

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: **Whitecross Hereford**

Academy trust company number: **7793019**

Year ended **31 August 2013**

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 Leadership Team, champion the principles of best value: challenge, compare, consult, compete.

Improving Educational Results

The Headteacher together with the 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 are 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 or roles.

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 an Assistant Head who also have oversight of the use of the Pupil Premium.

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 2013 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 Vice Chair of Governors, a qualified Accountant, chairs the Resources Committee which, supported by the Bursar and Deputy Head, has oversight of the school budget and issues related to the PFI contract. In addition I, as Accounting Officer, attend when necessary to fulfil the requirement of my role. The members of the committee receive monthly reports and are responsible for approving a balanced budget and recommending it to the Board.

Subject departments are allocated capitation using a formula, which identifies the number of students and a weighting for those, which are resource hungry (for example Science, Creative Arts). 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 ensure best value by sourcing resources at competitive prices, using West Mercia Services consortium for example for the purchase of general stationery in bulk to generate economies of scale. Also the use of a Government Procurement Card facilitates the on-line purchase of specialised materials.

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 regional 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 provider, ICT provider and Catering provider have to demonstrate at set intervals that they still provide value for money.

Since January 2013 we have reviewed our leasing contracts for photocopiers, franking machine and telephone calls to ensure we have better value services.

If we wish to make small adjustments or improvements to the premises we have to seek the landlords permission and then we work with our facilities manager to seek competitive quotes for the works.

Having only converted to academy status in January 2013, it has not been possible to benchmark our costs yet but we aim to use the DfE figures as soon as they become available. In the interim our Bursar meets with other colleagues and does local benchmarking.

We are looking to purchase insurance through a local academy collaboration and we are currently working with a local business supplies company to seek competitive prices on standard school consumables.

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.

Reviewing controls and managing risk

Governors, senior staff and department budget holders are provided with monthly reports so that they can monitor expenditure and performance.

We are subject to internal audit checks through a Responsible Officer who will review financial procedures such as cashflow, bank reconciliation, payroll, purchases, income, VAT, petty cash and financial reporting.

Since January 2013 we have identified surplus cash funds, which we have placed in short-term, no risk deposits with our bankers (Lloyds). Our policy is to ensure that we have adequate liquid funds to meet all payroll related commitments and outstanding supply creditors each month.

The school premises are insured by the PFI landlord. The school has comprehensive insurance cover with Zurich Municipal for public liability, employer's liability, libel and slander, governor's liability and fidelity, as well as motor, school journey, personal accident and legal expenses.

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 for which we currently make no charge. We should consider making a charge to those organisations who are independent of the school to cover facilities costs and create some additional funds for the school.

Signed: 

Name: Denise Strutt

Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: 5th November 2013