



Permanent Secretary

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Dame Meg Hillier DBE MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

1 February 2022

PAC: 2019-20 Academies Sector Annual Reports and Accounts

Dear Meg,

John Edwards, Warwick Sharp and I appeared before the Public Accounts Committee on 24 January 2022 to discuss the 2019-20 Academies Sector Annual Reports and Accounts. During this hearing, my colleagues and I committed to providing the Committee with written updates on various points. I am writing to provide those updates.

Question 07: timeframe for awarding 2021 bids for college capital funding

Richard Holden MP asked about the timeframe for announcing the outcome of the stage 2 applications for the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund. I can confirm that we are currently assessing the applications in line with the stage 2 guidance. We hope to be in a position to inform all applicants of the outcome of the stage 2 process in March 2022.

Question 44: qualifications for academy trustees and committee members

Shaun Bailey MP asked about our requirements on the qualifications and skills of academy trustees and committee members.

We expect academy trusts' boards of trustees, and by extension any committees they appoint, to review their skills annually, as required by the Academy Trust Handbook (see paragraph 1.27). As part of this review, boards should identify any further skills or experience needed and address gaps through recruitment and or induction, training and other development activities.

To support trusts' boards in this, the Department has published a Competency Framework for Governance to help boards determine where they have gaps in skills. The Governance Handbook also identifies training material to help trustees develop and engage fully in their role.

Specifically on finance, the Academy Trust Handbook (see paragraph 1.46) requires Chief Financial Officers and their staff to be appropriately qualified and/or experienced. The trust should assess whether the CFO and their finance staff should have a business or accountancy qualification and hold membership of a relevant professional body.

Similarly, the Academy Trust Handbook (see paragraphs 3.15/3.19) requires that the trust must deliver internal scrutiny (internal audit) and that the person(s) carrying out this programme of work should be suitably qualified and/or experienced. For example, that they are a member of professional body or have qualifications in finance, accounting or audit.

Question 97: an update on the Schools Rebuilding Programme

James Wild MP asked that we write with an update on the second wave of the Schools Rebuilding Programme (SRP). All 100 of the projects, accounted in two rounds in February and July 2021, are now in delivery with the most advanced projects having signed contracts and started work on-site from September 2021. Details of the schools, along with the methodology used for prioritisation, are on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

We consulted on the approach to prioritising remaining places in the programme over summer and autumn 2021. We expect to publish our response to the consultation and set out details of the next round of prioritisation shortly.

Demonstration and walk-through of the Schools Financial Benchmarking website

During the hearing I offered Committee members a demonstration of the [Schools Financial Benchmarking website](#). I would like to make that offer again, to meet Committee members at a time that is convenient, to demonstrate how the website works and the data it is built upon. We can also demonstrate why we think the site is a useful tool, how it helps users understand and explore school finances, and crucially, how it allows users to compare schools across the academy and maintained sector. Please contact my office via permanent.secretary@education.gov.uk who will be able to support in arranging this.

I hope these clarifications are helpful. As ever, we are grateful to the Committee for their attention and interest in the work of the Department.

Best wishes,



**SUSAN ACLAND-HOOD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**