

Academy Trust Name: The Griffin Schools Trust

Company Number: 7893665

Year Ended 31 August 2014

I accept that as Accounting Officer of **The Griffin Schools Trust (GST)** I am responsible and accountable for ensuring that the 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 Trust's use of its resources has provided good value for money during the academic year.

Improving Educational Results and Long-term Performance

Our Proud Traditions, Wide Horizons and High Achievement agenda enhances the National Curriculum through free extra curricular provision, engaging all pupils, hence improving attendance and supporting children to improve their learning outcomes.

In 2014 the Trust's schools saw some impressive improvements after only two or three terms from schools with historic patterns of severe under-performance. Six of the ten primary schools were in special measures at transfer and three had recently exited from special measures or serious weaknesses. Only one had recently been judged good and the LA and school itself expressed surprise at such a positive assessment. So, GST took on a very challenging group of schools with very little internal capacity for self-driven improvement through school to school support. We were therefore delighted that seven of the ten primary schools saw improvements of between 8% and 45% in their KS2 results.

Two fell back slightly, though both improved the progress children make over time. One (which transferred in February 2014) had a significant headline drop in outcomes though very high mobility distorts the figures somewhat. There is nothing more the school or GST could have done in that school over that timescale.

The secondary school's results were disappointing and the causes are being robustly addressed.

These gains have been achieved through the engagement of high quality associates with backgrounds in HMI, Ofsted and successful school leadership. The Trust pays mid-market rates and enjoys a high degree of flexibility in deployment through this model which is balanced by a small HQ team of permanent employees to provide executive leadership in education, finance and governance. This team is supported by two administrative staff. The ratio of employed HQ staff to employed school staff currently stands at 1:100 and this will reduce further when we add two secondary schools to provide clusters of all through education and complete the family.

Our next priority will be to deploy some of this resource to further curriculum development across the schools, building on the mindsets work and the impact of values education seen in the most rapidly improving schools in GST.

The Trust has continued its fruitful relationships with an outstanding primary school in London to train NQTs and with other exceptional schools who are experts in inclusion and making the school environment a key improvement strategy. There are also

relationships with higher education providers and national figures on driving social change so that the poorest children are beginning to enjoy and expect access to high profile events and high quality thinking.

The Trust has established its own team to drive step change in English and literacy. Staffed from within schools and supplemented by associate time and expertise, the Griffin English Partnership is designed to make a strong impact using the existing levers of shared visions (based on Proud Traditions, Wide Horizons and High Achievement), a common approach to planning and evaluation and a culture of building the capacity for leadership at all levels. We expect to see proportionate impact of this work in 2015's outcomes.

Leadership is the key to great schools and GST's school improvement model is predicated on growing leadership capacity within and across the schools. The impact of our leadership programme, carried out through 1-1 and small group coaching as well as regular seminars at HQ is clear. Heads are developing into chief executives who understand the full range of their responsibilities. We use a matrix based on the standards for Heads which constantly reminds Heads of the balance and reach of the role, way beyond the core activity of leading teaching and learning. As a result, three of our Heads are about to lead work across the Trust in the first stage of our strategy to build a self-sustaining system. Given the starting points of our schools at transfer, this is both credible and creditable progress.

Financial Governance and Oversight

The Trust has received additional support from its new auditors to address fully the spirit and letter of the Financial Handbook for Academies. This has meant an unusually high spend on professional fees in 2013 -14 and the first quarter of 2014-15.

The Trust has appointed a Director of Finance with a successful track record as an accountant and management consultant in a global professional services company. She is supported by a very experienced Financial Controller and a graduate assistant accountant. This team will provide GST with the capacity to move beyond financial control to group savings and the generation of income.

Financial control is rigorous and Heads are regularly included in training for compliance as well as good strategic financial management. Strategic financial plans are in place and are regularly discussed and challenged by the Board.

The Executive Team uses the risk register, which is regularly updated, to inform all strategic decisions and scrutinises the monthly management reports.

The Board approved the Trust's Audited Financial Statements on 12 December 2014.

Ensuring Value for Money and efficient/effective use of the Trust's resources

The Trust is in the process of reviewing finance staffing across the schools and the degree of centralised processing which will bring efficiency whilst retaining the Head's financial autonomy, which is a key principle for GST.

A Procurement Group drawn from the schools, HQ team and Board is working to make use of block purchasing and joint procurement to save costs and improve the quality of service the schools and Trust receives.

The Trust uses EFA sources and the Kreston Report to benchmark its financial

performance against other sponsors of similar size, spread and challenge to ensure that GST is providing Value for Money. Work on unit costs which is shortly to be completed will inform our judgement of VFM in the context of the challenges the schools face in terms of high pupil mobility, surplus places, the cost of robust performance management and the difficulty of recruiting high quality staff at this stage of the improvement trajectory. The schools which have broken through the recruitment pain barrier have seen an immediate difference in their capacity to use funds positively.

The Trust uses options appraisal in making purchase decisions and has secured higher level support by outsourcing some functions such as the provision of IT support and the management of capital programmes, than it could by employing directly.

Going forward the Trust will look for savings through shared energy contracts, the gradual introduction of LED lighting and the potential for earning through solar panels selling energy back into the grid. We will also look to income generation through further lettings of school premises and facilities and through the success of school to school support programmes.

Signed:



Name: Liz Lewis

Griffin Schools Trust Accounting Officer

Date: 18th December 2014