

# Value for Money Statement

**Organisation name: St Francis of Assisi Academies Trust**

**Company number: 8462151**

**Year ended 31 August 2014**

I accept that as accounting officer of St Francis of Assisi 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.

Targeted improvement:

St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

Staffing structure is reviewed regularly. When the school moved to a creative curriculum foundation subject leads were replaced by school development groups with all staff being responsible for the development of one area of the SDP. As the school developed from Lower to Primary leads of lower primary and upper primary were employed to respond to this change to ensure that standards of attainment continued to rise.

During this Autumn Term, this has once again evolved with the appointment of a Deputy Head whose main brief will be to oversee KS2. As a result the lower primary LoL will now be responsible for KS1 and EYFS.

There is a Teaching Staff Appraisal System now in place which clearly outlines the expectation for UPS1, 2 and 3 in terms of expectations for impact on Teaching and Learning and expectations for impact on the wider curriculum.

All members of the senior leadership team are expected to use at least two management time slots for each half term for monitoring their areas of school development through learning walks, book scrutiny, lesson observations and pupil discussion in order to assess impact of improvement strategies and plan for further development.

The school has continued to invest in CPD through Training School in order to support teachers and teaching assistants and allow for succession planning, particularly at KS2. The school has also worked closely with the University of Bedford to ensure that PGCE, SCITT and Bed students can be placed here. One SCITT student has just been appointed as an NQT from September 2015.

St Josephs Catholic Lower School

- Staffing and leadership structures are reviewed and amended by school leaders to meet the changing needs of the school. These are monitored termly through Academy governor meetings.
- AHT on reduced timetable (50%) to enable effective leadership of Inclusion and Foundation Stage.
- A member of the leadership team was employed supernumerary to lead a project in determining assessment strategy for the school.
- HLTA and supernumerary teacher deployed for 1st day cover to ensure consistency and continuity for children.
- Support staff efficiently deployed in their area of expertise to ensure support and intervention is effective. This is evaluated termly to determine impact by the Inclusion Team and reported to school staff and governors.
- Wide range of ITT students places provided by the school enabling high staff-pupil ratios and contributing to the development of quality teachers for the wider community.
- Leadership training opportunities and good quality CPD offered to appropriately qualified teachers to ensure succession planning.

St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- Staffing structure kept under review and existing staff efficiently deployed in their area of expertise to support an improved curriculum.
- No applications for the ICT position so existing staff deployed to the area.
- Appointment for maternity cover made in house
- AHTs on reduced timetables to support teaching and learning in their respective Key Stages.
- Both AHTs have additional responsibility for English and PSHE

#### St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

STM has maintained a review of staffing in order to develop the Teaching School effectively and ensure effective deployment of staff to school improvement work within the Borough and Diocese. Any work undertaken for the Teaching School by staff is reimbursed back to the school. No monies are taken from the school budget to pay for TS Work.

The school has addressed staffing structures in Science to promote opportunities for improvement in this area of the curriculum. An extra Cover Supervisor has been employed to reduce the cost of external cover via agencies. All maternity cover has been through staff qualified to teach that subject: RE, English, Music and Drama.

The school has completed a review of staffing structures required to meet the needs of Year 7 students who arrived at STM in 2014, and the new Year 8s of 2015. Numbers have increased to 75 for the new Year 7 of 2015, so three classes rather than two will need to be created.

Focus on individual pupils:

How has the trust managed the differing needs of pupils, such as those requiring one to one support, and those requiring more stretch?

#### St John Rigby Catholic Lower School

- Access one to one funding through LA
- The school is part of the Achievement for All programme
- Pupil premium money is used to fund support for individual pupils, play therapist, engagement in extracurricular activities, speech and language support
- Impact of initiatives and spending on pupil premium and vulnerable groups monitored through ASIG, Inclusion committee, Standards

#### St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- Achievement for All (AfA) programme continues into its third year, led across the school by School Champion and individual teachers to provide opportunities for vulnerable children, and their families, to achieve higher levels of educational success.
- Reading (RWI) programme implemented and developed across the school enabling small classes and targeted intervention at all levels of attainment.
- Weekly writing & maths programmes run across all year groups to enable provision to be targeted (vertically grouped) and more focussed (smaller groups @15); thus enabling more able pupils to be challenged and extended in their learning, as well as providing targeted support for the least able learners..
- 1:1 Intervention programme run for targeted children (SEND, CLA & Pupil Premium) every term offering at least 12 children individual focussed tuition outside of core curriculum time.
- Challenging targets are set (to at least meet national expectations) to ensure progress is rapid and sustained for all pupils.
- Pupil premium funding targeted to support the needs of the most vulnerable children across the school e.g. supported places at 'breakfast' and 'after-school' clubs, trip funding, provision of Family Support Worker, provision of Nurture Setting.

