

# Value for Money Statement

**Academy trust name: Prenton High School for Girls**

**Academy trust company number: 7672980**

**Year ended 31 August 2014**

I accept that as accounting officer of **Prenton High School for Girls** 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.

**Improving Educational Outcomes:** Examination results for 2013/14 were the "best ever" and above national averages with 68% gaining 5 A\* - C grades (including English and Maths), 78% making expected progress in English and 77% making expected progress in Maths.

The Academy supports social, emotional and academic growth of students through the development of meaningful relationships and the offer of a broad and balanced curriculum delivered by experienced and skilled staff. The staffing structure has been deployed to ensure that all students receive the support and challenge required in order to achieve (and exceed) their potential.

Wirral's School Improvement Team has reviewed the performance of all Secondary schools in the Local Authority and has graded the Academy in the highest performing category, as a "Band 1" school.

From the September 2013 Year 7 cohort, 18 students were identified as working significantly below average in literacy. These students had additional literacy intervention (Read Write inc) 3 periods a week as well as following 'The LIT Programme' in English lessons. As a result, 13 of these 18 students reached a level 4 by the end of Year 7, effectively 'catching up' with their peers. The other 5 students made good progress from their starting points, which were much lower (levels 1-2).

On average these 18 students added 1.3 years to their reading ages, which is more than expected for students with SEN, who typically progress at a slower rate.

**Targeted improvement:** To ensure that standards have continually been raised, the Academy has introduced Transition Matrices to monitor student progress. In reviewing the assessment and reporting cycles, progress updates have subsequently been increased from 3 to 5 across the year. This has supported early intervention for any student identified as underperforming.

**Focus on individual pupils:** The Academy increased investment in its annual Service Level Agreement with the local ESW from 25 to 50 hours to improve attendance in addition to procedural changes that addressed early and staged intervention. Panel meetings with parents and increased issue of Fixed Penalty Notices has had a positive impact and attendance has increased from 93.8% (2013) to 94.9% (2014) Persistent Absence has reduced from 7.7% (2013) to 4.1% (2014)

Students have benefitted from one to one mentoring, small group work, holiday revision classes and an in-school counselling service.

The Academy rewards excellence and encourages positive behaviour. We celebrate achievement and throughout the year students have been encouraged to try new activities to develop their confidence and leadership skills.

**Collaboration:** As part of transition, data was collected from primary feeder schools and students working below level 4 in maths were selected to attend a series of maths booster workshops to support their transition from KS2 – 3.

The Trust has engaged with other educational providers and experts to share delivery of good practice and to drive up standards for the least cost, including work with other local secondary schools and provision of time for departments to observe and share best practice.

**New initiatives:** To support transition from KS2 - 3, the Academy fully funded the cost of an off-site Summer School camp in August 2014, providing time for staff and students to work in Tutor groups and collectively to focus on team-building skills in preparation for the Autumn Term. Staff, student and parental feedback has been so overwhelmingly positive that we have made provision for embedding this initiative into annual KS2 – 3 transition planning.

**Quantifying improvements:** The Governors' Curriculum Committee meets at least three times a year to ensure that the quality of provision for students at the Academy continues to be at least good and is clearly addressing improvement plan issues so that the Academy is evidently moving towards delivering outstanding quality in all areas of provision. Staffing enhancement in English and maths, in addition to the creation of new classroom facilities in these subject areas, have supported improved student outcomes.

The Academy has maintained its position as a highly subscribed local secondary school with intake numbers increasing despite a current climate of falling rolls.

**Financial governance and oversight:** The Academy's Governing Body has clear oversight of the financial management of the budget, strengthened by changes made to the structure of committee meetings. Detailed Management Accounts are shared with all governors each month enabling them to fulfil the requirements of their role, review the financial position of the Trust and to challenge decisions. The role and responsibilities of the Responsible Officer have been developed to expand testing of our internal controls.

An “Away Day” was held in the Summer Term with specific training for all governors on financial accountability.

