INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™

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Insights assessment feedback

Heronsbridge School

Project number: WAL-20-00188
Practitioner: Nicola Wright
Date: 05/12/20

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Heronsbridge School did it!

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We invest in people Platinum
Rydym yn buddsoddi mewn pobl Platinwm

Heronsbridge School is at the Platinum level of the We invest in people accreditation.

Detailed feedback and recommendations

- What to be pleased about
- What to consider working on
- Suggested recommendations
- What's next

Key dates

Accreditation date	12-month meeting	24-month meeting	Accreditation expiry
20/11/20	09/11/21	09/11/22	09/11/23

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At a glance
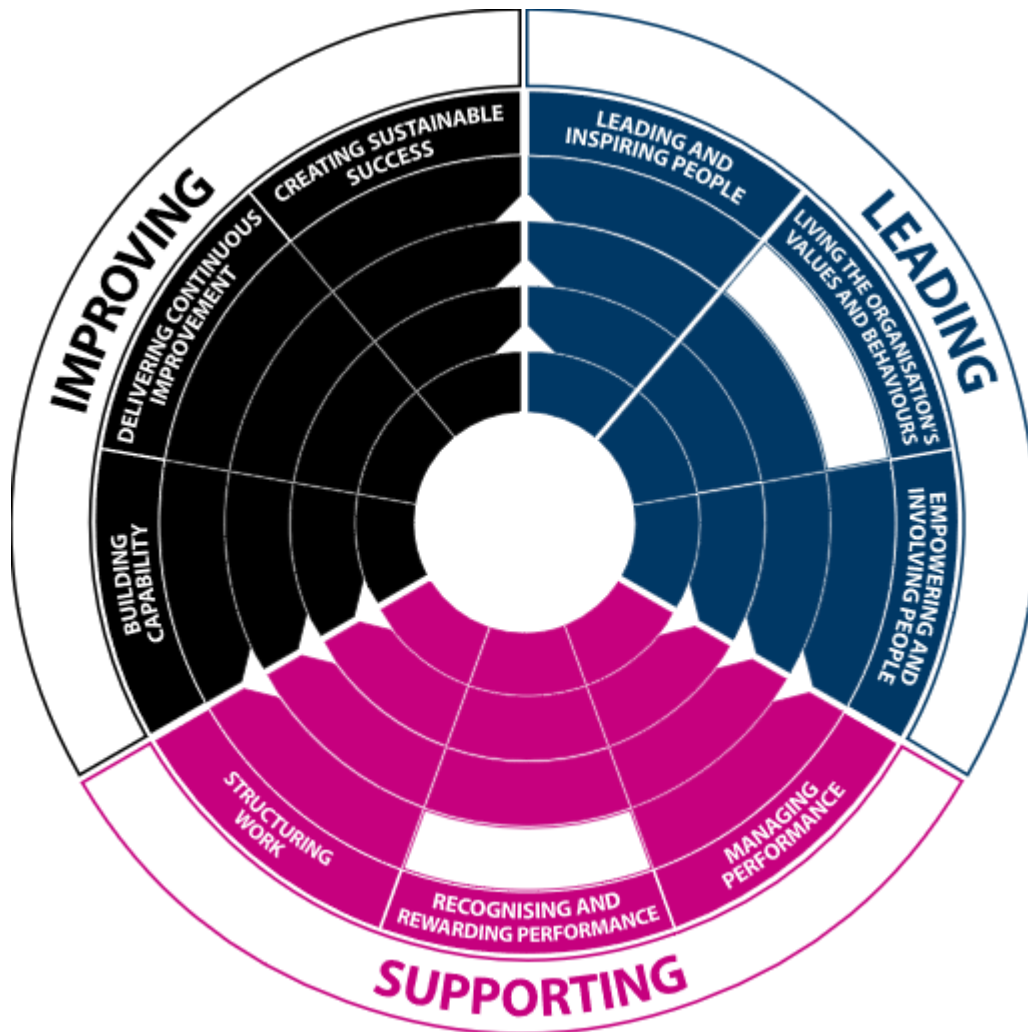
The heat map above shows the final assessment outcome for Heronsbridge School, hereafter referred to in this report as Heronsbridge. In summary, it can be seen that Heronsbridge has had a very strong performance overall, the majority of the indicators at the high performing level, with weaker evidence areas only in indicator 2 'living the organisation's values and behaviours' and indicator 5 'recognising and rewarding high performance'. Despite this, these two indicators nevertheless remain at the advanced performance level. Overall, this has led to platinum level accreditation.

The strategic goals of Heronsbridge are focussed on realising the four purposes whilst planning for the Curriculum for Wales, which was launched in January 2020 and needs to be fully implemented by September 2022. Heronsbridge uses the Investors in People framework to underpin these strategic goals.

Heronsbridge has held Gold level accreditation since 2017 and has always embraced previous assessment recommendations in the spirit of continuous achievement. Hence, in this assessment report, repetition is avoided by focussing on the advanced and high performing levels only (the assessment itself did of course test the developed and established levels, for reassurance).

What to be pleased about

- People are proud to work at Heronsbridge and say it is a great place to work.

- People have a high level of trust for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and indeed across the school as a whole.

- People feel well supported during this exceptional period of work caused by the COVID-19 situation.

- People feel very trusted to use their initiative and take decisions in their role.

- People can see how their individual and team roles support the strategic goals and values of Heronsbridge.

- There is a very positive culture of continuous improvement and innovation and creativity.

- People have a high buy-in to the values of Heronsbridge which very much influences their positive behaviour and performance.

What to consider working on

- Ensure consistency of management and leadership across the organisation.

- Consider how to provide people with more confidence to challenge inappropriate behaviours should such a situation arise.

- Continue to 'sense check' communication and engagement across the organisation to ensure improved practices continue to move forward.

- Review recognition strategies to identify any opportunities for more consistent approaches appreciating and recognising high performing teams and individuals.

- Continue to review evaluation processes so that you have even better information on the opportunities for improved people practices.

- Review the current meeting formats; whole school meeting were valued highly and regretfully COVID-19 is limiting the opportunity for large gatherings.

- Ensure people are prepared to challenge behaviours which are inconsistent with the values of Heronsbridge.

Suggested recommendations

- Consistency of management and leadership across the organisation – see Annex 1 for a resource paper.

- Consider whether it might be appropriate to offer further learning and development to create an environment of leadership at all levels.

- All over the globe, organisations are being challenged by the COVID-19 crisis to find new ways of operating and communicating to serve their customers and communities. it may be useful to review some of the latest thinking in this area: https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/reimagining-the-post-pandemic-organization

- There may be ways that Heronsbridge can build on the excellent level of engagement and involvement evidenced even further; there may be some ideas in the link below: https://www.investorsinpeople.com/knowledge/employee-voice/

- Consider ways in which you could add more structure and / or flexibility to your recognition and reward processes. Some initial thoughts on this can be found here: https://www.xperthr.co.uk/good-practice-manual/employee-recognition/157383/

- Although the school has limited opportunity to make changes to the reward mechanisms in place, there is space to introduce some new recognition schemes. Consider news ways in which Heronsbridge could celebrate success, recognise performance and show appreciation, to further improve engagement. One interesting innovative approach can be found here: https://www.mo.work/

- Given the level of maturity of people practices, it may be worth reviewing approach to performance management and appraisal, considering some of the latest developments on this. Some thoughts on this can be found here: https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/ahead-of-the-curve-the-future-of-performance-management

- Dealing with difficult situations where inconsistent behaviours are observed may not arise often, but it may be useful to develop confidence skills in teams so they are prepared for occasions when they observe and need to challenge such behaviours See Annex 2 for a guidance document.

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What's next?

When this report has been received and read, there will be the opportunity for further discussion in a **feedback meeting**.

WHO?
The meeting will include Nicola Wright (Investors in People Practitioner) as well as representatives from Heronsbridge.

WHEN?
The feedback meeting is scheduled for 10am on the **16/12/20.**

WHERE?
The feedback meeting will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

WHAT?
- **discuss the result** and the recommendations in detail
- brainstorm how to turn the recommendations into **tangible activities**
- develop an **action plan,** which will be reviewed one and two years on from now

To keep Platinum accreditation, Heronsbridge will need to

- keep meeting (or exceed!) the **requirements** of the Platinum award
- meet for a conversation at **12 and 24 months** – this will not be an assessment but will give the opportunity to **discuss progress** against the agreed action plan
- be **reassessed** no more than three years on from this assessment.

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Assessment results
Your results by indicator

Compared to your last assessment in 2017, you have moved up at least one level in seven indicators.

INDICATOR	THEME	DEVELOPED	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	HIGH PERFORMING
LEADING AND INSPIRING PEOPLE	Creating transparency and trust	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Motivating people to deliver the organisations objectives	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Developing leadership capability	✓	✓	✓	✓
LIVING THE ORGANISATION'S VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS	Operating in line with the values	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Adopting the values	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Living the values	✓	✓	✓	
EMPOWERING AND INVOLVING PEOPLE	Empowering people	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Participating and collaborating	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Making decisions	✓	✓	✓	✓
MANAGING PERFORMANCE	Setting objectives	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Encouraging high performance	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Measuring and assessing performance	✓	✓	✓	✓
RECOGNISING AND REWARDING HIGH PERFORMANCE	Designing an approach to recognition and reward	✓	✓	✓	
	Adopting a culture of recognition	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Recognising and rewarding people	✓	✓	✓	
STRUCTURING WORK	Designing roles	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Creating autonomy in roles	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Enabling collaborative working	✓	✓	✓	✓
BUILDING CAPABILITY	Understanding people's potential	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Supporting learning and development	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Deploying the right people at the right time	✓	✓	✓	✓
DELIVERING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	Improving through internal and external sources	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Creating a culture of continuous improvement	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Encouraging innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓
CREATING SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS	Focusing on the future	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Embracing change	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Understanding the external context	✓	✓	✓	✓

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How the assessment was undertaken

This assessment was slightly different to a conventional assessment, due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 situation. The context discussion with the SLT and all conversations were conducted remotely, via Microsoft Teams or by telephone. Under normal circumstance, these sessions would be a combination of one-to-one conversations and small focus groups. Instead, all but one of these conversations were carried out exclusively on one-to-one basis. The sample size, which for an organisation of the size of the Heronsbridge selecting an Insights assessment, is required to be at least 9%; in this instance, this was raised to over 13%.

Evidence for this assessment was considered from three data sources:

- The online survey, with every person at Heronsbridge invited to participate

- Conversations with people across the organisation

- A suite of documentary and metrics evidence, including

    - Whole School Improvement Plan 2018-2021
    - Heronsbridge School Data & achievement summaries
    - Learning walks
    - Professional Learning Plan
    - Training evaluation and impact
    - Lesson observation evidence
    - Staff development and learning opportunities summary
    - Developing a whole school vision
    - Heronsbridge Partnerships 2019/20
    - OECD SLO staff responses and survey results (2017 and 2020)
    - Hector screenshots
    - UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools - Gold Accreditation Report
    - Estyn Report 2014 (2020 inspection delayed due to COVID-19)
    - Job adverts, descriptions and job packs
    - Investors in People video
    - Purple mash blogs

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Survey highlights

The highest scores

- 98% of people feel that their behaviours reflect Heronsbridge's values.

- 95% share Heronsbridge's values

- 95% believe that their work is interesting.

- 95% are positive about Heronsbridge's plan for the future.

...and the lowest

- 6% say that they have not discussed performance with their manager in the last 6 months.

- 4% of people disagree that people are selected for roles based on their skills and abilities.

- 3% of people do not feel confident to challenge behaviours which do not match Heronsbridge's values.

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The overall survey score

Benchmark

788
out of 900

YOUR BENCHMARK
- **788**

AVERAGE IIP BENCHMARK *
- **726**

AVERAGE INDUSTRY BENCHMARK
- **777**

Showing results for Primary Education

* This reveals the average IIP Benchmark for all organisations who have undertaken the survey.

The benchmark above shows Heronsbridge's overall performance in the survey compared to the Investors in People average, for all organisations who have completed the survey; also, compared to the relevant industry sector, in this case 'primary education'. Please note this benchmark is based on live data and is correct as of the survey closure date 19th November 2020. The benchmark overview shows that Heronsbridge is ahead of both the Investors in People average benchmark and ahead of the industry average benchmark. It is important to note that the Investors in People average benchmark data includes all organisations of all sizes in all sectors; typically, small organisations (single site) return higher scores than large organisations.

The benchmark value of 788, places Heronsbridge 21st out of 69 originations who completed assessment and identified with the industry, Primary Education. This data is based on educational setting with between 50 and 249 staff. Heronsbridge has more people than average for a primary setting, and if the data for 100 to 249 is analysed, Heronsbridge rank joint second.

