

# Value for Money Statement

**Organisation name: St Thomas More Roman Catholic Academy**

**Company number: 7844795**

**Year ended 31 August 2014**

I accept that as accounting officer of St Thomas More Roman Catholic 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.

Examples of such activity include:

- We have continued to closely scrutinise the deployment of our resources throughout the year, the main element of which is staff. 2014 saw the first full year of implementation of our staff restructure (effective from September 2013). This restructure examined all areas of staff deployment and resulted in a reduction in total staff costs (teaching and non teaching) from £7.159m in 2012/13 to £6.583m in 2013/14. We continue to monitor the demand placed upon teaching, support services and leadership reflecting necessary changes whether driven by curriculum development or pupil choices. Our Leadership model has remained very lean, operating with just one Deputy Head teacher. This is very low for a school of our size. We have given this operating model thought during 2013/14 as we recognise it may limit our ability to drive culture change where necessary and resilience.
- We continue to look for innovative and proven ways to improve educational outcomes. We do not settle for simply repeating our historical strong academic performance but seek to embed a culture and expectation of continuous improvement for all of our staff and pupils. During 2013/14 we purchased and rolled out a series of IT software solutions which help us to help scrutinise and improve performance for individual pupils and subject areas. This is led by our Director of Learning and has been embraced by all staff.
- As a Catholic Academy we place an emphasis on our strong and effective pastoral ethos of support to pupils in the Academy. For example, we employ a school chaplain, student counsellor, and family support worker who can work on a 1-2-1 basis to help us to understand the individual pupil, their needs and how we can tailor our delivery to support them to achieve. These support services allow teachers time to utilise their expertise fully and focus on teaching and learning.
- We work in partnership with the Hexham and Newcastle Diocese and from 2013/14 we have been part of the Catholic Partnership of schools in the North East at a cost of £22k p.a. This collaboration enables us to achieve economies of scale in purchasing to open up an array of professional development opportunities to teachers and high quality student activities that would not have been possible otherwise without considerable financial outlay.
- As the only Catholic secondary school in our local authority area we have always valued our close working relationships with the Catholic Primary schools in our area. We meet on a regular basis to discuss issues that affect us all and how best to approach them. This has historically enabled us to understand individual pupil needs, or trends, before pupils join us and offer suggested strategies that may enable them to settle and achieve quickly when they do. In addition to this from 2013/14 we have used the strength of our ICT support staff in St Thomas More Academy to support our feeder Catholic schools through a service level agreement. This mutually beneficial arrangement means our feeder schools have access to local high quality ICT support at competitive price, and also allows us to make a contribution to the costs of maintaining this team. We will use 2014/15 to explore where there may be further potential benefits of closer collaborative working.
- We know that the use of our resources and the programme of activities we offer (as briefly outlined above) is highly effective as we are able to demonstrate sustained high levels of educational achievement in excess of national averages. Our student attendance records remain good and our student progression rates high.
- We always seek value in our purchasing decisions. For example we seek three quotes for items likely to cost over £1000, we compare prices for products with regional purchasing frameworks e.g. NEPO or YPO. In addition to this however we undertake options appraisals before making purchases e.g. when looking to replace a franking machine which was over 7 years old and at the end of its useful life) we evaluated lease options or outright purchase, as well as different contract providers. This included volume driven estimates and the potential change in

the need for postage over the next 3 years. The outcome of this exercise was we were able to select a product and procurement option that secured significant savings over the expected life of the franking machine.

- We have regular meetings with our contractors to ensure effective service standards. e.g. We meet monthly with the area manager of our cleaning contractor to undertake a joint service inspection and discuss service developments. The renegotiated contract for cleaning allows for a small bonus payment to cleaners payable upon the achievement of performance standards over the previous year. This has ensured cleaners have remained motivated over the year, has reduced sickness absence and maintained high service standards.
- Financial governance and oversight is a key aspect of our governing body. Our Governors have a wealth of experience and skills in accounting and finance in the public and private sectors. They demonstrated their commitment to securing strong financial governance through taking a full and active part in the recruitment and selection of the Director of Finance & Support services when this post became vacant during 2013/14.
- Routine budget monitoring reports are produced monthly for individual budget holders. Any variances are identified and acted upon immediately with budget holders by the Finance team and the Director of Finance. The Academy produces monthly management reports, prepared on an accruals basis. The Director of Finance discusses the position monthly with the Accounting officer and reports are taken to Governing body on at least a termly basis. These reports identify variances, but also solutions for improvements, and in doing so are not just monitoring reports but are active management reports.
- The Accounting officer plays an active part in Local democratic decisions around education funding and holds the post of Academy at the North Tyneside Schools Forum. This has enabled us to challenge all aspects of the Dedicated Schools Grant, fully understand how it is deployed and ensure it is utilised effectively for the benefit of children in North Tyneside.

**Name:** Mrs Diane Donkin  
**Academy Trust Accounting Officer**

**Date:** 21 Nov 2014