

Fir Vale School Academy Trust

Value for Money Statement

Company Number: 08090074

Year ended : 31st August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of Fir Vale School Academy 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.

1. Key Developments

1.1 The 2013/14 academic year was the third year of the school expansion programme with an additional 60 students on roll. This increase was acknowledged in the planning of the staffing model to ensure full deployment of teaching staff, with the timetable designed using subject specialists for the vast majority of lessons.

1.2 With local demographic changes, the school has continued to experience a rise in the number of students who had very little knowledge of the English language prior to being placed at Fir Vale, these are predominantly from the Slovak Roma community. This has changed the context of the school and structures and systems have been reviewed to accommodate this change and enable appropriate provision for this specific and exceptionally vulnerable and needy ethnic group.

1.3 A three year School Improvement Plan along with individual Department Development Plans underpins the strategic work of the school and through regular monitoring is a driver for continuous planned improvement and the efficient and effective use of resources.

2. Educational Outcomes

2.1 Students achieved some real success in the 2014 GCSE examinations with the results for French, History, Law, Science and Sociology should high levels of progress and being above the national average for their respective subject. 43% of the Y11 cohort obtained 5 or more GCSE's at C or above and including English and Mathematics.

- 2.2 A comprehensive careers education programme continues to provide students with excellent levels of guidance and this results in very high levels of students progressing in to further education and a very low level of NEETS (Not in education, employment or training).
- 2.3 At KS3 students achieved considerable progress due to the introduction of the 'Culture of Progress Programme' which raises the profile of KS3 achieving at least 2 sublevels progress each year linked to the reward and praise system. We also introduced a new system of assessment and recording called 3LP. This saw significant improvements in the core subjects, particularly in Science.
- 2.4 The value of a high level of attendance at school is promoted to students and this aspect of work proved successful with an overall student attendance level of 93.5% for the academic year.
- 2.5 High quality pastoral work throughout the school resulted in a much reduced level of negative behaviour referrals and student exclusions during the academic year and producing one of the lowest fixed term exclusion levels within the city.

3. Curriculum Provision

- 3.1 A detailed annual review of the curriculum is undertaken to consider national changes, specific needs of the student cohort and an internal guidance programme for students transferring to KS4. Courses for the KS4 curriculum are only confirmed once there is a viable level of interest. The staff establishment is then reviewed to ensure employment of appropriate specialist staff to deliver the curriculum.
- 3.2 The curriculum model has been developed to ensure suitable provision for those students attending Fir Vale who have very limited English and this is matched with the appointment of specialist staff with appropriate skills to work with these students.
- 3.3 The range of student ability is considered when reviewing provision and a specialist team is in place to provide individual and group support to those students with identified additional needs. External support and provision is utilised for individual students when their needs cannot be fully met from within the school.

4. Partnerships

- 4.1 Fir Vale works closely with the Sheffield family of schools and meets regularly with the local family of primary schools to consider common issues, the transition of students and joint initiatives to drive school improvement.
- 4.2 Teaching staff have benefitted from quality professional development as a result of collaborative work with local schools through a Leading Edge Partnership and working with a local designated Training School.

4.3 Having become a Microsoft IT Academy, Fir Vale is now developing provision for the local community and for staff, with a suite of online IT courses and tutorials taking place in the Enterprise Centre.

5. Financial Governance

5.1 A detailed budget was prepared and considered by Governors for this first full financial year as an academy. Following agreement to the budget, regular monitoring has taken place both in school and by the Finance, Premises and General Purposes Committee of the Governing Body.

5.2 Governors have made a Responsible Officer appointment to undertake a programme testing financial processes and accuracy. Accountants appointed prior to conversion have continued to provide support throughout the year and undertaken a through audit and preparation of the financial statements and accounts at the end of the year.

5.3 The balance of funds accrued from the previous school and planned in-year surpluses from the first two accounting periods, has been held as a contingency fund. This provides a level of financial protection available to fund unpredicted and one-off issues, with the academy being an independent body and the need to ensure operational stability.

5.4 A review of the governance structure and accountability has ensured that recommended practice is in place and that any possible pecuniary interests of governors is checked at each stage of the decision making process.

5.5 The Risk Register is updated on an annual basis to reflect areas of risk to the school and ensure effective measures are in place to reduce aspects of risk.

6. Contracts / Procurement

6.1 During the planning process for academy conversion, tendering processes were undertaken for legal, accountancy, banking, insurance and HR provision and these arrangements continue to be reviewed to ensure that future services are appropriate and cost effective. Other external services are subject to ongoing review, producing a cost benefit analysis, to ensure high quality service and best value for the school.

6.2 Expenditure on provision through the PFI Facilities Management contract and ICT Managed Service contract is regularly reviewed by staff and Governors to ensure sufficient challenge to the service being provided by these external providers. The contract for ICT provision expires in 2015 and detailed planning is already in place to ensure seamless transfer to the future service provision.

7. Future Planning

7.1 The on-going review of internal processes will ensure prudent financial management and future considerations will take in to account relevant benchmarking information for schools with similar characteristics.

7.2 To enhance overall resources and opportunities for students, work is taking place to seek grant funding and expertise in this area will benefit the potential activity of the school. Successful applications will enhance the existing wide programme of extra-curricular activities as well as the programme of interventions that includes a developing and popular Saturday Morning School.

7.3 Potential risks associated with the national funding position are under continual review in order to ensure financial stability and ensure that Fir Vale School Academy Trust can maintain high quality and relevant provision whilst still maintaining 'making dreams a reality' for all students.

Signed :

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Martin', written in a cursive style.

Date: 19th December 2014

Breffni Martin, Academy Trust Accounting Officer