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We Invest in People Benchmark Data - Primary Education
No of Employees 50-249

Heronsbridge School
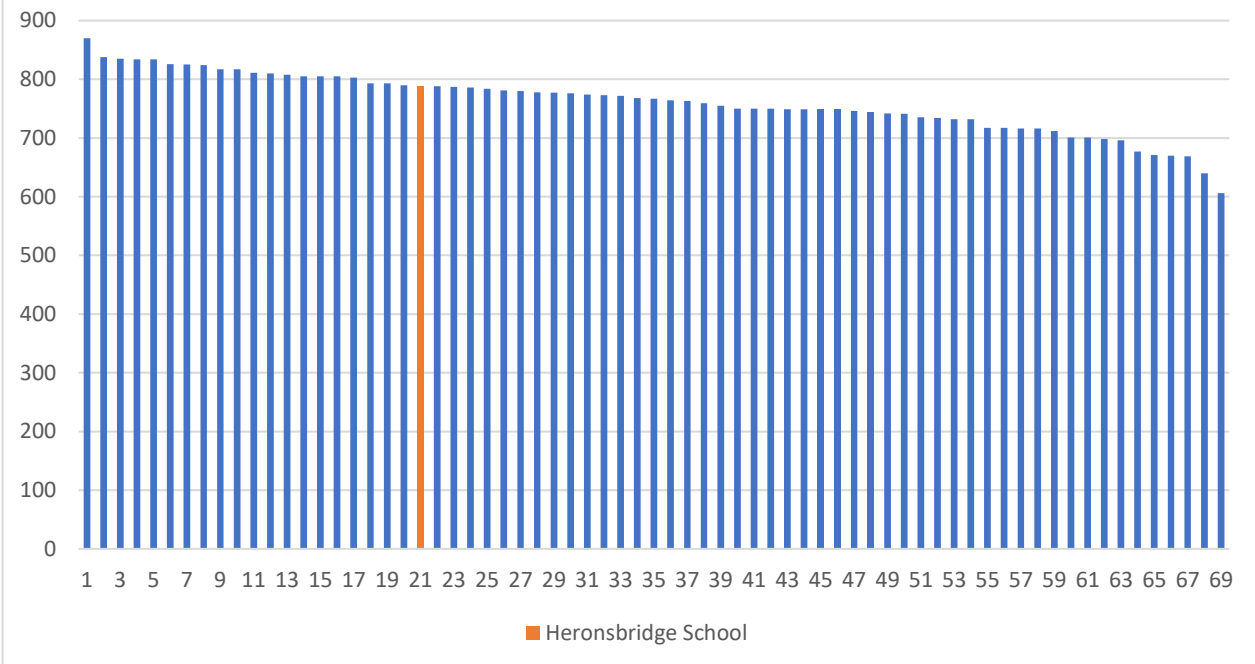
We Invest in People Benchmark Data - Primary Education
No of Employees 100-249

Heronsbridge School

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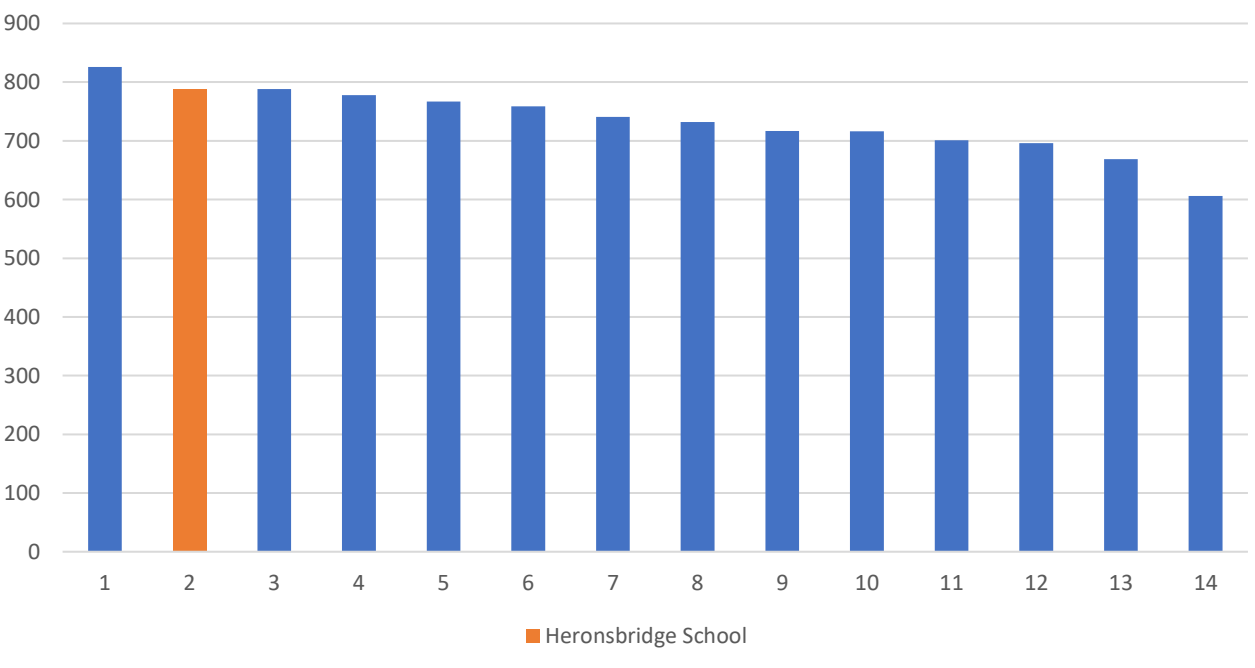
The graph below shows the benchmark comparison for the 2017 assessment and the touch points at 12 and 24 months. The 2020 benchmark, 788 is just slightly below the 2019 benchmark, 792 but there was no data triangulation at the 24 month review.

Heronsbridge School Benchmark Comparison
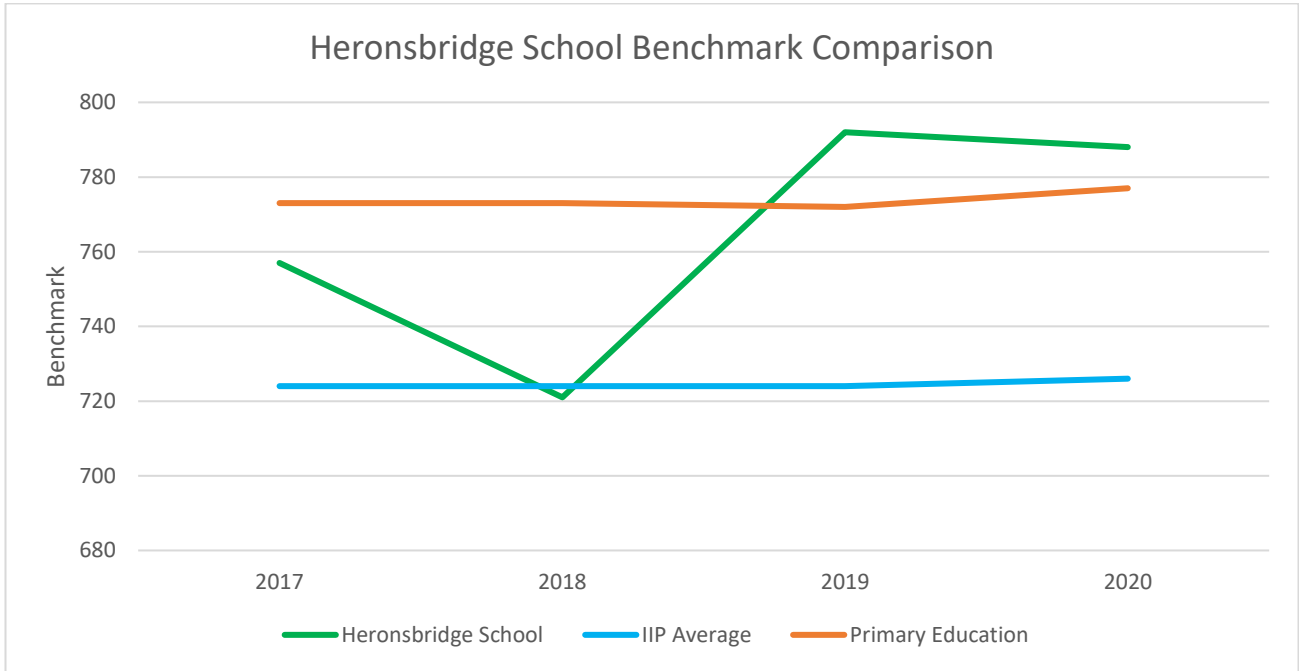
Who took the survey?

Survey Response Rate

Overview

TOTAL RESPONSES   155 responses out of 200 (78%)

RESPONSE METHOD

Email link: 0 responses out of 155   Open access: 155 responses out of 155

The online survey was deployed to 200 employees by open access and a response of 78% was received. This was significantly above the international We Invest in People guidelines of 50% and therefore the sample is considered statistically significant. 78% represents a very high level of engagement from people at Heronsbridge and is an increase on the 2017 (61%), 2018 (63%) and 2019 (63%) response rates.

Heronsbridge School Online Survey Reponse Rate
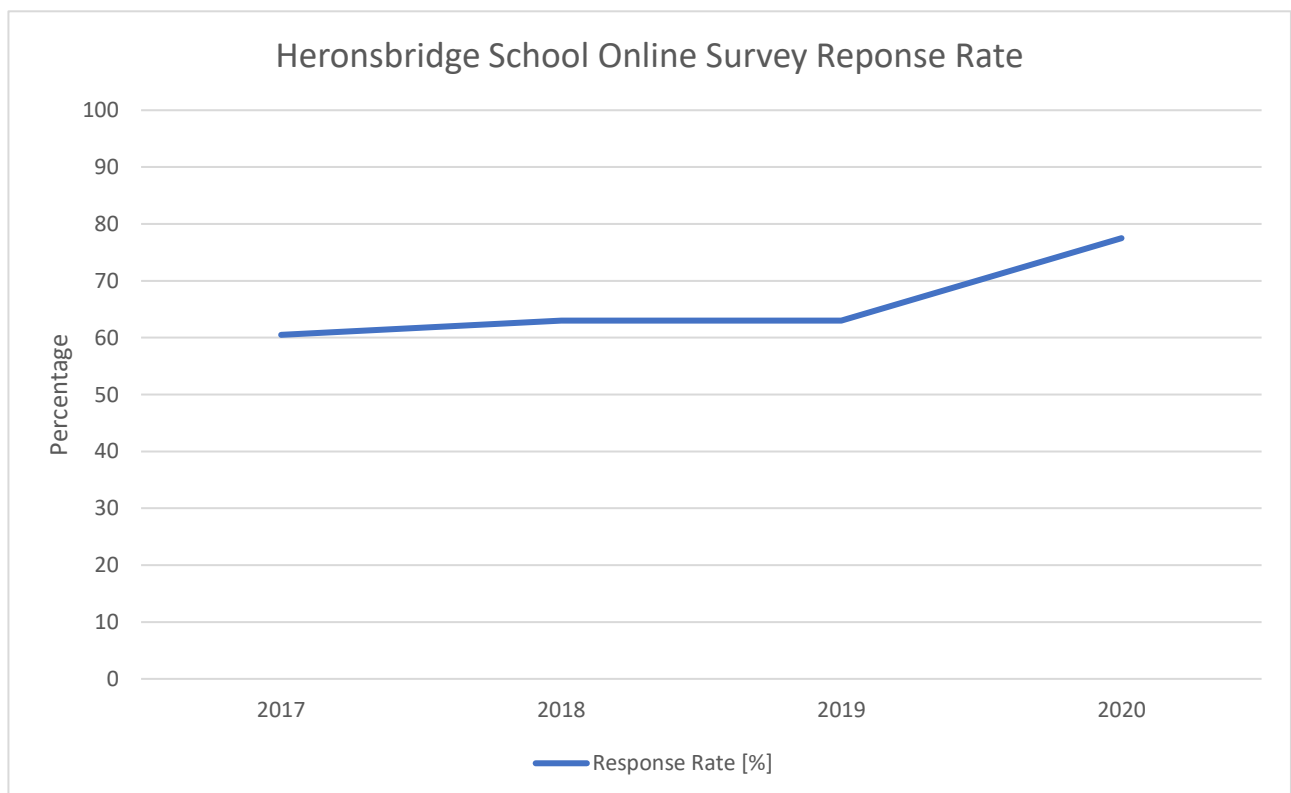
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Survey results by indicator

The table below shows how employees responded to the online survey for each indicator of the We Invest in People Standard (including the average per indicator and the difference to other organisations that have completed the online survey).

The Average Score is the average response from all employees who participated in the online survey. To help interpret this score, number 7 represents a response of 'Strongly Agree', so the closer the Average Score is to 7, the more positively the result can be read. 4 is a neutral response.

This overview provides a summary of the online survey results at an aggregate indicator level, as well as the score of alignment. The online survey covers all 9 indicators of the We Invest in People Standard and each of the 38 statements asks the respondent to rate agreement with the statement aligned to one of the indicators. The responses are categorised from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (7). The 1-7-point scale is then used as a score of alignment against the standard.

The overall analysis based on the online survey alone demonstrates the following:

The highest rated indicators were:

- Structuring work is related to designing roles, creating autonomy and enabling collaborative working, rated overall when combining strongly agree and agree at 90.2%.
- Creating sustainable success and relates to the focus on the future, embracing change and considering the external environment, rated overall when combining strongly agree and agree at 90.5%.
- Living the organisation's values and behaviours are related to operating in line with, adopting and living values, rated overall when combining strongly agree and agree at 89.3%.

The lowest indicators were:

- Recognising and rewarding high performance relates to designing and adapting an effective approach, and impacting reward and recognition of people, this was rated overall when combining strongly agree and agree at 60.5%.
- Delivering continuous improvement is related to the extent to which people use internal and external sources to come up with new ideas and innovative approaches, this was rated 81.6% when combining strongly agree and agree.

It should be noted that all indicators scored considerably above the We Invest in People average and also the same as or above the industry average for Primary Education.

