

Archdiocese of Westminster

Education Service

Dedicated to Lifelong Growth of the Whole Person in Faith

Department of Schools

School Premises Policy and Guideline

May 2003

School Premises Policy and Guideline

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School Premises Policy and Guideline

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a reference for the maintenance and development of school premises, particularly those within the trusteeship of the Westminster Diocese and it is hoped that it will also be of use to those VA schools not within diocesan ownership. The document is intended to establish a framework within which governing bodies, headteachers and other relevant parties will undertake the management and stewardship of the premises.

2. Background and current position

Responsibilities of the Trustees

For the majority of schools within the diocese, the trustee body is the Westminster Roman Catholic Diocese Trust – or WRCDT. For some schools the trustee is a religious order.

The trustees of a Catholic school own the premises of that school, on behalf of the Church, to ensure that the property is used for the furtherance of the Church's mission. The trustees are responsible for safeguarding the Catholic character of their institutions and ensuring that the property is always ultimately at the service of the wider mission of the Church.

Responsibilities of school governors

The governing bodies of Catholic schools occupy the land and buildings of their school on behalf of the trustees. In doing so, they carry the responsibilities in law, of occupiers of premises and are responsible to the trustees for the proper management, maintenance and development of the premises in line with the school improvement plan and in co-ordination with the asset management plan (see below). They carry the legal liability for capital expenditure – currently 10% - for any works carried out with DfES grant funding.

General

There are currently around 200 voluntary aided schools within the diocese. This number includes schools which are both within the trusteeship of the diocese and of religious orders. It is important that these sites are managed in a responsible way so that they do not deteriorate and the diocese is aware, and appreciates, that in the great majority of cases, good management is effectively in place.

In recent years and in particular since the devolution of school budgets, governing bodies and headteachers have had increased responsibilities placed upon them in all areas of their work. The area of premises management is one which is not necessarily familiar to many and it is partly against this background that the diocese has decided to produce this document.

The building stock of the diocese is very varied, ranging from Victorian three storey buildings on very restricted city sites and no playing fields, to modern buildings on generous and well landscaped, attractive sites with attached playing fields. (In the latter case, it is usual for the LEA to own the

playing fields). The type and age of building does not necessarily relate to its condition and suitability, as many well maintained old buildings are more suited to the modern curriculum than those constructed in the 1970s. There are several school sites which incorporate a variety of type and age of building, and some which might be described as a motley collection. There is therefore no blueprint for the maintenance and development of school premises – each school needs to develop in the most appropriate way and as advised by building consultants (see below). It is however, essential to the good management of the premises that each school has its own premises development plan. (see below)

3. Asset Management Plans (AMP)

In recent years, the DfES has developed a strategy based on data provided by LEAs relating to the condition, suitability and sufficiency of school buildings. Details are provided about elements of the school and site in each of these three categories according to guidelines laid down by the DfES. Work required is then assessed and a priority and cost allocated to it. This data base comprises the Asset Management Plan.

The quality of the data originally provided has been variable, but as a result of appraisal by the DfES, this is improving and future rounds of AMP data should be more reliable. LEAs are allocated funds which, to some extent, depend on the information provided in the AMP – i.e. those LEAs with a high proportion of poor condition school buildings should have this factored into the formula determining their funding allocations for work related to the condition of buildings. The strategy of using such information is one which the diocese strongly supports, as it provides a more consistent set of data than has previously existed and enables funds to be allocated according to identified need rather than by less objective criteria.

In prioritising bids for capital funding from central sources therefore, the information in the AMP is assessed, but is not the only element for consideration in this process.

In encouraging and expecting schools to manage school premises effectively and to get the best use out of them, the diocese expects governing bodies to produce a premises development plan. A suggested outline of such a plan is attached as appendix 1. This enables the governors to have an overall strategic view of the priorities for maintenance and improvement of the premises, rather than to react to situations as they arise individually, which can result in very piecemeal development. A three to five year programme is suggested, ideally comprising a mixture of condition/maintenance work and improvement projects. Some projects would cover both these

needs. This plan should refer to the data in the AMP and usually relate to priorities identified therein.

