

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: St Francis of Assisi Academies Trust

Academy trust company number: 8462151

Year ended 31 August 2013

I accept that as accounting officer of St Francis of Assisi Academies 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.

Targeted improvement:

St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

Staffing structure is reviewed regularly, when the school moved to a creative curriculum foundation subject leads were replaced by school development groups with all staff being responsible for the development of one are of the SDP. As school developed from Lower to primary leads of lower primary and upper primary were employed to respond to this change to ensure that standards of attainment continued to rise.

St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- Staffing structure reviewed regularly and leadership structures reviewed with governors at least yearly and sooner if vacancies arise.
- Support staff efficiently deployed in their area of expertise to ensure support and intervention is effective. This is evaluated termly to determine impact.
- HLTAs deployed for 1st day cover to ensure consistency and continuity for children.
- Student teacher employed supernumerary as a proactive approach to recruitment requirements in the longer term.
- AHT on reduced timetable (50%) to enable effective leadership of Inclusion and Foundation Stage.
- Leadership training opportunities and good quality CPD offered to appropriately qualified teachers to ensure succession planning

St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- Staffing structure kept under review and existing staff efficiently deployed in their area of expertise to support an improved curriculum.
- No applications for the ICT position so existing staff deployed to the area.
- Appointment for maternity cover made in house (TA promoted on a temporary contract)

- AHT on reduced timetables to support teaching and learning in their respective Key Stages.
- Both have additional responsibility for English and PSHE

St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

STM has maintained a review of staffing in order to effectively develop the teaching school and ensure effective deployment of staff to school improvement in the teaching school alliance without any detrimental impact upon standards at STM. This has included removing all non-teaching and learning related activities from the job roles of members of the SLT so that their work remains focused on our core purpose

- the school has addressed staffing structures in science to promote opportunities for improvement in this area of the curriculum.

- the school has completed a review of staffing structures required to meet the needs of year 7 students arriving at STM in 2014

Focus on individual pupils:

How has the trust managed the differing needs of pupils, such as those requiring one to one support, and those requiring more stretch?

St John Rigby Catholic Lower School

Access one to one funding through LA

Part of AfA programme
Pupil premium money used to fund support for individual pupils, play therapist, engagement in extracurricular activities, speech and language support
Impact of initiatives and spending on pupil premium and vulnerable groups monitored through ASIG, Inclusion committee, Standards

St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- o Achievement for All (AfA) programme led across the school by School Champion and individual teachers to provide opportunities for vulnerable children, and their families, to achieve higher levels of educational success.
- o Reading (RWI) programme implemented across the school enabling small classes and targeted intervention at all levels of attainment.
- o Weekly writing & maths programmes run across all year groups to enable provision to be targeted (vertically grouped) and more focussed (smaller groups @15).
- o 1:1 Intervention programme run for targeted children every term offering at least 12 children individual focussed tuition outside of core curriculum time.
- o Challenging targets are set to at least meet national expectations to ensure progress is rapid and sustained for all pupils.
- o Pupil premium funding targeted to support the needs of the most vulnerable children across the school e.g. supported places at 'breakfast' and 'after-school' clubs, trip funding, provision of Family Support Worker, provision of Nurture Setting.

St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- High expectations for all pupils expressed through aspirational target setting
- Intervention groups/One to One support/Nurture groups allocated following results at interim assessment points
- Part of AFA programme
- After school Reading Club established to support the development of reading
- Able and talented coordinator appointed
- Parent Support worker employed to work with vulnerable families

St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

Under the scrutiny of directors STM has allocated specific high quality staffing to both pupil premium and one to one programmes. As a result the performance of vulnerable groups is consistently above national averages for similar groups and progress across the school is exceptional

Collaboration:

How has the trust engaged with other educational providers and experts to share delivery or good practice, and to drive up standards for the least cost?

St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

The school has provided school to school support to other schools in the borough directly impacting the standards for those schools. St John Rigby has developed and delivered CPD training for schools and university students. The school works closely with St Thomas More Teaching school to access and deliver high quality CPD for all staff. The school has put in a bid for teaching schools and has a large number of strategic partners to support in the delivery of the key areas. The school has worked with the other 3 schools in the trust to develop targeted and relevant CPD and moderation opportunities.

St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- Good practice shared through Teaching School courses and School 2 School support
- In-house training provided by the Teaching School provision has developed staff pedagogy and leadership skills.
- Joint meetings with local Headteachers and subject leads has enabled moderation to ensure consistency and rigour in judgements across phases and key stages.

St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- Head teacher engaged with the St Thomas More Teaching school on both training and delivery of courses
- Assistant Head teachers have run the English PSG on behalf of the Teaching School
- OFSTED training accessed through BLE at a reduced cost
- Staff have been able to access the Teaching school courses at a reduced rate

St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

As a teaching school we have a vast menu of activities that promote improvement in partner schools. We are a key provider of school improvement services to schools in Bedford borough and take a strategic lead in both English and the humanities. Our work has seen us support a failing school in Northampton to great effect with results at key stage 4 and 5 transformed during our period of engagement.

New initiatives:

What changes did the trust make to its budget to accommodate additional activities whilst living within its means?