Indicator summary

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average Indicator Score	Difference from IIP Average
INDICATOR 1 Leading and inspiring people	38.9%	43.1%	11.3%	4.5%	1.3%	0.6%	0.3%	6.1	+0.5
INDICATOR 2 Living the organisation's values and behaviours	47.6%	41.7%	6.5%	3.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%	6.3	+0.4
INDICATOR 3 Empowering and involving people	42.1%	41.8%	10.3%	2.7%	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	6.1	+0.4
INDICATOR 4 Managing performance	42.9%	38.9%	9.4%	5.6%	0.6%	1.9%	0.6%	6.1	+0.3
INDICATOR 5 Recognising and rewarding high performance	25.0%	35.5%	22.1%	10.8%	4.8%	1.0%	0.8%	5.6	+0.5
INDICATOR 6 Structuring work	49.7%	40.5%	7.1%	1.6%	0.3%	0.2%	0.6%	6.4	+0.5
INDICATOR 7 Building capability	42.5%	44.1%	8.4%	3.0%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%	6.2	+0.7
INDICATOR 8 Delivering continuous improvement	35.3%	46.3%	9.8%	6.0%	1.3%	0.8%	0.5%	6	+0.3
INDICATOR 9 Creating sustainable success	50.2%	40.3%	5.6%	2.4%	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%	6.3	+0.6

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Indicator summary
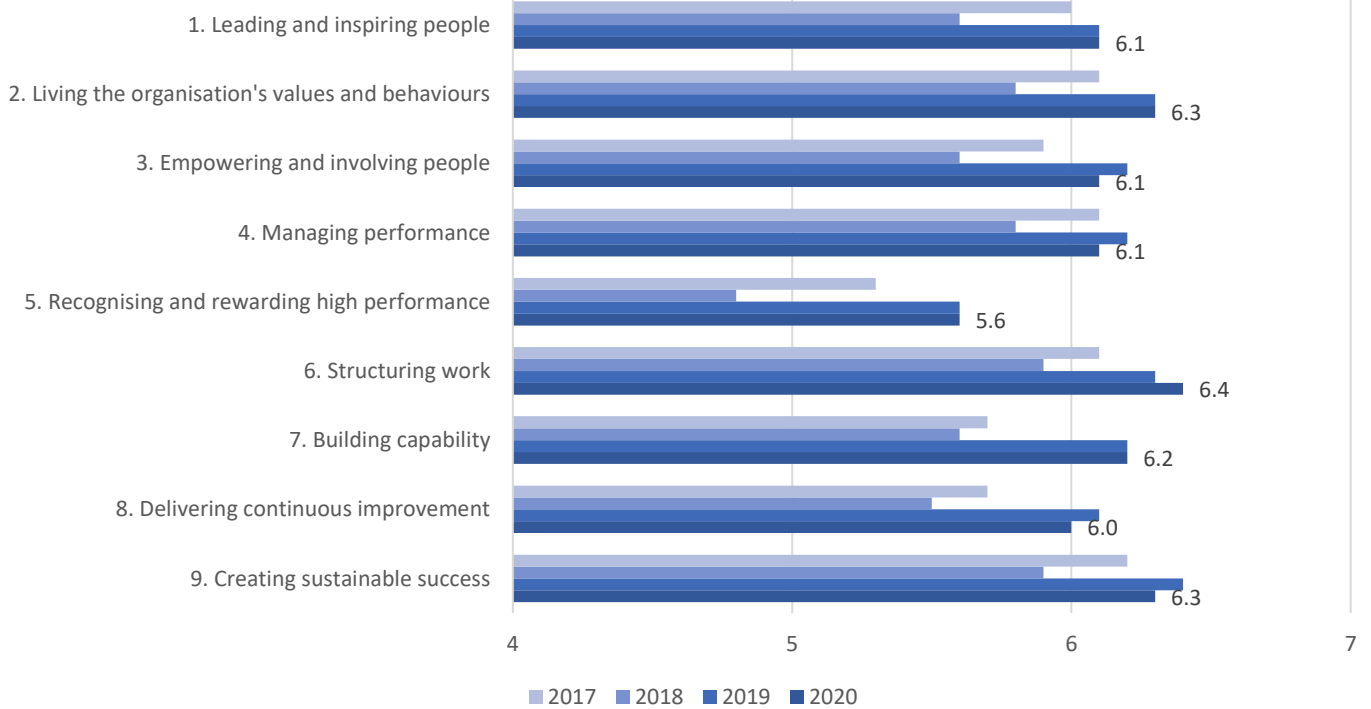
	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average Indicator Score	Industry
INDICATOR 1 Leading and inspiring people	38.9%	43.1%	11.3%	4.5%	1.3%	0.6%	0.3%	6.1	0.0
INDICATOR 2 Living the organisation's values and behaviours	47.6%	41.7%	6.5%	3.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%	6.3	0.0
INDICATOR 3 Empowering and involving people	42.1%	41.8%	10.3%	2.7%	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	6.1	+0.1
INDICATOR 4 Managing performance	42.9%	38.9%	9.4%	5.6%	0.6%	1.9%	0.6%	6.1	-0.0
INDICATOR 5 Recognising and rewarding high performance	25.0%	35.5%	22.1%	10.8%	4.8%	1.0%	0.8%	5.6	+0.1
INDICATOR 6 Structuring work	49.7%	40.5%	7.1%	1.6%	0.3%	0.2%	0.6%	6.4	+0.1
INDICATOR 7 Building capability	42.5%	44.1%	8.4%	3.0%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%	6.2	+0.3
INDICATOR 8 Delivering continuous improvement	35.3%	46.3%	9.8%	6.0%	1.3%	0.8%	0.5%	6	+0.1
INDICATOR 9 Creating sustainable success	50.2%	40.3%	5.6%	2.4%	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%	6.3	+0.1

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Average Indicator Score

Indicator	2017	2020
1. Leading and inspiring people	6.0	6.1
2. Living the organisation's values and behaviours	6.1	6.3
3. Empowering and involving people	5.9	6.1
4. Managing performance	6.1	6.1
5. Recognising and rewarding high performance	5.3	5.6
6. Structuring work	6.1	6.4
7. Building capability	5.7	6.2
8. Delivering continuous improvement	5.7	6.0
9. Creating sustainable success	6.2	6.3

■ 2017 ■ 2020

Average Indicator Score

Indicator	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Leading and inspiring people	6.0		5.6	6.1
2. Living the organisation's values and behaviours	6.1		5.8	6.3
3. Empowering and involving people	5.9		5.6	6.1
4. Managing performance	6.1		5.8	6.1
5. Recognising and rewarding high performance	5.3		4.8	5.6
6. Structuring work	6.1		5.9	6.4
7. Building capability	5.7		5.6	6.2
8. Delivering continuous improvement	5.7		5.5	6.0
9. Creating sustainable success	6.2		5.9	6.3

■ 2017 ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

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Indicator positive sentiment

Chart showing Indicator positive sentiment comparing 2017 and 2020:
- Leading and inspiring people: 82.0%
- Living the organisation's values and behaviours: 89.3%
- Empowering and involving people: 83.9%
- Managing performance: 81.8%
- Recognising and rewarding high performance: 60.5%
- Structuring work: 90.2%
- Building capability: 86.6%
- Delivering continuous improvement: 81.6%
- Creating sustainable success: 90.5%

Legend: 2017, 2020

Indicator positive sentiment

Chart showing Indicator positive sentiment comparing 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 across:
Leading and inspiring people, Living the organisation's values and behaviours, Empowering and involving people, Managing performance, Recognising and rewarding high performance, Structuring work, Building capability, Delivering continuous improvement, Creating sustainable success

Legend: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020

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Indicator negative sentiment

Chart legend: 2017, 2020

Indicator	2017	2020
Leading and inspiring people	1.0%	0.9%
Living the organisation's values and behaviours	0.8%	0.8%
Empowering and involving people	3.8%	1.9%
Managing performance	2.4%	2.5%
Recognising and rewarding high performance	3.6%	1.8%
Structuring work	2.6%	0.8%
Building capability	3.6%	1.1%
Delivering continuous improvement	3.2%	1.3%
Creating sustainable success	0.8%	0.6%

Indicator negative sentiment

Chart legend: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020

Survey results by theme

Themes (Highs and lows)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Average Score	Difference from IIP Average
Highs									
Adopting the values INDICATOR 2: Living the organisation's values and behaviours	57.4%	36.8%	4.8%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5	+0.5
Understanding the external context INDICATOR 9: Creating sustainable success	52.9%	40.6%	3.2%	2.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	6.4	+0.6
Focusing on the future INDICATOR 9: Creating sustainable success	54.8%	36.5%	5.8%	1.6%	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	6.4	+0.6
Designing roles INDICATOR 6: Structuring work	54.5%	35.2%	8.7%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	6.4	+0.6
Enabling collaborative working INDICATOR 6: Structuring work	46.5%	47.7%	3.9%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	6.4	+0.4
Lows									
Developing leadership capability INDICATOR 1: Leading and inspiring people	25.2%	49.0%	17.4%	5.8%	1.9%	0.6%	0.0%	5.9	+0.7
Measuring and assessing performance INDICATOR 4: Managing performance	41.3%	27.1%	12.9%	11.6%	1.3%	4.5%	1.3%	5.8	+0.1
Deploying the right people at the right time INDICATOR 7: Building capability	27.7%	41.9%	16.8%	6.5%	3.2%	2.6%	1.3%	5.7	+0.4
Recognising and rewarding people INDICATOR 5: Recognising and rewarding high performance	23.2%	35.8%	22.3%	11.9%	4.8%	1.0%	1.0%	5.5	+0.5
Designing an approach to recognition and reward INDICATOR 5: Recognising and rewarding high performance	22.6%	30.3%	22.6%	14.8%	7.7%	1.3%	0.6%	5.4	+0.4

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Context

The context discussion meeting was a facilitated session including Jeremy Evans, Headteacher, Lisa James-Smith, Deputy Headteacher and representatives of the SLT. The session included a consideration of current performance (and aspired to performance) against the Investors in People framework. In undertaking this exercise, the strategic goals of Heronsbridge and associated values, were front-and-centre of the conversations. The context discussion is used to establish the hypothesis of the assessment process; do wider colleagues have a similar view of the organisation as the SLT?

Heronsbridge School aspires to be
- A pioneer in special education, with high expectations for all.
- At the heart of our community, working in partnership to provide a welcoming and motivating learning experience for all.
- A provider of an engaging, relevant curriculum where everyone is supported, challenged and inspired to flourish.

Heronsbridge Values
- Wellbeing
- Independence
- Opportunity
- Sustainability

Healthy, Confident Individuals
- I know the difference between right and wrong/ good and bad
- I know how to behave with different people
- I will always try my best
- I can work on my own
- I will try again and never give up
- I will be a good friend to others
- I will always try to do things on my own
- I will always look after myself as well as I can
- I will get help from others when I need it
- I know about how to live a healthy lifestyle (diet & exercise)
- I will try to keep myself safe

Health and Well-being

Wellbeing Wynnie

Ambitious, Capable Learners

- I want to do well
- I can celebrate my own and others achievements
- I will always try my best
- I will never give up
- I will always be ready to learn
- I will work on my own whenever I can
- I can ask questions to get information
- I can talk about my learning
- I can take responsibility for my learning
- I can find out about things and say what I think

Independence

Independent Izzy

Enterprising, Creative Contributors

- I can use my ideas to make and do
- I can think for myself
- I can solve problems
- I can work with others as part of a team or group
- I will try new things and experiences
- I can talk about my ideas and feelings
- I can help my friends

Opportunity

Opportunity Ollie

Ethical, Informed Citizens

- I can share my thoughts and opinions
- I can talk about my interests and listen to others
- I know my rights
- I will always be kind to others
- I will always respect others beliefs
- I will always display my best behaviour
- I am aware of my own and others emotions
- I am aware of things important to me - people, places, etc
- I will do my best to look after our planet
- I will use what I know to make decisions
- I will always Reuse, Reduce, Recycle
- I will try my best to look after the world around me

Sustainability

Sustainable Sam
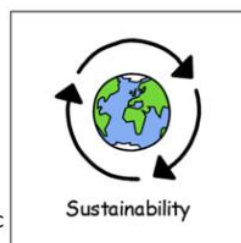
Heronsbridge's aims for the learners are that they

- Develop a strong sense of who they are and that they are proud of their Welsh identity
- Show a curiosity and concern for the environment and recognise their responsibilities as global citizens
- Show resilience, independent thinking skills and creativity and have the confidence to explore their world and try things out
- Have a growing ability to respond to a changing world and are equipped for developments in literacy, numeracy and technology

The Heronsbridge ethos is one that

- Promotes respect, tolerance, empathy and teamwork
- Models high standards and sets high expectations of learning, teaching and behaviour
- Values each individual, nurturing growth and development.
- Creates a safe and caring environment, where everyone is included

The non-negotiable aspiration is that

- Heronsbridge is a happy school where everyone is valued and inspired to give their best

The output of the context discussion meeting is summarised below in the heat maps presented, which can be compared to the final outcome heatmap, presented earlier in this report.

'As is' heatmap – the Senior Leadership Team view Heronsbridge's current performance
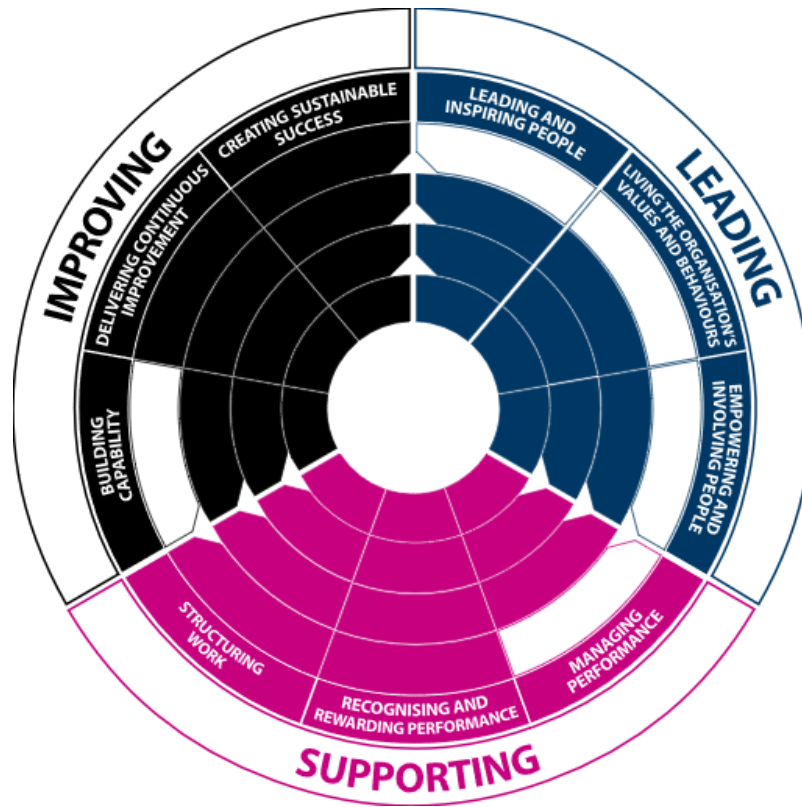
'To be' heatmap – the Senior Leadership Team's aspiration for Heronsbridge's future performance

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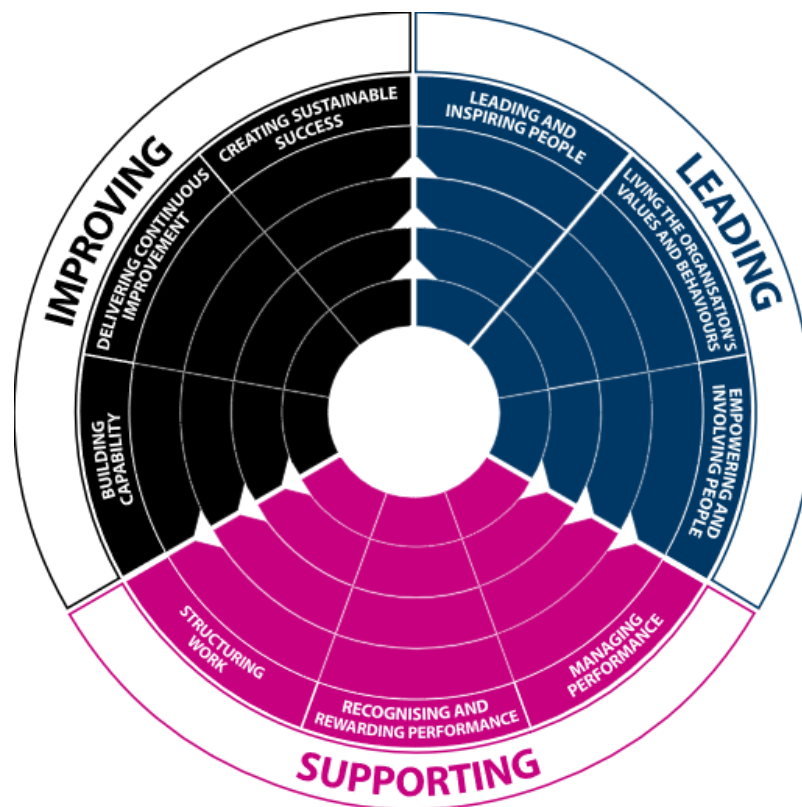
What people said

Leading

LEADING AND INSPIRING PEOPLE

Statements in the survey for this indicator relate to how leaders make Heronsbridge's objectives clear, inspire and motivate people to deliver against these objectives and are trusted by people in the organisation. The table graphic below, shows the four statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment. Positive sentiment is determined by 'strongly agree' and 'agree'.

