



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**

IMPROVING BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

**ASSESSMENT REPORT**

St John's School

**Undertaken By**



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE** | New Zealand

**October 2010**

**In Confidence**

## **Introduction**

This report results from the Investors in People assessment undertaken by Stuart Burgess, on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2010, in line with the agreed Assessment Plan.

St John's School was first accredited as an Investors in People organisation in 2007. One of the requirements to retain Investors in People status is to have a re-accreditation assessment every three years. This fosters the continuous improvement philosophy of the Investors in People framework and ensures people strategies remain front of mind.

It is on this basis that this assessment was undertaken and this report reflects the findings of that assessment.

## **Objectives of the Assessment**

Whilst the primary focus for this assessment was to gather evidence of good practice within the scope of the Principles of the Standard (Plan, Do, Review) and award re-recognition as an Investors in People organisation, the Principal and senior team was keen to have an objective review of the school and receive any recommendations for continuous improvement.

## **Sample Rationale**

A sample of 12 people, reflecting both diversity of the people and the school, took part in the interviews. When choosing those to interview individuals were selected to reflect seniority and position, length of service, gender and job role.

Interviews were undertaken on a one to one basis in confidential surroundings.

The following range of documents was also reviewed as part of the assessment:

- 2010 School Plan
- 2009 Annual report
- ERO Report (2010)
- Various Job Descriptions
- Coaching documentation

## **Acknowledgements**

The assessment could not have been conducted without the willing, honest and open participation of the people that were called to interview, and those whose contribution and assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

As always the assessor felt very welcome whilst on-site during the assessment.

## Assessment Outcome

Having carried out the assessment process in accordance with the guidelines provided for assessors by Investors in People, the Assessor was satisfied beyond doubt that St John's School continues to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Standard.

On behalf of Investors in People New Zealand the Assessor would like to congratulate St John's School on its achievement. This is an excellent result and reflects the focus to continuously consider and acknowledge the positive contribution the people at the school have on its success.

The accreditation is valid for three years to September 2013. A formal letter and certificate will be sent confirming the outcome from this assessment as well as presenting options to consider in terms of development over the next three years. Higher status accreditation of Bronze, Silver or Gold is certainly attainable for St John's in the future.

## Executive Summary

The following is a summary of *Areas of Good Practice* that contributed to the meeting of the Indicators of the Investors in People Standard. These are highlighted to ensure that these strengths are maintained into the future.

*Areas for Continuous Improvement* have been noted in the belief that a culture of continuous improvement exists at St John's School and that by addressing these points, further improvements will be made in the way the organisation develops and supports its people. These points will form part of the objectives for assessment in subsequent Investors in People reviews.

### Areas of strength/ good practice:

#### Planning and Involvement [Indicators 1, 3 & 7]

- The 2010 Strategic Plan is a comprehensive document that sets out with clarity the following:
  - Mission, Vision and Values
  - 5 Broad Goals
  - Professional Learning
  - Curriculum information
  - Policies and Procedures
- The 5 goals are described further in the 2010 School Plan by outlining the specific goal, the outcomes expected and the actions required to achieve the stated goal.
- All Planning continues to involve wide groups with improvements noted in the Curriculum leaders group. People at all levels acknowledged that they participated in the setting of goals at team and school level.
- Moreover, everyone at the school was clear on what the goals were and what part they played in achieving these.

- The planning day at the beginning of term 1 in 2010 was seen as particularly successful due to the mix of information sharing, operational matters and having some fun with an engaging presenter. The assessor was pleased that feedback from 2007 had been taken on board and that people were responding positively to the on-going use of planning days.
- Professional Development activities are now better linked to the 5 school goals so that people were in no doubt as to what development activity should achieve for them and the school.
- Part time and ancillary staff are considered throughout the planning process and good opportunities exist for them to discuss matters and be involved in communication that affects them and the role they undertake. The SENCO sits within the management team and takes a key role to include teacher aides.

