

Value for Money Statement

Academy trust name: Bexley Grammar School
Academy trust company number: 7455732
Year ended: 31 August 2019

I accept that as accounting officer of **Bexley Grammar School** I am responsible and accountable for ensuring that the academy trust delivers good value in the use of public resources. I understand that value for money refers to the educational and wider societal outcomes achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

I consider how the trust's use of its resources has provided good value for money during each academic year, and report to the board of trustees where value for money can be improved, including the use of benchmarking data where available. The following sets out how I have delivered improved value for money during the year:

The bulk of the school's budget is spent on staffing and during the previous academic year the school was fully staffed with well qualified, specialist teachers who delivered a demanding curriculum to a high level of success (see 'Achievements and Performance' section above and the results tables on our website).

Similarly, support staff are well qualified, experienced people. These include a strong team of Higher Level Teaching Assistants (specialists who between them deliver a wide range of support to students); a school counsellor with a very full appointment book; fully trained science technicians; an efficient team of administration staff; site staff who take a proactive role in maintaining and improving the school premises, catering staff who are proud of the service they provide and cleaning staff who also take pride in keeping the site looking its best. All of these teams, and particularly their supervisors, work in tandem to make the school run smoothly to produce a rich educational experience for students which leads to excellent results.

The school continues to operate with a reduced Senior Management Team: two Deputy Heads and now four Assistant Heads (3.2 fte). Whilst the reduction puts considerable strain on the Senior Management Team, this continues to demonstrate a clear commitment to reducing our staffing costs as far as is possible. The Sixth Form team has been reduced – we did not replace the role of IB coordinator when the post-holder left in August. We have made small reductions to our already reduced support staff mainly in Art, DT and Science technician support. Teaching staff load is matched closely to the curriculum following the options processes for Year 10 and Year 12. Departing teachers are only replaced as demand dictates from the curriculum. We have reduced our teaching staff again, this year by 3 full time equivalent (fte) and have 100 teachers in September 2019 (87.6 fte) compared to 101 (90.7 fte) teachers in September 2018. Members of staff continue to be generous with their time both in school and beyond with enrichment activities, clubs and events. The sheer number and range of these enrichment activities, including visits and journeys, arranged in one academic year remains remarkable (see weekly Newsletters on website).

Accountability for delivering results is established and monitored through Performance Management and through whole school self-review. Performance Management involves rigorous review and target setting which is linked to pay progression. The two Learning Teams drive the

school's self-review process. Each of these is linked to a committee of Governors through the two Deputy Headteachers who lead the teams and attend the committee meetings. The Learning Teams are made up of a range of responsibility-holders drawn from across the school and each team conducts a review of different aspects of the school every term. These reviews include lesson observations, analysis of data and interviews with students and staff. Judgements are made and recommendations for improvements suggested. This self-review has been bolstered with the addition of a more formal Self-Evaluation Week (SEW) which includes external experts reviewing our practices. The impact of all these reviews is considered and discussed at the relevant governors' committee meeting. This work, the resulting action plan and analysis of results and reports forms the basis of the School Improvement Planning process.

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is a comprehensive planning document to which the leader of every area of the school contributes in an organic fashion in response to the school's identified priorities for the year ahead. The review section of the plan builds into the targets for the following year. The timing of the SIP in September links it closely with Performance Management and Department Review meetings with the Headteacher.

The Sixth Form team has recruited just under 200 students Year 12 to complete an extremely high-achieving fully IB Sixth Form, both academically and in extra-curricular terms. The work of this team is to ensure the optimal running of the IB cohorts whilst developing the recruitment process further to secure future IB cohorts.

In light of the Sutton Trust's recommendation that staff training is the most cost-effective way of securing improvements in outcomes for underperforming and disadvantaged students, our Staff Development focuses on Personalisation which has had a positive impact on every teacher's classroom practice. This year we are continuing to emphasise mental health and wellbeing for both students and teachers with the development of strands of the Growth Mindset programme as we work towards the 'Wellbeing Award in Schools' (WAS). The voluntary 'Teaching and Learning Inspiration Group' brings inspiring ideas to our classrooms and often informs our CPD. Directors of Study and members of the Senior Leadership Team track the progress of individuals and target groups in response to assessments and feedback and put in place a range of interventions to support students.