Indicator 1: Leading and inspiring people

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I trust the leaders of my organisation	41.9%	40.6%	9.0%	3.9%	2.6%	1.3%	0.6%
Management communicates the organisation's ambition	44.5%	43.2%	9.0%	2.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
My manager motivates me to achieve my best	43.9%	39.4%	9.7%	5.8%	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%
My organisation develops great leaders	25.2%	49.0%	17.4%	5.8%	1.9%	0.6%	0.0%

Statement 1 – *I trust the leaders of my organisation* – 82.5% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *Management communicates the organisation's ambition* – 87.7% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *My manager motivates me to achieve my best* – 83.3% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *My organisation develops great leaders* – 74.2% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored the third lowest of all the indicators; 6.1 out of 7.

We invest in people

Creating transparency and trust

The SLT strive to ensure consistency of trust at all levels of the organisation by enhancing communication routes. People confirmed that this was an area that had improved over the past few years, but now, due to the COVID-19 crisis requiring teams to stay in strict 'bubbles', the SLT meet together and matters are cascaded by line managers to their departments and teaching classes. Whilst this was seen as positive change by some, others were missing the whole school meeting and direct exposure to the SLT. Others mentioned they did not feel they were missing information, more often duplication of information was commented upon.

Many people spoke about having high regard for the leaders (at all levels) in the school and seeing them as role models. There is also a strong system in place by which teachers manage their own class teams and provide direction and feedback where necessary. It is worth noting however, that the collaborative culture in place at Heronsbridge means that teachers rarely direct and it is more commonly the case that the team works cohesively together as one unit.

Throughout the discussions, many people articulated that they perceive that leaders are trusted and display the right behaviours, people described the leaders acting as role models, particularly in their interactions with the children.

It is recognised by all staff that the SLT have different strengths which complement each other, all are available and accessible. As well as demonstrating pride and commitment to the pupils in their care, people across the organisation are very aware of the need to demonstrate behaviour to provide a welcoming and motivating learning experience for all.

'They're all very good here, all the leaders are exceptional, they lead by example. You'd never doubt that they're always trying to do the right thing.'

'You've got to give it to them, it's been a stressful year for everyone, but they don't let that show, they're always positive and always available.'

'It's brilliant to work for the leaders here, they are amazing, friendly, approachable and I know that their doors are always open.'

'Our class teacher is amazing with the children, I saw her dancing around with some of them the other day and I thought 'that's what we need here', we want leaders who understand what we're dealing with, and they really do.'

'The communication here is somewhat disjointed at the moment we are missing the whole school meetings not everything we need to know is necessarily getting through.'

Motivating people to deliver the organisation's objectives

There is a consistent understanding of the school's purpose and objectives across all staff discussions. This is partly a result of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) being available to all staff, which details the objectives and success criteria, and regular reiteration of the aims through teachers' meetings and staff briefings. It is credible that this clarity has been achieved in a relatively organic way, without people feeling that the understanding is being forced on them. It is also notable that people enjoy their jobs and feel fortunate in the fact that they work in an excellent school, therefore taking an interest in sustaining or improving performance in critical areas.

We invest in people

The SIP is reviewed and discussed on a regular basis by the SLT, filtering into everyday conversations with staff. People relayed a consistent message when asked of the school's objectives.

Motivation in the school is incredibly high and a result of a number of reasons. Firstly, people find leaders inspirational and respond accordingly in terms of their own aspirations and performance, there is significant credit given to leaders and their approach being fair and consistent. Secondly, people are motivated by the fact that the school is currently a high performing school, as evidenced by ESTYN inspections and numerous other accreditations and awards, such as the Gold Rights Respecting school award and as a Trauma Informed School. Finally, people are working vocationally, in an area which they find inspiring. The pupils in the school are valued by the staff and this is the primary motivator to them, they want to have an impact on pupil outcomes.

Although many of the above motivators are not extrinsically tied to leadership, the SLT and other managers play an integral role in reminding staff of these things when their roles are difficult, which they inevitably can be. People believe that leaders and managers are passionate about making the school the very best learning environment possible, and providing pupils with the very best learning opportunities, which has effectively permeated every level and team across the school. It is to the school's credit that teams such as the administration team still speak of their impact on pupils, understanding the impact their own work has on them, despite being non-teaching staff.

'This is an amazing school, I wouldn't work anywhere else, there is nowhere else like this, I've been to other schools and I would never leave here.'

'The SLT are really passionate, they believe what they're saying, and it comes across so people will always get on buzz from that.'

'Nothing goes unnoticed here, you always hear positive endorsement, you know you got support.'

'There's an atmosphere here, everybody talks about it, everyone just wants to do their best every day, it sounds like a cliché but it's true.'

Developing leadership capability

There is a notable lack of bureaucracy at Heronsbridge, as everyone's contribution is valued. This means that staff at all levels are encouraged to take the lead in areas of interest, and there is evidence of this happening across the school. A consistent comment made throughout the discussions was that the staff work together as a team. This ethos has allowed increased collaboration and team cohesion but has also built further confidence and ownership amongst learning and support staff who see the importance and value of their roles.

There have been a number of roles created in recent years, which have allowed people to take on additional responsibility and develop leadership skills. There is also evidence of the SLT making intentional effort to facilitate people in achieving their career aspirations, providing exposure opportunities and moving people around the school in order to allow them to gain necessary experience for the next step in their development.

There is a sincere effort from the SLT to be available and accessible, this was noted by all those involved in discussions. This is in spite of current challenges posted by bubbles; people feel that they could always speak to leaders if necessary. This goes some way towards sustaining the culture of support and collaboration across all levels of staff.

Conversations confirmed that management and leadership development opportunities are available, including for people who aspire to be leaders as well as those who currently hold leadership roles. Department managers spoken with confirmed that they are developed to undertake their role, as part of their career pathway, and that they understand how to develop their people effectively, including supporting them through the performance review process.

The effort from the SLT in encouraging all staff to play an active part in the development of the school has paid dividends, with staff at all levels showing an interest in achieving successful outcomes for the school and its pupils.

'There's lots of opportunity here, if you want to try something new you can, and that gives you something to talk about in future interviews.'

'I wasn't confident I would like to work in the Autism department at first, but once I overcame that initial concern, I love it! There are loads of new skills and techniques to learn here which can be transferred to other parts of the school. It's been great for my personal development.'

'There's no hierarchy here really, it starts with the SLT being around the school all the time and having an open door all of the time, but it's also that you could walk into a classroom and not know who the teacher is, people work together, we're all leaders.'

Overall indicator score – high performing.

LIVING THE ORGANISATION'S VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

Statements in the online assessment for this indicator relate to how people and leaders within Heronsbridge act in line with the organisation's values, including whether they have the courage and support to challenge inconsistent behaviours. The table graphic below, shows the five statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment.

Indicator 2: Living the organisation's values and behaviours

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The values at my organisation guide the way we work	43.2%	49.7%	5.8%	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%
My organisation has clear values	59.4%	34.2%	5.2%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
I share my organisation's values	55.5%	39.4%	4.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I challenge behaviours which don't match the organisation's values	22.6%	44.5%	16.1%	11.6%	1.9%	1.9%	1.3%
My behaviour reflects the organisation's values	57.4%	40.6%	0.6%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Statement 1 – *The values at my organisation guide the way we work* – 92.9% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *My organisation has clear values* – 93.6% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *I share my organisation's values* – 94.9% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *I challenge behaviours which don't match the organisation's values* – 67.1% positive sentiment.
Statement 5 – *My behaviour reflects the organisation's values* – 98% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored the second highest of all the indicators; 6.3 out of 7.

Operating in line with the values

The values at Heronsbridge contribute to an ethos which is upheld across the whole school and contributes effectively to the positive culture. The values are everywhere around the school, they are visible on poster displays, form a central part of every school assembly, are embedded in the performance management process, and are verbally communicated between staff and to pupils on a daily basis.

Key values mentioned consistently throughout the assessment were:
- Wellbeing
- Independence
- Opportunity
- Sustainability

These have been developed into Heron characters for the pupils, Wellbeing Winnie, Independent Izzy, Opportunity Ollie and Sustainable Sam. Stickers of these characters are awarded in the weekly celebration assembly to pupils who demonstrate these behaviours in line with each value.

There is an effort to ensure that those recruited to the school demonstrate these values and understand what the school is seeking to achieve. This is usually done via temporary supply staff being assessed and encouraged to apply for more permanent roles when they arise, once staff and stakeholders are sure that the staff member demonstrates the necessary attitude.

People at Heronsbridge could all describe the values and there was consistency in the culture people described and the way people feel they should behave. Everyone was able to explain how they support their colleagues across the school, in order to ensure high levels of performance are maintained. Observed training and documentation revealed content relating to values and behaviours.

People in leadership roles were consistently observed behaving in line with the values. For instance, many were appreciative of the support from the SLT in recent months, despite extensive change and people adapting to significant changes in school. Many described 'Wellbeing' as the most crucial of these, especially in times where people feel uncertain.

The values of the Heronsbridge are central to everything it sets out to do and the way the school operates at every level.

'Our values are really important to us. The Herons are promoted in a big way to the pupils and the values are promoted on a daily basis to staff too.'

'The values are really linked closely to both our purpose and to the new curriculum.'

'Together we can is our mantra, the values are really strongly prompted through our work.'

'This is what work should be like, like a family. The values are really important. The Herons are promoted in a big way.'

Adopting the values

There is consistent demonstration of the fact that people do what is right for the school over what is easiest for them, this is particularly evident where staff have taken on additional responsibilities in order to support the school's achievements, despite this meaning additional work for them. This has enabled the school to become sector leading in many areas, and to provide services and opportunities which other schools are unable to provide.

All conversations revealed that people act according in line with the values, even if not the easiest path to follow. The reason consistently given is their pride in working at Heronsbridge and upholding the reputation of the school.

'What we're doing really matters, we have a profound impact on the children and families we work with and so it's never about the quickest way to do something and always about the right way.'

'A lot of our work here is difficult, sometimes very difficult, but massively rewarding. There is never a question of whether it is worth doing.'

'We have pride in our work; we are lucky to work in teams where standards are so high.'

'Everyone here has the same motivation, we all want to see the children make progress, nothing gets in the way of that drive.'

Living the values

People confirmed that a culture of trust and openness is developed right from the start of working at the Heronsbridge, people consistently behave in line with the values. The values at Heronsbridge are embedded and are demonstrated organically and unconsciously on a day-to-day basis. The performance management system enables behaviour discussions and reviews, with reference to the values and the most important things Heronsbridge needs to achieve.

Challenging behaviours not in line with the values was explored in conversations and whether people are held to account. There were some inconsistent responses from staff. Some people confirmed that they would be happy to deal with this; by speaking directly with the person and coaching them, in the first instance before escalating if necessary. Others said they were not sure they would be confident taking the matter to their line manager, but this appeared to be a situation which had not arisen and so perhaps a hypothetical line of enquiry.

'If feels so intrinsic to live the values, you don't really know you are doing it, it is totally unconscious behaviour.'

'I'm not sure if I would challenge people, I've never had to. I suppose people usually challenge themselves here. We review about how lessons went and discuss what could improve, people will reflect on their own contribution and make changes.'

'The values stretch across and around the school purposes, we want everyone to enjoy wellbeing, be independence, have opportunity and behave sustainably.'

