

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: **Scholars Academy Trust**

Academy Trust Company Number: **851549**

Year ended **31 August 2020**

I accept that as accounting officer of Scholars Trust I am responsible and accountable for ensuring that the academy trust delivers good value in the use of public resources. I am aware of the guide to academy value for money statements published by the Education Funding Agency and understand that value for money refers to the educational and wider societal outcomes achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

I set out below how I have ensured that the academy trust's use of its resources has provided good value for money during the academic year.

Introduction

The Trust is accountable for the way in which the individual school's resources are allocated to meet the objectives set out in the schools' development plans. Trustees need to secure the best possible outcome for pupils, in the most efficient and effective way, at a reasonable cost. This will lead to continuous improvement in the schools' and Trust's achievements and services

What Is Best Value?

The Trustees apply the four principles of *best value*:

- **Challenge** - Are the schools' performances high enough? Why and how is a service provided? Do we still need it? Can it be delivered differently? What do parents want?
- **Compare** - How do the schools' pupil performance and financial performance compare with all schools both within the MAT and other schools? How does it compare with LA schools? How does it compare with similar schools?
- **Consult** - How do the schools seek the views of stakeholders about the services that are provided?
- **Compete** - How does the Trust and schools secure efficient and effective services? Are services of appropriate quality, economic?

The Trustees' Approach

The Trustees and school leaders will apply the principles of *best value* when making decisions about:

- the allocation of resources to best promote the aims and values of the Trust and schools.
- the targeting of resources to best improve standards and the quality of provision.
- the use of resources to best support the various educational needs of all pupils.

Trustees and school leaders will:

- make comparisons with other/similar schools using data provided by the LA and the Government, e.g. national data, quality of teaching & learning, levels of expenditure
- challenge proposals, examining them for effectiveness, efficiency, and cost, e.g. setting of annual pupil achievement targets,
- require suppliers to compete on grounds of cost, and quality/suitability of services/products/backup, e.g. provision of computer suite, redecoration

- consult individuals and organisations on quality/suitability of service we provide to parents and pupils, and services we receive from providers, e.g. Sex and Relationships Education, pupil reports, Ofsted and any other agencies including the LA.

This will apply in particular to:

- staffing
- use of premises
- use of resources
- quality of teaching
- quality of learning
- purchasing
- pupils' welfare
- health and safety

Trustees and school leaders:

- will not waste time and resources on investigating minor areas where few improvements can be achieved
- will not waste time and resources to make minor savings in costs
- will not waste time and resources by seeking tenders for minor supplies and services

The pursuit of minor improvements or savings is not cost effective if the administration involves substantial time or costs. Time wasted on minor improvements or savings can also distract management from more important or valuable areas.

Staffing

Trustees and school leaders will deploy staff to provide best value in terms of quality of teaching, quality of learning, adult-pupil ratio, and curriculum management.

Use of Premises

Trustees and school leaders will consider the allocation and use of teaching areas, support areas and communal areas, to provide the best environment for teaching & learning, for support services, and for communal access to central resources, e.g. the library.

Use of Resources

Trustees and school leaders will deploy equipment, materials and services to provide pupils and staff with resources which support quality of teaching and quality of learning.

Teaching

Trustees and school leaders will review the quality of curriculum provision and quality of teaching, to provide parents and pupils with:

- a curriculum which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, the LA Agreed RE Syllabus, and the needs of pupils in line with the local context of each school
- teaching which builds on previous learning and has high expectations of children's achievement

Learning

Trustees and school leaders will review the quality of children's learning, by school, cohort, class and group, to provide teaching which enables children to achieve nationally expected progress

and attainment, e.g. setting of annual pupil achievement targets to make good progress from entry into school at the relevant key stage

Purchasing

Trustees and school leaders will develop procedures for assessing need, and obtaining goods and services which provide “best value” in terms of suitability, efficiency, time, and cost.

Measures already in place include:

- competitive tendering procedures (e.g. for capital development above £25,000) (use the LA support services when necessary)
- procedures for accepting “best value” quotes, which are not necessarily the cheapest (e.g. suitability for purpose and quality of workmanship)
- procedures which minimise office time by the purchase of goods or services under £10,000 direct from known, reliable suppliers (e.g. stationery, small equipment)

Pupils’ Welfare

Trustees and school leaders will review the quality of the school environments and the school ethos, in order to provide a supportive environment conducive to learning and recreation.

Health & Safety

Trustees and school leaders will review the quality of the school environments and equipment, carrying out risk assessments where appropriate, in order to provide a safe working environment for pupils, staff and visitors.

Monitoring

These areas will be monitored for best value by:

1. Annual target setting meetings between the Headteachers and Subject Leaders
2. Annual Performance Management
3. Annual Budget Planning
4. Analysis’s of school student performance data, e.g. national testing results, standardised test results
5. Analysis of DfE pupil performance data
6. OFSTED Inspection reports
7. Trustees’ termly committee meetings
8. Trustees’ full termly meetings
9. Self Evaluation framework

Improving educational results: The Trust together with governing bodies checks and ensures that educational standards continue to improve for the benefit of pupils and wider society, and that all pupils have the opportunity to raise their individual levels of attainment.

Targeted improvement: The Trust together with governing bodies has kept its staffing structures under review and deployed staff efficiently to support an improved curriculum, or to target areas of the curriculum in need of development.

Focus on individual pupils: The Trust continues to manage the differing needs of pupils, such as those requiring one to one support, and those requiring more stretch.

Collaboration: The Trust together with governing bodies continues to engage with other educational providers and experts to share delivery or good practice, and to drive up standards for the least cost.

Quantifying improvements: Termly reviews of data are available to evidence the effectiveness of the Trust's strategies, via head teachers reports and updates – such as pupils' educational attainment, behaviour and attendance records over time.

Financial governance and oversight: The Trust's systems of financial governance include strong oversight by the trustees and accounting officer. The Trust have advised and challenged decision makers within the trust on the cost and effectiveness of spending proposals in order to achieve value for money and a regular basis.

Better purchasing: What has the Trust done to get more for its money?

Fitness for purpose: Services and contracts been appraised or renegotiated to get the best mix of quality and effectiveness for the least cost.

Benchmarking: The Trust benchmarked its costs against similar organisations to identify areas for making savings.

Options appraisal: Different options are considered before making purchases, including an assessment of the costs and benefits of the alternatives. Tendering is used appropriately and effectively to get the best deal. This does not mean always choosing the cheapest option.

Economies of scale: The Trust has taken opportunities to work collaboratively with others to reduce and share administration and procurement costs.

Better income generation: Opportunities have been taken to explore and generate additional and reliable revenue streams.

Reviewing controls and managing risks: The Trust organised its internal controls to maximise its use of assets. Management receive regular budget reports, and they act on them to best utilise spare resources and prevent waste. The Trust has checks and measures to manage cash, bank balances and investments effectively.

Lessons learned: The Trust continues to appraise and learn from its strategies and decisions in order to make the budget go further.

Signed: 

Name: Inderjit Sandhu

Scholars Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: NOV - 2020