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility of reviewing the effectiveness of the system of Internal Control. For 2013/14 my review has been informed by:

- The work of a governor in the role of Responsible Officer
- The work of the external auditor, Langtons
- The work of the Finance Director and Senior Leadership Team who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework

The Academy’s system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information and procedures, a scheme of delegation and separation of duties in addition to the following:

- Risk Management
- Budget setting and monitoring of performance against budget/ forecasts through management account information and periodic reports to governors at committee and full Governing Body level
- Review of curriculum, staffing and asset plans

The governors are cognisant of their responsibilities to ensure that the Academy’s resources are managed effectively to support both the School Development Plan objectives and the longer term developments of the Academy.

**Better purchasing:** The Academy has taken a prudent approach to expenditure, regularly appraising and re-negotiating contracts when applicable to ensure value for money by means of quality and effectiveness. The Academy has endeavoured to obtain three quotations and in exceptions, where this has not been possible, has recorded an explanation.

**Benchmarking:** The Academy has benchmarked costs against similar organisations through data sharing exercises in participation in FD Forum discussions (notably benchmarking data published by Reeves for 2013 – highlighting strong performance) and also in partnership with other Wirral schools.

**Options appraisal:** The Trustees, Senior Leadership Team and all staff have strived to achieve the best outcomes and provide “best value” in terms of suitability, efficiency, time and cost in relation to:

- targeting resources to best improve standards and the quality of provision
- allocation of resources to best promote the aims and values of the Academy
- further development of the competitive tendering policy

- procedures which minimise administration time in the procurement of goods and services under the value of £1000 from trusted, reliable suppliers

As staffing consumes the large part of the Academy's budget, the curriculum and staffing plans have been reviewed at least annually to ensure that they are fit for purpose and capable of adaptation to respond to both internal and external context. Staff have been employed to provide best value for money and temporary changes to contracts have been applied to meet the needs of the academy and reduce payroll costs.

**Maximising income generation:** The Academy works in partnership with local universities to support ITT students through their mentoring programme. Funding that has been raised through this programme throughout the year has been passed back to departments as additional capitation to support development planning.

As a PFI school, the Academy is contracted to a 27 year PFI Project Agreement. Increased scrutiny of contractual performance has led to the development of a targeted approach to ensure that under-performance of the PFI contractor has been closely monitored, reported and financial recompense obtained as a performance deduction payable to the Academy. (PFI income £4.5k in 2012, £15k in 2013)

The Academy has an Investment Policy and throughout the year cash-flow has been monitored and surplus balances moved on to higher interest rate deposits to increase investment return.

**Reviewing controls and managing risks:** The Academy regularly reviews its Risk Management Strategy, Business Continuity Plan and Risk Register. Insurance levels are reviewed at least annually to ensure that they are adequate and cost-effective. Annual insurance has been secured as part of a 3 year contract brokered by the Local Authority in partnership with other local Academies maximising economies of scale.

In July 2013 the Trust approved a new appointment of a Health & Safety Manager to its staffing structure to strengthen procedures and control measures already in place. The newly appointed manager has undertaken and successfully completed the NEBOSH qualification this year.

The Governors review Academy reserve levels each term to evaluate income and expenditure streams in order to determine that future commitments can be met in addition to the nature of the reserves.

Monthly Management Accounts and termly budget monitoring reports are produced and reviewed by the Governors, the Accounting Officer and Director of Finance. Significant variances to budget that may have an impact on budget out-turn are reviewed and any remedial action required formalised.

The Academy maintains a Financial Procedures Manual which is adhered to by all staff with budget responsibility and is reviewed at least annually by the Governors. This manual sets out detailed procedures in respect of accountability, budgets, purchasing, asset management, income, security and personnel.

**Lessons learned (reviewing operations to maximise resources):** In 2012 the Academy introduced AIMS (Academic Intervention Mentoring Scheme) a new scheme implemented to track progress, increase levels of assessment and support with early intervention. Subsequently, this initiative has been further developed to include 5 reporting periods and strengthened through changes to the staffing structure through the introduction of Progress Leaders for each of the 5 Year groups (previously overseen by 3 Heads of House.)

**Signed:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Academy Trust Accounting Officer**

**Date:** .....

