

Value for Money Statement

Academy Trust Name: RNIB Specialist Learning Trust

**Academy Trust Company Number: 8478985
(England and Wales)**

Year Ended: 31 August 2014

I accept that as accounting officer of RNIB Specialist Learning Trust that 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.

RNIB Specialist Learning Trust is a multi-academy trust. Currently the trust has one academy – RNIB Three Spires Academy. Three Spires converted to Academy status under the Specialist Learning Trust on 1 September 2013. The ethos of RNIB Three Spires Academy is that every individual is valued. There is a real focus on ensuring every pupil is given the necessary support to overcome barriers to learning which arise from their special educational needs. Pupils needs include moderate or severe learning difficulties and over half have an additional diagnosis of autism. Some also have a sensory impairment.

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.

Curriculum Revision: The Curriculum has been revised with flexibility in its design to better meet the needs of the young people. There is a real focus in supporting children to develop receptive and expressive communication skills. Staff attended in-service training on the use of Picture Exchange Communication System to help achieve this.

Improving Educational Standards: RNIB Specialist Learning Trust has a rigorous appraisal policy for all staff and good CPD opportunities. The academy took a stepped change in raising the level for expected and challenging targets by a factor of 10% (best fit with B Squared assessment programme). Overall 84% of pupils achieved either their expected or challenging targets which is in line with last year even though the level of challenge was increased. The school has established a robust system of measuring pupil progress and maintains detailed record of pupil targets and attainment in Maths, English, Science and PSHE. The quality of teaching in the school is consistently good with 81% of lessons observed as good or better; many with outstanding features.

Targeted Improvement: The Academy is acutely aware that the single most important item of expenditure is on salary costs and works to ensure that the staffing structure is financially viable in the medium and long term and is built on firm foundations. The Academy also pays close attention to its agency cover costs and has taken out the necessary insurance to ensure that these do not become a burden.

The staffing structure is kept under continual review throughout the first year of operation at RNIB Three Spires Academy.

Focus on Individual Students: Teachers devise individualised education targets which are cross curricular and

complement the pupil progress targets. If required, support plans are developed and implemented to assist pupils to develop socially appropriate behaviour. Behaviour is carefully monitored through the School's use of Behaviour Watch, a computerised program which staff use to record all incidents and accidents which senior management review and sign off on each record input. Patterns of behaviour and risk are identified by SLT by means of analysing the data produced through this program.

The academy has managed the differing needs of students through the provision of numerous intervention strategies to provide support for those students who need one to one support and those that require more challenge.. This has included pupil premium students as well as gifted and talented.

Collaboration and New Initiatives: The school maintains close but independent links with the local authority to ensure that it can meet the special educational needs in the city, including its move to broad spectrum provision, attending the planning meetings which took place over the year. As such, the school is projected to be at full capacity for the foreseeable future. In 2013-14, the school was at full capacity with 81 pupils and by the end of the academic year, the local authority had approached the school for an additional 10 places at a satellite provision.

The Academy has engaged with other educational providers such as Special Heads groups, Coventry City Council and Safeguarding group meetings.

Quantifying Improvements: Attendance for the year was 90.5% an increase on the previous year, despite the increasingly complex range of needs of pupils attending the school. Where attendance was a concern, senior leadership engaged with families to offer support and guidance. This work will continue with the target at least of achieving the national average of 93.4%.

Successful Bid: The Specialist learning Trust was successful in the Academies Capital Maintenance Fund Bid and was awarded more than £400K for safeguarding and health & safety works. This includes improvements to office space and the creation of a new car park which have all been delivered within the project budget.

The Academy was also successful in its bid for a donated renovation of its sensory room from Warwick Castle, saving the school an expense of over £20K.

Financial Governance and Oversight: The academy receives strong oversight from its Governors, Trustees and Accounting Officer. Regular Trustee meetings occur as well as local governing body meetings to oversee educational, financial and risk management.

The Specialist Learning Trust appointed Accountants undertake regular audits to ensure compliance by acting as the Responsible Officer.

Better Purchasing: The Specialist Learning Trust enjoys the services of RNIB Procurement Department to ensure value for money exists with approved suppliers. This therefore means services and contracts are reviewed regularly to ensure value for money as well as cross-reference the service/product is still fit-for-purpose. Examples of significant improvements in value for money can be seen in the catering provision, ICT provider and cleaning costs predominantly.

Tendering: is undertaken wherever appropriate and consideration given to assessment of the costs over longer terms, purchasing versus leasing, etc. where necessary. This has been necessary for the new Catering Contract for instance.

Economies of Scale: Bulk purchases are considered where

appropriate to drive best price.

Income Generation: Letting of academy facilities are under review to ensure that value for money and health and safety regulations are met concurrently. Grant opportunities are exploited on a regular basis, eg. Academies Capital Maintenance Bid, Children in Need, etc...

Reviewing Controls and Managing Risk: the Accounting Officer and Trustees receive regular budget reports through the Trustees meetings. Monthly budget reports are sent out to the Accounting Officer.

Lessons Learned: any lessons learned are reported to the Governors via the various Committee meetings held throughout the year and any changes or policy amendments are considered and approved at these meetings as necessary.

Signed: _____

Name: Mr Andrew Moran, Executive Headteacher

Date: 19 December 2014

File Location: Sharedad/RNIB Academies/RNIB Specialist Learning Trust/Legal and Governance/Financial Management