

**Value for Money Statement**  
**Academy trust name: Education Central Multi Academy Trust**  
**Academy Trust company number: 08255492**  
**Year ended 31 August 2014**

This is a formal declaration by the accounting officer that they have met their personal responsibilities to Parliament for the resources under their control during the year. To form their conclusion the accounting officer must ensure that the Education Central Multi Academy Trust (ECMAT) is working within the boundaries of regularity and propriety.

The accounting officer of **ECMAT**, Sir Geoff Hampton, is responsible and accountable for ensuring that our academy trust delivers good value in the use of public resources. He is aware of the guide to academy value for money statements published by the Education Funding Agency and understands that value for money refers to the educational and wider societal outcomes achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

**Accounting officer's statement**

As the accounting officer of ECMAT I have considered my responsibility to notify the academy trust board of trustees and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) of material irregularity, impropriety and non-compliance with EFA terms and conditions of funding, under the funding agreement in place between the academy trust and the Secretary of State. As part of my consideration I have had due regard to the requirements of the Academies Financial Handbook.

I confirm that I and the academy trust board of trustees are able to identify any material irregular or improper use of funds by the academy trust, or material non-compliance with the terms and conditions of funding under the academy trust's funding agreement and the Academies Financial Handbook.

I confirm that no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or funding non-compliance have been discovered to date.

I confirm that any instances of material irregularity, impropriety or funding non-compliance discovered to date have been notified to the board of trustees and the EFA or, if occurring after the date of this statement, will be notified to the board of trustees and the EFA.

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.

## **Improving educational results**

ECMAT has now completed its second year of operation and as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014 consisted of nine academies; Tame Valley Academy, Fairway Academy, Edgar Stammers Primary Academy, The Orchards Academy (formerly known as Ley Hill Primary School), Woodhouse Primary Academy and Heathlands Academy are primary phase schools with the Reaside Academy a Key Stage Two phase school. The ACE Academy and Smestow School are our only Secondary phase schools at present.

The primary phase schools vary in size moving from 146 in one up to 443 pupils in the largest. Admissions in all of the schools are moving positively forward. The secondary schools have between 1,000 and 1,400 pupils at present.

ECMAT has further strengthened its Advisory team with John Sullivan as Senior Advisor, joining Mick Waters, Education Director and Sir Geoff Hampton, CEO. All are members of the board and are eminent educationalists working with our academies. There is also a team of talented Advisers with responsibility to challenge and support the academies with regular reviews including all involved school improvement parties. The advisory team is closely monitored by the Senior Advisor.

Some of these schools were advised by the DfE to become academies as a result of their attainment issues with others joining the family to enable improvement to occur at a faster rate with support from linking to a University engaged in raising aspirations and achievement of the region. Tame Valley Primary received a good judgement at their recent Ofsted inspection (May 2014) with Reaside receiving a 'Requires Improvement' later in the summer term. All other schools in the family have been evaluated as Satisfactory in their latest OFSTEDs, now the Requires Improvement category, and so are working towards a good at their next inspections. This will require a concerted effort on all parties supporting with coherent school improvement plans delivered to the highest quality possible. As the ECMAT Trust does not top slice any of its schools budgets this will be organised with the funds available in each individual school. The school improvement funds that came attached to some schools have been used wisely to fund improvements mostly in the area of teaching and learning.

The trustees of ECMAT have had due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers or duties. Here we highlight areas in which ECMAT has carried out its duties for the public benefit during the year in support of its charitable activities. We have access to a wide range of resources to deliver a dynamic social, cultural and education programme aimed at raising the achievements and aspirations of children and young people. Academies within the trust attend leadership networks led by Mick Waters. Whilst the trust encourages each academy to

seek best value for its services, there are mandatory services that the academies must purchase. These services include: Payroll provision, Accountancy & Financial services, financial Audit, HR services and Health and Safety support and basic support packages of School Improvement and Governance Support provided by the Trust in conjunction with the University. We have a strong commitment to supporting staff development and well-being and, through our Staff Charter, are committed to creating a culture where staff are supported to play as full a part as they can in the life and goals of the Trust.

Education Central has a high level of expertise in connecting children, families and communities with experiences that can have a positive impact on their lives and we are a leading force for young people's engagement in arts and culture in the region. Each Trust academy pupil has access to the Children's university which includes arts opportunities, such as working with the RSC, support for Artsmark and Arts Award, specialist curriculum events and a significant range of outside learning opportunities. To raise aspirations of all our pupils we also; engage employers in our work, we collaborate and arrange visits to the university and we facilitate innovative partnerships to increase young people's outlook, motivation and ambition.

ECMAT works for all pupils in our family of schools to secure an innovative approach to schooling which builds on observable strength and addresses long standing difficulties. The Trust strives for the best though remaining realistic, investing in communities, taking the lead where necessary and expecting the best, whilst dealing with the worst. The Trust is dynamic, active and imaginative in its work with schools while at the same time encouraging schools to take responsibility and develop their own autonomy within the context of a community of schools supporting each other.

