

# Value for Money Statement

**Academy trust name: The Propeller Academy Trust**

**Academy trust company number: 8340120**

## Year ended 31 August 2013

I accept that as accounting officer of The Propeller Academy 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.

The Propeller Academy Trust (PAT) was operational as of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013 and consists of Kingfisher Special School and Fitzwaryn Special School and Abingdon and Witney College which acts in the capacity of sponsor. The Trust operates using the four best value principles of Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete.

**Challenge:** Directors of the Trust are kept fully informed on all areas of school improvement and performance by receiving reports from the full Governing Body and committee meetings operating at local level. The PAT Business Development Manager attends the Resource committee meetings at local level and together with the Chair from each Resource Committee reports to the PAT Resource committee. The Chair from the PAT Resource Committee together with the PAT Business Development Manager report to the Board of Directors. With this structure securely in place, working practices, management systems, senior leaders' performance and financial commitments are regularly challenged to ensure that outcomes for pupils continually improve with the available resources.

**Compare:** As special schools, there is a strong working relationship with other special schools in the county. Both headteachers have been heavily involved in consultation over the funding formula for SEN pupils in Oxfordshire and continue to be active in ensuring the best outcome for funding to ensure the stability of the Trust in financial terms as well as securing the very best resource to ensure first class education for all pupils.

**Consult:** With the Trust in its infancy, the PAT Strategy group is preparing an action plan which will incorporate consulting with a wide range of stakeholders to inform future planning.

**Compete:** Contracts and purchasing commitments are made using the principles of competition in the Financial Handbook and the PAT's Scheme of Delegation. The Financial Manual of Guidance Procedures are adhered to and a quarterly audit by the Responsible Person ensures compliance together with suggesting actions for improvement should they be necessary to ensure best practice at all times. Levels of authority for employees making financial commitments are set out clearly in the Scheme of Delegation and the Financial Manual of Guidance.

Abingdon and Witney College advise on opportunities to secure best value. During this period to which the accounts relate, a part-time interim Business Manager was in post and secured best value in areas such as the cleaning contract where a better price was secured negotiating for two schools rather than individually. A permanent full-time Business Development Manager has been in post since September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 and continues to operate effective negotiations to secure the best value for the Trust.

Benchmarking against similar schools locally and nationally will become an integral part of annual processes to ensure best value.

**Monitoring Processes:** The principles of Best Value can support and influence all management and decision – making activities including:

- Setting targets
- School Improvement planning
- Allocation of resources to identified priorities within the SDP by ensuring budget planning is directly linked to the SDP.
- Scrutiny by members of local governing bodies: monitoring and reporting of the quality of provision in terms of teaching and learning for all pupils and through analysis of performance data set against similar schools locally and nationally. Ofsted Inspection Reports will provide further evidence of Best Value.
- Scrutiny by governors and Directors: Regular scrutiny of management accounts including monthly cash flow, quarterly Responsible Officer visits to scrutinise financial systems provides further assurance of best value.
- Managing the performance of staff through a process of robust Performance Management and governors holding School Leadership and Management to account.
- Care of pupils including allocation of staff and matters of Health and Safety
- The School environment to ensure it is fit for purpose
- Personnel contracts

The PAT Strategy Group is in the process of reviewing all Service Level Agreements to ensure quality in terms of financial best value and quality of service. Service Agreements are in place for the following:

HR advice  
Payroll Services  
Health and Safety Advice and audit  
Maintenance contracts  
Financial and audit services  
Educational support services eg Ed Psych, school nurse  
Legal Services

### **Income Generation**

The PAT does encourage income generation from letting school facilities. Letting rates are decided at local level taking into account the nature of the letting and often provide a quality service specific to the children with SEN and therefore as well as generating income, outcomes in terms of learning are achieved through these opportunities. The PAT also sees supporting such activities as engaging with the community as a whole and broadening the core offer.

### **Pupil Premium**

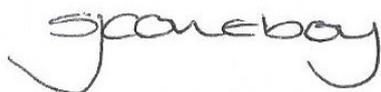
Both schools report on progress of pupils in receipt of pupil premium and publish this information on the website. Progress is also monitored closely for pupils in receipt of free school meals and looked after pupils.

The income of the PAT is derived from the DfE funding formula with a top up per pupil from the local authority. All pupils have a statement of SEN and a higher percentage of income is used for staffing than in the mainstream setting. This presents huge challenge as little flexible income is available once staffing has been assigned. This ensures an even greater necessity for awareness of best value in every aspect of school life as money is so tight and continues to be the greatest risk and challenge to the PAT.

### **Improvements to Best Value processes planned for 2014/15**

A review of the deployment of support staff as a whole will take place in the coming months. Within this the administration services of the PAT will be reviewed and an action plan developed to ensure staff are deployed in the most efficient manner to support the PAT and school improvement.

**Signed:**



**Name:** Stephanie Coneboy

**Academy Trust Accounting Officer**

**Date:** 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013