

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: Caldew School

Academy trust company number: 7680823

Year ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of Caldew School 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.

Educational Improvement

Outcomes

The school remains committed to improving the outcomes achieved by its students in external examinations, relative to their ability, in order to maximise their potential within society.

Within this commitment there is a clear outlined Action Plan which is published on the schools website that summaries the main actions being taken to improve outcomes over the period of each year. A 3 year Development Plan supplements this that details the structural and financial strategies of the school. These documents are reviewed regularly by both the Governing Body of the Trust and Senior Team within the school.

Curriculum

The curriculum studied by students within the school is reviewed each year within the requirements as set out by the DfE; so it is appropriate to encourage further study and that it meets the local need.

This has seen the school make significant changes in Key Stage 4 so that the majority of subjects studied are full GCSEs with vocational courses only taken when appropriate for students. The promotion of academic endeavour is the aim of the school.

Staffing

The staffing structure that is required to effectively deliver the curriculum and the support systems both academically and administratively are reviewed each year. This led to the identification of three areas for focus in 2013-14 which were:

- Planning for retirement of Data Manager and Timetabler
- Leadership of Teaching and Learning
- Tackling underperforming Teaching Staff

The first was addressed by employing a new Data Manager who was appointed to overlap with the retiring member of staff, while the school has secured a consultant for production of the school timetable. The long term Secondment of one of the schools Deputy Headteachers to a school in Workington has meant a need was identified to revise the schools approach to the leadership of Teaching and Learning. This review led to the appointment of an Assistant Headteacher alongside two Lead Practitioners who will assume this role in the 2014-15 year.

There were concerns about the performance of several staff and during the year they have left the school, in two cases the process resulted in staff severance payments in order to expedite the process while providing value for money.

Collaboration

The school continues to take an active role in the development of system leadership within Cumbria and the sharing of good practice. Caldew works in a "soft chain" with Trinity School in Carlisle and much joint work is done to develop classroom and business practice in the schools. As part of the wider Carlisle area we work extensively as part of the Carlisle Collaborative sharing good practice between subjects, teaching staff as well amongst Business Managers

Our work collaboratively extends beyond our immediate vicinity and we have undertaken work with numerous schools across the Local Authority of Cumbria as well as wider afield including Holland and Russia. These are undertaken so that we share and learn of the good practice across the range of sectors at minimal cost. The deployment of our SLE in English and the secondment of our Deputy Headteacher to Southfield Technology College as acting Headteacher are clear examples of this work.

Use of Pupil Premium

The school receives an amount of money for supporting those students who are disadvantaged through the Pupil Premium. This is targeted at the specific students to enable them whenever possible to catch up their peers in relation to their academic and social development.

As well as supporting the academic progression the school uses the money to support students so that they can access school and extra curricula activities. A more detailed breakdown of the current areas of expenditure are outlined on the school website. The performance of Pupil Premium students within the school has been a concern but the impact of the expenditure in 2013-14 has seen the gap in performance reduce by 19% relative to 2013-13.

More Able Students

A focus has been placed on tackling the relative underperformance of our More Able Students during 2013-14. This use of resource allowed the significant majority of students to achieve the challenging targets that were set for them resulting in them making them greater than expected progress in English and Maths as well as other areas. The significant improvements in Maths in securing 4 Levels of progress were the result of much targeted work and resource.

Financial Governance

The board of Trustees of the school take a macro approach to the oversight of the financial performance of the school taking responsibility for macro budget setting and surplus carry forward decisions. The Financial and General Purposes committee of the Governing Body meet termly to monitor the budget performance against projections and to advise the Full Governing Body on the funds available to support initiatives both educational and operational. It is this committee that oversee in broad terms the micro expenditure of the budget as well as approving significant virements between budget lines.

The school is monitored by an Internal Auditor who reports directly to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and who prepares action plans as appropriate to improve financial systems within the school. The progress against these recommendations is monitored on the regular visits. The schools financial handbook is updated regularly to reflect the improvements in systems that are made.

