

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: Whitecross Hereford

Academy trust company number: 7793019

Year ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of Whitecross Hereford 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.

The Governors supported by the Senior Leadership Team champion the principles of best value: challenge, compare, consult, compete and apply them when making decisions about the allocation, targeting and use of resources to :

- promote the aims and values of the school;
- improve standards and quality of provision; and
- best support the various educational needs of all students.

Improving Educational Results

The Headteacher together with the Senior Leadership Team review the staffing structure annually and on departure of any member of staff to ensure that it is fit for purpose. A rigorous appraisal process ensures that teachers are recognised for their achievements and supported to improve their practice. Those who fail to meet the required standard are supported through a capability process; which may result in their leaving the school.

There is a similar review of associate staff to ensure that detailed job descriptions maximise the potential of these staff and reduce overlap.

Careful analysis of GCSE and other school results enables the school to identify which groups of students are at risk of under-achievement. These groups are then provided with additional support including 1 to 1 and small group teaching, additional resources, contact with parents and support in and out of lessons. This is carefully monitored by a

member of the senior team who also reports progress and spending on Pupil Premium students to the Behaviour and Safety Governors.

The school curriculum is designed on principles; which ensure cost effective class sizes and maximum utilisation of teachers' contact time. There is an acceptance that some subjects should be supported even though they may recruit smaller than optimum numbers, for example Music.

The school is part of the Wigmore High School teaching alliance which enables the sharing of good practice and support amongst many of the High Schools in Herefordshire and some outside of the county. Through this support we can access training for individual and groups of staff, access best practice in subject areas and share resources.

Since becoming an Academy in January 2012 our attendance figures have improved and our exclusions have reduced. Ofsted in May 2013 judged Whitecross to be a 'Good' School for Achievement, Leadership and Management, Behaviour and Safety of Students and Teaching.

Financial Governance and Oversight

The chair of Resources Committee is a qualified, practising Accountant and is ~~which~~, supported by the Bursar and Deputy Head. The committee has oversight of the school budget and issues related to the PFI contract. In addition I, as Accounting Officer, attend meetings when necessary to fulfil the requirement of my role. The committee receives monthly reports and ~~are~~ is responsible for approving a balanced budget and recommending it to the Board. The committee reviews the Finance Policy on an annual basis taking account of any revisions made to the Academies Financial Handbook.

Departments are allocated capitation using a formula, which identifies the number of students and a weighting for those that are resource hungry (Science, Creative Arts for example). This formula and allocations are reviewed annually to take account of the priorities in the School Development Plan and any curriculum changes.

The budget holders and the finance staff continually strive to seek best value in all purchases, where time and cost effectiveness allow. The school has worked with many local suppliers to procure goods and has a competitive arrangement with a local stationery supplies firm for copier paper and office supplies. The school is striving to reduce the cost of printing by reviewing its copier contract which is due for renewal in Summer 2015 and is investigating a 'follow me' print solution. We are also intending to trial the 'paperless finance office' within SIMS Financial Management System (FMS); moving to more on-line ordering and payments to creditors by BACS rather than cheque payments which are costly to procure and post !

The use of a Government Procurement Card facilitates the on-line purchase of specialised materials at competitive costs.

This year the school re-negotiated its Trade Refuse service with a local company offering a competitive price and local flexibility.

We have procedures in place to ensure that I authorise all cheque and BACS payments; which enables me to query spending which may be excessive or unnecessary. I also sign off payroll, bank statements and VAT claims.

The Bursar and I attend meetings where we share data to enable benchmarking of costs and results and then sharing practice to improve.

Better Purchasing

As a PFI school the major contracts are not held by us, however benchmarking is built into the contract so that, in particular, the Facilities Management Company, ICT provider and Caterers have to demonstrate at set intervals that they still provide value for money.

We have a process, which requires our contractors to provide competitive quotes before we agree work with them.

Better Income Generation

We are limited in our opportunities to generate income because we don't own our buildings and therefore cannot let them to third parties.

Some funds are created through consultancy, which is shared equally between the generator and the school. The school also receives money for my work as a Headteacher Ambassador for the Youth Sport Trust and for Chairing the Local Organising Committee for the Herefordshire School Games.

We provide one of our partner Primary Schools with a specialist PE teacher for one day per week for which they pay us £7k from the Sport Premium.

Reviewing Controls and Managing Risk

Budget holders are provided with monthly finance reports for their specific areas of responsibility and the Resources Governors receive comprehensive income and expenditure reports and accompanying notes so that they can monitor performance.

The schools uses SMS FMS to monitor all expenditure and income and the Finance Team monitor the bank account on a daily basis to ensure sufficient are available to meet costs recorded in the system.

We also use Lloyds Bank investment services and have earned £1.8k over the past twelve month period and is continuing with an on-going investment (32 day deposit account) which we will monitor against our cash-flow during the forthcoming year.

For insurance we use Zurich Municipal to cover public and employee liability and low level of school owned contents: the PFI landlord assume the buildings and major contents risk.

An external 'responsible officer' performs termly reviews of the financial processes and presents findings in a report that is shared with the Headteacher and Resources Governors.

Staff, students and parents are regularly consulted, formally using an independent provider – currently Kirkland Rowell, and informally during other meetings.

Lessons Learned

We are the venue of choice for daytime meetings, particularly by the Local Authority for which we make no charge, however we have negotiated a fee of £1000 to cover the annual cost of refreshments and facilities. We are less willing to make our facilities available without charging.

Signed: Denise Strutt

Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: 1 December 2014