

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: School Partnership Trust Academies

Academy trust company number: 07386086

Year ended 31 August 2013

I accept that as accounting officer of School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA) 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.

In order to complete this statement, I have considered arrangements in place in the 2012/13 academic year both centrally at SPTA in the work of the Core Team which supports and monitors the work of Academies and at each of our Academies.

The SPTA Core Improvement Team provides support in Academy Improvement and various business support services including: Finance, HR, Payroll, Recruitment, ICT, Governance, Professional Development Programmes and Facilities (including Capital Development and Health and Safety).

The Academy Improvement Team leads on the raising of educational attainment and standards. It takes local context into account but will endeavour to deliver a consistent recognisable strategy in all Academies. This approach challenges and supports the local SLT in each Academy and sets the methodology for improving student attainment.

All other core services provided by SPTA allow the Principals at its academies to concentrate and focus on delivering excellent teaching and learning, while SPTA undertake functions centrally on their behalf.

Individual value for money statements have been prepared by each Principal of our academies open in the 2012/13 academic year and returned to SPTA. These statements, together with activities undertaken centrally, underpin this statement and have provided the examples of good practice and collaboration included in the detailed sections below.

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.

Improving educational results:

The vision for School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA) is to provide high quality education and deliver the best outcomes for young people, with an ethos based on our four founding principles of Quality, Partnership, Aspiration and Responsibility.

Overarching, group-wide targets for our Academies are set every year by the SPTA Board of Directors. We then use DfE benchmarking data, including RAISE Online, as well as support from experienced School Improvement Officers, alongside individual Academy Senior Leadership Team expertise to inform the setting of annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each Academy.

Currently the following aspirations represent our **key priorities**:

- All Academies good or better in Ofsted inspections;
- 100% satisfactory or better teaching;
- 80% good or better teaching;
- 40% outstanding teaching;
- No student exclusion; and
- Student attendance at 95% plus.

Pre 11 targets

- 90% of children achieve level 4 in English and Maths;
- No child at 11 to have a reading age more than 1 year behind chronological age; and
- All children to have experienced a prevocational programme and/or a qualification in sport/sporting achievement.

Post 11 targets

- All students to achieve 3 full levels of progress by end of KS4;
- All Academies to be 60% plus 5 x A to C including English and Maths;
- No child at 14 to have a reading age behind chronological age; and
- All students to engage on a post 16 course of study or apprenticeship.

The profile of our academies continues to show improvements towards achieving the SPTA targets and against the rigour of the new Ofsted Framework and its focus on achievement. The achievements and performance of each academy are shown in the Report of the Directors in SPTA's Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2013.

Targeted improvement, Focus on individual pupils.

Each Academy within the group has an Education Advisory Body (EAB), which is a sub-committee of the main SPTA Board. The responsibilities of the EABs along with their financial delegations are laid out in the SPTA Governance Handbook. The EAB plays a key role in the quality assurance of educational standards of each Academy.

Each Education Advisory Body has specific duties to provide support and constructive challenge in the areas of:

- Educational Standards
- Safeguarding
- Staffing, Recruitment and HR
- Facilities, ICT and Estate
- Community and local issues
- Finance and legal

The EAB and academy staff are supported in delivering their responsibilities by the SPTA Core Team.

The Principal and Chair of the EAB (or their representative from within the EAB membership) attend Keep-in-Touch meetings throughout the year with the Chief Executive Officer. Key personnel from the SPTA Core Team attend these meetings. These meetings review progress against targets that have been agreed with the Principal of the academy and provide an opportunity to identify key risks to achieving these targets and outline any mitigating actions necessary. The risks identified are reviewed and updated at each subsequent meeting.

At an academy level, targeted improvement and a focus on individual pupils is ensured by:

- Regular reviews of the curriculum model and staffing structure at each academy.
- Comprehensive tracking systems to record all aspects of student data including progress through school and to ensure interventions and support are targeted.
- Planning based on a thorough understanding of every child's ability and learning needs.
- Extensive programmes of lesson observations to quality assure provision.
- Well - targeted professional development to ensure that the quality of teaching is continuing to improve.
- Half-termly data analysis and termly pupil progress meetings against KPIs.
- A focus on pastoral care to provide support where barriers to pupil attendance and achievement have been identified. For example, parent support advisers have been appointed to meet the needs of vulnerable families and to provide support in respect of attendance, welfare, SEN behaviour support and parental engagement.
- Reviewing the impact and the use of Pupil Premium, ensuring it is used as effectively as possible to raise standards and accelerating the progress of the most vulnerable pupils.