#### St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- High expectations for all pupils expressed through aspirational target setting
- Intervention groups/One to One support/Nurture groups allocated following results at interim assessment points
- Part of AFA programme
- After school Reading Club established to support the development of reading

- Able and talented coordinator appointed
- Parent Support worker employed to work with vulnerable families
- Pupil Premium funding allocated

#### St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

Under the scrutiny of directors STM has allocated specific high quality staffing to both Pupil Premium and One to One programmes, funded by the Borough. Discrete Literacy and Numeracy teaching occurs for students of lower ability both by the Individual Needs Department and by teachers from the respective department teachers on a rotation basis.

Effective mentoring of students is in place, with aspirational goals set for all abilities. A TLR is allocated to a teacher i/c mentoring Able, Gifted and Talented.

The impact of initiatives and spending on Pupil Premium and vulnerable groups is monitored through ASIG, the Catholic Life Committee, and the Performance Committee.

#### Collaboration:

How has the trust engaged with other educational providers and experts to share delivery or good practice, and to drive up standards for the least cost?

#### St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

The school has provided school to school support to other schools in the borough directly impacting the standards for those schools. St John Rigby has developed and delivered CPD training for schools and university students. The school works closely with St Thomas More Teaching school to access and deliver high quality CPD for all staff. The school has worked with the other 3 schools in the trust to develop targeted and relevant CPD and moderation opportunities.

#### St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- Good practice shared through providing and attending Teaching School courses in collaboration with STM Teaching School e.g. Religious Education Quality Mark workshop.
- In-house training provided by the Teaching School provision has developed staff pedagogy and leadership skills.
- Joint meetings with local Headteachers and subject leads has enabled moderation to ensure consistency and rigour in judgements across phases and key stages.
- Attendance at Bedford Borough Learning Exchange has provided informal sharing of good practice, as well as enabling direct links with local schools with which to collaborate on smaller, localised projects.
- Assistant Headteacher provides training for the local SCITT.
- In collaboration with three universities, ITT places are provided for students across the school providing them with excellent opportunities to gain practical experience in teaching SEND and EAL learners.

#### St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- Head teacher engaged with the St Thomas More Teaching school on both training and delivery of courses
- Assistant Head teachers have run the English PSG on behalf of the Teaching School
- OFSTED training accessed through BBLE at a reduced cost
- Staff have been able to access the Teaching school courses at a reduced rate
- Shared INSET on Behaviour Management with St Joseph's

#### St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

As a Teaching School we have a vast menu of activities that promote improvement in partner schools. We are a key provider of school improvement services to schools in Bedford Borough and take a strategic lead in both English and the Humanities. Our work has seen us support a failing school in Northampton to great effect with results at key stage 4 and 5 transformed during our period of engagement. We are a National Provider of courses for NCTL and COLAB Leadership Centre, delivering Specialist Leader of Education training, National Professional Qualification of Senior Leaders (NPQSL) and National Professional Qualification of Middle Leaders (NPQML). Exam Boards such as AQA deliver from our Teaching School as does the nationally recognised Olivei and Third Wave for their Outstanding Facilitators Programme (OFP). The Head Teacher is an Ofsted I inspector, and all the SLT plus Pastoral Coordinators have been trained in Effective Classroom Observation skills - the initial parts of Ofsted training.

## New initiatives:

What changes did the trust make to its budget to accommodate additional activities whilst living within its means?

### St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

The school has developed a wide range of extracurricular activities and ensured that these are accessible to all using pupil premium funding. The school has worked with St Thomas More to provide a wide range of educational experiences and to offer an innovative transition programme from year 6 to year 7.

### St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- Impact of Pupil Premium funding monitored by leadership and governors.
- Parent workshops hosted free on-site for the local community providing much needed training.
- Sports Premium funding has enabled the continuous provision of swimming lessons to all children in the school for 1.5 terms of the year.
- Accommodation provided free for Italian Consulate teacher which then provided the local community with Italian lessons for children.
- Three apprentices (through the local FE college) taken on for a year to boost staffing levels in the office and classrooms and provide quality training to an inexperienced trainee.

### St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- Sports Premium money was allocated to facilitate swimming lessons for Years 5 and 6
- Costings for the different venues/travel arrangements were sought to ensure that the total cost did not exceed the budget
- Pupil premium monies allocated and reported upon. (See website)
- Timetable adjustments to facilitate smaller classes

### St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

The school has been very careful to develop the Teaching School in a sustainable way under the direction of the Trust. The school has established a known benchmark for income to the teaching school and has used this to inform staffing levels. We have been very careful not to over estimate future income and in doing so we are able to work with a healthy surplus that is invested in the school facilities as opposed to a thin margin that is a threat to standards and job security.

