College does encourage you to use your talents and develop further.'

- I came across many examples where people feel that they are being supported to make the most of their talents through their personal development. As a result, many staff recognise that this enhances their career development, if they have those aspirations. You are proactive in giving people advice and support, including with mentoring, where appropriate.

'They've given me cover to undertake the role. It's an opportunity that I wanted and they've been really good with their support.'

'I can undertake a wider range of activities in my role and I do feel that it's a positive move for my career development.'

'They've been brilliant in supporting my career development and I feel that there is room for me to grow within Clyst Vale.'

Potential for ongoing development

'Process' issues

- From conversations with staff, it is evident that the College uses a number of cards and marking methods, which may cause some confusion for students. This can be through: the number used (e.g. subject report cards, behaviours and attitude linked to PCC, SAIF, redemption cards, HOM cards etc; through the associated 'scoring', where sometimes a '5' is for high performance (PCC), in other cases for low performance (SAIF); or colouring, where green on SAIF is positive, but on a report card, it is not.
- Staff also commented that some of your processes are quite 'bureaucratic' in nature; for example, spreadsheet updating within the SAIF system is very time consuming and more about 'accountability' than being useful for staff and students; also TPRs are quite 'data heavy' and not very 'parent friendly.'

Making more efficient use of time

- There are no obvious solutions that will generate more time with the school environment. However, on reflection, it is often the case that not all activities undertaken and time currently spent 'adds value' to students' development, and could therefore be said to constitute wasted resources. As a longer term strategy, you might find the concept of 'Lean Education' helpful in developing new ideas for continuing improvement. The document: 'The 9 wastes in education' <http://www.leaneducation.com/whitepaper/9-wastes-in-education.pdf> is useful to stimulate thinking about this approach.

Theme 4: How effective has Habits of Mind training been in strengthening the culture of continuous learning with the College?

Planning staff development to meet Thinking School objectives.

(Links to indicator 2)

- Building capacity across your workforce to deliver the Thinking Schools agenda (and to support the shorter term priorities to raise attainment) is well planned, delivered and effective for many people, judging by the comments made by staff at this visit. Habits of Mind (HOM) training and ongoing support for self-learning is a good example.

'I think HOM is brilliant and the training that we undertook was excellent.'

'I've been catching up on HOM – there's a good PowerPoint presentation and information through the HOM folder on our shared folders.'

- Learning and development (L&D) is on the agenda for team meetings across the College and people clearly feel that they can contribute to planning appropriate provision, both for themselves (through appraisal, for example) and in the context of their team.

'The College's approach to our development certainly meets needs for what we're focusing on now and also for moving forward with Thinking Schools.'

Embedding a culture of continuing development within the College.

(Links to indicators 2, 3 & 8)

- Most people that I met are proactive 'self learners' (although there can be some perceived barriers to this for support roles – see below). Overall, staff (and Governors) are motivated to learn and grow their expertise, and feel well supported in the College with their continuing development.

'They want everyone to succeed – both staff and students. People are not embarrassed to ask if they have a development need. It's not seen as a weakness.'

'As a teacher you're always learning. I'm particularly keen to develop kinaesthetic learning for boys – that links in with HOM.'

'We're constantly learning – new systems, Thinking School techniques, etc. You're never afraid to give it a go. I enjoy learning – I'm well up for that!'

- L&D is well supported in the workplace and people feel encouraged to try out new techniques, even if they may not meet initial expectations. It is seen to be all part of the learning process, which reinforces HOM skills.

'Our team is developing a range of skills and we're constantly topping those up. We've a really good team and are supportive of each other. We come together; discuss our learning, share practice and how we can use HOM.'

'We slowly introduce new HOM techniques and ask "is it going or not going to work?" Then we adapt. They've become part of how we work now – we reflect on their impact and move on!'

'It's a healthy culture – pragmatic. If it doesn't work we change it or drop it.'

- The current drive to use Trios to share learning and good practice across your teaching population is generally well received. People can see the value of this coaching approach to support their continuing professional development.