The Headteacher as accounting officer of the school monitors the work of the Business Manager through regular meetings and by being directly involved in the authorisation of expenditure. This system is augmented by the external audit function as carried out by the schools accountants and by twice yearly external reconciliation of the schools accounts by a third party.

The school is secure in the robustness of its financial governance with its multiple balances and checks. This has resulted in the Trust showing slight surpluses in the last two years for which Audited Accounts have been prepared.

The spending of the surplus monies held by the school is overseen through the Finance and general Purposes Committee of the Governing body. In 2013-14 this has resulted in additional expenditure to replace the schools Fire Alarm system which suffered a terminal cascade failure and needed full replacement as well as the refurbishment of one storey of one of the two original 1950's blocks within the school. The expenditure totalled £48,000 from a total surplus of £159,000.

Better Purchasing

The school has clear guidelines within its Financial Handbook regarding the need for purchases over set limits to be subject to multiple quotes and where appropriate a full tendering process. The Accounting Officer with the schools Business Manager ensure that these are strictly adhered to. The external and internal audit testing of the school are further checks that these systems are both appropriate and implemented fully.

Benchmarking for all costs centres in the budget is undertaken on a regular basis. This has led to changes in staffing structure in the last year and where significant concerns are raised during benchmarking action is clearly identified in the schools 3 year Development Plan.

Where it can the school will take advantage of economies of scale by joining multiple organisation purchasing arrangements, an example of this is the energy contracts which are negotiated across a number of schools in Cumbria.

Income

The school regularly reviews its income streams other than those provided through DfE funding. There are regular applications to the ACMF fund and these have all been successful in recent years which has enabled the school to effectively manage and maintain its 1960's buildings in a reasonable state of repair. Other grants are regularly made to bodies such as Sport England which have met with similar levels of success. The main sources of school generated income are through catering and lettings of facilities. Charges and performance against budget targets are monitored regularly and have been increased for 2014-15 after a period of no increases. The school receives substantial income from these sources which enable it to provide a high quality service as well as generating income for replacement of plant and facilities such as the schools floodlit 3G Astro Turf pitch.

The school has reviewed the rental agreement with its site manager for his accommodation and are introducing phased yearly increases in rental to bring it in line with the benefit and general market value.

Review of Controls and Risks

The school has robust internal procedures for managing risk. These are set out in its Financial Handbook. They include regular internal and external checks and reconciliations to ensure the smooth financial operation of the organisation. The school has explored investment opportunities for the large cash reserves it holds on a monthly basis and a clear investment strategy in short time call accounts and longer term accounts is in place and is monitored by the Business Manager and the schools trust. On the advice fo the Internal Auditor a Treasury Management Policy has been put in place during the 2013-14 year.

Areas for Further Development

Areas for further development are constantly identified.

The school has responded to the areas identified in the management element of the 2012-13 Audit report on improvements that were recommended, the school similarly has a clear action plan based on addressing areas for development identified through the Internal Auditor testing.

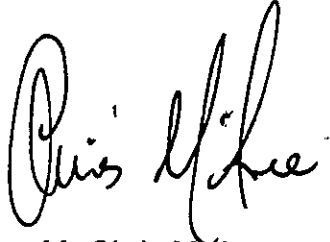
The work of the local area Business Managers is being enhanced and a specific group has been formed in the local schools collaborative to work on streamlining purchasing as well exploring ever greater use of collective bargaining and economies of scale.

The school welcomes the DfE commitment to provide a benchmark summary to all schools based on the latest available data. This will enable the school to further address

any differentials that exist in cost effectiveness and value for money relative to its statistical comparable institutions. The school has actively taken part in the work being undertaken in workshop form on how this material may be best produced.

The school will continue to deploy its resources as it determines best to continue the five year trend of improving results so as to maximise the potential and progress of its students.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris McAree". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Name:

Mr Chris McAree

Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date:

September 2014