'I have never witnessed any behaviour not in line with the values.'
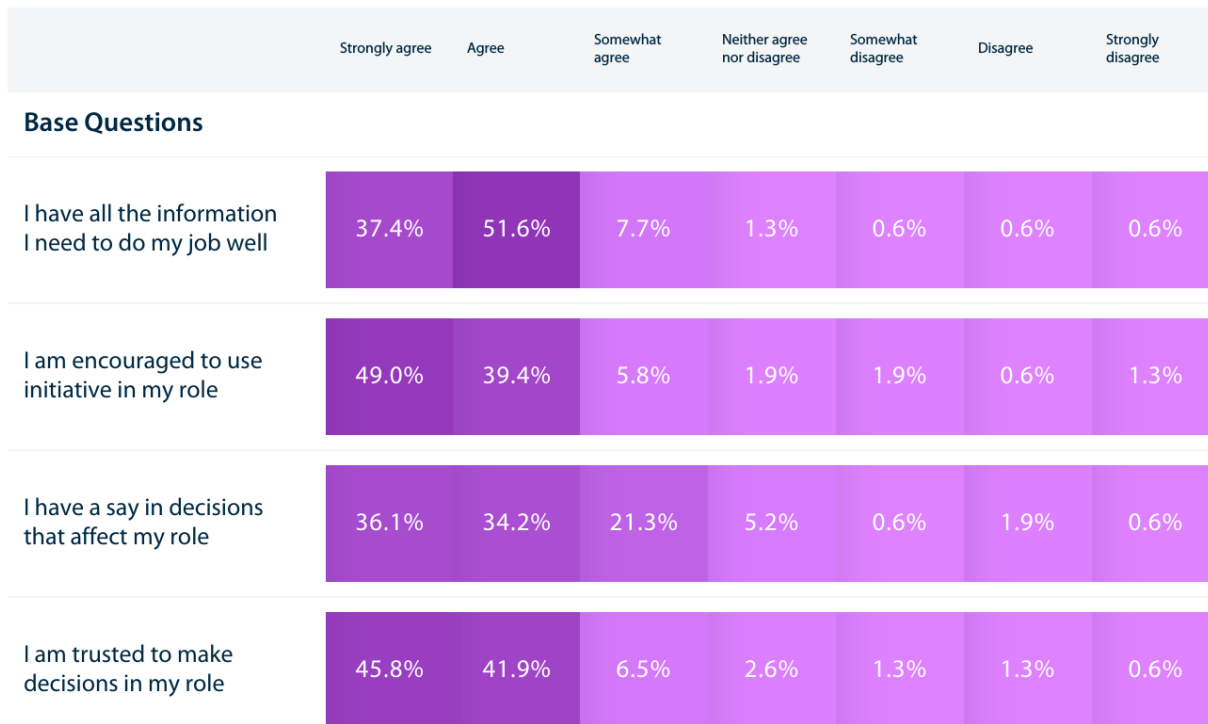
We invest in people

'If someone did not work in the way we want them to - focusing on improving the school and outcome for the children, then they wouldn't be here. We can see straight away whether someone's a fit when they come in for a supply job for the first time, if we're not happy they don't come back, it's so important that we find people who will actually help the children.'

Overall indicator score – advanced.

EMPOWERING AND INVOLVING PEOPLE

This indicator explores the extent to which the school has a culture of trust and ownership, and whether people feel empowered to make decisions and act on them. The table graphic below, shows the four statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment.

Indicator 3: Empowering and involving people

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I have all the information I need to do my job well	37.4%	51.6%	7.7%	1.3%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
I am encouraged to use initiative in my role	49.0%	39.4%	5.8%	1.9%	1.9%	0.6%	1.3%
I have a say in decisions that affect my role	36.1%	34.2%	21.3%	5.2%	0.6%	1.9%	0.6%
I am trusted to make decisions in my role	45.8%	41.9%	6.5%	2.6%	1.3%	1.3%	0.6%

Statement 1 – *I have all the information I need to do my job well* – 89% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *I am encouraged to use my initiative in my role* – 88.4% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *I have a say in decisions that affect my role* – 70.3% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *I am trusted to make decisions in my role* – 87.7% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored 6.1 out of 7 overall.

Empowering people

People gave examples of pitching an idea to the SLT and being approved to take the idea forward. This approach is a driving force in the school demonstrating sector leading practice, as every member of staff takes responsibility for improvement. Through managing the implementation of new initiatives, staff are also given an opportunity to develop their leadership schools, as this often involves presenting to other staff and training colleagues in how to implement the new initiative in their classes.

Discussions with staff provided plenty of examples of people being able to take ownership over

delivering Heronsbridge's objectives. The performance management system lends itself to this, with people taking the initiative with their own objectives, then discussing and agreeing with their manager. The aforementioned lack of bureaucracy has fully enabled this culture to embed, where staff do not have any issues with junior staff teaching SLT new things or leading on a school wide initiative. This is a credit to the school and those who work within it, as it has clearly led to higher levels of performance.

'I have worked in departments where I have often seen people who aren't teachers given the opportunity to lead on a part of a task, this is always supported, and that person coached. I have never seen anyone left to fail.'

'Staff movements between different parts of the school offer people the opportunity to experience other types of classroom environment and develop leadership skills across the school, as well as the training courses that are available.'

'I came up with a new idea, which the teacher agreed we could try and I was able to lead on it. It worked well for our team, so I had the opportunity to share across the school.'

'Our views and ideas for improvement are taken on board. We have collaborative decision making within our department.'

Participating and collaborating

Humility in leadership was a consistent theme throughout the interviews, and people feel this has supported a culture of participation, leaders are willing to listen even if they disagree and this has led to the collaborative ethos throughout the school. This was particularly evident in the way people described the decisions on class lists, people were consulted and asked for their thoughts before decisions were made.

All staff are also involved in creating and amending the SIP on a regular basis, meaning that all of those interviewed could articulate how they are included in strategic decision making and in day-to-day decisions within the class or support environments.

SLT describe how involvement of staff has led to unparalleled levels of discretionary effort, as people believe it is their choice, rather than something they are being instructed to do.

'We operate a system of peer review. We bounce around ideas and accept constructive criticism, to arrive at decisions collectively.'

'To get my job done successfully, I have to collaborate, teamwork is normal here. Functional silos would prevent the school from operating effectively.'

'You might work in a school which was very top-down, the leaders would make a decision and tell us what to do, I cannot imagine that happening at Heronsbridge! We all work towards the best interests of the children, I work very closely with a few children here and so get to know them very well, my ideas are always taken on board.'

'We are a Learning Organisation and collaborate externally too, we have a huge number of partnership organisations from within Wales and beyond. We are always sharing ideas and best practice.'

Making decisions

People unanimously confirmed that the SLT are transparent about sharing information and decisions that have been made at that level. This is shared via cascading in regular meetings, emails or less formally via Hector. Conversations revealed that this in turn gives people the confidence that they have up-to-date information, on which to base their own decisions and act accordingly.

Information and guidance is shared freely allowing people to feel comfortable making decisions themselves, which is often necessary given that people work predominantly in their classrooms. People described their clarity on areas such as dignity, respect and safeguarding enabling them to make decisions on a daily basis, knowing that their colleagues would be happy with their practice. People also feel confident to challenge the way things are done in order to guide the improvement of the school.

'My head of department is great, she is a really good leader. We have regular meetings and I have confidence in the quality of the information cascaded downwards.'

'Everyone knows that there are areas we should involve SLT in, but if there was something within the classroom, and it wasn't about any of those things, I would make the decision myself and feel supported.'

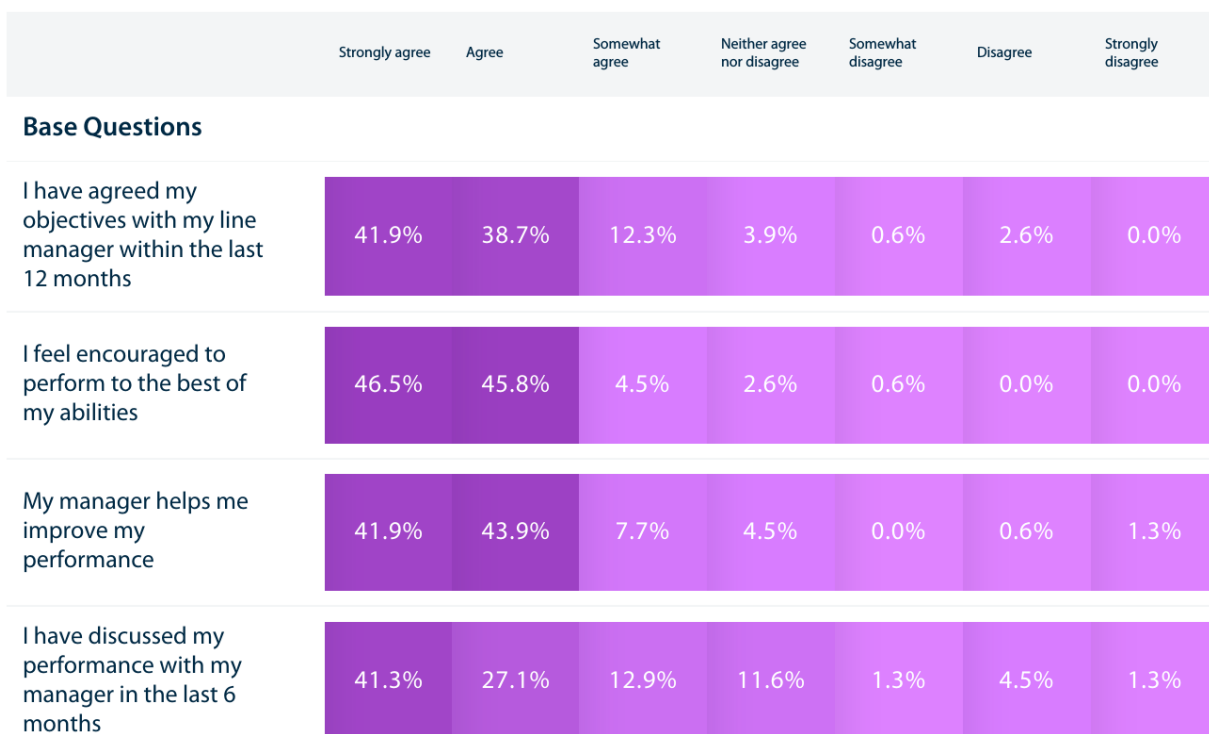*'There is no fear here of making suggestions and being afforded the opportunity to try something different.'*

Overall indicator score – high performing.

Supporting

MANAGING PERFORMANCE

This indicator explores the extent to which objectives within the school are aligned, performance is measured and feedback is used. The table graphic below, shows the four statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment.

Indicator 4: Managing performance

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I have agreed my objectives with my line manager within the last 12 months	41.9%	38.7%	12.3%	3.9%	0.6%	2.6%	0.0%
I feel encouraged to perform to the best of my abilities	46.5%	45.8%	4.5%	2.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
My manager helps me improve my performance	41.9%	43.9%	7.7%	4.5%	0.0%	0.6%	1.3%
I have discussed my performance with my manager in the last 6 months	41.3%	27.1%	12.9%	11.6%	1.3%	4.5%	1.3%

Statement 1 – *I have agreed my objectives with my line manager within the last 12 months* – 80.6% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *I feel encouraged to perform to the best of my abilities* – 92.3% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *My manager helps me improve my performance* – 85.8% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *I have discussed my performance with my manager in the last 6 months* – 68.4% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored 6.1 out of 7 overall.

Setting objectives

In conversations, people were universally positive about the performance management process, the transparency and ease of use. Almost everyone agreed that they had participated in an

objective setting discussion with their line manager recently, those that has not, had sessions scheduled in the coming weeks. The performance reviewed cycle for 2020 has been slightly put back due to COVID-19.

People confirmed that they are responsible for monitoring their own performance; whether objectives are achievable in the timescale, whether they remain relevant according to business needs and whether they have development needs to achieve their own objectives.

Everyone confirmed that they are expected to suggest their own objectives in addition to the cascaded objectives. People think that the performance management process is really valuable for focussing conversations and keeping the objectives live and responsive, whilst making individuals more responsible for their goals.

The objectives of the school are also explored throughout the SIP, people are aware of the part they play in this, as well as key accountabilities within the plan. Job Packs have detailed the post holder's responsibilities in line with the SIP and ongoing conversations take place in relation to collective and individual progress against these.

'People know their objectives, but it all links back to the school plan and pupil outcomes, if it doesn't impact on either of those there's not much point in doing it.'

'Objectives are aligned with the values and feed into the strategic aims of Heronsbridge. We all have a part to play in achieving them. We are focused on outputs.'

'As well as the formal sessions, I like the informal discussion I have on a regular basis. These should stop an issue potentially becoming a problem.'

'We have performance management where we talk about how we have done and what we need to focus on next, I think they're really helpful. We know what we are doing but it is good to move away from the day-to-day and plan ahead.'

Encouraging high performance

Managers could describe how they would discuss underperformance with their teams and generally use a supportive approach, building on a foundation of reflective practice and offering individuals learning opportunities in order to rectify any skill gaps or lacking knowledge.

The ethos of the school is that everyone is aiming for high performance. That being said, people are working in order to achieve high performance on an ongoing basis, as they believe the school can be the very best. This involves individual and collective improvement, as well as pioneering schemes aimed at achieving the very highest levels of performance. The most recent ESTYN inspection (2014) resulted in the school being rated as 'Excellent', the next inspection is overdue as a result of COVID-19, but Heronsbridge have used 2020 to work towards and subsequently achieve a Gold in the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award.

'The ability to provide constructive feedback is as important skill, poorly given feedback can be

a serious demotivator, whereas positive feedback can make a real difference and can have a really positive impact on people. We need to make sure there is consistent training in this area.'

'I would speak to anyone in my team that I thought wasn't up to scratch, I probably wouldn't have to though as they'd pick it up themselves.'

'The nature of our work means we expect the best from people on a daily basis.'

Measuring and assessing performance

Lesson observations and learning walks take place on a regular basis, it is to the school's credit that people see this kind of performance monitoring as a motivator and an opportunity for improvement rather than a way to discover underperformance.

People find the feedback from learning walks and lesson observations to be helpful and can talk about improvements they have made as a result of historic feedback. The respect staff have for the SLT and class teachers is instrumental in people valuing and taking feedback onboard and this has led to improved practice. People believe that those offering feedback are excellent teachers themselves and value their perspectives as a result.

The document review found that data is used to improve both people and organisational performance. Performance management interviews for teachers compare predicted pupil performance against actual pupil performance with reflective elements and self-evaluation. The review also has a second set of objectives at a whole school level, Continua Self-Evaluation evidence is captured, monitored and reviewed. Behaviours as well as high performance, underpinned by the values, is the cornerstone of the review process.

'I find the feedback from lesson observations really helpful; they know their stuff and they have seen the best practice so we are keen to hear their suggestions.'

'The performance management process at Heronsbridge is really good, line managers are supportive, the sessions are confidential, developmental and feedback is always welcome and appropriate.'

'We keep our displays up to date and tidy, we take photos of before and after for evidence to use in our appraisals. Mine is due in a couple of weeks and I'm really looking forward to it, there are some great courses I've seen that I would like to go on which would really beneficial.'