This approach allows intervention programmes to be targeted to support all our learners to gain the necessary skills to become responsible members of a knowledge based society.

Collaboration

Our commitment to partnership and the sharing of challenge and expertise is a key value of the SPTA group. We use a collaborative approach to School Improvement, which allows individual academies access to excellent school improvement support on a shared cost basis. We have three Regional Directors of Education operating across our academies that co-ordinate support for School Improvement and share good practice to aid the improvement of teaching and learning within SPTA. Secondments are made from our outstanding and good academies to add additional capacity or fill vacancies within our more challenging academies.

We have also continued to develop the use of the Executive Principal model across the group to provide effective and cost effective support across groups of schools. We have also promoted the use of Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments (TLRs) to retain or attract outstanding teachers, particularly within the core subjects

SPTA Teaching School Alliance is a professional partnership which allows experts to share delivery and good practice and drive up standards. This has now successfully appointed 40 Specialist Leaders of Education (SLE). The SLE cohort is being fully deployed across the SPTA group of academies to increase capacity around school improvement support.

SPTA is one employer for all staff across its central team and academies and all recruitment is carried out on behalf of our academies centrally. This allows posts to be recruited and shared across more than one academy. Examples of posts provided through collaboration across SPTA in the year include:

- Learning Leaders in English and Maths at Secondary level,
- SENCO and extended services provision
- Inclusion team members with responsibility for welfare, attendance, behaviour SEN and parental engagement.
- Attendance officers,
- Behaviour Support Team
- Parent support advisers,
- Finance officer.

SPTA has developed a Continual Professional Development Programme, which can be accessed by all our academies. This provides a cost effective approach to training and targets specific support and the sharing of best practice.

New initiatives:

During this year SPTA has been given further opportunities to enhance their work around existing projects and have also been given the opportunity to undertake new areas of work.

SPTA's financial objectives are:

- to achieve an annual operating surplus
- to pursue alternative sources of funding, on a selective basis, consistent with each academy's core competencies, and the need for a financial contribution to each academy's overall finances
- to generate sufficient levels of income to support the asset base of the academy
- to further improve each Academy's shorter term liquidity
- to fund continued capital investment.

These financial objectives were met through the following projects:

- Schools Direct: the recruitment of 49 salaried and unsalaried trainee teachers who were appointed during the year and commenced their training contracts on 1st September 2013.
- 3 Alternative Provision Free Schools are within the planning and pre-opening stage and are due to open in September 2014. These will be situated within North Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire and will provide an additional provision for the most vulnerable pupils.
- Secondary and 6th form Free School due to open September 2014
- New 6th form – extending provision and opportunities for post 16 education
- Pooled capital maintenance provision.
- Academy rebuild and refurbishments
- National JNC arrangements with professional associations
- Participation in government reference groups.

The Trust's financial performance in the period is shown in SPTA's Financial Statements.

Financial governance and oversight:

SPTA's system of financial governance, including the Finance and Assets Scheme of Delegation, is laid down in the SPTA Governance Handbook. The Handbook is approved by the Board of Directors, of which the Accounting Officer is a member, and communicated to each Academy within SPTA.

Strong oversight by the SPTA Director of Finance is ensured by the use of a common financial system across all SPTA Academies and by regular meetings between Academy and Core Improvement Team Finance Officers who work together on both budget monitoring and financial planning tasks.

In addition to regular, routine budget monitoring at both officer and EAB level, on at least an annual basis, budgets are subject to detailed review and scrutiny by Core Improvement Team staff with expertise in school improvement, curriculum development and finance, to ensure resources are targeted in accordance with the Academy Development Plan.

Budget monitoring reports are produced monthly and provided to budget holders, the Principal, the Academy Leadership Team and to SPTA Core Finance. Any action necessary is taken in collaboration between Academy and Core Improvement Team staff to ensure that academy development plan priorities are supported. Reporting to the Academy Finance and Resources Committee or EAB occurs at least on a termly basis.