#### Learning and Development [Indicators 2, 8 & 9]

- The 2010 School Plan sets out the 7 learning priorities for the year covering a broad spectrum of learning from Religious Education, Coaching to First Aid.
- The learning priorities are described in a similar way to the school goals by outlining the specific goal, outcomes expected and actions required.
- The coaching framework pulls the school goals and learning goals together and this has been a significant development in the way the school approaches the professional development of its teaching staff.
- Professional Development is therefore targeted and focused influenced in part through the on-going work of Jan Hill, a trusted and effective leader in teaching and learning practices at St John's.
- There has been a greater focus on assessment and reporting with improved use of data to drive initiatives. Whilst this may be influenced by the requirements of the National Standards, the team leaders have embraced the initiative to be part of 'what we would do anyway'. This will continue to strengthen the evidence required to meet Indicators 9 and 10 in the future.
- People could give good examples of learning being applied back on the job and the coaching model is more supportive of learning being part of every day practices.
- Induction was generally referred to as effective and improved from the past. An influx of new staff in 2008 required this area to be reviewed and evidence gathered suggested that this was worth the effort

#### Leadership and Management Effectiveness [Indicators 4, 5 & 6]

- Changes in management roles over the last three years have allowed a natural development in the way the leaders at St John go about their job. This has included:
  - Re-allocation of responsibilities and further delegation from the Principal
  - Providing greater clarity of roles which are re-enforced in the School Plan
  - Effective use of management units and application of resources by having team leaders continuing to have teaching responsibilities. This is respected by other teaching staff.
- There are a number of sources of information relating to the definition of requirements for managers and team leaders. These include:

- the vision and values (special character) stated in the strategic plan;
- defined annual priorities (including a description of what each one 'looks like');
- the team plans which are more specific about exactly what team leaders need to do, and to what standard

In discussions with staff, this provides clarity of practical day to day management expectations and outcomes. Team meetings were described as more effective, relevant and engaging.

- The emphasis on developing a coaching model at St John's has been the catalyst to create an environment of trust and support, which is led from the top. Coaching has provided the framework for feedback to be an everyday occurrence. There has been a huge amount of effort to improve the level of feedback people give and receive. St John's (like many schools) has struggled with making formal appraisal meaningful and useful and the coaching model has addressed this issue.
- People referred to the culture at St John's as:
  - Having all people accountable,
  - Allowing people to take ownership
  - Providing very supportive pastoral care practices
 People felt more motivated to put forward ideas and contribute at team level as a result of this shift.
- Communication is rated as strong and relevant and no one felt excluded or unsure as to what was going on. The small team environment at St John's with shared tea breaks allowed a certain amount of informality to be retained without losing the message. This is a strength and efforts to retain this aspect is encouraged
- Recognition of good performance to people from managers and peers was described as good and improving despite this already being a strength in the past.

### 2007 Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

One of the requirements of a re-recognition assessment is to ensure that the organisation has addressed some of the areas for continuous improvement. The assessor was particularly impressed to see that the management team had taken action on all points raised in the 2007 report. These included:

- Looking at ways to keep a level of freshness in the way the staff only days are run. As noted earlier in the report, people were very positive about their experience of the 2010 term one planning day.
- Communication of milestones and achievements has improved through a more devolved management structure, coaching discussions and meetings in general.
- A number of staff changes in 2008 was going to be a challenge and would require open and clear communication, consultation and effective induction. People confirmed that all of the above occurred.
- Workload was described as heavy and people were concerned in 2007 that this was not sustainable. Whilst people were conscious that levels of work were still high, more effective monitoring of this has been enabled through coaching.

- Evaluation of the School Plan and Professional Development plan needed to improve so that the school was confident that the development of people directly contributed to the successes of the school. The on-going work to improve assessment and reporting was noted as having improved the overall review practices. Again the coaching conversations ensure reflection takes place at the individual level.