4. Finance

Sources

There is no doubt that the amount of money provided by the DfES for school building projects has increased significantly in recent years, from £700million in 96/97 to £3.8 billion in 03/04 and over £5 billion in 05/06. These figures include all types of funding. For voluntary aided schools the main sources of funding are:

School delegated budget	for revenue repairs and maintenance costing less than £2,000
School formula funding	Not part of the school budget but the allocation is held by the DfES (Darlington) and based on the type of school and the number of pupils. It is allocated on a three year basis – i.e. first year’s allocation must be spent by the end of the third year, otherwise lost. Governing bodies have to find 10%. Can only be used for work costing over £2,000. Should be the first port of call for funding projects and only then move on to the bidding opportunities. Governing bodies make claims against the allocation which is then reduced accordingly.
LCVAP (locally co-ordinated voluntary aided programme) Formerly known as the VA minor works budget	This is a sum of money allocated to each LEA and includes modernisation, condition and access money as well as funds for minor works. It is based on the number of pupils in each LEA in VA schools and the AMP information provided by the LEA to the DfES. The diocese invites bids for this funding and then negotiates with the LEA and other VA bodies on the overall priorities. Governing bodies have to find 10%.
Targeted capital fund (TCF) formerly referred to as major bids	Individual named schemes which cannot be contained within the LCVAP. Diocese presents bids to the LEA who are allowed to submit three bids from the VA sector each year. At present (for 03/04) this is only an 80% grant fund, but this may change – possibly be reduced. Governors currently have to find a minimum of 10%. The current diocesan policy is that the difference between governor contributions and the grant is allocated from the LCVAP, but this could vary from year to year.
LEA based initiatives	These include standard funds schemes and seed

challenge and are managed via the LEA.

Please note that a project can be funded from a number of the above different sources and any other sources of funding available to the governors.

Note: The DfES file ‘Funding for premises related work at Voluntary Aided schools in England’ provides additional detail on the sources of funding and how to apply for them. Every VA school is provided with this document.

5. **Diocese of Westminster Schools’ Building Fund.**

This was established in order to help governing bodies to fund their liability (currently 10%) for capital building projects. The great majority of schools/parents work hard at raising these funds and the Trustees are grateful for this.

Due to the increasing number of building projects in progress at the present time, the demands on this fund have increased significantly. It has been agreed therefore that, as a general principle, the fund will only be available for schemes costing over £40,000 – ie a governing body liability of a minimum of £4,000. There may be exceptional circumstances in which the trustees would consider helping governors with smaller projects and such cases would be given individual consideration.

The diocese also makes available loans to schools on an interest free basis where there are insufficient funds in a school’s building fund account. The repayment period must be formally agreed before such loans can be secured. Schools which have contributed regularly to the Fund are likely to be given more favourable consideration than those who have not, particularly if there is great pressure on the Fund at the time.

A leaflet on the Schools’ Building Fund is available from the Finance Office tel. 020 7798 9168.

6. **Relationship with the LEA**

Since April 2002, the liabilities of the LEA for aspects of the premises of VA schools has been reduced and the system is now more straightforward. The governing body is now responsible for all aspects of the school premises, except the playing fields and any buildings associated with them – irrespective of the ownership of the playing fields. If work is required to the playing fields, the governing body will need to refer to the scheme of delegation for their LEA, as the details of this may vary. A VA

school should not be treated any differently from a community school if work is required on the playing fields. All the boundary fences remain the responsibility of the governors. A few LEAs are continuing to provide some funds for VA schools from their own resources but this is generous, as they are not obliged to do so and it is likely that this will reduce over time.

LEAs can if they wish, help schools with the 10% governing body liability and in certain circumstances, such as providing additional school places which will help the LEA, they have done so.

Some schools are continuing to use the LEA's property services, but may wish to review this, as the LEA no longer has the responsibilities it used to have for certain aspects of the building and services. It may be more straight forward to use just one consultant contact point for all premises related matters.

7. Other uses of school property

From time to time, approaches are made from schools to the diocese, about the possibilities of disposing of part of the school site and/or letting of part of the premises. There are a number of issues which need to be borne in mind in relation to such requests.

As a general rule, for Catholic schools, the trustees own the building and adjacent land around it – e.g. the hard play areas - and the LEA owns any adjacent playing fields. For playing field land in such cases, it would be the LEA who would be the main beneficiary to any capital receipt. A number of LEAs have a policy by which governors can receive a proportion of such proceeds, particularly if the sale is linked to a building project. This will vary from LEA to LEA and some LEAs will not have such an arrangement. The LEA would also require the consent of The Secretary of State under the Schools Standard and Frameworks Act section 77 in order to dispose of any part of their playing fields.

If the school was formerly a grant maintained school, the playing fields will be vested in the governing body rather than the LEA. In this case, the governing body must apply for the consent of the Secretary of State for any disposal under schedule 22 of the Act. The Secretary of state will determine how any proceeds are to be split between himself, the LEA and the governing body.

