



BEST VALUE

1. Introduction

- Schools are expected to apply the principles of Best Value in their budget planning.
- Best value is a challenging framework to improve performance. Under best value schools assess their own performance and put in place measures to ensure continual improvements in this performance, thereby insuring that they give value for money.
- OFSTED has included the inspection of Best Value in schools in its inspection framework.
- When a school submits its approved annual budget plan to the LA it must include a statement setting out what steps they will be taking to ensure that expenditure will reflect the principles of Best Value.

2. Schools which are successfully implementing the principles of Best Value should be working in the following ways:

- **Compare**

The school makes use of all available sources of comparison such as RAISEonline, families of schools, local performance tables or performance profiles which include benchmarking with schools that have similar free school meal levels, to measure its performance against national indicators and the performance of similar schools. It compares the educational attainment of its pupils and other educational outcomes such as attendance and exclusion and identifies where it needs to improve. It also compares its performance in meeting its own targets by measuring progress in achieving its objectives. It makes these comparisons on an annual basis to provide the focus for its next school development plan. The school also makes use of self-evaluation to compare its performance against standards in such areas as the development of its staff (Investors in People) and its management processes (Business Excellence Model). The school also compares its use of resources by benchmarking its expenditure via the Audit-Commission web site (<http://www.schools.audit-commission.gov.uk/>) against that of other similar schools.

- **Challenge**

The school asks itself difficult questions about its performance. Is it good enough? What more should we be doing? The school listens to and acts on the messages received through monitoring by the local education authority and OFSTED inspection. The school investigates under-achievement and its causes and takes necessary action. The school's governors play an active role in challenging the school by questioning its direction and priorities. They are well placed to advise the school on whether it is meeting the needs of parents, pupils and the local community. The school gains the views of these stakeholders about its performance and responds to them. The school development plan identifies all significant areas for development and sets out the actions needed to bring about improvement. In addition to questioning its educational performance, the school also challenges its use of resources and investigates whether there are more cost-effective ways of providing the curriculum and other services.

- **Compete**
The school ensures that it delivers value for money by securing services in the most efficient and effective way. It looks critically at the services offered by a variety of providers to secure the best service at the most economical price. It reviews the cost, quality and impact of services purchased from other providers to ensure they are providing value for money. It knows what it expects from providers and has performance targets against which to measure their performance. The school shops around as much as possible to make the most efficient use of its resources.

- **Consult**
The school engages in meaningful consultation with its own staff, parents, pupils and the local community. It consults on major changes to the use of its resources where they might affect the educational opportunities it provides. It also seeks the opinions of its stakeholders to check how well it is doing in meeting their needs and uses their views to challenge its performance. The school uses consultation to secure the support of parents for its educational objectives. It can show how it has taken the results of consultation into account and balanced the views of the consultees, including its own staff, with the school's overall priorities.

- **Effective Performance Management**
The school's development plan shows how the school intends to turn its aims into action and what outcomes it is seeking. It defines its success criteria or performance indicators and has systems for regularly monitoring and measuring achievement of its goals. The school makes best use of its staff and resources. Plans have been effectively communicated within the school so that all parties are clear about what they are trying to achieve and their own roles within the process. Staff have personal targets and take responsibility for how their performance affects the whole school. The school can provide evidence that it is implementing its actions, achieving key targets and that outcomes meet its aims.

3. What a School Might Do To Approach Best Value

- **Compare**
 - Has the school compared services provided with other similar schools?
 - What benchmarking data is used to compare levels of achievement?
 - Does the school use DFCS/OFSTED/LA comparative information to inform it's planning process?

- **Consult**
 - What consultation processes are undertaken with staff, pupils and parent groups in challenging service providers?
 - Are staff and governors consulted during the budget-setting process?

- **Challenge**
 - Has the school, maybe in collaboration with other schools, challenged the standards of service delivery to secure continuous improvement?
 - Does the school have ambitious but realistic targets which are measurable?

- Is the budget clearly linked to the School Development Plan?
 - Has the School's Development Plan set costed objectives and targets?
- **Compete**
 - Are quotations/tenders obtained for the purchase of goods and services in accordance with financial regulations and standing orders and the scheme for financing schools?
 - Have discussions taken place with the governing body or finance committee about the purchase of support services from the LA or an alternative service provider?
 - Is information sought from other providers before SLA's are signed with this Authority?

4. **Model Statement For Governing Bodies on Best Value**

The Governing Body acknowledges the need to achieve Best Value in terms of decisions made.

The Governing Body acknowledges the need to:

- **Consult** stakeholders before decisions are made;
- Identify targets and performance indicators for the various functions of the school;
- monitor outcomes and **compare** performance with similar schools;
- regularly review the functions of the school and to set **challenging** targets for improvement.

The Governing Body acknowledges that in order to achieve Best Value in how it uses its resources it may be necessary to co-operate with other providers of services who may be in **competition**.

The Governing Body acknowledges that it is necessary to build **competition** into the process of purchasing goods and services to be certain of achieving the Best Value.

The Governing Body of the school will adopt the principles of **consultation, comparison, challenge** and **competition** within its review processes.

The Governing Body will work in partnership with the LA which has a statutory responsibility to achieve Best Value in its own work and which is expected to monitor the application of Best Value in its schools.