

For the attention of Headteacher / Head of Centre
cc Chair of Governors and Bursars

The following information is to update and remind schools and centres of a number of important property-related issues. My apologies for the lateness but it should be helpful to schools undertaking building projects and in preparing for activities next term. I would like to draw your particular attention to the safety alert and also to the Statutory Testing document, which has been recently revised - it includes essential information to enable Headteachers to meet their Health & Safety obligations.

Chris Gilbert
Head of Asset Management

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Urgent safety alert All schools are urged to employ consultants to manage works including preparing detailed specifications and supervising the works even where the works may appear quite straightforward. We have had a recent instance of windows being replaced without the work being adequately specified which has contributed to the structural failure of walls. Safety is the priority so if you have undertaken any works (not just to windows) that may affect the structural integrity of the building but have not employed a consultant to manage the works then you must contact your [Asset Management Team](#) and we will arrange for a Surveyor to visit school and check the works.

Safety Matters Headteachers have significant responsibilities Health & Safety responsibilities for their premises. We have listed below some of the key issues to take account of.

- Statutory Testing** All schools must ensure that appropriate testing of both fixed and loose plant & equipment is undertaken. The Urban Design Schools Emergency Property Service does not cover all testing and therefore, this is a critical document which all Headteachers and appropriate staff need to be aware of. We have updated the statutory testing guide, which details testing requirements, frequency and how to organise them together with a guide re preventative maintenance.
- Asbestos - duty of care** The use of asbestos containing materials has been widespread and the majority of educational buildings have this material present in one form or another. This in itself is not the problem, but asbestos can become hazardous when disturbed. Headteachers and managers of establishments have the day-to-day control of buildings (i.e.: the Duty Holder), which will include the management of asbestos. Whilst it may not always be the Duty Holder who commissions work, they will always retain the overall responsibility for the way the work is undertaken and managed. Recently, there have been examples of asbestos being disturbed when having network cables installed, a process that involves walls and ceilings being drilled for access of cables etc. This has resulted in the closure of one school and the evacuation of classrooms.
- Asbestos survey imperative** As the summer holidays approach, many establishments plan to carry out decorating and maintenance work that cannot be carried out when the school is in operation. It is imperative that an appropriate asbestos survey be carried out in the area of work activity and risk assessments completed before any work is undertaken. Unless it is obvious that the material being drilled does not contain asbestos i.e. glass, metal, wood etc all other materials should be treated as if it were asbestos. Please refer to the asbestos guidance note in the safety manual or download the document from BGFL website: www.bgfl.org/safety
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- Legionellosis Guidance re management of legionella is contained in the statutory testing document referred to above. However, it is important that schools, upon receipt of risk assessments and testing reports, ensure that any high-risk works are actioned immediately.
- Fire safety The Fire Precautions Regulations places a responsibility on owners or controllers of establishments to carry out a fire risk assessment and to act upon the findings to reduce the risks from fire.
- Fire risk assessments West Midlands Fire Service is currently taking an active interest in education establishments and are routinely inspecting schools. In addition to the normal fire prevention equipment such as fire extinguishers, signs, alarms etc., they are looking in detail at fire risk assessments and may take enforcement action if they are not available. It is important that you have a current, comprehensive fire risk assessment and if you need advice or guidance please contact your safety officer.
- Money Schools Devolved Capital allocations for 2007/08 have been shared with schools and, for Community and Foundation schools only, is also available with details of any balance from previous years on our web site www.bqfl.org/services/assetmgt Detailed guidance is available here. Please note allocations must be spent as follows:
- | <u>Year allocated</u> | <u>spend by</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 2004 / 05 | 31 / 08 / 07 |
| 2005 / 06 | 31 / 08 / 08 |
| 2006 / 07 | 31 / 08 / 09 |
- Where we are able to fund works from our main programme including asbestos surveys, schools have been made aware of this already and, for a few late additions, we will be in touch with you shortly.
- Property Planning / Safety Officer visits We continue to be able to offer schools a Property Planning Visit to review all aspects of the management of your property. This will include defining roles of all involved in property management, assessing school priorities, asset management issues, review of funding available and data access. Similarly, our Safety Officers are also able to visit your school to discuss Health & Safety issues. School feedback on the value of the visits is excellent and whilst of particular interest to new Headteachers, the service is available to all. If you would like a visit, contact the Asset Management Team
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- Floor plans** You should now have received a completed set of electronic building plans in AutoCAD for your school premises, the exceptions being schools currently being rebuilt under the PPP2 initiative. These are critical documents for use by yourselves and the Authority for all surveying tasks e.g. asbestos, condition, suitability and sufficiency surveys, and will aid future investment and planning decisions. You can access plans for your school through the Birmingham Grid for Learning (BGfL) by visiting the Asset Management web site www.bgfl.org/assetmgt. They are available in pdf format for printing, and you will require Adobe Acrobat reader for this purpose. Should you encounter any difficulties in accessing the documents, please either contact the Asset Management Team or our Business Support Unit on 303 8847. Please remember that it is mutually beneficial that CAD drawings are regularly maintained in the event of any future building works undertaken. If your drawing requires alteration, please contact the Asset Management Team who will activate the review process.
- Framework Agreement / Consultant Partners** When undertaking building works we urge schools to employ the services of a property consultant to manage the project (see Safety alert above). Following competitive tendering, we have identified 2 external consultants who have been subjected to detailed and rigorous evaluation. These consultants together with the in-house Urban Design team give schools a choice of property professionals. Further information is available in your current School Property handbook or may be obtained from your Asset Management Team.
- Building schools for the future** Progress continues apace on the Building Schools for the Future programme. The programme has reached the stage of selecting it's short-list of three bidders - Land Securities Trillium Ltd, E-Pact and Catalyst Education and it is intended to announce our Preferred Bidder by June 2008 who will work with us to deliver the whole of the BSF programme. Project Managers and TESO's (Transforming Education Senior Officers) have been working on the preparation of the Output Specifications for the sample schools - Broadway, Stockland Green and Holte Mayfield Lozells and they will soon start the exercise with the phase 1 non-sample schools. BSF phase 2 was launched on 18th June and Project Managers and TESO's have visited schools to begin working with them. More detailed information is available on our web site www.bgfl.org/bsf and on the soon to be launched 'Transforming Education' electronic update.
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Primary Capital The programme will commence in 2009/10, with annual allocations for a fifteen-year period, subject to future spending decisions. We are anticipating an announcement of the first funding allocation for the authority by DCSF in October.

The authority is required to complete a strategy document for DCSF approval to access the funding in March 2008. This will set out the principles for prioritising investment across the primary estate, in accordance with government objectives. Consultation locally will commence following the issue of the guidance from DCSF in October. Look out for regular updates in the Transforming Education newsletter, sent to all schools monthly. If you require further information please contact the [Asset Management Team](#).

PPP2 This major investment programme is progressing on time. By September 3 schools will have been rebuilt with the remaining 9 completed by 2009.