SPTA's current investment policy is to maximise income but from a low risk strategy. All monies are currently held on bank deposit and are attracting interest on a quarterly basis. During the year funds have also been invested in fixed term deposits to maximise any interest receivable. All funds can still be immediately accessed if needed.

In accordance with normal commercial practice the Academies have purchased insurance to protect Directors, EAB members and officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions occurring whilst on Academy business. The insurance provides cover up to £1,000,000 on any one claim.

Better purchasing:

In 2012/13 we have used centralised procurement by SPTA Core Improvement Team members on behalf of Academies to achieve value for money. For example we have used framework contracts for ICT, capital works and maintenance procurement to minimise the administrative burden and maximise the financial benefit for individual academies. We also use specialist subcontractors, wherever possible, in single trade packages to eliminate the need for main contractor's involvement and overheads and have grouped projects which have a similar scope together, such as for windows, roofs, kitchens and boilers.

SPTA also procures centrally on behalf of all its academies insurance and energy; this secures economies of scale and discounted prices and allows SPTA to compare the costs against other suppliers. All External and Internal Audit is procured centrally and went out to tender in January 2013. These services are managed centrally by SPTA which reduces the burden on the individual Principals and staff working within each academy.

In addition to central activity in this area, individual SPTA academies, with support from the SPTA Core team, have secured savings by retendering contracts in the following areas:

- Central print solutions
- Cleaning
- Grounds maintenance
- Catering.

All options have been considered as part of these exercises, including taking contracts back in house where this provided the most cost effective solution.

SPTA have retendered a number of catering contracts this academic year and this has shown great benefits with investment into the dining areas, savings to the academy and greater uptake by pupils and staff of school meals. We will be looking to re-tender in this area in 2013/14 to ensure all our academies are receiving value for money and benefit from this process.

Better income generation:

SPTA Academies have generated income from lettings in particular of halls, sports facilities and swimming pools, but have also generated revenue from sources such as arts festivals, music and the provision of specialist support to schools outside the SPTA family of schools. All income generated has been used to provide additional opportunities for learners in our academies.

Reviewing controls and managing risks

SPTA has undertaken further work during the year to develop and embed the system of internal control, including financial, operational and risk management which is designed to protect the Trust's assets and reputation.

School Partnership Trust Academies, Core Improvement Team (CIT), undertake a comprehensive review of the risks to which each academy is exposed. They identify systems and procedures, including specific preventable actions which should mitigate any potential impact on each academy. The internal controls are then implemented and the subsequent year's appraisal reviews their effectiveness and progress against risk mitigation actions. The CIT also consider any risks which may arise as a result of a new area of work being undertaken by the Academy.

SPTA appointed Baker Tilly as Internal Auditors. Over this financial year Baker Tilly have reviewed and reported to the Board of Directors on the following areas;

- Financial Controls,
- Equality and Diversity and
- Value for Money and Procurement.

Baker Tilly's work involves reviewing arrangements both at SPTA and at a sample of Academies.

The work undertaken provides independent assurance to the Audit Committee and the Accounting Officer that controls have been adequately designed and complied with.

In each of the areas reviewed in 2012/13, the Internal Auditors reviewed both the design of the control framework and the application and compliance of the framework. They concluded that while some action was necessary to manage risks in the areas of review, the Board can take some assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective.

Action taken by SPTA management in response to audit recommendations is monitored by the Audit Committee.

Lessons learned:

As SPTA has grown, the challenges to remain networked and deliver high quality local partnerships increases. We have therefore implemented a new structure to support challenge and progress in educational standards which includes the appointment of three full time Regional Director and Executive Principal positions. (This replaces the previous structures where Principals within 3 of our academies carried out this role in addition to their full time role within their own academies.) This is a significant step forward in empowering local ownership, within our broader regional structure of school improvement. This significant additional capacity will enable us to accelerate the pace of change and help deliver even higher standards in our Academies.

We also have planned implementation of the recommendations arising from our Internal and External audit reports. Key actions we will take in 2013/14 include:

- Developing the accountability of individual academies in implementing Internal Audit recommendations;
- Standardising documentation to support efficient and effective procurement;
- Embedding a new VLE based approach to the communication of key policies across SPTA;

- Further supporting Academies in the use of standardised software to support the procurement of routine and preventative maintenance.

Signed:

Name: Sir Paul Edwards

Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: 20 December 2013