'I'm quite excited about the Trios. It's good that the school is investing time in that. Although your partners are allocated – they've been thought through.'

'Trios is a brilliant idea – it's very focused. I'm excited about them – a chance to "magpie" ideas! Some people need to get over their aversion to observation – its all about helping them.'

'Trios are beneficial – they give you the chance to see different approaches to teaching. That has a very positive impact on our teaching and has strengthened relationships across departments.'

- You celebrate learning within the College – both for students and staff – this reinforces its value and continues to motivate people to develop themselves.

'Learning is definitely celebrated; for example, through the newsletter or "successes of our staff" on the notice board.'

Support for your team delivers anticipated improvements

(Links to indicator 9)

- Many staff recognise that improvements in student behaviour and attainment are evident, in their experience. Your Thinking School approach and applying appropriate techniques form that are seen to be key factors in bringing this about.

'I think that the 4 Schools, SAIF and HOM etc are having a positive impact. This year is a lot calmer. Students know that they're looked after and behaviour has improved – they feel supported. We have lots of interventions and parents are noticing a difference.'

'You see kids starting to think about their learning rather than just being bombarded with information. Their retention is better and they are developing their skills for life.'

'We've just "dipped our toes" in HOM, but the outcomes have been disproportionate. It's given us a common palate, but it will take time. There's real enthusiasm for it.'

- Considering HOM in particular, many staff see real value in using these; however there is also recognition that not all staff are comfortable with HOM at present. Further support and encouragement will be needed so that there is a consistent approach to realising the benefits.

'HOM is an excellent concept and I try to use them as often as I can. I'm not sure that all staff have bought in, which has a knock on effect on childrens' understanding. For example, in the use of HOM cards – different approaches give mixed messages. My HOS is really focussed on that, taking a whole School approach.'

'The whole concept is very good, but it's not consistent across the school. Some teachers just put the posters up on the walls and may not think about them again. They're not really using the techniques, which annoys me!'

Potential for ongoing development

Support roles

- One or two comments were made that the Inset activity that focused on HOM did not reach some support staff, as they were engaged in other activities. They also do not feel as well supported in ongoing L&D around this topic, as perhaps their teaching colleagues do.

'Sometimes L&D could be tailored more for support staff, for example, at Inset days. We often can't be released. HOM is really useful for support roles and we need to have confidence that we are doing the right thing.'

'We had information from the HOM training and we've discussed it with the HOS and tutors, which was OK, but perhaps we need some refresher training.'

- Perhaps a contributory factor is how well support staff feel they are rewarded for their roles. Whilst teaching staff readily embrace the 'self learning' approach and are willing to put their time towards that, it is more difficult for staff on low wages to feel motivated to the same extent. Perhaps the College might consider it to be a valuable investment in allowing support roles to have some paid time to pursue

their more 'progressive' L&D (in addition to the activities that satisfy their current needs).

Trios

- Whilst most staff involved feel that this is a positive way to share good practice; care needs to be taken to ensure that participants continue to benefit from this coaching approach to their development. It needs clear focus, strong commitment and a firm allocation of time in peoples' busy working calendar. Some trios are successful, others perhaps less so at present.

'I feel that Trios are a reaction to Ofsted. They sound like a good idea – sharing good practice. We've only got as far as identifying lessons to observe. I'm not really sure how they will operate – it doesn't feel very formal.'

'Haven't done any yet as the Trio leader isn't proactive.'

- Once Trios become 'embedded' practice for teachers, you might consider the benefits to be gained in extending this opportunity to those with support roles. These might look at aspects of their work and performance with colleagues in similar roles, or even participating in Trios which include teachers, within the 4 School teams, in order to share experience and expertise more widely across the College.

Developing coaching and mentoring

- Whilst coaching is established as a method of supporting staff, some staff might find the following websites helpful for ideas and resources to further develop their capacity for coaching and mentoring:
www.coachingnetwork.org.uk/ , www.associationforcoaching.com and <http://www.mentormatchme.com/mentoring/resources> .