### **Areas for Continuous Improvement 2011 - 2013:**

1. Professional development was described as well planned and facilitated earlier in this report. This area could be strengthened by ensuring discussions overtly look at professional development and goal setting through the three tiered approach of organisational, team and individual levels. This will assist in planning discussions, coaching and review of impact of learning and development.
2. Communication processes are robust at St John's. However a number of people wondered if this area could be further improved by looking at current practices and considering if this was the best use of time. It is therefore recommended that a communication review take place in the New Year to consider areas such as the Tuesday teachers meeting and how the higher use of emails is now widely accepted. Involving people at all levels will ensure no changes are made unless a consensus is reached.
3. Support staff are well respected at St John's and efforts have been made to improve how people in non teaching roles can support teaching and learning. Some areas to consider reviewing include:
  - An induction checklist to ensure people know what they should know after a given period in the role (particularly if starting during the year).
  - How any changes to day to day timetables might impact the ability for ancillary staff to perform their role. Timeliness of communication and general awareness from others will ensure gaps don't occur
  - Having a teacher buddy to give feedback after meetings when support staff do not attend would assist the above point. This would also continue to strengthen teaching and non teaching relationships so that no one feels taken for granted.
4. The coaching methodology has been a huge success. On-going development of the coaching model will ensure coaching and mentoring becomes the norm for giving and receiving timed and constructive feedback.
5. People were a little unsure as to what plans were in place with Clare taking maternity leave. Communication of plans needs to be given priority, even if communicating that no plans have been finalised.
6. There is an opportunity to continue to celebrate milestones achieved during the year. Each goal has very specific outcomes and timeframes so re-enforcing what has been achieved on a more regular basis may assist in motivating people by realising the good progress is being made.

## **Opportunity to gain Gold status accreditation in 2013:**

St John's operates at a high level and produces effective outcomes in the way it develops and supports its people. The next assessment in 2013 provides an opportunity for this to be recognised with a Gold level award. In order to achieve that level of accreditation the management team will need to develop strategies in the following areas:

### Planning and Involvement [Indicators 1, 3 & 7]

- The vision should continue to be clearly linked to the school's values and ensuring these remain at the heart of the school. This area currently meets higher level requirements of Indicator 1
- Being able to articulate how St John's promotes work life balance consistently at all levels will gain a number of Evidence Requirements in Indicator 3
- The review of internal communication practices and implementation of changes after consultation will strengthen Indicator 7.

### Leadership and Management Capability [Indicators 4, 5 and 6]

- The coaching framework could be further embedded into the everyday practices.
- Equality and diversity strategies exist through the intent of the special character, stated values and specific goals. Overtly stating how St John's ensures equality exists at all levels will be required to meet this area of the Standard
- Role modelling is considered as an important part of the leadership of the school and people need to confirm that this occurs.
- Open and transparent consultation needs to continue to be encouraged.

### Effective Learning and Development [Indicators 2, 8 and 9]

- Effective use of both external and external learning and development resources (already in place).
- Learning is valued and is an everyday occurrence that is shared across the school (already in place)

### Continuous Improvement [Indicator 10]

- Data is used to effectively monitor and plan for the future. This sits nicely with developments in the use of assessment data etc
- People believe that it is a great place to work!

## Conclusion

Gaining re-recognition against the Investors in People standard does not happen by accident. This is achieved through a structured, committed and consistent approach to planning and delivery of organisational practices that are outcomes focused.

St John's is no exception and the management team has worked through a number of actions since the first assessment in 2006. In particular this has been focused in consistency and quality in education and maintaining the reputation of the school in the community. This has demanded exceptional leadership and the development of the management team has paid dividends.

Well done to all those at St John's for this achievement. The Investors in People Standard is a robust improvement framework and when benchmarked against many NZ organisations, St John's continues to perform at a high Standard. Investors in People recognition will demonstrate both internally and externally that a high performing and supportive culture exists.

We look forward to coming back to re-recognise St John's in the future and review on-going progress and improvements. Again congratulations on this achievement, and best wishes for the future.

Best regards  
Stuart Burgess  
Assessor

## Next Steps

- Feedback to staff on the findings of the report and presentation of Certificate
- Complete Action Plan to address Areas for Improvement