If land or buildings become surplus to requirements as a result of some new buildings being provided, or for example a school transferring to another site, the DfES expect the capital receipt from such surplus sites to offset any

grant they may allocate towards the new buildings. This has the effect of reducing the total sum of 10% contributions from the governing body

If land in diocesan ownership is sold in circumstances not connected with DfES grant provision, the diocese decides on how to utilise the proceeds. Typically such receipts are recycled into the schools' building programme and thus benefit the overall education aims of the diocese. In certain circumstances, the diocese will consider favourably, requests that a proportion of the proceeds of sale be given to the governing body to aid specific developments. It would be considered more appropriate for such money to be put towards a capital scheme, rather than used for revenue expenditure. An alternative may be that a proportion of any such sale is placed in the DOW Schools' Building Fund for that particular school, so that this fund accumulates towards any future capital scheme specifically for that school.

If the governing body wishes to grant a lease or licence over a part of the school premises, there are a number of issues to consider, such as insurance cover. The diocese expects to be informed about such arrangements and to decide whether it is appropriate for the school to retain all or a proportion of the income. Any such income received by the diocese would be recycled back into the schools building development funds and thus would support schools by helping with their 10% contributions.

The diocese is naturally cautious about disposing of assets and each request is dealt with on an individual basis. Factors relating to potential value, which may not be immediately obvious, can be very significant and must play a part in any such consideration. The diocese must also work within the requirements of the Charity Commissioners for any disposal.

8. Consultants

The diocese retains a number of building professionals who help and support schools in their premises management. Schools are very strongly recommended to use such a consultant, who will take a considerable burden off the headteacher and governors in carrying out their responsibilities related to premises management. Some schools use a consultant who is not one of this group and as long as the service provided is satisfactory, this is acceptable. However, it is most important that such firms are not only familiar with the management and funding arrangements of schools in general, but in particular for voluntary aided schools. A knowledge of the DfES processes, procedures and expected standards are also essential. The attached appendix 2 lists the range of duties which are expected of all consultants who support diocesan schools and this has been agreed with the regular group. Firms may work in different ways, but the outcome,

in terms of the service provided, should be the same in each case. There are advantages to the diocese in working with a regular group of consultants in terms of efficient communication and it is therefore most important that **if a school is not using one of these, we are provided with the relevant information** and can ensure that the firm concerned understands our expectations. A list of our current regular consultants is attached as appendix 3.

9. Insurance

In the past, because of the different liabilities of the governors and the LEA, there has been some confusion about the responsibilities for insuring premises related items. This is now clearer, but not all LEAs have understood or accepted the new arrangements. The DfES has confirmed that the LEA is responsible for providing funds in the school's delegated budget to meet the costs of insurance premiums. This is because the LEA is legally responsible for all revenue costs.

There could be two separate school insurance covers for premises related items – one for items costing over £2,000 (probably via the Catholic Church Insurance Association - CCIA), and one for those costing less than £2,000 (probably via the LEA) .

For premises related insurance works costing over £2,000, the governing body will need to seek grant funding from the DfES. The majority of diocesan schools are insured via the CCIA. This covers the 10% governors' liability for building works over £2,000, the 90% being DfES grant referred to above. The DfES does not automatically provide extra funds for insurance claims and if a school has a substantial amount unspent and uncommitted in its formula funds, there may be an expectation that this will be called upon to fund the necessary work. Each case would be given individual consideration.

Any premises related insurance work under £2,000 is regarded as a revenue cost and as such, not eligible for DfES grant. Such costs must therefore be met from revenue sources. This is often where complications arise, particularly as LEAs will vary in their insurance arrangements. Please note also that loose equipment is not covered by premises related insurance, even if it costs over £2,000. Governors therefore need to clarify what the position is for such items. Under the present arrangements, it would be expected that such items would be met by some form of LEA insurance.

If the excess payable on the relevant policy is less than £2,000, then VA schools should not be treated any differently from their LEA community schools and should be able to make a claim via an LEA insurance policy, if

they have subscribed to it – i.e. if the excess is £500 for example and the cost of the work is say £1,500, a VA school should be able to claim £1,000 via the LEA's policy. Some LEAs have not understood this and are taking the view that they have no responsibility for VA schools premises insurance, others are continuing to insure as before. It is therefore important that governors check the situation for their own schools. It would seem logical that insurance charges for VA schools to join an LEA scheme would be less than their community school counterparts, as it would only need to cover single costs less than £2,000.

10. **Useful Contacts**

For technical advice please contact your consultant.