'Yes, data is utilised, at an individual level as well as at department and whole school level, when assessing achievement of targets. Of course, some targets are qualitative, but also quantitative, in terms of pupil outcomes for example.'

Conversations revealed that line managers have regular informal discussions with their people as well as regular team meetings. Everyone reported that this has been enhanced during the COVID-19 situation, to ensure the support and wellbeing of staff at such a challenging time for the school. The job roles at Heronsbridge can at times be difficult and challenging, the coaching and support is very welcome. All respondents could describe being coached on a day to day basis and were

really happy to be supported in this way.

'The way I am managed is by coaching – no spoon-fed answers, but I am guided to find my own answers. That suits me as it builds my confidence as well as my competence.'

'I speak with my manager several times every day to prioritise workload or resources. This is helpful and provides a daily focus.'

'I could ask for and receive feedback at any time, it is a really supportive environment here.'

Overall indicator score – high performing.

RECOGNISING AND REWARDING HIGH PERFORMANCE

This indicator explores whether recognition and reward is clear, fair and appropriate, and specifically is there is a culture of appreciation where people are motivated to perform at their best. The table graphic below, shows the four statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment.

Indicator 5: Recognising and rewarding high performance

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am consistently recognised when I exceed expectations	23.2%	32.9%	23.2%	13.5%	5.2%	0.0%	1.9%
I get appropriate recognition for the work I do	23.2%	38.7%	21.3%	10.3%	4.5%	1.9%	0.0%
I feel appreciated for the work I do	31.0%	40.0%	21.3%	4.5%	1.9%	0.6%	0.6%
I am rewarded in ways that match my motivations	22.6%	30.3%	22.6%	14.8%	7.7%	1.3%	0.6%

Statement 1 – *I get appropriate recognition for the work I do* – 61.9% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *I am consistently recognised when I exceed expectations* – 56.1% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *I feel appreciated for the work I do* – 71% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *I am rewarded in ways that match my motivations* – 52.9% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored the lowest of all the indicators; 5.6 out of 7.

Designing an approach to recognition and reward

The school has limited control over reward, as decisions relating to all areas of pay are not ultimately made by the school themselves, or the SLT. This is understood by all staff who despite being aware of the salaries in other jobs, choose to stay at Heronsbridge and in education for other motivational factors such as the impact on pupils' outcomes, as described earlier.
Generally, people accept that the SLT do all they can to influence these areas and have made some changes wherever possible. For example, the creation of a number of new roles within the school and the opportunity to take on extra paid responsibilities, such as driving have been very well received by staff.

We invest in people

There are structured approaches to reward and recognition, of which the school has more autonomy on recognition. There are a number of mechanisms the school uses to recognise people which include, learning opportunities, exposure to leadership responsibility, professional development, recognition in staff meetings, less formally the weekly coffee and cake award. These initiatives demonstrate the leadership team's willingness to introduce new schemes wherever possible to recognise people with different individual motivations.

Staff were involved in designing the school approach to recognition. The survey found some staff are uncomfortable with a big shout in assembly whereas others enjoyed public recognition. The SLT are now very aware of their staff preferences and act accordingly.

As performance expectations are clear, people have a strong understanding of the areas of performance which are likely to be noted and recognised.

'The SLT has done everything they can with pay, they have supported people with job evaluations, have introduced more roles and provided opportunities for extra paid responsibilities, they can't increase everyone's pay but they have done what they can.'

'Being called out on the stage in assembly is not for everyone, it's great that the team know who to direct public recognition too and who to have quiet word with instead.'

Adopting a culture of recognition

Despite the school's limited control over reward, there is a very clear culture of recognition at Heronsbridge. This culture is in fact so embedded, that people describe recognition from their colleagues as a daily occurrence and a valuable motivator to them.

Many described the SLT stopping people in corridors to thank them for their efforts in notable areas, for introducing new initiatives or incredible work. It is a significant achievement to have created and sustained a culture that celebrates success whilst also dealing with underperformance, striking an effective balance between dealing with issues and recognising when things are done right.

There was consistent feedback that successful lesson observations or learning walks are often recognised as a team contribution, with feedback provided to a whole class team. People also described how successful completion of training is recognised, where appropriate with the giving out of certificates in assemblies, in front of all colleagues and pupils.

Most people talked about a culture where colleagues support each other and recognise good work from each other, across all levels, functions and teams. It is worth noting that this is true for non-teaching staff also. Some people commented that more recognition would be appreciated which suggests there could be inconsistent practices across the school.

'Nothing goes unnoticed here, we always hear when have done a good job, it happens on a daily basis.'

'The SLT are really good at thanking people informally. I really appreciate when they go out of their away to speak to me.'

'When the children go home happy, we are always thanked as a team for a successful day. You don't get that in an office! It really does go through the whole school like that.'

'Recognition never feels forced here, it is intrinsic and happens naturally. The result is keeping smiles of people's faces.'

'I think the school could improve staff recognition, it's the little things, the verbal thank yous, you don't get a sense of 'wow - I'm really appreciated'.'

Recognising and rewarding people

People, as described earlier, are primarily motivated by the pupils and their interactions with them, though many did note that the leaders' understanding of the pressures of their work after a hard day can be extremely motivating.

Currently, high performing individuals or teams do not receive greater financial rewards due to the schools limited control in this area, but the SLT could provide examples of giving increased recognition to those who had achieved higher levels of performance. The general ethos of the school though is to encourage everyone to perform at the highest level, as one school, rather than encouraging competitive behaviour. In spite of this, constructive competition is taking place throughout the school with teachers talking about wanting to have the best resources and lesson plans. This is undoubtedly boosting performance.

'We have periods of quite intense and sometimes very stressful, even upsetting work, but ultimately Heronsbridge is like a family. The rewards come from playing a part, however small in providing the very best quality of life for our children. We get paid for this too!'

'This is not work, not a career or a job, but something I couldn't imagine not doing.'

'It's always noticed here, if you do something extra special or you work really hard on something, it is noticed, my manager would definitely notice.'
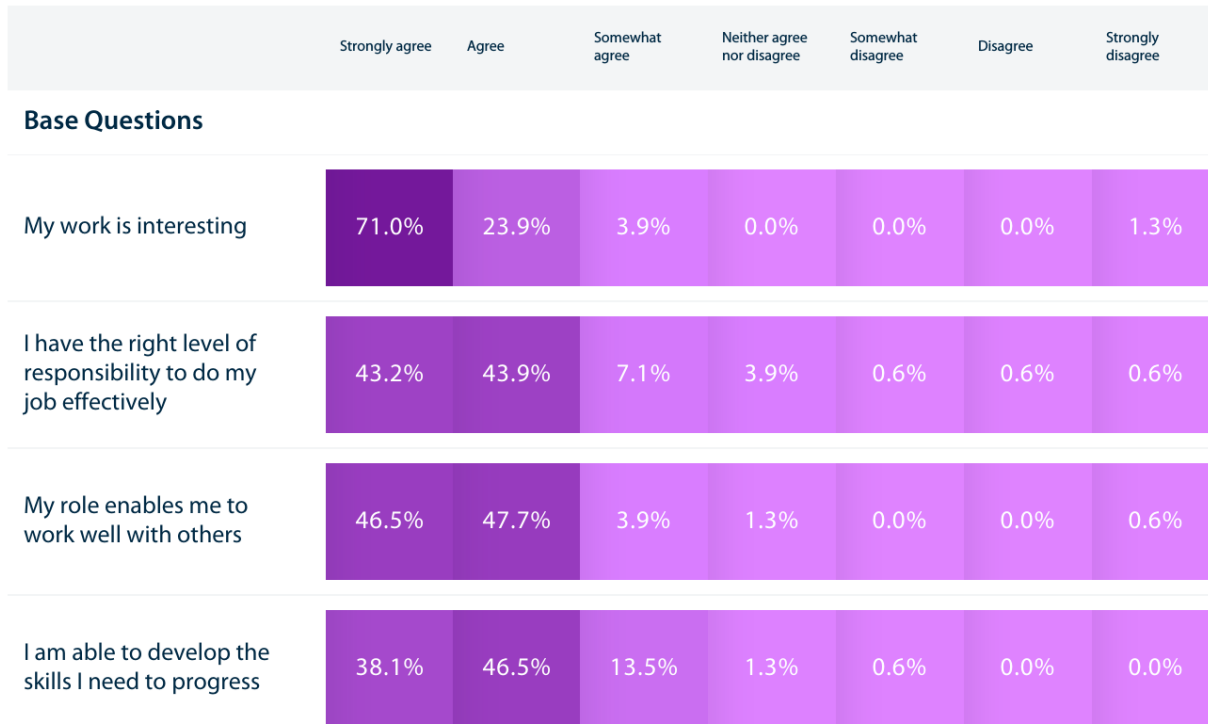
'I attended some training and when I came back I was asked to present back to my colleagues, I was thanked for doing that, so I know I did a good job.'

Overall indicator score – advanced.

STRUCTURING WORK

This indicator explores the extent to which the school is structured to deliver the strategic objectives; also, how roles are designed to deliver these objectives whilst offering interesting work for people and supporting collaborative ways of working. The table graphic below, shows the four statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment.

Indicator 6: Structuring work

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My work is interesting	71.0%	23.9%	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
I have the right level of responsibility to do my job effectively	43.2%	43.9%	7.1%	3.9%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
My role enables me to work well with others	46.5%	47.7%	3.9%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
I am able to develop the skills I need to progress	38.1%	46.5%	13.5%	1.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%

Statement 1 – *I am able to develop the skills I need to progress* – 84.6% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *I have the right level of responsibility to do my job effectively* – 87.1% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *My role enables me to work well with others* – 94.2% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *My work is interesting* – 94.9% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored the highest of all the indicators; 6.4 out of 7.

Designing roles

The organisational structure supports collaborative working and this is further supported by the composition of the class lists each year, where people may be allocated to a new team having built relationships with the colleagues they worked closely with in the previous year, meaning that staff have extensive and effective networks across the school. There was mixed feedback as to how successful some of these changes were; some staff were really receptive others less so.

Job Packs are reviewed when new roles are advertised meaning they are kept up to date and relevant. There is also discussion taking place with individuals during performance reviews as to

the requirements and key responsibilities of their role.

Many people expressed that although every effort is made to provide people with dynamic roles, there is also an attraction in that the school's culture is extremely positive and has a strong reputation amongst SEN staff within the sector.

Discussions confirmed that roles are designed and adapted to meet the changing needs of pupils and the school. Positive comments were also noted around the learning and development provision; most people expressed that the provision is always evolving and improving to match people's needs, both for their current role and their career aspirations.

'We are a Pioneer School which makes what we do interesting, we're on the cutting edge really so every role here is interesting, we're always doing new things.'

'Job titles here are what you make of them, if you want to do something different you can raise the request and if it fits with your objectives you can make it happen.'

'I was somewhat unsure about moving to the centre for autism at first, but it has been really positive and I can see benefits to some of the techniques we use here being deployed elsewhere in the school.'

'I don't really want to work in another department as I feel that I work really well here. Moving around the school is not for me.'

Creating autonomy in roles

People were broadly unanimous in their view of how policies support ownership and responsiveness. Recent and relevant examples were cited, such as the speedy adoption of effective home working at the beginning of the pandemic, followed by adjusting to being a hub school, all the time supporting the health and wellbeing of staff. Adapting the school environment and communication channels to accommodate bubbles, once the school reopened, was also provided as evidence of agility.

The trust in leaders which was mentioned in earlier sections of the report have been effectively repaid by leaders who in turn trust staff implicitly. There is an intention from Leaders to start from a place of trust and this was noted by those involved in discussions.

'We are trusted here, we are the ones working with the children day in day out and they recognise that, we know when we should get them involved and when we should crack on ourselves.'

'The policies are clear, we have training on them as well, so everyone knows who to speak to about a safeguarding issue or whatever.'

'I think we are really good at solving problems and getting on with what we need to do.'

Enabling collaborative working

The structure of Heronsbridge includes several roles with whole school responsibilities; these roles include responsibilities for health and wellbeing, family engagement, training and development and partnership links. These roles as well as other co-ordinator roles ensure that staff work across the school with different teams and colleagues in order to meet national standards and improve performance in critical areas.

Managers, teachers and support staff work together and are responsible for school wide initiatives. There are medical professionals based in the school, to provide support to pupils, staff are encouraged to collaborate with these teams and share ideas.

Working life at Heronsbridge is very different at the current time with the requirement to staff and pupils to stay within bubbles; despite the physical barriers, conversations revealed that everyone feels collaboration is still working well. Staff supported this throughout the discussions by describing a helpful culture, in-keeping with the earlier comments around the value of support, where people know each other, support each other, and share best practice.

'We have team meetings every week. Issues are discussed and people have the option of getting involved, which is great for aspirational individuals.'

'Everyone works together, we work as one team, one school, we all have responsibilities that we need everybody to be on board with, so we present to all staff, we have to work as one team if we want to continue to be an excellent school.'

'The strapline of the school is really all about collaboration – Together we can. It really holds true here and is at the heart of everything we do.'

'I don't feel we are missing out on much even though COVID is here.'

Overall indicator score – high performing.

Improving

BUILDING CAPABILITY

This indicator explores the extent to which people's capabilities are actively managed and developed, allowing them to realise their full potential and ensure that Heronsbridge has the right people at the right time, for the right roles. The table graphic below, shows the five statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment.

Indicator 7: Building capability

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My manager thinks it is important that I develop my skills	51.0%	36.8%	8.4%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
I have opportunities to learn at work	49.7%	44.5%	1.9%	1.3%	1.3%	0.6%	0.6%
I make use of my organisation's learning and development opportunities	41.9%	46.5%	9.0%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I know how my organisation invests in learning and development	41.9%	51.0%	5.8%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
People are selected for roles based on their skills and abilities	27.7%	41.9%	16.8%	6.5%	3.2%	2.6%	1.3%

Statement 1 – *My manager thinks it is important that I develop my skills* – 87.8% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *I have opportunities to learn at work* – 94.2% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *I make use of my organisation's learning and development opportunities* – 88.4% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *I know how my organisation invests in learning and development* – 92.9% positive sentiment.
Statement 5 – *People are selected for roles based on their skills and abilities* – 69.6% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored the third highest of all the indicators; 6.2 out of 7.

