

# Value for Money Statement [DRAFT]

**Organisation name: St George's School, Harpenden Academy Trust**

**Company number: 8092358**

**Year ended 31 August 2014**

I accept that as accounting officer of St George's School, Harpenden 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.

The governing body is accountable for the way in which the Academy's resources are allocated to meet the objectives set out in the School Improvement Plan. Governors need to secure the best possible outcome for students, in the most efficient and effective way, at a reasonable cost, which will lead to improvement in the school's achievements and services.

Value for Money (VfM) is defined as the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Audit Commission defines these as:

Economy – assesses the costs of the resources used

Effectiveness – assesses the impact of spend by reviewing outcomes

Efficiency – assesses productivity; how much you get out for what you put in.

Achieving VfM means achieving a balance between all three. This is consistent with the duty of Best Value placed on the Academy.

What is Best Value?

Governors apply the four principles of best value:

- Challenge - Is the school's performance high enough? Why and how is a service provided? Do we still need it?

Can it be delivered differently? What do parents want?

- Compare - How does the school's student performance and financial performance compare with all schools?

How does it compare with similar schools?

- Consult - How does the school seek the views of stakeholders about the services the school provides?

- Compete - How does the school secure efficient and effective services? Are services of appropriate quality and economic?

The Governors and school managers apply the principles of best value when making decisions about:

- the allocation of resources to best promote the aims and values of the school.
- the targeting of resources to best improve standards and the quality of provision.
- the use of resources to best support the educational needs of all students.

The Academy Trust is committed to:

1. Raising student attainment

This is demonstrated by the outstanding exam results for 2013/14:

At A Level:

- 41% of entries were awarded an A\* or A Grade.
- 27 students achieved all A\* and A Grades

At GCSE level:

- 93% of students achieved at least five A\*-C grades
- 90% of students achieved five A\*-C grades including English and Maths
- 58% of students achieved at least five A\* & A grades

Full details are available on the Academy website <http://www.stgeorges.herts.sch.uk/>

The Academy is developing and embedding tracking systems for individual students and groups of students that track levels of progress from Key Stage 2 through to Post 16. This tracking system also enables early identification of students who are not achieving their full potential so that interventions can be put in place to meet their target grades. All interventions are assessed for impact on an 8-weekly basis.

## 2. Robust governance and oversight of Academy Trust finances

The Academy has appointed Kingston Smith LLP as their external auditors to ensure the Academy's accounts give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs and that the statements have been properly prepared in accordance with UKGAAP, Companies Act 2006 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2013 to 2014. Kingston Smith also give their opinion on whether the information in the trustees' report is consistent with the financial statements and other matters on which they are required to report by exception.

In addition, the Academy has appointed a Responsible Officer to provide an independent oversight of the Academy's financial affairs, including providing the governing body with on-going assurance that:

- the financial responsibilities of the governing body are being properly discharged;
- sound systems of internal financial control are being maintained; and
- financial considerations are fully taken into account in reaching decisions.

The Responsible Officer provides a written report to finance staff, so that they can improve any areas that have been highlighted as requiring improvement and to each Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Academy.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee receives termly budget monitoring reports and management accounts and reviews these. The full Governing Body approves the budget each year and is mindful of the need to balance expenditure against income to ensure the Academy Trust remains a 'going concern'. The Governing Body also receives, reviews and approves the Annual Accounts and responds to issues raised in the External Auditors Management Reports on the financial statements and on regularity.

## 3. Ensuring the operation of the Trust demonstrates good value for money and efficient and effective use of resources

The Academy regularly benchmarks financial performance against other academy trusts to demonstrate that the Trust provides good value for money.

Staff are deployed to provide best value in terms of quality of teaching, quality of learning, adult-student ratio, and curriculum management.

The allocation and use of teaching areas, support areas and communal areas are carefully considered to provide the best environment for teaching and learning. Equipment, materials and services are deployed to provide students and staff with resources which support a high quality of teaching and learning.

In addition, tender exercises are regularly undertaken to ensure that higher value contracts are assessed against the marketplace on a regular basis to ensure that long term contracts remain competitive.

Procedures for assessing need, and obtaining goods and services which provide "best value" in terms of suitability, efficiency, time, and cost are detailed in the Academy's Competitive Tendering/Procurement Procedure.

## 4. Reviewing controls and managing risks

Regular budget monitoring reports are produced by the Business & Finance Director and reviewed by the Governing Body and Headmaster and any necessary remedial action is taken to address any significant variances that may have an impact on the budget out-turn.

The governors have agreed a risk register which details the most significant potential financial and business risks and has put measures in place to minimise the implications of these.

The Academy Trust ensures that all surplus cash balances are invested in accordance with its Investment Policy.

#### Monitoring

These areas will be monitored for lessons learned and best value by:

- In-house monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team and Curriculum Leaders, e.g. classroom practice, work sampling
- Target setting meetings between the Leadership Team and Curriculum Leaders
- Annual Performance Appraisal
- Annual Budget Planning (including submitting the 'Value for Money' statement.
- School Improvement Plan
- Annual visits by the accountants to carry out audits
- Analysis of school student performance data against similar schools
- Analysis of financial data against benchmark data for all schools and similar schools
- Analysis of DfE student performance data
- Ofsted Inspection reports
- Governors' meetings (full and committee) including; a review of 'Best Value' at appropriate points in the year and reviewing this 'Value for Money' statement in the Autumn Term.
- Accessibility of information to parents.

**Name:** Mr Raymond McGovern  
**Academy Trust Accounting Officer**

**Date:** 11 Dec 2014