

Value for Money Statement

Organisation name: Bicester Learning Academy

Company number: 9053713

Year ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of Bicester Learning Academy 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.

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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.

I view value for money as ensuring that we gain maximum benefit in terms of economic, effective and efficient use of all the funds available to us for the purpose of providing each student with the maximum opportunity to make best use of their abilities. By producing robust financial plans and regularly reviewing and updating those plans we are committed to gaining true value for money across all areas of the trust.

Stringent Control of Finances

We produce detailed three year budget plans for each school within the trust ensuring that this is closely linked to our school development plans. Dedicated funding streams such as Pupil Premium are carefully monitored to ensure that the funds are directed to that specific purpose.

We have introduced a new finance system and have established strict controls in terms of authority levels with countersigning signatures for all levels of expenditure exceeding £1000. Any expenditure over £5000 requires three separate like for like quotations, expenditure over £10000 requires prior approval from the Finance Committee and expenditure over £20000 requires prior approval from the full Board of Members. Each Budget Holder signs to certify that every order constitutes appropriate use of public funds. Additionally each Budget Holder, as well as each Board Member has signed a statement of Pecuniary Interest thus ensuring that no individual seeks to achieve personal gain by spending school funds.

As expenditure on staffing is our largest spend area, I seek to ensure that our staffing structure, whilst supporting Teaching and Learning, is no more than 80% of our total expenditure and is sustainable in the event of varying student numbers.

We have increased our purchasing power by negotiating joint contracts for grounds maintenance and catering provision and benefitted from economies of scale for recent and planned computer purchases.

My Finance Director reviews all budgets monthly and circulates to the Finance Committee which meet at regular intervals throughout the year.

As a new academy (formed 1 July 2014) we have worked closely with our accountants to ensure that our processes and procedures under this new way forward meet their requirements; and those of the EFA. Our accountants will also be providing full Responsible Officer and audit functions.

Improving Educational Standards

Bicester Learning Academy strives to prepare and motivate all of our students to develop to their full potential as individuals and as members of society by providing the highest quality all-round education for each and every learner. GCSE and A Level results have improved steadily over the last nine years. We aim to make use of third millennium technologies including Blogs, Vlogs & Social Networking (Twitter, Facebook and You Tube), latest developments in Information Technology (including Chromebook, tablets and netbooks) and widespread wireless networking.

We have recently strengthened our SEN provision by introducing dedicated subject specific and specialist (eg autism) HLTAs partially funded by Pupil Premium monies. Remaining Pupil Premium funds are carefully managed by a dedicated member of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure optimum use for those students most in need. Our SEN provision map clearly identifies targeting intervention for individual students and groups of students with particular needs. Shortfalls in Literacy levels are being addressed by the appointment of a Literacy Co-ordinator/Lead Practitioner and HLTA support who have introduced an accelerated reader programme whereby all Year 7 and 8 students are tested and assigned targeted reading materials followed by further tests using an 'Accelerated Reader Computer Programme'. We have also recently appointed a numeracy co-ordinator working across both Trust Schools.

We are fortunate to have a Quality Careers IAG (Information Advice & Guidance) provider giving one to one advice on further education and only had one NEET exiting 2013-14 from a cohort of 218.

Resources are targeted towards more able students by way of the appointment of a 'More Able Coordinator' working across both schools.

Teaching staff now work across both schools currently within the trust sharing best practise and innovative teaching methods thus easing the transition of pupils from the largest of our feeder primary schools. The 2014 Summer School Programme adopted a Trax scheme whereby year 6 pupils with behavioural issues moving into year 7 attended a two week course to focus on socialisation and working with peers.

We are also looking to introduce academy wide support staff (Finance, IT and Site Management) working to gain maximum benefits from sharing experience and knowledge.

Areas for Development

Our most immediate priority as a Multi Academy Trust is to improve the standards required to raise the OFSTED rating of our Primary School and senior leadership teams in both schools are making significant inroads towards that target.

We, as a Trust, are constantly seeking to develop our working practices to ensure maximum benefit for all of our learners. We will continue to strengthen Teaching and Learning links across our member schools by further increasing joint learning and partnership working. We have recently appointed a joint site music teacher and will be investigating further areas for collaborative teaching opportunities.

Our Blue Sky ambition is the creation of a new teaching block dedicated to years 5 to 8 to aid the transition between Primary and Secondary education.

Name: Mr Ben Baxter
Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: 11 Dec 2014