School Equipment Savings Could Pay for Almost 500 Extra Teaching Assistants in UK

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494 additional teaching assistants could be funded and put into UK schools and academies through *£6 million easily saved by shopping around for everyday essential items*, according to new school spending data released by purchasing organisation ESPO.

ESPO's data compared the prices of millions of pounds worth of supplies it sold to schools in 2013/14 compared to other purchasing organisations used by schools which would have charged up to 26% more for the same list of items, including paper, glue, pens and toilet roll.

The data from ESPO, which came out as the cheapest source of supplies for schools and academies showed that sales of is top 100 products to schools in 2013/14 cost £4.7 million less than the most expensive national education supplier.

Last year, schools in the UK purchased 8,803 miles of toilet tissue, over two million sheets of A4 copier paper and almost 1.8 million HB pencils from ESPO.

John Doherty, managing director, ESPO said: "As a not-for-profit organisation our aim is to ensure that we constantly deliver on price and value to our customers throughout the public sector.

"As this data shows, there is a real variance on price on the items schools need, so it's important they search out the best deals on the market.

"The savings that could be made by schools throughout the UK are significant and they could potentially be put to much better use.

"As public sector budgets continue to be squeezed, we would like to see greater transparency in public sector procurement to ensure that the market is competitive and all organisations throughout the public sector have access the goods and services they need at the right price."

Tracey Parr, bursary assistant at St Faith's School in Cambridge said: "Having used ESPO for a number of years, we recently undertook an ESPO 'schools purchasing health check'; benchmarking a wide range if the products and services purchased by our school.

"We are very pleased to report this helped us to identify this helped us to identify over £12,000 of potential annual saving we could make."

All schools in England and Wales will have recently received a copy of the new ESPO's Essentials catalogue featuring a 1,000 specially selected items for schools at highly competitive prices.

Notes to Editors:

*Savings figures based on ESPO supplying 9,000 schools with up to 80% of their everyday essentials. There are approx. 24,000 schools in the UK so if the remaining 15,000 also came to ESPO for 80% of their purchases the average saving per school would be £500.35.

*This figure excludes catering and furniture

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