Measuring success

- Perhaps those teams providing support services for students might use the SAIF system more proactively to measure the impact of their interventions on students, in a 'before and after' context.

Theme 5: How effective are College leaders supporting your workforce to deliver Thinking School

Clarity of expectations for leadership roles.

(Links to indicator 4)

- There is consistent understanding of what leaders at both middle and senior levels should be doing to progress with the Thinking School agenda and meet the short-term requirements to raise attainment levels. Leaders across the College share a common view about what abilities are required for their roles, in the context of what the College aims to achieve and your ethos. Your new appraisal policy further clarifies expectations.

'As a new HOD, people management expectations have been made clear. That was part of the recruitment process.'

- From the perspective of your staff, there is good understanding of the roles of both SLT and the HOS/ATHOS. Recent changes to SLT responsibilities have been clearly communicated and welcomed.

Performance management drives capacity building.

(Links to indicators 1, 5 & 7 of the liP Framework)

- Discussion through appraisal, with SLT links, in leaders' meetings etc, encourages individuals to reflect on their leadership and management capabilities and seek support where further development is needed.

'I do have the opportunity to discuss my people management with my line manager – there's a lot of respect and trust there.'

'Anything you need, you just ask SLT and support is there. I didn't have that in my previous school.'

The effectiveness of leadership and management.

(Links to indicator 5)

- The great majority of people involved in this visit felt strongly that the support that they experience from their line manager is, with a few exceptions, excellent. Relationships between leaders and their teams are based on genuine respect and trust, and several people described how they were inspired by their immediate manager (and by individuals on the SLT).

'..... is brilliant. You couldn't wish for a better or more supportive manager.'

'We're extraordinarily lucky to have as a leader'

'Our HOD leads a fantastic team – you couldn't wish for more! There's respect and trust certainly and (HOD) does inspire the team.'

- Staff commented that their engagement with and support from Governors has improved recently.

'I can only say that I have had very good support. My link Governor takes a real interest.'

- When asked to reflect on their confidence in the SLT, there were positive views offered. The Principal is highly regarded by many staff for his considerate approach to supporting the College's community.

'Kevin is very approachable – we have an open and trusting relationship. He's great – he cares about you.'

'Kevin might not be conventional, but I do like what he does.'

- As a team, most people have a high regard for SLT – some individuals being stronger than others. Collectively, people perceive that you are a cohesive team.

'They all support each other 100%. They are different characters, but fit together as a team.'

'On the whole, I really respect our SLT.'

'The SLT are a good team. They really do care about their staff and students.'

- One aspect of SLT that several people feel could be strengthened, is the focus of SLT on providing effective 'leadership' rather than, as some people perceive, on College management. This is not a consistent viewpoint – other staff feel that you have very good leaders within the SLT.

'Leadership and the motivation of staff needs to be stronger from SLT. It doesn't feel like SLT are driving that, but rather the individual departments.'

'It's not management that's lacking but sometimes inspirational leadership.'

'I think that SLT have been very courageous in leading change. It's never an easy thing to do.'

- Staff did comment that following Ofsted and the ASCL review last term, some improvements are being recognised; for example, a firmer focus on key short term priorities for the College and more clarity with SLT responsibilities for driving those.

'It's definitely got better (confidence in SLT). The Ofsted feedback was a good thing. It's forced a more proactive approach. They are more out and about now; there's clearer direction and getting people back on track. It seems to be a tighter team – more focused on raising attainment, especially for the middle achievers.'

- One or two staff felt that improvements in how SLT support the College team still have some way to go. The gender balance across the SLT was also an area of concern raised.

'Our main support comes from within our department – I don't feel the same connect to the SLT. However, I've seen more of the SLT this year, for example dropping in to our School meetings and with our HOD.'

'With SLT, there's a lot of challenge and not much support.'

