

Value for Money Statement

Organisation name: Chester Diocesan Academies Trust

Company number: 8451787

Year ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of Chester Diocesan 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.

Improving educational outcomes

a. Targeted and Quantifying improvement

The trust keeps its staffing structure under review and deploys staff efficiently to support an improved curriculum and also to target areas of the curriculum in need of development. Following an in-depth examination, there have been a number of staffing changes and moves. The Academy Principal produces a six weekly statistical report to governors on pupil's attainment which is also reported to the trust.

b. Focus on individual pupils

The trust manages the differing needs of pupils, such as those requiring one to one support and those requiring enhanced work to match their abilities. The work of Teaching Assistants is carefully directed to those pupils requiring support and outcomes carefully monitored.

c. Collaboration

We engage with other educational providers and experts to share delivery or good practice and to drive standards for the least cost. Work was supported by another outstanding church school in the Diocese and the University of Chester.

d. New initiatives

The Environmental Improvement Grant was used to improve the buildings making educational provision more effective. The new phonics curriculum was introduced by utilising part of the budget to buy training and support from the Read Write Inc programme.

e. Quantifying improvements

The academy principal produces a six weekly statistical report to the governors and trust on pupil's attainment. Early Years (Reception and Nursery), Year 1 (Phonics) and Year 6 are now at National Standard if not above, with Year 2 children being closer to National Standard than in previous years. The school employs an experienced Child Protection Officer/Senior Learning Mentor who has worked consistently to improve pupil attendance, punctuality and behaviour.

Financial governance and oversight

The trust maintains a system of financial governance, including sound internal spending controls, keeping up to date financial records, continuous financial monitoring and timely reporting. Internal audit is provided by experienced accountants and regular reports provided to the trust. A scheme of delegation demonstrates clearly who has authority to make financial decisions. This scheme also identifies an appropriate number of quotations must be obtained for purchases over set levels. Systems incorporated within the FMSIS accreditation have been maintained since conversion as evidence of good practice. The trust utilises FMS Multiview software to enable individual academy financial records to be regularly examined at the trust's office.

Better Purchasing

a. Fitness for purpose

The trust has negotiated contracts for HR, payroll, IT and communications support by seeking tenders, interviewing and ensuring the appropriate effectiveness of the suppliers. Building work to utilise the Environmental Improvement Grant was subject to competitive tender. The experience of the academy's business manager as a procurement manager has supported the drive for fitness for purpose.

b. Benchmarking

Bench marking against other similar schools/academies by the academy's business manager is an on-going process to identify areas for making savings.

c. Options appraisal

When appropriate suppliers have been found, the option of longer-term contracts has been considered and where appropriate (for example with finance software and insurance) agreements have been made.

d. Economies of scale

The trust has worked with a local church university and another church school in the Diocese to provide economy of scale in the provision of educational support.

Maximising Income Generation

All avenues of income generation are explored and will continue to be so as and when the premises and needs of the children change.

Reviewing controls and managing risks

A new, web based Asset Management Software programme is now employed to manage and control risks. A risk register is maintained and regularly reviewed by the trust. Academy specific insurance brokers are used to ensure the service is tailor made. A new financial management framework is in place with external auditors and stringent internal controls.

Lessons learned

This is an on-going process with an innate culture of self-appraisal within the trust. Staff are encouraged to discuss mistakes/errors and how we/they can learn from these mistakes. A culture of blame is discouraged; openness and honesty are strongly encouraged so that lessons can be learned.