



Academy trust name:

Sandbach

High School & Sixth Form College

Academy trust company number: 7404747

Year ended: 31 August 2014

As accounting officer, responsibility and accountability for ensuring that the academy trust delivers good value in terms of educational and wider societal outcomes in the use of public resources falls to me. Below are examples of how school leaders and I have helped to ensure that our use of resources has resulted in good value for money during the academic year, 2013-2014.

Robust governance and oversight of Academy finances:

Our directors are committed to ensuring that governance is robust and challenging as exemplified by their work for Governor Mark. Directors are cognisant of their responsibility to ensure that resources are managed effectively in support of the objectives laid out in our School Growth Plan. Directors, Governors, School Leadership Teams and staff strive for the best possible outcomes for pupils, achieved at reasonable cost. Having reviewed the School's Raise on Line Report for 2014 it would not be unfair to describe the school's results for 2013/14 as outstanding, surpassing national averages across most if not all benchmarks. The Finance and Leadership Committee supported by a very proactive Internal Control Committee have clear terms of reference, ensuring the suitability of, and compliance with, financial systems and controls. An independent Responsible Office has been appointed by the Governing Body of Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College and provide governors with an independent oversight of the school's financial affairs. The review to August 2014 gave a high assurance grading for procurement, banking, payroll and financial reporting and an overall high assurance on the system of internal control being maintained by the school. Monthly reports are provided to the Trustees which includes a review of academy funding, budget monitoring, cash flow and a balance sheet. All Directors and Governors are required to complete a Register of Pecuniary Interests form annually. The opportunity to declare any pecuniary interests is provided at all governors meetings.

Ensuring that the Trust gains good value for money, and effective and efficient use of resources

The Academy Trust takes a prudent approach to expenditure. With approximately 80% of the Academy Trust budget spent on staffing, staffing structures are reviewed annually to ensure that they are fit for purpose and can adapt and respond to support the successful attainment of the objectives within the Academy Trust development plan.

The Academy Trust has a high proportion of skilled and experienced teaching and associate staff, who are effectively deployed to provide best value. Teachers' performance management and support staff appraisal systems are in place, and HR policies, such as Managing Absence, Whistleblowing and Dignity at Work, are implemented.

The Academy Trust's payroll is maintained by Strictly Education, and detailed monthly reconciliations of payroll are undertaken by the Academy's Finance Officer to ensure that payments to staff are correct. The Academy Trust's Internal Financial Regulations has defined responsibilities for each person involved in the administration of schools finances to avoid the duplication or omissions of functions and to provide a framework of accountability for directors, governors and staff. A documented scheme of delegation ensures that contracts and services are regularly appraised and renegotiated when appropriate to ensure value for money. Individual budget holders are held accountable for the use of their budgets, and are helped by experienced finance officers in sourcing best value.

All purchases under £5,000 should be chosen from a list of approved suppliers. At least three written quotations should be obtained for all purchases between £5,001 and £25,000 to ensure that an assessment of cost and benefits are duly considered. All purchases over £25,000 must be referred to the relevant financial committee for approval. Purchases over £75,000 are subject to formal tendering procedures. The Academy Trust ensures that all surplus cash balances are invested in interest bearing accounts to maximise interest earning potential. Investment institutions are selected carefully to provide the most acceptable balance of return and risk.

Assessing value for money

Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College is committed to providing a high quality, inclusive education for all. Through regular assessment, we have a clear picture of the potential and progress of every student and provide support and extension work for those students who need it. Pupils that receive pupil premium are clearly identified and their individual performance reviewed to ensure that progress attainment is achieved. The academy's Finance Director scrutinises each budget forecast, ensuring that they comply with agreed policies and procedures, whilst challenging on spending decisions and approving expenditure over £25,000 in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

Departmental and curriculum allocations are allocated to specifically meet day to day needs, thus ensuring that significant expenditure remains within the control of senior management. Option appraisal is then the focus before any purchase proceeds. In 2014, Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College, replaced its photocopiers, quotes were received prior to appointing a company to take over the contracts within the school resulting in a saving in the excess of £12000 per annum.

The academy is committed to providing a broad and relevant curriculum for all students. The Trustees approved the spending of monies to put forward a bid to the ACMF for a new Sixth Form building. Although the bid was unsuccessful the academy are moving forward with the work already done in carrying out surveys, obtaining planning permission etc. to put forward a revised bid to the C.I.F in December 2014.

John Michael Leigh

Accounting Officer

Sandbach High School and Sixth Form College