The link with Wolverhampton University is significant. The faculties of the University offer expertise to our schools, including high calibre teaching staff. The University itself acts as an image of personal growth, learning and achievement for the community of which the pupils and their families are a part. The University's Engagement Policy is now being rolled out with our Trust Academies and includes links for all age ranges varying from scholarships to Science, Sports and Arts Fest. Education Central believes that it is contributing to the long term health of the region and works closely with employers and business to meet the local economic needs.

ECMAT will work to ensure that parents are confident that committed staff at every level offer pupils the best of school experiences where their futures are secure. Pupils will leave the schools of the Trust with the skills to enter the next stage of their life, a desire to continue to learn and a belief that their schooling was the best it could be.

The leadership of our schools is of paramount importance and key to school improvement. All headteachers are supported in their work by an experienced adviser who works alongside senior and middle leaders with regard to school action planning. New headteachers are provided with an experienced colleague as a mentor in their first year of headship. Termly Leadership Conferences focus on key national and Trust issues providing opportunities for school development and networking across our schools. School leaders are encouraged to work closely together and a 'triad' arrangement across the family of schools will be in operation for the first time next year. Bespoke opportunities for sharing and developing good practice that support schools in improving leadership are also in place.

ECMAT formed an Academic Board during the year. The academic board met three times during the year to ensure that the performance of all ECMAT academies were suitably supported.

Detailed analysis of results throughout the Academies are carried out half termly and reported to the Board termly. The School Improvement Team is then held to account for its support work in these establishments. Any concerns are then identified to the ECMAT Board for their consideration.

ECMAT has also created a support team of schools displaying outstanding practice which can be shared. These include Heartlands Academy, Windsor Academy and the Earls. There is also outstanding practice in some of our ECMAT Academies joining the family during the next financial year who are busily influencing present family schools in areas such as Assessment, Literacy and Numeracy.

Continuing Professional Development, ECMAT are committed to supporting all staff in their learning regardless of role or experience. We place a strong emphasis and value on professional development and believe that personalised, relevant and sustained CPD is critical to improving the quality of learning experiences and outcomes for pupils. Therefore we offer a number of opportunities for staff depending on their needs and interests. Working within the ECMAT family of academies allows good practice, ideas and enthusiasm to be shared, benefitting many staff and pupils.

Each member of staff has been encouraged to formulate a Personal Professional Development Planning offering staff the opportunity to pursue an interest in a self-selected professional development activity that is separate from performance management. We are hoping to enlarge this offer during 2014-15

## **Financial governance and oversight**

ECMAT is governed by a body of Trustees drawn from Directors, parents, staff and Local Advisory Board (LAB). The ECMAT board meets at least four times a year. It approves each academy's budget and reviews it throughout the year. It considers the Annual report and Accounts, and monitors audit points raised by the independent auditors, Chantrey Vellacott DFK. The ECMAT board takes an active interest in achievement within each academy, receiving updates on tracking data and holding the Senior Leadership Team accountable for performance.

More detailed financial oversight is supplied by the individual LAB committees to the ECMAT Finance & Resources Committee, which met three times during the year. This Committee reviews internal management accounts, and receives termly internal audit reports prepared by the Principal Finance Officer. All expenditure is monitored and delivered in-line with a scheme of delegation prior to submission to LAB/ECMAT for approval. The scheme of delegation also provides the requirements and applicable financial limits for procurement and tender process to ensure value for money. The Finance & Resources Committee's other responsibilities help ensure that proper consideration has been given to recruiting, retaining, and rewarding staff in order to offer the best possible opportunities to our students, while recognising the importance of staffing costs as a proportion of the overall budget.

In addition ECMAT have an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which is responsible for; the review of the draft annual Financial and Trustee Report for approval of the audited financial statements prior to submission to the Secretary of State by 31 December. This committee also received the report of the appointed external auditor taking into account changes in the wider political and economic climate. This assists ECMAT and the academy's strategic planning to avoid the waste of time, money and resources. This committee also has oversight of Health and Safety within each Academy to ensure a safe and secure environment is provided for its pupils, staff and visitors

The Committees operate in accordance with their Terms of Reference, and are supported by an experienced Clerk.

### **Better purchasing – ensuring value for money**

Contracts and services are regularly appraised and renegotiated when appropriate to ensure value for money. Each academy takes advantage of the local authority consortia when appropriate, to obtain economies of scale and access appropriate frameworks

Individual budget holders are held accountable for the use of their budgets and are supported by an experienced qualified management accountant to provide reassurance to each academy in sourcing best value and meeting the requirements of the Academy Financial Handbook/Accounts Direction.

## **Maximising income generation**

ECMAT encourages each academy to explore every opportunity to generate income through the hire of the Academy facilities wherever possible within the constraints of its leases/funding agreement.

## **Managing cash**

ECMAT has developed a reserves and surplus policy, whilst ensuring that each academy continues to plan for future growth and maintenance of its buildings. We are currently developing an investment policy that will ensure that its financial reserves & surplus cash balances are invested in interest bearing accounts to maximise interest earning potential. Investment institutions will be selected carefully to provide the most acceptable balance of return and risk.

**Signed** 

**Name : Prof Sir Geoff Hampton**

**Accounting Officer**

**Date: 22 December 2014**