For general enquiries to the diocese, please contact Sally Livesey on 020 7798 9005

For financial advice on loans the Building Fund, please contact John Lee on 020 7798 9168

The VA team in Darlington are always very helpful. The following telephone numbers of the operational team are relevant:

01325 392143
392179
392130
392158
392137
392138

Various documents are available on the DfES website: www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/

11. **Database**

The DfES operate a useful database, accessible via the teachernet website which gives information about each school's financial situation with reference to DfES grant, such as how much has been approved on a project and how much formula funds have been allocated and spent etc. It is known as the VASIS website. Each school has been provided with a password to access their own information. Our consultants also have a password (in

agreement with their schools) so that they can access the information. If you have problems using this or getting access, please call 01325 392173.

12. General Conclusion

It is hoped that this document provides an outline guide to the management of VA school premises. It will be circulated to all schools, with the intention that it is retained as a reference. A copy will also be sent to our regular consultants and to the relevant officers of the LEA.

This document was compiled in Spring 2003. It is inevitable that over time, some aspects of the advice may change, particularly the financial arrangements. If in doubt about such matters, it is probably best to check the position.

[Appendix 1 – Premises Plan](#)

[Appendix 2 – Service specification for building consultants](#)

[Appendix 3 – List of Consultants](#)

Appendix 1

WESTMINSTER DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

SERVICE SPECIFICATION FOR BUILDING CONSULTANTS SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

1. To provide a general advisory service to governors/heads in relation to all building matters.
2. To advise governors/heads on setting up a 3 – 5 year maintenance and development programme for the school site and building, with reference to

asset management plan priorities and any other relevant data provided by the consultant (as a result of an annual or other survey) or from any other source.

3. To advise on the use of formula funding to implement priority work identified in 2 above and to complete relevant application/approval forms on behalf of the school.
4. To prepare and submit bids to the diocese and/or other bodies (such as the LEA) for other grant funding on behalf of the governors.
5. To ensure that appropriate contractors are appointed and to act as contract administrator for building projects which have received funding approval.
6. To take on the responsibility for CDM regulations at the feasibility stage of schemes
7. To liaise with the DfES where necessary and in particular where technical queries are raised by them in relation to a specific project.
8. To keep the diocese informed of significant problems/disputes arising from projects which seriously affect the management and running of the school and/or cause delays in project implementation.
9. To visit the school once a term at least, even when no actual work is in hand, in order to maintain the working relationship and to be pro active in discussing the ongoing maintenance and development programme referred to above.

10. To attend governing body meetings as appropriate

11. To clarify the school's mandatory responsibilities relating to service contracts and other current mandatory requirements and to assist the school in meeting these.

12. To submit a brief (one side of A4) annual report by the end of January to the diocese which provides information about work undertaken at the school, including mandatory servicing and to indicate possible further developments and/or any concerns about the site and buildings.

The following is an optional service, which consultants may wish to offer to schools – some schools may choose to use the LEA's services in this respect.

To provide a 24 hour 365 day emergency call out service for major disasters/emergencies

The diocese reserves the right to approach other architectural practices for major projects – ie those with a building cost of over £400,000 and possibly some minor projects - to undertake the design work. The regular consultant would be included in any competitive presentation and the diocese would make its best efforts to include the regular consultant for other services, if not appointed for the design work

Appendix 2

WESTMINSTER DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

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3. To advise on the use of formula funding to implement priority work identified in 2 above and to complete relevant application/approval forms on behalf of the school.
4. To prepare and submit bids to the diocese and/or other bodies (such as the LEA) for other grant funding on behalf of the governors.

5. To ensure that appropriate contractors are appointed and to act as contract administrator for building projects which have received funding approval.
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Appendix 3

LIST OF CONSULTANTS

DHP
4 St Martins Court
York Road
Weybridge
Surrey
KT13 9UU
01932 850100

David Rackham Partnership
The Old Bank Building
The Street
Hatfield Peverel
Essex
CM3 2EH
01245 381500

Johnson & Partners
Architects and Building Surveyors
39a High Street
Hemel Hempstead
Herts

HP1 3AA
01442 212755

Barker & Associates
Chartered Surveyors
Waggoners Court
The Street
Manuden
Bishop's Stortford
Herts CM23 1DW
01279 647111

Paul Abbott
14 Baltic Street East
Barbican
London
EC1Y 0UJ
020 7490 1993

Wilby & Burnett
Providence House
123 Ashdon Road
Saffron Walden
Essex
CB10 2AJ
01799 513621

Mr J Davies
J R Davies Associates
Chartered Building Surveyors
6 St George's Mews
Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7JB
020 7928 5140