

Value for Money Statement

Academy Trust Name: Aquinas Church of England Education Trust Limited (the 'Trust')

Academy Trust company number: 07525735

Year ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of Aquinas Church of England Education Trust Limited, I am responsible and accountable for ensuring that the 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 Trust's use of its resources has provided good value for money during the academic year.

Improving educational results

Targeted improvement - The curriculum is reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis in line with the school improvement priorities of each academy. The refinement, improvements or updates are designed to meet the needs of each cohort of students. In planning the curriculum the existing staffing structure and planned changes to the staffing structure are modelled against the curriculum and the needs of learners. This is then reflected in available teaching hours. Where subjects need a time adjustment to deliver best outcomes this is reviewed and adopted subject to the adjustment in time having the potential to impact positively on outcomes and the availability of specialist staff. Where there is a desire to introduce subjects or specialist teaching beneficial to the needs of the students the staffing requirements are planned strategically to secure an effective introduction of the course/teaching which has the potential for success and is value for money. When a curriculum/development area requires improvement or targeted intervention, in terms of training and staffing a support structure and strategic leader is put in place. When new strategies have been identified they are initially trialled and then evaluated before full implementation. An effectively monitored School Improvement Plan, supported by a quality assurance programme and robust staff appraisal systems ensure high standards of accountability and clear evidence trail to assess the impact of the changes made.

Focus on individual pupils - The Trust gathers extensive information on each pupil including any specific learning needs, cognitive assessment profiles, academic levels or grades and social information. This information is used to inform staffing for extra support across a range of areas, from academic to personal development groups. The primary academies continue to provide a positive learning experience at all levels in the core areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Phonics is focused on to establish sound reading knowledge from KS1. The academies provide specialist intervention for those students who are not achieving the expected levels of progress. A tiered curriculum in key stage 3 provides different learning experiences based on this evidence the curriculum is designed to secure both breadth and depth for learning. Class sizes are managed to meet the nature of the curriculum and the needs of the students in each lesson. Additional adults are used within the classroom to support the learning of individuals or groups of individuals. Specialist teachers are employed in various areas of sport (Games, Gym and Dance) and French and existing staff are released to teach music. Small group work or one to one support is provided using both members of staff and external agencies. The Trust's academies are dyslexia friendly and in many cases are working towards or have achieved dyslexia accreditation ensuring pupils are

screened, assessed and provided with support to meet their individual needs. A central record of student needs and educational support plans support the work of the classroom teacher. The key stage 4 curriculum is updated each year and includes courses appropriate to the needs of all learners providing clear information on the type of course best suited to each learner. The 6th form curriculum is expanding as the secondary academy expands providing progression routes from key stage 4 through to employment, educational or training opportunities. The provision at the Trust's academies reflects the national curriculum change, qualification changes and raised participation age. Able students have courses with more breadth and requiring greater depth of study thereby stretching their learning and raising aspirations. They are helped to work and research more independently. More demanding courses are included in the timetabled curriculum with specialist extracurricular courses enhancing learning. The most able students are identified and given additional opportunities and mentoring. The Trust's secondary academy attracted record numbers into year 12 this year, these students were placed on existing courses within the existing staffing model in order to maximise further value for money in delivering the curriculum.

Collaboration - Through collaboration with other schools the quality of education continues to improve. Teacher professional development is enhanced through Bromley Schools Collegiate initial teaching programmes, partnerships with universities, engagement with 'outstanding teacher programmes' and 'middle leader programmes' locally, participation in national programmes for senior leaders and future headteachers. Collaboration with both primary and secondary sector provides opportunities for teacher mentoring, cross phase teaching, subject and leadership networks. The Trust is a hub for 7-14 teacher training in conjunction with Christ Church Canterbury University. The Trust also delivers its Outstanding Teacher Programme and the Improving Teacher Programme across phases. An out of hours training programme run by teachers for teachers supports the Trust's strategic direction.

New initiatives – All the elements of the strategies for improvement focus on individual pupils and collaboration and these have been funded by the effective use of available resources. All new initiatives are focused on improving learning for children. The budget has incorporated changes to staffing which have been the primary means of accommodating these continual improvements. The secondary academy continued its investment in IT systems and refurbishment of the kitchen and coffee shop. The primary academies are also focused on facilities expansion and improvement. This has included improved access and security to the academies, plans for additional classrooms and new kitchen equipment to enable the academies to comply with free school meal legislation.