Understanding people's potential

In conversations, people confirmed that learning and development needs are met via a variety of media, including internal and external provision, as well as 'classroom' and online provision. Of course, currently provision is exclusively online, which people confirmed is 'working well'. People involved in conversations confirmed that learning opportunities are available to all.

Everyone confirmed that they are able to request learning and development opportunities, both formally as part of the performance review process and informally. There is an expectation that people will identify their own learning needs, and the best ways in which to meet these; everyone interviewed was aware of how they would go about requesting learning which is usually through a submission to the SLT based on the cost, rationale, expected benefits and links with the National Mission and SIP of any prospective development opportunities.

Document review of the school training proforma showed extensive amounts of training are being conducted at all levels and in very wide subject areas from specialist skills in Autism and ADHD to more general management training and development programmes.

'I feel confident to request learning opportunities. I know that my request will be seriously considered and very probably approved. That's good.'

'Lots of the skills we need here are quite specialised. We make suggestions to SLT on how the school would benefit from staff attending.'

'The appraisal system is great for development discussions; I can suggest courses I am interested in and if they are relevant they are generally approved.'

Supporting learning and development

Heronsbridge has a long history of staff development. Due to the nature of the school there is a high staff to learner ratio. Many staff work on a one to one basis, so it is essential that all staff have access to high-quality professional development to benefit all learners within the school and their various barriers to learning.

In conversations, people were aware that the learning and development opportunities are evaluated and evolved to best suit the needs of the individual and Heronsbridge. Evidence was provided of training evaluation from scrutiny of the Staff Professional Learning Request Form. These forms have an element for training evaluation to be completed by the trainee after the activity has been delivered, comments regarding immediate learning as well as impact on teaching practice and opportunity to share learning within the school community are all captured.

People confirmed that continuous learning is part of the culture of Heronsbridge as everyone has a desire to learn and improve. The Welsh Government launched the School as Learning Organisation (SLO) approach in 2017 to support schools to prepare for the new curriculum. Heronsbridge was as one of 22 pilot schools chosen to develop the model, based on feedback and trial it was launched nationally in September 2019.

We invest in people

'We have to be able to link our learning to the School Improvement Plan, so we're then expected to discuss what we learned and how we're going to use it going forward.'

'We are always asked for feedback, reflection and evaluation are part and parcel of the activity.'

'Definitely. We are always asked our opinion and I have seen provision altered for later groups as a result of previous feedback.'

'We have used feedback from training courses not only to influence future training, but also as an opportunity to review and improve teaching practices in our school.'

'I really value the online resources; I can fit training around my life and work.'

Deploying the right people at the right time

People confirmed that they feel recruitment at Heronsbridge is transparent and fair. Equally, internal movements between departments in the school, were felt to be fair, although there were a few comments about how staff lists for new academic years had come about. Nevertheless, the majority view in discussions is that succession planning is mostly working. People also confirmed that the feedback they receive, if unsuccessful, is useful and felt to be genuine.

The SLT at Heronsbridge believe that capacity and capability planning is robust and ensures that people will be in place to deliver future success and maintain high standards for every child in its care. Colleagues, in conversations, also believe that the right people will be in place to deliver success for the school. The staff training board provides all staff with up-to-date information about training opportunities and The Curriculum for Wales.

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'I think the processes in place are good. If I wanted to progress, I believe that I could, as well as receiving support to move to a more senior role. Conversely, I believe that I could stay in my current role and still receive ongoing support and development.'

'Revision of role competences is an ongoing process. It's part of our continuous improvement activity to ensure staff are 'fit for purpose' with the right people in the right roles.'

'I would like more information and transparency about why we are moved around, it can be quite unsettling.'

'I do feel now that most often the best person for the job is given the role.'

'We do recruit the right people here, and that is so important to get right, you can see straight away whether someone's got it or not. Some people just aren't cut out for this kind of environment.'

Overall indicator score – high performing.

We invest in people

DELIVERING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This indicator looks at the focus on continuous improvement, whether people use internal and external sources to inform new approaches and whether there is a culture at Heronsbridge that encourages innovation. The table graphic below, shows the four statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment.

Indicator 8: Delivering continuous improvement

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I look for improvement ideas from my colleagues	45.2%	46.5%	3.9%	3.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%
I am responsible for improving the way we do things	28.4%	41.3%	19.4%	6.5%	2.6%	1.9%	0.0%
I am encouraged to improve the way I do things	33.5%	51.6%	7.7%	6.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
I am trusted to try new approaches in the way I work	34.2%	45.8%	8.4%	7.7%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%

Statement 1 – *I look for improvement ideas from my colleagues* – 91.7% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *I am encouraged to improve the way I do things* – 85.1% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *I am responsible for improving the way we do things* – 69.7% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *I am trusted to try new approaches in the way I work* – 80% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored the second lowest of all the indicators; 6.0 out of 7.

Improving through internal and external sources

People confirmed that they believe leaders are always looking to learn from the external context, both from a wide variety of educational institutions, including Careers Wales, Global Learning Partnerships, as well as local colleges and universities, but also to organisations in other sectors, such as the ASD Network, Sony and other local businesses. The impact has been both to adopt different ideas but also to reject practices seen as less suitable for Heronsbridge.

Everyone confirmed that they are able to contribute to continuous improvement and that all

suggestions are received positively, even if not all are ultimately appropriate for implementation. Recruitment into Heronsbridge from other sectors has enabled a wider conversation around innovation and enhanced understanding of people living with disability and diversity in Welsh society.

'We have a huge number of partnership organisations we regularly liaise with, both here in Wales, and elsewhere, to review policies and procedures.'

'My motto is there is always something new to learn each and every day.'

'Ideas and innovation are definitely welcomed here. However, we always need to risk assess potential changes in how we do things.'

Creating a culture of continuous improvement

The SIP is wholly focused on improving all areas of the school's delivery and support, looking at feedback from a variety of sources and pulling it all together in order to support staff in seeing not only the contribution they make to the improvement but also the wider aims of the school including the areas the SLT would like individuals to focus on.

In conversations, most people asserted that they are supported by their managers to take 'reasonable' risks in developing ideas and suggestions for innovative solutions or improvements to current processes. All confirmed that new ideas must be checked prior to implementation (usually by the immediate line manager), but everyone felt that the culture at Heronsbridge encourages all to contribute and that ongoing improvement is encouraged.

People do not feel their credibility or reputation is threatened if suggested actions don't work or deliver the intended outcomes, but instead view this as a learning opportunity. However, there were very few examples provided of schemes that were ultimately unsuccessful.

People confirmed that continuous improvement is welcomed and encouraged, but some people expressed the view that perhaps a more formal approach might lead to even greater success in capturing and benefitting from people's good ideas.

'I came up with a suggestion which we tried, it didn't work, but the feedback was great. I don't feel at all put off for making more suggestions, quite the reverse, I'm even more determined now.'

'We are always asked for feedback. We are always asked for new ideas. Any mistakes are learnt from, I am not aware of a blame culture.'

'I certainly have the flexibility to do what I think works. I do always 'sense check' with my manager first. Also, our class team meetings allow for ideas to be floated and discussed.'

'I don't think we'll ever get to the point where we have done enough, and everyone accepts that, it keeps it interesting.'

Encouraging innovation

People spoke about their pride and passion for working at Heronsbridge and how this motivates many people to always consider and volunteer new ideas. There were several examples provided of people working together to come up with new ideas. Staff have been presented with an issue or an area identified for improvement and given opportunities to debate and offer their perspectives before offering a collective answer. There was however a sense from the discussions, that due to restrictive bubbles, staff are not mixing informally as they might have done previously, this is having a negative impact on shared experiences and therefore may be temporarily hampering innovation.

People overwhelmingly believe that the adoption of new ideas deliver positive outcome for the school. A current example is the fish pebble river, painted individually by pupils and staff, based on the story 'Only One You'. This story empowers children to embrace their uniqueness, encouraging them to be who they are and not feel the need to follow everyone else. This was widely hailed as a success and has become an important space for thoughtful reflection though an especially challenging year at the school.

'Everyone's ideas are heard here, it doesn't matter what role you are in, or which area you work in, they trust that we know what we're talking about and take us seriously.'

'The class teacher is always open to new suggestions; we often have brainstorming sessions as a team to problem solve and come up with new ideas.'

'We don't get to see many people at the moment due to the requirement to stay in bubbles, so we are losing some opportunities to share experiences, I am sure though, this this is a temporary issue.'

It is great to get ideas from the team and try new things, it doesn't matter if they don't work, we have tried. Nothing is too crazy here.'

Overall indicator score – high performing.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

This indicator looks at whether Heronsbridge has a focus on the future and is responsive to change. Do leaders have a clear understanding of the external environment and the impact this may have on the organisation? The table graphic below, shows the four statements that respondents were invited to rate, in terms of positive (or not) sentiment.

Indicator 9: Creating sustainable success

Base Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My organisation has a plan for the future	52.3%	42.6%	3.2%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My organisation is a great place to work	57.4%	30.3%	8.4%	1.3%	1.3%	0.6%	0.6%
My organisation embraces change	38.1%	47.7%	7.7%	3.9%	1.3%	0.6%	0.6%
My organisation has a positive impact on society	52.9%	40.6%	3.2%	2.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%

Statement 1 – *My organisation is a great place to work* – 87.7% positive sentiment.
Statement 2 – *My organisation has a plan for the future* – 94.9% positive sentiment.
Statement 3 – *My organisation embraces change* – 85.8% positive sentiment.
Statement 4 – *My organisation has a positive impact on society* – 93.5% positive sentiment.
This indicator scored the second highest of all the indicators; 6.3 out of 7.

Focusing on the future

People were virtually unanimous in their positive comments about working at Heronsbridge. Many who have worked in other schools, would never consider leaving for opportunities elsewhere and can provide in-depth reasoning behind their decisions to stay in the school. This level of engagement and commitment is rare and a credit to those who have supported the development of this great culture.

There is evidence that the SLT have intentionally become involved in networks and national agendas in order to influence and learn of potential future challenges. These are fed back to staff in order to enable thorough planning and preparation for the future. Being a pioneer school also

allows Heronsbridge to gain insight into future governmental agendas, trialling and honing these initiatives and remaining one step ahead of others in the sector. The school is already working on areas such as the Trauma Informed Schools programme, School as Learning Organisation Welsh pilot as well as being sector leading, evidencing best practice with their support to the Welsh Government and implement the Curriculum for Wales.

'I can't see myself ever working anywhere else. The people here are great, the children are amazing and there is always something new to focus on.'

'We talk about the future a lot, that's what the focus is on in INSET days and things, we are always planning for the next change, the next development or the next opportunity for improvement.'

'This is such an amazing place to work. There are always opportunities to get involved in different projects; no two days are the same.'

'I absolutely adore working here, I wrap Heronsbridge around me like warm blanket.'

'Watching the children's happy little faces changing and growing up is wonderful. A smile from a child lights up my day, whistling children make everything worthwhile.'

Embracing change

In conversations, people confirmed that 'cheerleaders' are most likely to champion change and get involved in change projects. It was acknowledged that these people are most likely to seek career-enhancing project-based opportunities.

People see change as inevitable when working in a sector leading school and are fully on-board with a state of ongoing change and long-term transition. Where there have been instances of relatively unsuccessful change, practices have been adapted and communicated accordingly. Leaders partake in reflective practice alongside their colleagues and are able to admit mistakes freely; this is supported by humility in leadership. People are not fearful of experimenting with change.

'Some people are more likely to volunteer, but this is a secure environment for everyone to try new things.'

'During Covid-19, closing the school and reopening as a hub school meant that Heronsbridge had to rapidly change policies, to support people's home life, their work-life balance and ensure a safe environment for the children. Amendments had to be made to reduces stress. We have all been assured that if we can't fulfil a full day, say for care or home-schooling reasons, that's okay. People appreciate this support and reassurance. It's the measure of Heronsbridge's culture, I think, in a crisis.'

'Working in bubbles is a massive change and challenge for all of us. Formal communication has definitely improved, and I am sure some of these changes will be extended after the virus. I do

miss seeing colleagues in different departments though, but I guess that is inevitable right now. Everyone is really committed and pulling together to make this work as best we can.'

Understanding the external context

It would be an understatement to say that people clearly understand the relationship between Heronsbridge and the wider community. People unanimously believe that the school has a profoundly positive impact, offering a valuable and essential service to children and their families in the catchment area. People are extremely motivated to be a part of this wider picture, as they consider their involvement to be critical in impacting individuals and local communities.

The school has a very positive reputation within the sector as a career destination where people would like to work, the culture is described as inclusive and people believe that the workforce is appropriately diverse.

People overwhelmingly believe that Heronsbridge has a positive impact on Welsh society and local communities.

'I don't know how anyone could not see the impact we have on the community. These children are given a safe place, an opportunity to learn and develop and they're treated with dignity and respect, there's a lot of care here, no-one could say that's not a good thing.'

'Every member of staff here, from teachers, to the caretaker, pool attendants to support assistants and apprentices, they all believe they're doing something incredibly worthwhile.'

'We are a happy bunch of people, otherwise we should not be working here. The children deserve the very best staff.'

Overall indicator score – high performing.

Word cloud summary of what people said

We invest in people

Annex 1

How To Adapt Your Leadership Style

The most effective leaders adapt their style of leadership depending on who or what they are dealing with. Learning to use more than one or two different leadership styles on a regular basis, as a professional golfer would select different woods and irons over the course of a round of golf, takes a bit of practise. Here are some suggestions to help you broaden your style by increasing your self-awareness.

Scenario

You have identified certain behaviours or competencies that you think you need to develop in order to improve your leadership skills. Perhaps you feel you could get better at empathising in order to build stronger relationships with team members, or that you need to build on your self-confidence to lead the way when tough decisions need to be made.

A short lesson on brain science

Whatever competencies you have identified, having an awareness of how the brain functions will help you to understand how to go about developing them successfully. The two areas of the brain that are most relevant are the neocortex and the limbic area. The neocortex governs analytical and technical skills, and thus is useful when playing chess or programming the video recorder.