St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

The school has developed a wide range of extracurricular activities and ensured that these are accessible to all using pupil premium funding. The school has worked with St Thomas More to provide a wide range of educational experiences and to offer an innovative transition programme from year 6 to year 7.

St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- Impact of Pupil Premium funding monitored by leadership and governors

St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- Sports Premium money was allocated to facilitate swimming lessons for Years 5 and 6
- Costings for the different venues/travel arrangements were sought to ensure that the total cost did not exceed the budget
- Pupil premium monies allocated and reported upon. (See website)

St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

The school has been very careful to develop the teaching school in a sustainable way under the direction of the trust. The school has established an known benchmark for income to the teaching school and has used this to inform staffing levels. We have been very careful not to over estimate future income and in doing so we are able to work with a healthy surplus that is invested in the school facilities as opposed to a thin margin that is a threat to standards and job security.

Quantifying improvements:

What data is available to evidence the effectiveness of the trust's strategies – such as pupils' educational attainment, behaviour and attendance records over time – and what does it show? What was the trust's financial performance in the corresponding period?

St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

Raise on line data demonstrates that attainment at the key indicator (KS1) in St John Rigby is outstanding
Internal analysis of data for each year group demonstrates that this is the case across the school – Year 6 predictions demonstrate outstanding progress from KS1 to Y6
Data collected on behaviour

St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- Raise Online data analysis, Family Fisher Trust analysis and Governor comparison data charts & graphs online have all contributed to validation of school's own data.
- Attendance has steadily improved over the last year and is now in-line with national guidelines.
- Educational attainment has improved over the longer term with a steady increase in outcomes. Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1 and for the final year group in the school on leaving are at least in-line with national outcomes.

St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- Performance data shows pupils' accelerated progress through from entry to exit
- St Gregory's is the third highest performing school in the Local Authority at Level 4+ for the second year running
- Attendance is outstanding and above the National Average
- Exclusions are well below the National Average
- Finances have been managed prudently as we were unaware of the total cost of the 'buy backs' from the Local Authority
- Each package was carefully considered on its merits as to what would best serve the pupils before commitments were made.
- Monies have been saved by not appointing to ICT and internal cover of the Maternity leave.

St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

National performance data for behaviour and attendance, FFT achievement data and the schools own data shows that student outcomes were excellent over the course of the last 12 months. During this same period the school maintained a healthy financial margin that will be used to improve the facilities in the school and to offset the changes to the national funding formula.

Financial governance and oversight:

Does the trust's system of financial governance include strong oversight by the trustees and accounting officer? How have they advised and challenged decision makers within the trust on the cost and effectiveness of spending proposals in order to achieve value for money? Could funding have been used to better educational or economic effect elsewhere?

St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

- Directors receive a half termly Financial report at the ASIG meetings which the Executive Principal attends. Report is interrogated at the ASIG meeting
- School Finance Officer meets regularly with the Trust Principal Finance Officer (PFO)
- PFO meets regularly with the Executive Principal
- Yearly calendar of time-tabled meetings in place for school Finance Officer and Executive Principal
- Director Finance Committee – includes the EP and is advised by the PFO - meets half-termly for Trust-wide oversight

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FINANCE DEPARTMENTS

Directors and Finance Managers follow procedures for assessing the need and obtaining goods and services which provide best value in terms of suitability, efficiency, time and cost. We follow a competitive tendering process for goods and services above £5k. We accept quotes that are best value and not necessarily the cheapest for example quality of workmanship and suitability for purpose. All contracts are assessed when they come to the end of their period, renegotiated where appropriate, and also assessed to determine whether or not the contract is still required and/ or fit for purpose. We all follow the procedure of purchasing goods and services under £1k (stationary and small equipment) direct from known reliable supplier's thus minimising office time.

Benchmarking is an area that will be developed for the Multi Academy Trust. We have only been operating for the past 5 months and so far are unaware of a similar organisation structure to benchmark against. As we progress and move forward we will explore this further.

Finance Managers meet regularly and are led by the Principal Finance Officer to ensure that we share knowledge, advice and support within the Multi Academy Trust. We have obtained advice from Arambol with regards to tendering for larger projects and we have started to negotiate service contracts for the academy ensuring that we have reduced our cost by utilising the buying power of the four schools.

Some opportunities have been taken to explore income generation, a member of the Finance team has attended a bid writing course and a grant for sporting activities has been received. The Teaching Schools training facility has been built and will attract income as we increase the level of courses provided. We have also been successful in obtaining a grant of £358,817 for double glazing through the Academies Maintenance Fund. This is an area to be developed.

We have had difficulties with the financial software which has delayed the ability to produce budget monitoring reports. Finance Manager's meet with Headteachers regularly to discuss all budget and finance issues to ensure all resources are being spent wisely. A Principal Finance Officer has been appointed to oversee all cash flow and management of the single trust bank account and lead the finance team. The Finance Committee and the Principal Finance Officer have met regularly to review budgets and income and expenditure.

Over the next 6 months a review will take place of the Finance and HR functions across the Multi Academy Trust to develop and implement, if considered appropriate, a centralised Finance H/R Function. This will improve our buying power to ensure best value collaboratively as a trust and improve the ability to work collaboratively across the trust.

Signed: 

Name: ... Alan Lee

Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: ... 3 December 2013