

## **CASE STUDY**

# **St Mary's Girls College**

### **The Organisation**

St Mary's College is an all girls' school which opened in 1959. It serves almost 1,000 pupils in the 11 - 18 age range from the Derry area. The school's aim can be summed up in one word - "Excellence". There are around 90 employees. The school first achieved Investor in People status in 1995 and has been successfully reviewed at three-year intervals since. It has gone on to use the Investors in People Leadership & Management Model.

### **The Challenge**

The Headmistress undertook an industry secondment in 1990-91 and developed her knowledge of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles. Realising that "people are the most important resource" in any organisation, she resolved to apply TQM to the school. As people and their contributions are fundamental to any successful quality system, Investors in People was chosen as the framework to assess and improve its people policies and systems. Training and development for all staff needed a sharper focus linked to priorities in order to achieve the school's aim.

### **The Solution**

The Investors in People Standard was linked with the School's operating and improvement programmes alongside the EFQM Business Excellence Model. The practices developed as a result of Investors in People also served well the "people" and "results" criteria of the EFQM Model. They are now fully integrated within the school's culture and are kept under review across all job roles.

### **The Results**

St Mary's College has been astoundingly successful since its work on Investors in People and quality models bore fruit. It was the first European educational establishment to win the prestigious European Quality Award and has also won the UK Business Excellence Award. The public service "Charter Mark" has been achieved four times. The school has won two National Training Awards and two Regional Training Awards for examples of exceptionally effective training. Several individual staff members have won national teaching awards. The school has benefited greatly in many ways. GCSE examination performance results have doubled over ten years. The school is cost-effective, provides best value and has stayed within budget. Staff turnover and absence are well below sector averages. There have been numerous development successes which have resulted in internal promotions to senior positions and, for example, technical/clerical support staff achieving qualified teacher status. Parents are a valued part of the school community. Many have been trained to assist teachers and this has raised horizons, leading to further education, training and job opportunities for the parents themselves - exemplary practice which has since been adopted in other schools.

## **Champion Status**

St Mary's College is delighted to have added Investors in People Champion status to its impressive list of accolades. The school is passionate about promoting the tools it has used so effectively in the journey to excellence. It has already done so in over 30 countries to a wide range of public and private sector audiences at presentations and seminars. And, as a learning organisation, it always seeks to learn more in the process of best-practice sharing. The school has much valuable experience to offer in leadership, continuous improvement, managing change and developing partnerships. This applies not only to the education and public sectors, but to the private sector and government too.

