

Value for Money Statement

Organisation name: Harpenden Free School Limited

Company number: 7649122

Year ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of Harpenden Free School Limited 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.

Improving Educational Outcomes

As the new Principal of Harpenden Free School, I took up my post on 26 August 2014.

Harpenden Free School offers a distinctive education for the children. Our vision and values promote being curious, unique, brave, boundless and playful and this is evident through all aspects of our school community. Our children have a real voice and are active participants in their own learning programme, both indoors and out of doors and in our wide curriculum and clubs and activities programme.

Using the Ofsted Report as a basis (the school underwent its first Inspection 2014) the school demonstrated a number of areas of achievement that link to our mission statement.

Our overarching rule is 'Taking Care and the Report stated that, 'teachers take care to identify each pupil's unique strengths and celebrate them'. This is a key strength of the school and this is hugely conducive to improving the educational outcomes of all children as our children genuinely feel safe, happy and secure and are motivated to learn.

The Ofsted Report clearly highlighted the areas of development. The School received a follow up HMI visit in October 2014 and this was viewed as a positive step forwards, with the overarching statement as, 'Senior leaders and Governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas of improvement'.

A highly experienced new Leader of Younger years was appointed from September 2014, as was a new SENCO and these join the Principal and Director of Learning as the newly formed Leadership team. It was a strategic decision to deploy the SLT in this way, as part of our continual and targeted school Improvement Plan. EYFS staff are benefiting from working with an experienced early years specialist and have also attended specific professional development for this phase. The Director of Learning leads on all aspects of Learning for upper KS1 and 2 and leads on staff and parent training programmes so that all members of our community fully understand our vision into practice.

There is a strong monitoring programme in place and SLT have also been involved in intervention groups, targeting specific groups of children.

As a new school, we are now starting to embed the core structures that are firmly in place.

A new Staff Performance Review has been introduced for teachers to ensure an effective monitoring of performance.

The effectiveness of these strategies is being seen in pupil outcomes, staff observations and our developing enriched curriculum.

Clear plans with specific timescales have been put into place for targeted improvement, for example assessment and tracking. Positive outcomes have already been identified and teachers are ensuring the data is used to inform planning, target interventions and support differentiation. For example, the introduction of the RWI programme is ensuring that all children are receiving a comprehensive and progressive phonics programme which is a fundamental component of Early Years Education. Relevant staff have undergone specific training and the groupings are flexible in order to cater for the individual needs of the children.

Our SENCO works with individual children and also offers nurture groups to ensure the specific needs of each and every child are properly supported.

The school is keen on building up links and working in collaboration with other agencies. For example, the school both benefits to and contribute to the Wroxham Alliance and this sharing of good practice is a key component of our

approach. The Principal and Director of Learning are also part of local school leadership groups designed to share best practice.

The Teaching and Learning Committee of the governing body meet regularly and oversee pupil progress and attainment.

Financial governance and oversight

The Trust's system of financial governance includes strong oversight by the Trustees and the Accounting Officer. The Resources Committee meet regularly and review full monthly management accounts. Close attention is paid to levels of pupil numbers which is considered a key performance indicator, with reports provided regularly for the governing body showing new starters and explaining attrition rates.

Our external auditors take the role of Responsible Officer and review and test our internal controls on a quarterly basis. The scheme of delegation adopted by the School ensures that we take the necessary steps to achieve best value.

The Full Governing Body approves the budget each year and is mindful of the need to ensure that the school continues to operate as a going concern by balancing expenditure against income. The Governing Body also receives and approves the Annual Accounts and External Auditors Management Report.

Better purchasing

The school's scheme of delegation ensures that all expenditure is subject to the use of preferred suppliers, minimum of 3 quotes or formal tender processes. The preferred supplier list includes an established consortium for best value, Hertfordshire Supplies, which was the school's main supplier for curriculum resources and stationary in the school year ended 31st August 2014.

The school utilised the services of the School Buying Club during the year, a national procurement service in the UK dedicated to schools. They oversaw the procurement for the leasing of the school's photocopiers.

The school also utilised government contract/framework agreements for school purchasing and renewed its insurance arrangements via this avenue in December 2013 and has recently used Crown Commercial Services to procure energy suppliers for the school's new site at Victoria Road.

The school bench marks regularly with other schools, particularly 2 local free schools who opened at the same time as Harpenden Free School and who have a similar pupil number base.

Maximising income generation

The school runs in house breakfast and after school care, which ran at close to full capacity during the school year to 31st August 2014 and which generated a good level of additional income for the school. When the school takes possession of the new school premises at Victoria Road in the centre of Harpenden in September 2015 there are plans to further generate income from letting various rooms in the new premises for community use. This has not been possible whilst the school has been in rented accommodation.

Reviewing controls and managing risk

The management accounts produced monthly for review by the resources committee include financial commentary explaining variances against budget, updated full year financial forecasts against budget, cash flow and capital expenditure. The committee question variances and actively encourage the review of procurement, contracts and staffing to ensure the school receives best value. During the year ended 31st August 2014 this resulted in a:

- review of HR facilities within the school;
- staffing profile review designed to both maximise the use of staff skills and reduce costs.

The school is currently in the process of changing banks and there are plans to ensure that surplus cash balances are invested in interest bearing accounts to maximise earning potential.

Name: Mrs Marissa Davis
Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: 29 Dec 2014