'SLT can be defensive as a group. On a one to one they're fine, but when they face the whole staff, I think they might feel "attacked".'

People strategies deliver improvements in performance.

(Links to indicator 9)

- The progression of your Thinking School strategy and the support you provide for staff to engage with this, combined with your short term support measures to help staff with raising student attainment levels more consistently, is paying dividends. People recognise improvements both within their teams and from the whole College perspective. There is strong optimism that by the time Ofsted pay their next visit; they will find a much improved situation.

'The consensus is that we're now doing the right things and doing them well. I do see our "people strategies" working.'

'There has been a tranche of good early results coming through.'

'Our results in have gone through the roof! A lot of work was put in to achieve that.'

'We are doing everything that we should be doing now. People are working a lot harder. SLT have made us more aware. I think that the College is well placed to deliver results!'

Improving support for people.

(Links to indicators 5 & 10)

- You have long been an employer that supports its staff effectively. This visit demonstrates that this continues to be the case. It is evident that you have reflected on your practices and brought about improvements in the support that you offer – your staff recognise this and communication was an example frequently given. SLT are seen to be leading the way in driving forward improvements to the way people are supported in their work.

'I can certainly say that it's got better as a place to work – especially through improved communication.'

'I think there's more information disseminated and better communication – it keeps us abreast of what's happening.'

'Departments are being brought into line by SLT to ensure that things that should be done, are done. That's a good thing – there's more rigour.'

'SLT are popping into classes more, and that's welcome. It's good for them and good for us. I think that's as a result of the consultant's visit.'

- People feel that they can offer their opinion on how they are supported within their teams, and some managers will use that to 'raise their game'.

'I have conversations with my manager and discuss how I can be supported better, at my appraisal. He does take that on board. Communication is improving all the time – from all areas. For example, through the 4 Schools.'

- Those with a middle leadership role also commented that they are improving their people management skills.

'We've got better at holding difficult conversations with colleagues over the past year.'

- Staff feel that leaders at all levels want to 'do the right thing' for staff and continually improve the support they deliver. It makes Clyst Vale College a truly 'great place to work', for the majority of people.

'I think that management are definitely committed (to improving support) – they're on our side!'

'This school is head and shoulders above others that I've worked in.'

Potential for ongoing development

Effective leadership

- Although the great majority of those with a leadership role are judged to be effective by their team members, one aspect of their role which seems to offer the biggest challenge, is getting the best out of those team members who could 'raise their game'. Situational Leadership is an approach that is tried and tested in many organisations, which might help leaders to judge how best to support their team members through effective performance management. I have included an outline of this approach as an appendix to the report.

- Whilst middle leaders do get together occasionally to share practice and discuss management issues, some felt that this could be more frequent and also might be used to keep a 'finger on the pulse' of potential changing leadership requirements, in the context of how the College is moving forward.
- Another use of Trios might be to look at 'people management' practices within your middle leadership team.
- Managers may find the website Managers Pitstop a useful resource to support their ongoing development. This provides a range of on-line tutorials covering a wide spectrum of management techniques, for example, managing performance, assertiveness skills, effective teamwork, managing time, etc. Go to: <http://www.managerspitstop.com/home> Users need to register to access the resources, but that is free.
- Whilst people recognise that giving and receiving constructive feedback is welcome and an essential feature of how your College works and improves, those with a leadership role could be more proactive in seeking feedback from their team members on how they might improve support for their team. This is not to say that improvement is needed, but if you don't ask the question..... Appraisal discussions would be a good opportunity to generate that 'upward' feedback.

Developing the Governing Body

- Your Governors might consider using the Governor Mark standard (see http://www.gimpartnership.org/documentation/Governor_Mark_Standards_Document.doc) as a framework to clarify their leadership responsibilities and capability requirements, and also to guide self-reflection on their collective performance to support their continuing development.

Measuring the impact of people management

- Although leaders can readily identify improvements to their own and their team's performance as a result of people management strategies, and consequently how that impacts on the achievement of Clyst Vale's performance targets; they are not as confident with measuring that contribution. This is an area that can be strengthened, both at the department and College levels.