The school curriculum offers excellent value to students, as outlined below:

Year 7 students study the full range of traditional subjects (Mathematics, English, Science, Geography, History, RS, Computing, Design Technology, Art, Drama, Music, PE) as well as Latin and either French or German and a course in PSHCE which includes Citizenship. Year 8 students choose a second modern foreign language from a wide range including French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Chinese and Japanese. Year 9 is a transition year in which the focus is split between creative exploration, depth of study and preparation for GCSE.

At KS4: In Years 10 and 11 students take 11 GCSEs in English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, two language subjects (French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Russian or Latin), all three separate sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics), either Geography or History, and two other subjects from a range of options including creative and practical subjects.

This is the most comprehensive programme in the Borough of Bexley and the only school where every student studies all three sciences and two languages at GCSE.

At KS5 students are challenged by taking the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme which consists of three subjects taken at Higher level and three subjects at Standard level. Alongside an extended essay, study of the Theory of Knowledge (ToK) and elements of Creativity, Action and Service (CAS), the IB provides a world-renowned set of qualifications which prepare our young people to succeed at university and to flourish in our increasingly global society. Our students' contact time with staff is high and their private study periods are few and precious to them.

Good value is demonstrated in the destinations of our students after seven years of study. DfE data regularly shows Bexley Grammar School as one of the most successful school nationally in terms of gaining Russell Group university places. The past two cohorts have achieved 12 Oxbridge places and 14 places in Medicine and Dentistry, the highest in Bexley schools.

We continue to seek out the best value for money for services. We have shaped many service agreements to suit our needs (e.g. Educational Psychology, Behaviour Support, Governorship, HR advice, legal advice etc.) and this has resulted in considerable savings and improvements in service. Some services we have brought in house such as EWO services and the majority of Careers, Information and Guidance. We have just re-negotiated our IT services contract in liaison with another local school, keeping tendering costs to a minimum by sharing and holding costs for the contract at the current level for three years.

The printing credits system for students continues to reduce paper and ink consumption in the school. We have again reduced the number of photocopies across the school, supported by paperless solutions in the classroom including online textbooks and Google Classroom. The Finance team has been instrumental in moving from paper to electronic systems. 'Parent Pay' enables a cash-free and cheque-free office and all ticket bookings for concerts, plays and so on are handled through an online booking system. Our online system (Evolve) has proved very effective for planning and organising the numerous visits and journeys that we run throughout the year to enrich our students' experience. The Green Team, a student-led group which is dedicated to saving energy and sustaining resources has taken a very active role in promoting recycling, improving the paper recycling system throughout the school. It worked with the canteen particularly effectively this year to introduce compostable cutlery and plates, which, although more expensive, have removed the previous heavy use of plastic.

We have reviewed and trimmed funding to budget holders within school again and encouraged greater efficiency as the school budget continues to tighten. Supply costs have remained low because teaching staff who do not have a full allocation of contact time are used to provide cover. All staff (including support staff) contribute their time to support invigilation requirements, reducing the cost of invigilators. The costs of ground maintenance remain low, supplemented by the cricket club which has a long-standing letting with us and maintains the cricket pitch and by the site team which manages the front of the school and the maintenance of the perimeter of the field.

The school's Finance team monitor all spending and seek best-value on all purchases. They follow governor and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rules for procurement of all goods and services including tendering where this is required. IT services do their best to keep our PCs limping along and the Parents' Association has been key in providing funding for the small number of computers we have been able to purchase this year to replace obsolete machines. We are fortunate to have a link with a parent at a firm that regularly disposes of nearly new goods – we have received everything from vacuum flasks for coffee to carpet tiles.

The lettings of the school site brings in a steady income and the school continues to benefit from the telephone masts rental. The school is seeking (permission is needed from the ESFA) to sell the school house to increase its income in the short term to cover losses while our sixth form numbers settle down.

