

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: The Spencer Academies Trust

Academy trust company number: 7353824

Year ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of The Spencer 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.

- **Financial governance and oversight:**
- The Board has put in place a central services team with relevant experience and expertise for all the business functions of the Trust. The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the day to day management of the Trust's finances and to provide both a technical and leadership role, including ensuring sound and appropriate financial governance and risk management arrangements are in place, preparing and monitoring of budgets, and ensuring the delivery of annual accounts to the Accounting Officer and the Directors of the Trust.
- The Trust delegates financial management through a scheme of delegation, appropriate to the context of each Academy. The Scheme is reviewed annually by the Trustees.
- Local Governing Bodies approve appropriate financial policies and procedures and specific delegation of levels of financial authority. These Governing Bodies also approve under those procedures full annual budgets, receive regular reports on actual spending and variances and review and formally approve variances at least termly. The Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer review budgets set and Directors of the Trust receive and approve the annual Statutory Accounts after each local Governing Body has approved their annual full management accounts. In this way, scrutiny is applied to financial management and performance both at a local and Trust level.
- Large capital projects are managed centrally to provide expertise in forecasting, procurement, expenditure control and reporting. Local Governing Bodies approve

any capital plans funded from within their own budgets, with guidance and support from the Trust.

- When other significant expenditure is due to take place at any Academy, schools are required to liaise with the Trust Chief Financial Officer so that different options can be appraised and competitive quotations (usually 3) sought to ensure the best value for money and that the investment will generate the best possible results
- Principals and governors receive regular management accounts to track, and hold to account, the finances of each Academy. These reports are used to make informed decisions about the best use of funds.
- The Trust Chief Financial Officer and External Auditors perform checks on processes and finances at the academies. The outcomes of these reviews are used to inform plans to address weaknesses identified. Progress against those plans is independently monitored.
- Staffing structures and the effective deployment of staff are reviewed annually by each Governing Body.
- The Trust deploys staff across the schools effectively and brings economies of scale in ICT, Catering, Finance, HR and caretaking
- **Effective use of resources to improve educational outcomes:**

To ensure that standards are continually raised, systems and process have been put in place across the Trust for half-termly monitoring of attainment and progress. All Academies within the Trust closely evaluate performance in all outcomes. We continue with independent scrutiny using former HMI for reviews and an External Advisor for Performance Management. We maintain the main elements of the Ofsted Self-Evaluation Form which is the distillation of a self-evaluation process now deeply embedded in all aspects of school life. Many Trust Schools participate in the “Challenge Partner” reviews as this provides external validation of our self-evaluation work and is an excellent vehicle for developing our senior leaders in Ofsted practice and review skills. Those not involved in “Challenge Partners” will have an external review in the future. The use of assessment data, target setting and tracking is a key feature of the Trust’s approach to improving learning.

Developing effective strategies of seeking out opportunities and bidding for additional funding. Specific examples being:

In 2013-14 Capital funding bids secured additional £2.1 Million for 3 schools

Operating the Teacher Training Centre generates significant additional income through the provision of training programmes.

Increased pupil numbers at George Spencer, Wyndham and Sunnyside Academies have brought in additional revenue and improved operational efficiencies.

Targeted improvement:

George Spencer Academy deploys staff efficiently to deliver an innovative curriculum, which is nationally recognised. Imaginative use of mixed age teaching groups has resulted in significant curriculum savings thus reducing salary costs.

Senior leaders are often requested to share developments with other schools locally, nationally (key note speakers at SSAT conferences) and internationally (links in recent years with schools in India, China, USA and Australia) all with excellent feedback.

Wyndham Academy is a national centre of excellence for Digital Student Leadership and the use of iPads as a tool for effective learning.

Focus on individual pupils:

George Spencer Academy uses data to prepare 'Guided Pathways' where students are divided into distinct cohorts which ensure students follow an appropriate curriculum that maximizes their opportunities and potential for success during level 2 study. The timetable is compiled directly from student choices and we have, for the last four years, been able to deliver students' first choice of subjects.

George Spencer Academy continues to invest in staffing to provide a Nurture Group to support individual needs students with effective intervention. The DfE case study of this initiative identifies us as 'a highly inclusive school which sets high expectations for all of its pupils. Vulnerable pupil groups are identified on the school's tracking system and their progress is regularly monitored and discussed to determine appropriate interventions. A wide range of interventions are all rigorously evaluated. As a result of close links with its partner primaries, the school is alert to potentially vulnerable children from a very early stage. Reading fluency, spelling and oracy have all improved and pupils feel safe, happy and more socially competent; they are proud to have been members of the group.' (DfE Pupil Premium case study)

Teacher's expectations of all pupils across the Trust are consistently high and this is confirmed by student survey feedback.

The QUEST for excellence is part of the Trust's mantra. It's 2 key drivers: "success for every child" and "every child whatever it takes" lead to high standards of achievement for all abilities;

- Track record at George Spencer of outstanding results significantly above national average over time: 82% A*C 98% A*G 76% 5A*C EM 0% NEETS; [Maths and English levels of expected progress are significantly above national levels and A2 results are also well above national averages.
- Leaders at all levels drive the improvement – building on rigorous systems for tracking progress, identifying underperformance and ensuring timely intervention strategies to ensure students achieve their best.
- Pupil premium students' progress improved.

Collaboration:

Governors have supported system-wide leadership by increasing leadership capacity when the then Principal became a National Leader of Education (NLE) and George Spencer Academy a National Support School (NSS). The impact of this work includes Wyndham Primary Academy in Derby moving from Requires Improvement to Outstanding in May 2014 and newly sponsored secondary Heanor Gate in Derbyshire moving out of the Inadequate category after 3 months support in November 2014. Three previously supported secondary schools also now have embedded systems and processes to sustain improvements.