Communicating how you use staff feedback

- Whilst staff are aware that you do solicit feedback on how well they are supported within the College, they are not confident in describing how this feedback results in continuing improvement. Perhaps you could be more proactive in communicating this. A 'you said – we did' message can be very powerful, for example, following a staff survey.

'There is a desire to improve (support for staff) but I can't pinpoint specifics as a result of our feedback.'

- Also, you might consider analysing responses from activities that generate staff feedback, so that you have tangible evidence that their views on how they are managed and developed continue to improve.

Managing students' behaviour

- The management of students' behaviour generated some concern. Whilst overall, behaviour is seen to be good, some people felt that, for the tiny minority of 'repeat offenders', a clear 'bottom line' of sanction from SLT is not evident. Staff appreciate that you have a very inclusive ethos, but some feel that, for the good of the great majority, there needs to be firmer action at times.

Outcomes Table - Evidence Requirements met at this visit. Total: 174

Core Standard										
Total number of core evidence requirements reviewed – 39										
Total number of core evidence requirements met - 39										
	Indicators									
ERs	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	
5	✓		✓						✓	
6	✓									
Wider Framework										
Total number of additional evidence requirements reviewed – 146										
Total number of additional evidence requirements met - 135										
	Indicators									
ERs	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
4	Core	Core	Core	✓	Core	✓	✓	✓	Core	✓
5	Core	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	Core	✓
6	Core	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	X	✓
7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		X	✓	✓	x
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
9	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓		x
10	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
13	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	✓	✓	✓		X		✓	✓	✓	X
15	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
16	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
17	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	X	✓		
18	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		
19	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
20	✓		✓		✓			✓		
21	✓		✓		✓					
22	✓		✓		X					
23	✓		✓		✓					
24	✓		✓		✓					
25	✓		✓		✓					
26			✓							
27			✓							
28			✓							
29			✓							

Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire

Both IBP and I would welcome your feedback on this assessment and you will shortly be supplied with a Client Feedback Questionnaire to complete. We would very much appreciate it if you would complete and return the questionnaire after your Improvement Planning Meeting has been concluded.

Should you wish to contact an Account Manager at Investors in People South for any reason, please telephone 0207 492 5960, use the contact option on our website www.iip-south.co.uk or send an email to info@ibp.uk.com

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Telephone:  [0207 492 5960](tel:02074925960)
Email:  info@ibp.uk.com

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APPENDIX: SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Drawn from the 'One Minute Manager' series by Kenneth Blanchard.

LEADERSHIP STYLE is how you behave when you are trying to influence the performance of someone else. It is a combination of directive and supportive behaviours.

DIRECTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Involves: clearly telling people what to do, how to do it, where to do it and when to do it; and then closely supervising their performance.

SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Involves: listening to people; providing support and encouragement for their efforts; and then helping them to solve problems and make decisions.

There are four basic leadership styles: *Directing, Coaching, Supporting and Delegating*. **BUT** There is no one best leadership style; you need to adapt your style to meet individual's particular needs.

Situational leadership is not something that you do to people; it is something that you do with people.

To decide which leadership style is most appropriate for an individual in a given situation, you must determine their **competence** (*related to their knowledge and skill levels*) and **commitment** (*related to their confidence and motivation*) for the task.

High commitment	Lower commitment	Variable commitment	High commitment
Low competence	Some competence	Good competence	High competence
Directive	Coaching	Supportive	Delegating

DIRECTIVE: The leader provides specific instructions and closely supervises task accomplishment.

COACHING: The leader continues to direct and closely supervise task accomplishment, but also explains decisions, encourages suggestions and supports progress.

SUPPORTIVE: The leader supports efforts towards task accomplishment and shares responsibility for decision making, whilst retaining accountability.

DELEGATING: The leader turns over responsibility for decision making and problem solving to the team member, whilst retaining accountability.