In the past seven years capital funding bids have seen improvements to sixth form study areas, large proportions of our flat roof areas, our heating system, security gates, a new reception area and the long-overdue replacement of all our aging and inefficient boilers, ensuring long-term reliability and efficiency savings. We also secured an excellent value contract to replace our whole CCTV system with modern IP cameras, to replace the obsolete fire alarm control system and all of our internal fire doors. All works have been delivered on time and according to financial guidelines producing a significantly better and safer school experience for our students.

A bid to re-surface the severely worn and now dangerous upper tennis courts failed and then failed on appeal. In response, the Head of PE then spearheaded a fund-raising campaign (Save Our Courts) to raise £15,000 which they recently exceeded! The work is due at half term. The Head, in liaison with the PA, has been marketing EasyFundRaising, to try to encourage parents to click on a link which brings in small percentages of their online spending to the school at no cost to them. Income is gradually increasing as the number of users increases.

Best value is also established through various collaborations:

- We are members of the Penhill Academies Trust (PAT), an umbrella trust of five stand-alone academies in Bexley, four secondary and one primary. We work in partnership across the Trust with all stakeholders to provide innovative opportunities and raise aspirations and outcomes for all. Our focus is to improve learning outcomes, pupil welfare, transition, professional development, teacher recruitment, leadership skills, governance and value for money.
- We are active members of the South East London Schools' Alliance (SELSA). In the current teacher recruitment crisis it is increasingly important to have this avenue to recruit good graduates directly from University to train as teachers within the member schools and also to be able to share teachers across or between schools where this is appropriate. The department-level meetings have been particularly effective for some subjects at a time of upheaval in the curriculum at KS4 and 5. We currently host MFL, Music and Drama meetings at BGS.
- We link with several Bexley primary schools and help them to deliver improved language, science and PE teaching. This work pays back dividends to our students, especially in PE and Languages, who are trained to lead these activities. We lead, with the LA, a

collaborative partnership with three primary schools to improve the teaching of science, ultimately supporting primary transition to secondary school.

- We operate, with the other three Bexley selective schools, the Bexley selection and admissions processes, benefiting from the resultant economies of scale. We provide 11+ testing within the grammar schools and we work with Bexley to reduce the cost of the whole testing system. We continue to try to curb the continued increasing demand for 'In-Year' selection tests which we also operate effectively through this collaboration.
- Our membership of the Prince's Teaching Institute gives us high-quality and economical staff development linking our staff to others across the country in developing cutting-edge lessons and development plans. Four departments received The Prince's Teaching Institute Mark for 2018/19 and our school is regularly featured on the PTI website in recognition of its innovative work.
- As an IB school, linking with others and sharing resources is a natural component and we expect as a matter of routine to participate in high quality professional development and to have access to online resources for our teachers. We do this through local meeting with representatives of IB schools in Kent and also through a UK IB forum, IBSCA (International Baccalaureate Schools and Colleges Association). We are benefitting from a five year plan of staff training that we negotiated with the IBO at reduced cost by combining online training modules with local IB hub sessions.
- Our Language College outreach work continues to draw in numerous primary schools as well as leading a Strategic Learning Network (SLN) for Languages in secondary schools, providing opportunities for staff development through the sharing of best practice. We host several exchanges with several schools across Europe and with schools in Japan and China.

Our fully bursar-trained Finance Manager attends bursar meetings with representatives from other schools and this collaboration has resulted in sharing experience of suppliers, collaborating to pool 'buying power' to secure value for money contracts alongside a range of efficiency savings and joint applications for bulk reductions, such as the recent joint tendering of the IT Services contract.

The governors' Finance, Resources and Audit Committee includes people experienced in financial affairs who are fully aware of all matters relating to the school's finances. One of the governors acts as the school's Responsible Officer and he comes into school regularly to examine the school finances in any regard he chooses, reporting back to the full committee afterwards. Similarly, all of the work of the finance office is examined by external auditors. Under this high level of scrutiny nothing other than minor administrative improvements have been instructed during the period the school has operated as an academy. The Finance Manager provides information to the auditor early in order to secure a discount on the charges and the school's accounts are always submitted in a timely fashion.

Signed:

Name: Stephen Elphick
Academy Trust Accounting Officer

Date: 21st November 2019