

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: Montsaye Community Learning Partnership

Academy trust company number: 07670511

Year ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of Montsaye Community Learning Partnership 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.

This was the first year as a Multi-Academy Trust and therefore the focus has been on aligning systems and procedures whilst embracing opportunities to work more collaboratively. This began in the pre-conversion working groups where centralising contracts where possible, was a key aim. Legal support to the process was put out to tender and comparison to the costs for an individual academy, generated savings of in excess of £25,000. The group also identified payroll and HR support as another opportunity and due to acting collaboratively, were able to generate savings of £15,000 when compared to remaining with pre-conversion support.

In order to facilitate the production of consolidated accounts, it was necessary to explore financial software systems. As a result, based upon a 5 year costs estimate, the MAT not only introduced a more modern, compliant and versatile system, but generated savings of £40,000 when compared with the predecessor system. Beyond 5 years, there is an ongoing annual saving of £7,500 for support for the system across the 8 schools.

Improving Educational Outcomes. The trust recognises the importance of school improvement. As a result of these collaborative savings, the trust were able to commission a central contract to work with an independent specialist school improvement partner. Much of the early work in this field focussed on establishing baselines to inform future planning then acting on that information. Although this work is in its early stages, results at the end of the year generally showed improvement on prior year albeit only slight at this stage. The trust is keen to ensure this is developed for the longer-term benefit.

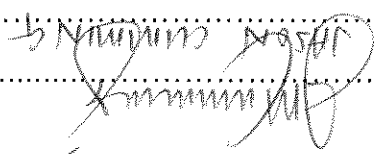
Financial governance and oversight. More generally, the trust has sought to ensure that by providing a robust suite of financial policies and making the necessary financial expertise available to all schools in the MAT, that the routine financial operations of the schools not only promote best value, but also minimise financial risk. The MAT has authorised a Scheme of Financial Delegation which details the responsibilities of staff at all levels to further enhance this. Bringing 8 schools together has required regular training which has been provided both internally and externally throughout the year. Discussion groups support this by facilitating collective learning and development and the spread of better practice. The trust have also contracted for an independent internal auditor who has reviewed and reported on each school individually highlighting areas for improvement but also opportunities to improve procurement and minimising risk. The reports of the internal auditor and the external auditor including the regularity audit, imply that these policies and principles have been well established across the MAT.

Better purchasing. The benefits of collaborative procurement have been easily identifiable in this first year and developing and acting on further opportunities will form a key part of the financial aspects of the MAT development plan going forward. Having the benefit of the first year data, the trust can now look at internal benchmarking as well as more widely to ensure that it continues to obtain value for the resources entrusted to it. Maximising income generation. The trust is fortunate to be able to provide excellent sports facilities to our schools through the Montsaye Community Sports Centre. Recently expanded facilities including gymnasium and dance studio have provided a wider offer for not only our students, but also the community with over 120,000 visits recorded in the year, gymnasium membership consistently over 400 members and a facility that is right at the centre of community activities. Income for the Centre has risen in a tough economic climate and the trust are now seeking ways to further develop the use of this facility for all.

Reviewing controls and managing risks. The trust is currently in the process of evaluating its governance structure after the first year with a view to ensuring it is fit for purpose and able to ensure compliance with the demands placed upon it. It has established an Audit & Risk Committee headed by a professional auditor who has been able to provide support and guidance to the MAT throughout the transition to MAT status. It also has a central contract for the provision of an Internal Audit function across all schools in the trust.

Lessons learned. Collaborative purchasing has achieved significant savings in some areas and this has meant additional funding being available to drive forward teaching and learning initiatives in the MAT development plan.

Progress in some areas has been hindered by a lack of staffing capacity and therefore the governance review and any subsequent recommendations will factor this into future planning and actions.

Signed: 
Name: Robert Cunningham
Academy Trust Accounting Officer
Date: 5.12.14

