

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: Hastings Academies Trust

Academy trust company number: 07185046

Year ended 31 August 2013

I accept that as accounting officer of **the Hastings 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 results

Resources are directed to where they are needed most and where they have the greatest impact in improving educational results. For example:

- The Hastings Academy and the St Leonards Academy are federated academies within the Hastings Academies Trust, which provides opportunities for sharing good practice, establishing joint specialist posts (for example, a Director of CPD/Lifelong Learning) and, where appropriate, deploying staff flexibly. Similarly, a single central services (support staff) operation provides economies of scale, enabling more resource to be directed to student attainment.
- Resources are targeted at areas where attainment has been low in order to improve student outcomes. To illustrate:
 - In each academy's first year, attainment in mathematics was low. Consequently decisive action was taken, with new appointments made, staff development activities undertaken and coaching for students implemented (including a mathematics 'Made to Measure' project developed and delivered in conjunction with the University of Brighton): this has resulted in significant improvement in attainment in this subject;
 - A range of strategies has been introduced to address the low standards of reading of some year 7 students, which includes additional time for reading and innovative use of ICT.
- Pupil premium funding has been deployed in highly effective ways to maximise student attainment: this includes one-to-one tuition in English and mathematics, behavioural and emotional support such as the Eggtooth project in Year 9, additional teaching assistants and additional support for further education and training. This has had a very positive impact on students' progress, although further work is needed to close the gap between the attainment of those students in receipt of free school meals and their peers.
- There is strong leadership of provision to support students who are disabled or who have special educational needs: both academies have larger than average proportions of students with special educational needs, and progress of such students is good. The St Leonards

Academy runs a special facility for students with high level physical and sensory needs or autism on behalf of the local authority and, from 2013/14, The Hastings Academy will run a similar special facility for students with speech, language and communication difficulties from 2013/14.

- Special funding is used effectively to maximise attainment: for example, in summer 2013, both academies ran very successful summer schools, which were designed for the new Year 7 intake (with a particular focus in students in receipt of Free School Meals). The summer school programme has enabled students to develop confidence, new skills and form new friendship groups. Evidence from previous summer schools indicates that those who participate tend to go on to attain more highly whilst at the academies.
- An innovative ICT strategy, including the roll out of a 1 to 1 iPad scheme, facilitates more creative approaches to teaching and learning.
- The academies collaborate effectively with other schools and academies in the locality. For example, a joint Family Liaison Worker appointment has been made in conjunction with local primary schools; and a staff development programme has been developed collaboratively with two local secondary academies and the local Further Education college.
- The academies work collaboratively with a range of alternative providers for vocational learning, in order to enable students to access specialist knowledge and expertise, thereby improving their attainment. This has been confirmed by Ofsted:

“A relatively large proportion of students attend courses elsewhere for part of the week. The impact of this provision on student achievement and well-being is tracked in an exemplary fashion so that the academy can point to a range of individual successes, and outstanding value for money achieved.”
(Hastings Academy Ofsted Inspection Report, May 2013)
- A comprehensive staff development programme is complemented by effective performance management of staff, and this has been confirmed by Ofsted:

“In addition to the regular monitoring and training, senior leaders including the board of directors ensure that teachers’ appraisal and pay are directly linked to the quality of their performance in terms of accelerating students’ progress ... The directors are adept and skilful in their arrangements for holding the senior leaders to account for the academy’s performance and ensure that staff salaries directly reflect students’ achievement.”
(St Leonards Academy Ofsted Inspection Report, May 2013)
- The Trust is led by the University of Brighton as lead sponsor, and BT and ESCC as co-sponsors. As Ofsted confirmed:

“The sponsors’ involvement ensures that the academy has productive links with the wider community including local businesses, schools, including the local primaries, and the local authority’s services.”
(St Leonards Academy Ofsted Inspection Report May 2013)

Financial Governance and Oversight

- At Board of Directors level, financial oversight of the Trust and its academies is strong. For example:
 - The Trust has a dedicated Resources Committee, the responsibilities of which includes oversight of medium and long-term financial planning; consideration of annual budgets; the monitoring and review of expenditure on a regular basis; evaluation of spending to ensure value for money is achieved; and oversight of income generating activities;
 - The Resources Committee is chaired by a senior Director from BT, with considerable corporate and commercial financial experience; whilst its membership includes senior level representation from high level and strategic public sector roles: it is therefore highly effective in scrutinising the academies’ financial activities.

- Operationally, the Trust's central services team includes two qualified accountants (plus one part qualified accountant), whilst an experienced member of staff at a local Further Education College was commissioned to act as the Trust's Responsible Officer during 2012/13.
- Management accounts are prepared and issued on a monthly basis to enable regular monitoring, thereby ensuring value for money; however, there are plans to review and update financial systems to enable more efficient processing.

Better purchasing

- Contracts are regularly reviewed and, where necessary, changed to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Similarly, some services have been taken in house – for example, certain HR activities – in order to achieve better value for money.
- The Financial Handbook includes clear tendering arrangements, to maximise value for money on large contracts/purchases; however, there are plans to further develop procurement processes in general in order to maximise 'purchasing power'.

Better income generation

- The new and significantly redeveloped buildings and facilities for the academies offer future opportunities to improve income generation activities: this is particularly the case in respect of sporting facilities.

Reviewing controls and managing risks

- The Trust has a Financial Handbook, which is regularly updated to ensure that it corresponds with EFA Handbooks and Guidance.
- The Trust's Financial Handbook incorporates a scheme of financial delegation: this is currently being reviewed and updated in order to clarify authorisation processes relating to the appointment of new and replacement staff. All expenditure is carefully scrutinised before making a commitment in order to ensure that it represents a suitable use of public funds.



Signed:

Name: Paul Griffiths

Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: November 2013