

Review of Value for Money – 2014-2015

By:

1 Staffing

As the largest cost for the Academy I ensure that the Academy continuously analyses the staffing needs against the staffing allocation. This information is reported to, and discussed at, Governors Committee meetings (Finance and Audit and Staffing) in November, February and May. I acknowledge the significant impact that being overstaffed can have on the budget and I aim to ensure that no more than 80% of the budget is allocated to staffing. We were successful in meeting this aim for 2014-2015. Weighed up against this is the importance of recruiting a suitably qualified and skilled staff. Our rigorous recruitment processes ensure this happens and we have a clear strategic plan in terms of the recruitment and retention of high quality teaching staff.

As Accounting Officer I am fully aware of the need to be bearing down on costs and I acknowledged that forthcoming budgets will continue to be “flat”. AS part of our Budget Cost Reduction plan we will continue to review how effectively we use staff in the school especially as there will be cost of living rises for all staff during the next year.

I have also made the decision to ensure that staff overtime claims are minimal. Overtime now has to be planned, as far as is possible, in advance and has to be negotiated with the member of staff’s line manager. Where possible we encourage staff to take time off in lieu rather than making an overtime claim. Our spending on overtime has subsequently reduced in 2014-15.

2 Energy efficiencies

We have embarked on a process of continually reviewing our existing costs and investigating how we can be more energy efficient. Areas which have been redecorated this year, including our large sports hall, have also been updated in terms of lighting facilities. These facilities, added to our work in 2013-14 on lighting in our main block, will start to ensure that the school is conserving energy and, in turn, reducing costs.

3 Financial processes

During the year, through the work of the Business Manager and the Finance Manager, financial processes within the Academy have been streamlined to improve productivity and efficiency and to reduce cost. Our internal controls are sound, tendering processes are agreed with the Governors and are thorough and finances are regularly monitored by myself. The Business Manager has scrutinised all of our contracts and services. Some services have been renegotiated and this has saved money.

4 Catering contract

We reviewed our catering contract during 2014-2015 and a new provider started in September 2015. We anticipate that this will provide improved dining and catering options for staff and students in the school. There has been some capital investment by the catering company. With increased uptake we would expect to see the benefits of the new contract for the school during the next year. The company will also be used for catering for large school based events such as the Oscars ceremony, the year 11 study day and the year 11 celebration event. In the past we have used external providers for these events. This will help to save costs.

5 Students and educational outcomes

I oversee all spending which directly impact on student achievement, for example the effective use of pupil premium money and the effective use of catch up money. It has been another successful year of raising aspirations and releasing potential at Blackfen School. In 2015, 70% of our students gained 5A*-C at GCSE including at least a C in English and at least a C in Mathematics. At KS5 we have continued to invest in our curriculum opportunities for our young people. Our KS5 results in 2015 were our best ever.

6 Collaboration

The Academy formed an Umbrella Trust – The Penhill Academies Trust – with two partner schools. These schools are Sherwood Park (primary school) and Hurstmere (boys 11-16 school). The three schools are now working together for the benefit of the local community. During 2014-15 there was a start to some collaborative work. A key aspect of this collaborative working is to share

some costs, hence be more efficient, in terms of potential staffing and purchasing power.

Matthew Brown – Accounting Officer – November 2015