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LIFTING THE CARPET

ISSUES ON DELIVERING FULL SERVICE AND EXTENDED SCHOOLS

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At the ACES Annual Meeting in London last November Michael Peters gave a presentation on his research project on Full Service and Extended schools. The following article is an edited version of that presentation.

INTRODUCTION

My background is that I have worked in schools and local authorities for over 25 years. My last two posts were Director of Education in Lambeth in London and similarly in York. I have worked with a number of large private consultancies and now run my own consultancy, Camber Consulting. I was asked to do this piece of work by ACES and the FPS. The report is based on personal experiences of working for many years within education and running education facilities. This paper gives an introduction to the topic and summarises the report.

The full report is extensive and comprehensive running to around 90 pages. It examines the issues on delivering full service and extended schools. This is a massive

agenda but initial discussions produced the following structure:

- An exploration of themes relevant to the Extended Schools and Full Service School agenda
- The identification of the property implications on the Extended Schools initiative and those that may emerge from the proposed legislation on Trust schools
- An examination of estate management implications arising from shared occupation by various agencies

METHODOLOGY

The work arises from a number of visits to a range of schools; primary schools, secondary schools, some schools that had post-16 within them, rural schools and urban schools. The research covered a whole range of different schools nationwide. A number of issues emerged.

OVERALL ISSUES

Licences

A number of schools were organising extended activities by asking people to come into the school and make use of surplus accommodation within the building. Typical activities are Childcare and Adult Education. The use often starts as an informal arrangement between the head teacher and somebody keen to provide that particular facility locally. Sometimes it is done to give the school an income that helps to make its LMS budget work. The outcome is often a licence agreement. A real danger here is that some of these licences could easily be seen as a business tenancy under the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act particularly if schools are using out of date forms and arrangement date back about ten years or so. The main danger arises when the arrangements come up for renewal and the school wants to do something else. A licensee might claim security under the Landlord and Tenant Act and insist on staying put.



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Security and fire risk

As different uses and users come in, schools are beginning to section off those areas in different use to support school security but without thinking through the key hazards and risks there may be. I have seen situations where the school had not undertaken a proper fire risk assessment with the result that the only fire exit for that part of the school was blocked off. A more orderly process is that if a school is beginning to think about bringing in other users this may mean minor capital works and a need for early advice on health and safety, fire risks and licensing risks. Every authority should issue clear guidance to support schools and this should be strongly endorsed by both the Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services.

A clear definition

There are issues around the meaning of "extended schools" and "full services". What is an extended school and what is a full service school? An extended school has activities that happen beyond the school day for everyone, for example, adult education. Full services are for targeted young people and their families, for example, a social care service being delivered from a school.

The School Development Plan

Every school has to have a School Development Plan. If the school is engaged in activities that go beyond the school day or bring in different users the "extended school" should be a part of the school development plan and should make it clear what the school is trying to do, how it will be done and who needs to be involved. It should be a fundamental part of school planning activity, not just an add-on.

Urban Issues

There were particular issues for schools in more urban settings. Extended activities were often the result of particular needs of some of the users of the school. In areas of high levels of social challenge there were many single parent families requiring additional services such as social care and special health needs and so on. Schools were beginning to respond by bringing such services into their premises. In an urban settings the extended schools agenda is becoming more about how to deliver social care services within the context of the school.

Rural Issues

In rural settings the issue is slightly different. We found that many of the services the public need to access were not around at all so the school was beginning to respond by bringing such things as adult care services, child care services and childminding services within the school, thus making the school the centre of public service delivery and public access. The extended services agenda needs to be supported by a transport strategy to enable people to access the site at different times. A strategy which enables students to get to and from school at different times of the day will support a developing personalised curriculum and will also alleviate the rush hour problems that happen just before and just after the classic school day. Another issue that must be taken into account is vehicle parking when

there are a range of users on the site. Some schools in are beginning to see this as income generation issue as well as a traffic management issue.

Leadership and governance

One of the drivers of the extended schools agenda is the quality of leadership and governance within the school. The schools delivering the agenda often have a really good headteacher who is often a maverick wanting to do their own thing and strongly supported by a good governing body. The challenge for those who responsible for the wider estate is how to bring into line, if that is the right word, the headteacher who wants to pioneer new activities but knows little about the property implications.

New school buildings

There is some interesting work going on in Kent, for example, who are designing into new schools spaces for extended activities and have produced a number of design templates. Building Schools for the Future, a massive programme to rebuild secondary schools is beginning to take forward extended schools facilities and opportunities. The key here is that BSF strategies in every local authority must think extended school and how sites could be used.

