

GRANT APPLICATION 2015/16 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	To ensure that children and young people receive a great start in life and identify and address any issues that may impede a successful childhood To help disadvantaged children and young people who are at risk of not achieving their potential to close the gap with their peers and make a positive transition into adulthood	
Organisation	THE AXIS EDUCATIONAL TRUST	ref 7/E/CTY
Address	30a Drayton Park, N5	

Corporate policy, aims and objectives

The Corporate Plan and the Children and Young People Plan, 2013-16, reflect a commitment to ensure a great start in life for every child and to improve outcomes for Barnet's younger population, creating the conditions for children and young people to develop skills and acquire knowledge to achieve their full potential and lead successful adult lives. The council is committed to continuing to raise educational standards and to close the achievement gap between pupils and their peers. Local communities and voluntary groups can play a part in promoting and complementing the school curriculum, particularly in supporting children from socially excluded and educationally deprived groups and pupils who are under-achieving.

Supplementary schools are largely parent and community-led educational programmes which offer a personalised and informal learning environment that complements mainstream education. They help to address some of the needs that the education system struggles to meet as its population becomes more diverse, building confidence, well-being and other characteristics important to a child's education, not only amongst migrant and minority ethnic communities but increasingly amongst socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils generally.

Activities / proposal

The Axis Educational Trust (AET) is a registered non-denominational charity and company limited by guarantee founded in 1994 which provides supplementary education to primary and secondary school pupils, particularly from low-income families, at fifteen branches across the UK from Hull to Brighton, including several London boroughs such as Croydon and Enfield. Unlike many other supplementary schools, it has no cultural, ethnic or religious bias. Its work embraces pupils at key stage 1 to key stage 5, who generally receive three hours of extra tuition each week in literacy, numeracy and science in line with the national curriculum, supplementing their mainstream school work, usually on a Saturday.

Every pupil has an individual learning plan informed by testing systems to identify areas of weakness. Tuition is supplemented by extra-curricular activities such as arts and crafts. A partnership with an international educational technology service is facilitating complementary on-line learning at home. Recent data reveals how the trust has helped improve the performance of pupils, especially at key stages 3 and 5. In 2014/15, it received the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education's gold award standard for service delivery.

AET currently operates at two sites in Barnet: Ashmole Academy, where it has run a Saturday school for lower secondary school students since 2010, and North London Grammar School (in Colindale), where it piloted a successful summer school last year. 130 Barnet-based pupils used the service in 2015, of which 75% were of primary school age. 95% of all students had English as an additional language.

This application seeks help to launch a new tuition centre in North Finchley in response to parental demand, catering, unlike the existing provision, especially for pupils at key stages 4 and 5 who are studying for critical GCSE and A-level examinations in core subjects like English and mathematics. The proposal is to expand out-of-school support from Saturdays only to weekday evenings, for which purpose rented premises not belonging to a school are sought. The aim is to assist 60 students in year one, increasing to 100 or more once the programme is fully established, targeting students, be they from low-income families or families new to the UK, who are struggling academically.

As with all of AET's provision, teachers at the centre will be professionally qualified and subject to safe recruitment checks. Many of the trust's teachers work in the state sector. In addition to core support with the national curriculum, the resource will facilitate homework clubs and other 'enrichment' activities like music classes and academic competitions designed to broaden students' horizons and, in the case of students from migrant or minority communities, familiarize them with UK culture in support of their integration. It will enable parents to be more involved in their children's education and offer opportunities to adults seeking experience as volunteers in teaching and community work.

The Education & Skills Service endorses the concept of supplementary education as a way forward for schools and teachers facing the multiple pressures associated with increased diversity, and with competing demands within the education system. A number of supplementary schools operate in Barnet with a focus on migrant and ethnic minority communities. The Barnet & Harrow Saturday School Partnership, for example, set up through the Afghan Association, operates on a hub arrangement whereby pupils are referred by feeder schools. The Organization of Young Africans works in partnership with selected secondary schools in supporting under-achieving African and Afro-Caribbean students.