## Quantifying improvements:

What data is available to evidence the effectiveness of the trust's strategies – such as pupils' educational attainment, behaviour and attendance records over time – and what does it show? What was the trust's financial performance in the corresponding period?

### St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

- Raise on line data demonstrates that attainment at the key indicator (KS1) in St John Rigby is outstanding
- Internal analysis of data for each year group demonstrates that this is the case across the school – Year 6 predictions demonstrate outstanding progress from KS1 to Y6
- Data is collected on behaviour and attendance

### St Joseph's Catholic Lower School

- Raise Online data analysis, Family Fisher Trust analysis and Governor comparison data charts & graphs online have all contributed to validation of school's own data.
- Attendance has steadily improved over the last year and is now at least in-line with national expectations. A local authority (LA) Education Welfare Officer is commissioned to work with the school to monitor attendance and work with vulnerable families. Attendance and behaviour data is shared with the LA.
- Educational attainment has improved over the longer term with a steady increase in outcomes. Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1 and for the final year group in the school on leaving are at least in-line with national outcomes; with progress being outstanding for most groups of pupils.

• The school finished the financial year with a significant underspend due to judicious use of grant funding. A large amount of the under-spend has been ring-fenced to develop accommodation for early years education in line with government and local authority 'early intervention' strategies. Well planned staffing has significantly reduced recruitment and cover costs. This money has been set aside to provide high quality CPD. Developing the school catering facilities and in-house management has ensured 100% take-up of school meals for reception and key stage 1 children.

#### St Gregory's Catholic Middle School

- Performance data shows pupils' accelerated progress through from entry to exit
- St Gregory's is the third highest performing school in the Local Authority at Level 4+ for the third year running
- Attendance is outstanding and above the National Average
- Exclusions are well below the National Average
- Finances have been managed prudently and staffing adjusted as vacancies have arisen

#### St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School

National performance data for behaviour and attendance, FFT achievement data and the schools own data shows that student outcomes were excellent over the course of the last 12 months. During this same period the school maintained a healthy financial margin that will be used to improve the facilities in the school and to offset the changes to the national funding formula.

Financial governance and oversight:

Does the trust's system of financial governance include strong oversight by the trustees and accounting officer? How have they advised and challenged decision makers within the trust on the cost and effectiveness of spending proposals in order to achieve value for money? Could funding have been used to better educational or economic effect elsewhere?

#### St John Rigby Catholic Primary School

- Directors receive a half termly Financial report at the ASIG meetings which the Executive Principal attends. Report is interrogated at the ASIG meeting
- School Finance Officer meets regularly with the Trust Principal Finance Officer (PFO)
- PFO meets regularly with the Executive Principal
- Yearly calendar of time-tabled meetings in place for school Finance Officer and Executive Principal
- Director Finance Committee – includes the EP and is advised by the PFO - meets half-termly for Trust-wide oversight

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- Directors involved in Focus Weeks and Learning Walks

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## FINANCE DEPARTMENTS

Directors and Finance Managers follow procedures for assessing the need and obtaining goods and services which provide best value in terms of suitability, efficiency, time and cost. We follow a competitive tendering process for goods and services above £5k. We accept quotes that are best value and not necessarily the cheapest for example quality of workmanship and suitability for purpose. All contracts are assessed when they come to the end of their period, renegotiated where appropriate, and also assessed to determine whether or not the contract is still required and/ or fit for purpose. We all follow the procedure of purchasing goods and services under £1k (stationary and small equipment) direct from known reliable supplier's thus minimising office time.

Finance Managers meet regularly and are led by the Principal Finance Officer to ensure that we share knowledge, advice and support within the Multi Academy Trust. We have obtained advice from Arambol with regards to tendering for larger projects and we have started to negotiate service contracts for the academy ensuring that we have reduced our cost by utilising the buying power of the four schools.

Some opportunities have been taken to explore income generation, a member of the Finance team has attended a bid writing course and a grant for sporting activities has been received. The Teaching Schools training facility has been built and will attract income as we increase the level of courses provided. We have also been successful in obtaining a grant of £358,817 for double glazing through the Academies Maintenance Fund. Income generation is an area to be developed.

We have had difficulties with the financial software which has delayed the ability to produce budget monitoring reports. Finance Manager's meet with Headteachers regularly to discuss all budget and finance issues to ensure all resources are being spent wisely. A Principal Finance Officer oversees all cash flow and management of the single trust bank account and leads the finance team. The Finance Committee and the Principal Finance Officer have met regularly to review budgets and income and expenditure.

Over the next 6 months a review will take place of the Finance and HR functions across the Multi Academy Trust to develop and implement, if considered appropriate, a centralised Finance H/R Function. This will improve our buying power to ensure best value collaboratively as a trust and improve the ability to work collaboratively across the trust.

**Name:** Dr Alan Lee  
**Academy Trust Accounting Officer**

**Date:** 19 Dec 2014