The Remodelling Agenda

Leading edge schools are taking on board the Remodelling Agenda under which every school is expected to remodel its workforce and look for greater ranges of professionals working. There is a stronger focus on the professionals that support teaching and other school activities. So, for example, many schools are employing their own bursar or financial manager and beginning to develop a new role of the estate manager. I saw the role with responsibilities for the school estate filled by an upgraded caretaker with little knowledge of leases, fire hazards and organising contracts for the use of the building. An emerging gap was the need for a strong property-related professional working in the school taking responsibility for how that building is used. There is a need for training in this area. Property professionals in local authorities should offer guidance to the lead professional in a school. The National College of School Leadership runs training qualifications for bursars called the Certificate for School-Based Management and the bursar often manages the premises manager/caretaker. Similarly strategic organisations like the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships provide nursery planning and business support for schools engaged in having childcare.

Budget separation

Schools should separate out their budgets to produce one for running the school curriculum and another for doing everything else. There is still a lot of crossover between the two. As the school moves on from just running a school, to letting out a building or part of a building for other users, issues such as wear and tear of furniture and equipment, electricity use, management costs and so on begin to arise. These should be fairly apportioned to the external user of the site and would clarify replacement and repair costs.

In-house provision

Rather than bringing in other users some schools are beginning to provide childcare services, health services, and such things themselves. This has human resource issues and the implication is that an authority will become the formal employer of a much wider workforce.

Site issues

In one school there was a separation of ownership of parts of the site. Here the Youth Service was run by the authority's Youth and Community Directorate and the school ran the school. There were issues about how the whole site was managed and this is covered fully in the report. There are variances in public liability. Clearly if things go wrong although some schools are well covered others are not.

Building issues

At some schools sports centres, youth buildings, and other services are run by Youth Development Services without a contract or agreement dealing with building ownership. There can be a particular problem arising concerned child protection. People entering and leaving the site were not properly managed, there was no contract between other users, and they did not know who those were. Surprisingly most worked well but major problems will arise if something goes wrong. But I saw a number of schools that were running sports centres or youth centres directly and they appeared to work well provided the school had strong support from its authority.

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Financial arrangements

There are number of problems around financial arrangements such as collections of money and chasing of debts. I saw several schools falling behind in collecting money for their operated facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ownership of the school site and buildings

Each school has to be clear about the ownership of its site and buildings. The owner of the site and buildings must set out an agreement for extended services in writing. The authority owns a community school site and the buildings. If it is a foundation school the school owns the site and buildings. The ownership of a trust school is in process of change and the intention is that the ownership of the site and the buildings, probably including on-site facilities such as sports centres, youth facilities and so on, will go to the school trust. A return to the "grant maintained status" for those of you who remember that.

Guidance

Local authorities to produce guidance on ownership and each school to take account of any issued guidance. As Trust schools are likely to own their own land and buildings authorities should prepare guidance on the implications for extended schools in consultation with diocesan authorities.

Benefits of extended and full service schools

Every school should have a formal understanding of the benefits it expects and how these will be measured and tracked over time. Authorities and schools should note the key factors that influence the development of the Full Service Extended School and seek to promote these. Authorities should have a clear idea if this is something they want to achieve.

Governance, leadership and management

Governing bodies must address issues of management and accountability. It is important to be completely clear about who does what. What is the headteacher's responsibility? What is the bursar's responsibility? What are the responsibilities of other site users? These must be carefully defined and agreed. And unless the governing body has a clear set of policies then there will be some confusion.

Charging

This was a big issue when the 1986 Education Act came in. It went into abeyance for a while but is to come back again because of the extended schools agenda. The governing body should have clear charging policy covering what, where, when they would have contracts, who would be responsible for managing the contracts and so on. Every school should publish its Extended/Full Service

Durham, for example, has some good advice on extended schools and charging.

Zoning

Where a school wants to provide additional facilities the zoning of the school is strongly supported. In zoning schools due regard has to be taken of safety, security and fire issues including taking guidance from qualified experts where appropriate.

Workload issues

Schools need to ensure that staff have responsibility for key Extended/Full Service areas such as leadership, finance, procurement and premises and that there are specific governing body arrangements for the development of full service and extended schools activities. The person who leads children's services in the school and Directors of Children's Services need to be clear as to who is responsible for extended schools, what levels of responsibility each has got and who do you talk to when something goes wrong with the buildings. The governing body is responsible for everything that goes on in the school. They must develop formal policies and practices about the use of the building, the employment of staff and so on.

Services by a third party

Local authorities should issue guidance on agreements and that the presumption is that the third party use of part of a school site be agreed as a formal lease with exclusions under the Landlord and Tenant Act, rather than a licence, so that it is possible to get the third party out if you need to.

Site issues

Both the authority and the school should have a strategy for extended and full service activities. There are some good examples around that can be shared. Every school and authority should have equality and diversity impact assessment and implementation plan for extended and full service activities. And a policy for issues about the Disability Discrimination Act so that the third party user of the site is as responsible for implementing that as the school.

That completes my summary of the recommendations and overall issues.

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