The Barnet & Harrow Saturday school model has been endorsed as good practice by the Institute for Public Policy Research, which recommends greater complementarity and coordination between the mainstream education system and supplementary schools. A 2008 study of three such schools in Barnet found that participating students achieved results in key tests that were better than local averages. Surveys have consistently found that children attending supplementary schools, and their parents, think that they help with mainstream schoolwork; enable children to benefit from greater parental engagement; and have a positive impact on student motivation.

The Education & Skills Service identifies several reasons why mainstream schools should work with supplementary schools that complement mainstream provision as an alternative to expanding hours and remits. Such schools are, by and large, parent-led initiatives which respond directly to parents' aspirations and are effective in engaging with newly arrived migrant families; they are cost-effective, having networks of volunteers and often pre-existing financial support; and they can deepen a mainstream's school's roots in the community. Collaboration gives greater control over alignment with the mainstream curriculum.

The opportunity that supplementary schools provide of building stronger relationships with students' parents and families is regarded as a key factor in raising students' attainment and academic performance. The signposting function that they perform, helping newly arrived families to access practical information and gain some understanding of the codes that govern public services, signifies the valuable wider role that they play in the community.

The proposal by AET is recommended for support pursuant to these arguments, but on condition that it establishes formal links with local schools; aligns its teaching programmes with mainstream practice; and targets pupils with the greatest needs.

Cost and financial need

In the twelve months up to 31/8/2014, the latest year for which accounts are currently available pending completion of the audit of accounts for 2014/15, AET recorded expenditure of £633,192 on its UK-wide operations, divided evenly between the cost of direct service delivery (including teachers' wages/expenses, equipment, books and materials) and overheads (including premises costs, administration and depreciation), fundraising and publicity. Income mainly derives from student fees; grants and donations; and revenue from hiring out premises that it owns. At 31/8/2014, net current assets were £261,349, of which £53,360 were restricted funds, leaving an uncommitted balance of £207,989 (equivalent to 32% of annual turnover, a reasonable working contingency for an organisation of this size).

Fundraising, mainly fixed-term grants and self-generated income from lettings serve to subsidise tuition fees, currently £8 per hour with further concessions (or occasionally bursaries) awarded to students from families facing particular financial hardship.

The cost of opening and running the proposed new tuition centre in North Finchley over the first twelve months is shown as £81,622, which includes estimated rental costs (£30,662); building refurbishment, furniture and equipment (£17,000); the remuneration (on a termly basis) of eight part-time teachers (£21,600); and the cost of a part-time centre manager (£16,800). The balance comprises publicity, books and stationery. A grant of £10,000 is sought on the basis that student fees will yield £36,000 in year one (assuming the full take-up of places over 25 weeks) and that the trust will defray the shortfall of £35,622.

A three-year business plan shows recurrent annual expenditure of £74,042 and income from student fees rising to at least £48,000 (year two) and at least £60,000 (year three), based on take-up at 70% of capacity. Although AET is committed to defraying annual deficits as they arise, there is a reasonable expectation that the centre may be self-funding by 2018 judged on the operation of some of the trust's other supplementary schools.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

£10,000 (from Edward Harvist Charity)

Start-up grant

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One-off grant

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Special conditions:

Payment of the award should be made subject to (a) agreement of an implementation plan, to include strategies for collaboration with local mainstream schools and to align with mainstream educational provision; (b) agreement of procedures for targeting pupils with the greatest needs; (c) confirmation of the acquisition of suitable premises; (d) the formation of a steering committee, to include representation from amongst feeder schools; (e) endorsement of targets and milestones for monitoring purposes; and (f) the receipt of quarterly progress reports and an undertaking to provide an evaluation of the success of the project after twelve months.

Target grant outcomes

(a) To raise academic standards from key stage 1 to key stage 5; (b) to reduce the gap in educational achievement between underperforming children and young people and their peers; and (c) to improve engagement with families of students from migrant and minority ethnic communities.

Date: February 2016