New Initiatives:

Five recent major decisions and successful bids /applications, have increased partnerships and collaboration with other schools and institutions for mutual benefit with George Spencer Academy becoming:

- i) one of the first 100 Teaching School Alliances.
- ii) a Senior Partner of the Challenge Partners national network. This has increased our Partnership working and ensured more schools are benefiting from shared expertise.
- iii) a SCITT with the ability to award QTS (having migrated from an EBITT) enabling 48 ITT trainees to benefit from the collective expertise of a strong training partnership.
- iv) a National College licensed provider for middle, senior and headteacher leadership development programmes.
- v) a lead school for the Regional Maths Hub, disseminating world class research into the best mathematics teaching.

There have been multi-level benefits for the many staff who become trainers, facilitators, coaches, mentors and assessors or provide school to school support as well as the participants. The impact of this both for our own and other staff has been increased knowledge and understanding of effective leadership, improved pedagogy and teaching

quality and the development of strong collaborative learning partnerships that engage in Research and Development and work across our schools.

Quantifying improvements

We believe that achievement is Outstanding at George Spencer because over the previous three years, overall achievement at the end of Year 11 has been high, with results which far surpass the national averages. RAISEonline Validated data (April 2014) and unvalidated (Dec2014) reports a 'Sig+' category for all major attainment benchmarks. The 'Challenge Partner Review' (Nov 2013) noted that attainment on entry for the Year 11 of Summer 2011 was broadly in line with National Average, despite the ability of the intake which is gradually decreasing as a result of poor literacy skills. Most students with SEND achieve their potential and are successfully prepared for the world of work (0% NEET). At KS5 attainment is improving, particularly at A*-B grades, and the majority of Year 13 enter Higher Education. "Excellent collection, analysis and use of data strongly indicate that improvement in achievement will continue and even quicken its pace" (Challenge Partner Review 2013).

Better purchasing and Economies of Scale:

As a Multi-Academy Trust, some services are necessarily and beneficially provided at Trust level, for example payroll provision, banking, Insurance and legal support. These contracts and means of service delivery are subject to review and market-testing regularly. Where appropriate, longer term contracts are selected if better value can be achieved. In the case of HR services and payroll, following reviews of price and quality and the growth of the Trust, those services were brought in-house this year to provide more controllable service levels and improved efficiencies.

Within the framework of local financial accountability provided by the Schemes of Delegation, suppliers capable of delivering Trust-wide services are regularly approached to provide competitive quotations to enable the Trust to secure better value. Examples of this include grounds maintenance, water monitoring and security.

Other services are assessed at Academy level and local governing bodies promote best value in all financial decision making. Academies are encouraged to take advantage of resources and expertise available at a local level, for example, selecting cleaning contracts offered by the Academy's Local Authority in some cases and bringing the service in-house in others.

Benchmarking:

The Trust benchmarks costs against similar organisations and also uses the FD Forum and market specialists such as Energy Brokers as a source of market data.

Options appraisal:

The Governors and Senior Leadership Team recognise the principles of best value when making decisions about:

- allocation of resources to best promote the aims and values of the school.
- targeting of resources to best improve standards and the quality of provision.

The Trust has built upon a history of independent thinking and obtaining goods and services which provide “best value” in terms of suitability, efficiency and sustainability. Measures in place include:

- competitive tendering procedures
- procedures for Local Governing Bodies to review and approve “best value” quotes, which are not necessarily the cheapest
- procedures which ensure efficient use of office time to provide appropriate approved authorisation processes for purchases.

Better income generation:

Significant additional income has been generated across the Trust. As a Regional Maths Hub, National Support School, SCITT and National College Licensed Modular Curriculum provider, the Trust is generating recurrent additional income of many hundreds of thousands of pounds annually. Since Academy conversion, a clear focus on the selection of appropriate projects and high quality bid writing has generated approximately £5.4 million of Capital Funding across the Trust.

Reviewing controls and managing risks:

The Trust has adopted and refined financial procedures setting out internal controls which have been scrutinised many times in different audit regimes. This is a continually evolving process, particularly with the growing nature of the Trust. It may be different in application at each Academy but essentially it ensures that management receive appropriate and timely financial information to enable them to discharge their financial responsibilities. Monthly management accounts and budget reports are a standard feature whether provided in paper form or electronically. All Academies have both current and deposit bank accounts with automatic “sweep” facilities ensuring that the necessary liquidity is provided whilst maximising the potential for investment returns.

Insurance cover and claims levels are reviewed each year to provide the necessary cover in a cost effective manner. Risk is assessed and appropriately managed within this framework.

For the financial year to 31 August 2013, the Trust had appointed an independent Chartered Accountant to act as Responsible Officer and to report back to the Finance Committees of each Academy. That arrangement has now changed with an Audit

Committee being formed for the Trust as a whole, to manage the internal audit function and accommodate the changing size and nature of the Trust.

Lessons Learned:

The Trust continues to balance the two principles central to the Academies concepts of independence and accountability of Local Governing Bodies. The Trust aims at all times to provide a response that is efficient and effective and demonstrates consistency and quality assurance in providing structured support to the Academies.

Working together provides opportunities including professional development, efficiencies and engagement that the Trust will actively promote and support.

The Trust will continue to engage in National and International initiatives to review and develop processes and structures in imaginative ways to better provide value for money. At all times, this will remain student-focused, with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for all.



Signed:

Name:S Jowett.....

Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date:22 December 2014.....