Quantifying improvements –The procedures for accountability are exemplary with targets being set for student attainment and progression by the local governing bodies of the Trust's academies and monitored by the board of directors. The targets are set within the context of each academy's past performance providing aspirational and challenging targets for the headteachers and head of school. The Trust is a strong advocate of "every child is an achiever regardless of their start point" and this is evident across all aspects of its work.

For the year 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, the Trust consisted of 2 primary academies. Standards at Parish School, at the end of key stage one, are good. Key stage two conversion rates at mathematics were 95%, well above the national average of 89%. Reading results were broadly in line with the national average. Writing results showed a decline on previous years, the Trust and the academy recognise this underperformance and appropriate measures are in place to ensure improvement. Progress data shows that the current cohort are already above last year's leavers, which will mean a sharp rise in combined Reading, Maths and 'SPAG' outcomes in 2015. At Keston the standards at the end of key stage one are above average in all areas. Key stage two results in Writing and 'SPAG' are above the national average. Reading results were broadly in line with the national average. Maths results although better than the previous year is below national average, the Trust and the academy recognise this is an area for improvement and various strategies have been adopted to ensure improvement. Progress data shows that the current cohort will be good, with prediction above national average in writing and maths,

Reading will be slightly lower due to (23% being below national) prior attainment at KS1. There were no permanent exclusions at Parish, and fixed term exclusions were at 0.00081%. At Keston the standards at the end of key stage one are above average in all areas. Key stage two results in Writing and SPaG are above national, Reading results were broadly in line with the national average. Maths results although better than the previous year is below national – the school recognises this is an area for improvement and various strategies have been adopted to ensure improvement. Progress data shows that the current cohort will be good, with prediction above national in writing and maths, Reading will be slightly lower due to (23% being below national) prior attainment at KS1. There were no exclusions and attendance was good at 96.8%.

In the secondary academy, the key measure of 5 GCSE qualifications at grades A*-C including English and Mathematics and continues to be above the national average at 65% (62% first entry) of all students at the end of KS4. The same is true of KS5 where 46% of students achieved A*-B grades at GCE or equivalent level. Alongside achievement of students, attendance is monitored rigorously with attendance levels being maintained above national averages. The attendance at all academies is good at levels of between 95.48% to 96.42% attendance. The local governing body and senior leaders are kept regularly informed of attendance levels. Similarly student behaviour is good with exclusion figures being well below the national average. At the end of 2013 the fixed term exclusions for the secondary academy were 2.94% against a national average of 8.55% and permanent exclusions were 0.9% against the national average of 1.4%. These percentages have continued to reduce throughout 2013-14 as we await national comparisons in November.

Financial Governance and Oversight

Better purchasing – The Trust has financial procedures which ensure that it achieves best value for money from all purchases. Consequently, the Trust procures the necessary goods and services in the correct quality, quantity and time at the best price possible. All contracts are placed on a competitive basis and regular suppliers are reviewed for value for money on a periodic basis. The Trust also follows its tendering procedures often going with an alternative supplier to achieve best value. This was the case in relation to the commissioning of recent IT support. The Trust has reduced overheads by undertaking many of the infrastructure services, in house, such as payroll, catering, cleaning and premises management. The Trust also considers all purchasing options.

Income generation – The Trust has an income generation strategy to supplement its core business. This is undertaken by means of lettings. The secondary academy has completed a new catering facility to cater for events and lettings at weekend the growth of which, as mentioned in last year's report, has been considerable over recent years. The facility also provides a lunchtime service to enhance student experience of dining in school.

Reviewing controls and managing risks – The Trust together with the local governing bodies agree the budget on the basis of available funds, central costs, and expenditure for each academy. On the basis of the agreed budget, headteachers and head of school make the appropriate apportionment to the relevant teaching areas. They ensure that funds are utilised effectively to ensure maximum benefit for the children and young people. Finance committees receive reports of the outturn against budget and teaching areas receive regular reports on the use of the funds apportioned to them. Headteachers and staff ensure that funds are effectively utilised. The majority of the budget is used for staffing to ensure that educational outcomes continue to improve by virtue of the provisions detailed above. The Trust's financial policies and procedures provide for the management of cash, bank balances and investments. The Trust maintains insurance for all the academies and always ensures that the best price is obtained through the use of a purchasing consortium.

Lessons learned – The Trust’s income generation strategy has proved successful and it will continue to exploit this initiative. The implementation of savings in its running costs will continue to be a focus as the Trust expands and thereby obtains economies of scale and greater buying power. The continued use of purchasing consortiums to obtain more focused tenders will also lead to greater value for money. The expansion of the Trust will provide for more effective use of staff.

Signed: *Kathy Griffiths* .

Name: Mrs Kathy Griffiths
Academy Trust Accounting Officer

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