

# Value for Money Statement

**Organisation name: CASTLE ACADEMY**

**Company number: 8143349**

**Year ended 31 August 2014**

I accept that as accounting officer of CASTLE ACADEMY 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.

Castle Academy achieves Value for Money by constantly monitoring and evaluating improvement in outcomes in relation to its pupils, parents, partner school and the community.

The Academy is mindful of its obligations to provide an efficient, effective and economic service for its pupils and local community. It will achieve this by adopting the 4 C's: Compare (shopping around for the best deals and comparing prices etc.), Consult (talking to other schools and suppliers and requesting references), Compete (be sure that the purchase is the best for the use of the Academy) and Challenge (informing suppliers of our needs and asking for what we want!).

To assist with this, the Academy has a procurement policy, approved by the Governing Body, to ensure procedures are followed and Best Practice is maintained. The Academy also has in place a Finance Policy outlining the responsibilities of the finance officers and committees with details of the reports to be made available and the time scales of reporting. The Academy also utilises the facility of Benchmarking to compare its spending with that of other similar Academies. Senior Leaders and Governors regularly review spending plans and priorities, making in-year savings when necessary in order to ensure that spending is effective and supports pupil development and achievement.

Raiseonline indicates that early years and KS1 performance is good and children achieve well. Coming from a variety of settings and from a below average starting point, children make good progress through the Foundation Stage and continuing on to Key Stage 1. Achievement in the national Phonics Screening is good. Ofsted inspected the school during spring 2014 and found that it required improvement due to a lack of progress from this positive start across Key Stage 2. The academy has invested in training and support for teachers to improve progress and the achievements of the most able. It has increased the spending on professional guidance and support to assist in identifying, monitoring and challenging practice. Noticeably the achievement in reading and writing in 2014 was much closer to the national average than in 2013 and there was an improvement in the number of pupils who achieved level 4 in core subjects. However, progress in mathematics remains a key issue which the academy is determined to address consequently spending on mathematics has significantly increased.

The Senior Leadership Team, Governors and Trustees work together to assess the needs of the Academy and seek the best ways to achieve the necessary outcomes. This can take place over a number of years and change direction, as in the planning of the new build. The Trustees and Governing Body are sensitive to the changing and growing needs of the Academy, for example by achieving the resources necessary to deliver a 21st Century computing curriculum. This has been achieved by working closely with the Academy's new IT providers, in terms of maintenance, support, hardware and software. There is now a fit for purpose wireless network infra-structure to support the growing demand for wireless technology installed across the Academy. Fifty wireless tablets were purchased to support learning within the new classroom and across Key Stage 2.

Our attendance data is slightly above the national average and is improving. Reward and support are in place to ensure that pupil attendance is high and that children and families have a high level of investment in the Academy. Further improvements and support for families has been achieved following the appointment of a Parent Support Advisor. She is a readily accessible point of contact for parents with concerns or difficulties. She has offered

support and guidance to families and children in both short term intervention and longer term support and guidance. Improvements in attendance will be made and maintained by the use of: regular monitoring and increasingly targeted challenge of families whose children's attendance is poor; a named point of contact for parents to discuss attendance issues; each case being pursued actively by the named person; consistency of approach based on on-going year-on-year data; good staffing on doors to encourage punctuality and make children welcome on arrival; Breakfast Club (free to Pupil Premium eligible children) ensuring that unauthorised absences are not because of issues with morning routines; enforcement targeted at the most persistent absence pupils.

The Academy had limited space available for the use of intervention group work by teachers and teaching assistants. The Governing Body had a long term plan to create additional teaching space in order to be able to accommodate a school population that fluctuates between 190 and 210. In addition, the government's free meals for Key Stage 1 initiative meant that although in previous years we had converted the scullery into a kitchen, this would not have the capacity for the additional meal requirements. During 2013-2014, an ambitious project sought to address both of these issues with the building of a new timber structured classroom containing two rooms, toilets and a small kitchen. Moving our Foundation Stage into this building improved the learning environment (both indoor and outdoor). It provides the opportunity for children to be taught in a modern and up-to-date area which matches the needs of the current curriculum. It gives us spare capacity which will allow us to expand our age range in future years to include a nursery. Having moved the children into this building, we were able to develop the classroom that they had vacated into two intervention rooms and an extension to the kitchen. The kitchen capacity now allows for every child in school to have a school meal – thereby future proofing against the possible free Key Stage 2 meals in the future. It also means that on festival days the kitchen are able to feed every child and all adults (staff and volunteers) creating a greater sense of community and investment in the school.

As part of this project the school was rewired to provide additional capacity and improve electrical safety bringing it in line with current electrical safety regulations. To achieve all of the above the Academy used a large proportion of the reserves that it had accumulated for this purpose. It carried forward a more proportionate reserve which is sufficient to insure against unforeseen expenditure but which spends current money on current pupils. The Academy worked in cooperation with the Education Funding Authority, Local Authority and suppliers to achieve best value for money, access appropriate expertise and access the additional funding required for such an ambitious project.

**Name:** Mr Simon Martin  
**Academy Trust Accounting Officer**

**Date:** 18 Dec 2014