

# Value for Money Statement

**Organisation name: Chantry School**

**Company number: 7657852**

**Year ended 31 August 2014**

I accept that as accounting officer of Chantry School 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 Results

Our Examination outcomes continue to suggest that we offer excellent value for money. Our 5A\*C including English and Maths score was 72%. This is against a national average of 55.9% for all state funded schools (source DfE First Statistical Release, Oct 14). Our performance against local schools is similarly very favourable, with the county wide figure being 59.2%.

We maintain our performance for all pupils, not just those on the C/D borderline that the above measure tends to exaggerate. Our progress data for pupils in English and Maths indicates that pupils at The Chantry School perform significantly better than national performance.

In Maths 87% of pupils make the expected 3 levels of progress (64% nationally) and 43% make more than expected progress (28%) nationally.

In English 84% of pupils make the expected 3 levels of progress (58% nationally) and 46% make more than expected progress (26%) nationally.

We have targeted specific funding towards supporting vulnerable groups of pupils with the aim of narrowing the achievement gap between those pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium and their peers. We appointed one to one staff to work with pupils in Maths and English. Our Teaching Assistants have taken on specific roles working with different target areas such as speech and language, social skills and literacy. We have a specific hardship fund to help these children be able to attend trips and buy essential resources to help them achieve.

Our Ever 6 data (FSM vs. NFSM) shows we are successfully closing the gap between these groups of pupils. In 2014 69% of Pupil Premium eligible learners achieved 5 x A\*-C inc. English and Maths, against 75% of the non-eligible cohort. This gap of 6% has come down from 33% last year and 44% the previous year, indicating excellent value for money from the targeted funding.

In Worcestershire we are one of the lowest funded authorities in the country so to continue to achieve these results with less money than other schools' per pupil is a significant value for money marker.

We work collaboratively with other schools and provide services to our pyramid primary schools at cost enabling them to obtain value for money. We are also an active member of the Worcestershire Association of Business Management (WASBM) which actively shares best practice helping to drive down inefficiencies in schools in the area.

Our financial performance compared to the previous period was also comparable and we achieved a balanced budget with an appropriate carry forward contingency for emergencies and future capital works. Please see our audited accounts for more detail.

## Financial Governance and Oversight

We have strong financial Governance in place. Our committee structure supports high level monitoring and challenge and we have agreed terms of Reference in place. Our Chair of Finance Committee is a qualified accountant and will question financial reports put in front of the committee. Committee minutes will support this if required. At these meetings expenditure is analysed, procurement is appraised and financial policy is debated. Audited accounts are presented in detail along with other audit reports e.g. Peer Assessments.

Finance Committee feeds into the main Full Governing body which will ratify annual budgets and audited accounts with all Governors given access to all documentation to aid decision making. Full Governors and committees meet every quarter.

We have an agreed reserves policy ensuring that we have protected amounts to deal with emergencies and larger

capital projects but also when we achieve efficiencies year on year i.e. increases in carry forward, we put these back into one off revenue projects. In 2013/14 examples included money towards a new minibus and improved dining areas.

We have an experienced Business Manager in place who spends a great deal of time providing information and liaising with Governors. The Business Manager is fully involved in any accounting and system audits and in turn provided Peer Assessment audits to other schools in the local area.

#### Better Purchasing

We have an effective procurement policy and achieving value for money for goods and services is an integral part of everything that we do. Again experienced financial staff provide a significant check point for budget holders and they will help them assess costs and whether there are cheaper solutions. Finance staff continually test the market for regular orders such as heating fuel and stationery. Our ICT staff are proactive in obtaining numerous quotes based on a clear specification and they continually test the market also.

A good example of our processes for achieving best value is that of the awarding of a new cleaning contract in the school in July 2014. Tenders were received from six companies and the shortlisted operators invited in to interview with myself as Head, the Business Manager and the Chair of Premises committee. This service was procured well below the average tender price, and at a service level that is of a continuing high standard.

We do some ad hoc benchmarking against other WASBM schools and consider information from the DfE Benchmarking Return. We also benchmark current costs of goods and services with past costs to ensure VFM continues. It's fair to say we know where our costs are high and low and what the reasons are. We make plans to address any issues by working with our Governors.

As mentioned we work collaboratively with our primary schools to cut costs and we have also been involved in WASBM joint procurement initiatives. We have a skilled and proactive Site team and our policy is to do as much internally as we can before acquiring the services of external contractors e.g. we do all our own decorating (unless part of a capital project) which saves us significant costs. Primary schools are also benefitting from this, as is the Sports Centre which is a dual use facility.

#### Better Income Generation

We were able to secure significant funding for capital works and are currently exploring the use of Section 106 money in the area so that we can improve our facilities further. We have prepared bids to Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) in respect of funding to support a new all-weather pitch. We have also worked with MHDC in formulating the re-tender process for our community time in our Sports Centre, successfully engaging a new partner committed to investment in facilities that will benefit pupils as well as community groups.

We tap into other funding streams as they arise and we have some regular small funding streams that we apply to including the Martley Old Grammar School Foundation.

Working with our school caterer we invested in a new biometric, cashless catering system. Despite the initial capital outlay profits have soared and we are sharing a healthy pot of money in year one.

#### Reviewing Controls and Managing Risks

We have a comprehensive Finance Policy and our internal controls are very effective. This has been confirmed by our Auditors and Peer Reviewers. All Budget Holders have access to an online finance system where they can analyse their expenditure reports and Finance staff periodically review and discuss their financial position with them. The Business Manager produces periodic full reports for senior staff and Governors and the use of reserves is often discussed. We have good cash flow processes in place and produce weekly reports on this. We have been investing money with our bank with 'no risk' investment policies.

#### Lessons Learned

Our biggest tool in appraising spend are experienced Business Manager and Finance staff who will challenge whether spend is appropriate and are very mindful of waste. They are experienced in assessing options and identifying high costs. They challenge suppliers and contractors and will secure discounts and reductions whenever they can.

The Business Manager continually challenges whether it's appropriate to continue with a service or product and will happily end historical relationships. He is 'bombarded' with sales ideas, recommended courses of action and new software but will only pursue if it offers value for money and long term benefit.

Governors have an active role in monitoring our finances and will suggest strategies to tackle cost issues. By considering 3 year budget plans at these meetings we are planning ahead and tackling potential problems as early as possible, particularly the challenge presented by unfunded pay awards and pension increases. These have required us to make efficiency savings without undermining the quality of delivery to pupils.

**Name:** Dr Andrew Dickenson  
**Academy Trust Accounting Officer**

**Date:** 16 Dec 2014