The limbic area, in contrast, handles the emotional side of things. It is distinctly more primitive than the highly efficient neocortex, and is particularly bad at relearning things that it has already learned.

The competencies you need to broaden your leadership style almost always rely on the limbic area of the brain. Unlike the neocortex, which can rapidly grasp complex ideas and put them into practice, the limbic area of the brain often doesn't absorb something first time around. It needs to be told something several times before its ingrained assumptions start to be altered and patterns of behaviour begin to change too.

Suggestions

These suggestions, based on a model developed by Richard Boyatzis, are specifically designed to allow you to gradually rewire the limbic areas of the brain, and so increase your self-awareness. It is a model that you can undertake yourself, with occasional guidance from friends, colleagues or mentors, and because it is directed by yourself, the learning is much more likely to stick.

Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning is a cyclical process of alternating between picturing your ideal self (who you want to be), and then building an accurate picture of your real self (who you actually are). Understanding who you want to be acts as a motivational driver for getting you to change your habits and behaviour. Understanding your weaknesses shows you what you need to improve on, while getting to know your strengths indicates the things you need to build on.

Once you have reached this level of understanding, you can begin to identify where the gaps are between your real self and your ideal self, and then to experiment with new ways of behaving, thinking and feeling. The final stage involves putting what you have experimented with into practice by beginning to develop relationships and behave in new ways.

Here are all the stages of the model:

1. **My ideal self** – who do I want to be?
2. **My real self** – who am I? (my strengths, my gaps)
3. **My learning agenda** – building on my strengths while reducing gaps
4. **Experimenting** – practising the new behaviours thoughts and feelings to rewire the way my brain works so I can adopt these new patterns of behaviour
5. **Developing trusting relationships** - that reinforce every step of this process

Imagine the model in the form of a web, with each stage interlinking with the other. Although there is an order to the stages, it is not fixed, and allows you to move back and forth between each stage, perhaps spending longer on one area than the other.

Let's now look at the various stages that make up this model of self-directed learning.

1. My ideal self – Who do I want to be?

Have you ever benefited from the power of positive imaging, in which you imagined an ideal future state, and felt better as a result? Positive imaging has been used for years in a variety of contexts: by athletes who mentally rehearse their run before a big race; by patients in hospital who imagine what life will be like when they are cured; and by people in organisations undergoing a major change (you may have heard of the technique of 'appreciative inquiry'; an example of positive imaging in the business world). While the idea may seem foreign to many of us, there is considerable evidence to suggest that positive imaging on its own can have beneficial effects in all the examples given above.

Ten Years from Now

Imagine what things would be like if everything happened the way you wanted it to for the next 10 years. Picture yourself in 10 years' time: What would life be like? Where would you be? Who would you be with? What would you be doing? Think about it, write down some thoughts, talk about it with a friend. It is a genuine technique for linking with real change possibilities.

Your goal when using positive imaging is to stop being a creature of habit and become a creature of hope. This might sound corny, but it's the ability to look to the future and envision how you would really like to be that, in turn, will energise your need to change and grow as a leader.

It's not necessarily very easy to do this, partly because organisations haven't tended to be very good at encouraging their employees to think in this way. Initially, your best bet would be to discuss who you want to be with, close friends and/or colleagues. Such informal mentoring will allow you to receive feedback and encouragement, ensuring that the picture you build of your ideal self isn't just a prediction of how you reckon things will turn out, but a vision of how you'd ideally like them to.

2. My real self – who am I?

You might think an obvious way to build a picture of your ideal self is to ask someone. But the sad fact about the way progression up the career ladder works is that the higher you go, the less likely it is that anyone will tell you what they think of you. This might seem a blessing, but not receiving feedback about who you are makes it very hard for you to change. After all, how can you change when you don't know you need to change?

Humans are masters of self-delusion. We frequently ignore what is patently obvious to others, because confronting it is too painful. We don't consciously choose to ignore truths; it's more often than not an unconscious process.

Building a picture of who you really are is an essential step in improving your competencies. Doing this will require help from other people, but you need to ensure that the feedback you're getting is accurate and honest. If you're not very careful about how you get feedback, all you'll get is what people think you want to hear. Try the following techniques:

Think about setting up a mentoring scheme with a colleague or more senior manager. You might even have two or three different mentors; the more different sources of feedback you can get the better. You need to form relationships with people in which there is mutual trust; where you can trust them to be honest about what they really think and they can trust you not to get offended or hold what they say against them in the future.

- Depending on your level of management, the use of 360-degree feedback might be helpful. This is a way of collecting information from as many people with whom you interact with as possible: your team, your manager, even friends or partners. A good technique is to use email: you nominate one trusted individual as the collator, and then get half a dozen or more people to email back a questionnaire that you have sent them. The trusted individual anonymises the emails and collates the findings and delivers them to you.
- The use of video or tape recordings of yourself can be invaluable in helping you spot areas of weakness. Provided they are aware of what the recording is for and how it will be used, most people won't mind the use of a video camera or dictaphone in the room, perhaps during a staff meeting or an appraisal session.
- Try and keep a degree of self-analysis going on all the time; think about how you're behaving; at the end of a conversation, play it over in your mind.
- Keep a record of events and conversations that provide clues to how you behave at work, either in the form of a diary or just a list that you can keep adding to. Get into the habit of writing down things about yourself as soon as they occur to you. Don't censor yourself. You can review it all later.

Over time, perhaps a month or two, you will begin to build up a much more accurate picture of who you are. At this point, you should start to assemble a list of your strengths and weaknesses, trying hard to keep an equal balance between them.

3. My learning agenda – building on my strengths while reducing gaps

At this point you need to make a decision to change. Here's when the fun really starts. In this stage you'll begin to set goals that relate to what you specifically want to change. This is important – it's you who'll be creating your own agenda. In this way it's very different from a performance target that you have been asked to meet. As you'll be setting the agenda, it's only you that you'll be letting down if you don't manage to work through it.

At the same time, though, your learning agenda needs to be made up of precise learning goals that you have thought about carefully. These goals have a very explicit purpose. Together they act as a rule book or an instruction manual for your everyday behaviour.

4. Experimenting – with new behaviour, thoughts, and feelings

Once you've come up with a learning agenda composed of specific, achievable goals, you need to start to experiment with the emotional competencies that you feel most need strengthening. For instance, it may be that in the course of forming a picture of your real self you have discovered that you frequently make judgements about team members by jumping to conclusions. Then,

when you discover the whole story, you tend to do a fairly good job at backtracking; but by then the damage is done. You might therefore have set yourself a goal of improving your sense of empathy by always taking the time to talk to the team member in a non-judgemental fashion; to gather the facts and to give yourself time to consider them, rather than just rushing in with the first response that comes to you. In this stage, it's no more promises, just action.

Remember, though, that this stage is an experimental one. You can't be expected to master new competencies overnight, just because you've set some goals for yourself. There will be times when you try, but don't get it right. You mustn't give up. Practice makes perfect. It's a corny cliché, but it's an accurate one. There are a few techniques you can use to help you though.

- Don't underestimate the power of mentally rehearsing what you intend to do before you do it. There are strong psychological and neurological reasons for doing this. Athletes frequently rehearse mentally what they're about to do before they perform; and it's been shown to work.
- Discuss what you're going to do with somebody you trust before you do it. And then report back to them afterwards on the outcome.
- When first trying to improve emotional competencies that you're not confident about, try to find what's known as a 'safe psychological space' in which to do it. In other words, a context where, if you mess up, you won't do any harm or come to any embarrassment. Finding such a space is sometimes tricky. An example might be trying something with a trusted colleague before you attempt to do the same with a new member of your team.

This stage feeds neatly into the first and second stages of the model. As you experiment with new techniques and behaviours, your picture of your ideal self and real self are likely to shift. You should keep a note of how these change; it will be a valuable way of tracking your progress and seeing how far you have come.

Developing trusting relationships

We have already touched briefly on the importance of other people in your journey towards a broader set of leadership styles. The value of mentors, close colleagues, friends or partners can be significant, as they can provide you with a sense of perspective and inform you about that which you can't possibly know – how you appear from the outside.

The process of changing in this way can also be emotionally very demanding and stressful; having people who are involved in and knowledgeable about what you are doing can be invaluable in helping you to deal with this stress.

Explore further

The ideas contained within the document are based on two main sources. For more detailed information on how you can go about broadening your leadership style, you may find it useful to read them. They are:

- Daniel Goleman et al, *The New Leaders: Transforming the Art of Leadership into the Science of Results* (Little, Brown, 2002), pp 144–152.
- Richard E Boyatzis, 'How and why individuals are able to develop emotional intelligence' in: Cary Cherniss & Daniel Goleman (eds), The *Emotionally Intelligent Workplace: How to Select For, Measure, and Improve Emotional Intelligence in Individuals, Groups, and Organizations* (Jossey–Bass, 2001).
- **Image Credit:** Flickr Jesus Solana (accessed 26 September 2014).
- Document source – Emerald Works GoodPractice

Annex 2

Dealing With Difficult Situations

People who are very self-confident or have a tendency to be over-confident can make you feel unsure of yourself. Just because you don't feel as confident as they appear, doesn't mean that communication with them can't be equal. This article will help you prepare for occasions where you feel you might lose your confidence.

If you are communicating with a person who appears highly, and perhaps overwhelmingly, confident, ask yourself why they appear to be so confident. Do they portray confidence just to intimidate others and thus get their own way? Or are they being assertive through concern for the overall project/team?

Either way, their behaviour is not aimed directly at you. It is important to remember this so you **do not take what they say personally**. Prepare to mentally separate yourself from the situation so you **don't get emotionally involved**. The last thing you want to do is get upset or angry.

Preparation is key

The best thing you can do to prepare for dealing with highly assertive people is to know your stuff:

- **Find out what the situation is about**. For example, if it is a meeting, ask what will be discussed and try to prepare your points and ideas, comments or inputs in advance.
- **Research the topic**. Know as much as you can about the subject matter to be discussed. If you don't know something, ask or find out.

- Get your position on the topic straight in your mind. What **outcomes** you would like to achieve; what are the main points you would like to cover; which points you are willing to budge on; and where do you want to stick to your guns?
- Anticipate any **questions** the other person could ask or any issues that might arise. Think through how you might handle such issues and practise your responses.
- Think about how you can put your point across **assertively**. For example, "I have looked into that and in my opinion …" will have far more impact than "I'm not sure but …".
- **Run through the situation with a trusted colleague/friend** and ask for their feedback on the content of what you intend to say and how you come across.

If they cross the line …

If the other person starts to become difficult and their behaviour a barrier to communication, you might have to mange the situation in a different way:

Managing anger

If the other person begins to get angry, the most important thing for you to do is to **stay calm**. Often our natural reaction is to meet aggression with aggression but this only serves to escalate already difficult situations. If you feel you are beginning to get stressed, focus for a second on calming yourself down. Breathe in deeply and let the air out slowly. As you breathe out, tighten the muscles around your diaphragm (the lower end of your rib cage). Relax at the end of exhalation. This will help you to calm down and prevent that nervous tremble in your voice. Distance yourself from the situation by telling yourself the anger is not directed at you personally, but at the situation.

To help you manage the other person's anger, try the following [1]:

1. Make sure you understand the other person by asking for **clarification** ("So you're saying …").

2. Demonstrate **empathy** and state your point of view ("I understand why you are annoyed. I don't believe that was the case, but I'd like to hear why you think it is").
3. Only step up your assertion if the other person remains aggressive. You may do this by increasing the **emphasis** on your position ("I don't agree") and restate your reasons.
4. If you begin to feel **frustrated**, resentful or annoyed, you may like to express this ("It makes me feel frustrated when you …" or "I'd like to sort out …").
5. If the discussion remains heated, you may have to resort to statements such as: "I can see that you are upset, let's talk about this later". But, make sure the situation is **resolved** and not left hanging.

Another technique you can try is '**mirroring**'.[2] This is based on the idea that people who get on well with each other unconsciously mirror each other's gestures and actions. You can use this to relate to others as it shows **empathy** and thus aids communication. It is important that the other person does not know you are doing this as they may see it as manipulation or even mockery. You must be **subtle** and use this technique only as an aid to communication, not for manipulation.

Method: alter your **position** slightly and slowly to align it with the position of the other person. Do not directly copy their actions. Alter your **facial expression** to be in tune with theirs. You probably do this naturally during everyday interactions. For example, if a friend is telling you a story in which they were angry, you might find yourself scowling a little.

You can increase the **volume and pitch of your voice** to match that of the other person. This is a way of acknowledging verbally that the anger is there. Gradually lower the volume and pitch as the situation progresses. When the heat has gone from the situation, you will be able to express your point of view and negotiate more successfully.

Managing criticism

If the other person starts criticising you personally, you can use a technique called '**fogging**' to cope with the attack without rising to the bait or becoming defensive or aggressive. It is a way of objectively gathering the information that the critic offers, so that you can digest it and decide on the response that you think is appropriate.

Fogging involves agreeing with any true statements or probable truths, while not denying the criticism. For example: "You might be right; I could have made a mistake". In this way, you are not necessarily accepting their criticism, just acknowledging that they may have a point. This lack of resistance will give them nothing to retaliate against while you deliberate the matter.

The following steps can also help you to deal objectively with criticism:[3]

- Listen to the criticism. Understand the content of the criticism rather than the way in which it has been phrased.
- Decide honestly whether there is truth in the criticism.
- Decide how to deal with the criticism: agree, partially agree or disagree.
- Choose appropriate language when replying. For example, if you say 'you're wrong', this leaves fuel to argue further. Whereas, if you say 'I disagree' they can't argue with your feelings. This is a more constructive way of getting your point across without fuelling an argument.

A final word

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Whether the person you are communicating with is exercising their assertion, or if they start to become aggressive, don't let yourself be intimidated. If you know your stuff, can separate yourself from the situation and apply assertive techniques, you can successfully and confidently communicate in any difficult situation.

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[1] Stephanie Holland and Claire Ward, *Assertiveness: A Practical Approach* (Speechmark Publications Ltd, 2002).

[2] Sue Bishop, *Develop Your Assertiveness* Second Edition (Kogan Page, 2000).

[3] Ibid.

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