

# TPM<sup>4</sup>Schools Newsletter

September 2015

DBE Services, 1 Evolution Park, Haslingden Road, Blackburn BB1 2FD

TPM Office: 01254 584690 - All enquiries during office hours 8am - 5pm Monday to Friday  
Fax Number: 01254 584699 - Job requests during office hours 8am - 5pm Monday to Friday  
Email: [info@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:info@dbeservices.co.uk) - Job requests for attention during office hours.  
At all other times please use the emergency number.  
Emergencies: 01254 584699 - Outside office hours and Bank Holidays

## Another Op'nin', Another Show"

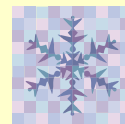
When I was a child we acquired a modern gramophone which played LPs rather than just 78s. The problem was we only added to our collection of LPs at birthdays and Christmas - no downloadable music or simply ordering on-line! For a long time the only LP we had was the sound track of Cole Porter's musical 'Kiss Me Kate' the opening song of which is "Another Op'nin', Another Show". Given it was the only LP we had to play, those words have become engrained in me and I have often reflected on them over the years as we reach new beginnings. Also part of the sub plot is two of the characters constantly look back to how things used to be.

For many heads and governors running schools today, it will be difficult to relate to my record collection of only one LP - my children think I make these things up! As you wrestle with a budget which is constantly being squeezed, despite government promises to the contrary, many of you will look back to the days when education funding left you with pleasant choices rather than very difficult decisions. Both my LP collection and the days of funding plenty are matters of historical note; tales to tell our grandchildren. But we do have a lot we can learn from history. If prolific funding was prerequisite to children having a good education then for the whole of the history of maintained education, apart from ten years between 1998 and 2008, nobody would have had a good education. That is not the case because education is about inspired teachers, enthusing young minds to be hungry for knowledge.

Continued on Page 2



## Winter is coming!



Each year winter seems to take us all by surprise! We always have a very busy day when the first cold snap of autumn descends and schools turn the central heating on for the first time after the summer months. Last year it happened on the first Monday in October, when we received a flurry of urgent calls reporting heating systems that had 'failed'. So, just to make sure you are fully prepared for the cold snap to come, it is always worth firing up your boiler early in September to make sure it will be ready and raring to go when you need it most.



Visit our website at  
[www.tpm4.com](http://www.tpm4.com)

## SAVE 25%

When you recommend a school to join the DBE Services TPM<sup>4</sup>Schools Scheme.

You AND the recommended school will save 25% off this year's management fee, when they join the scheme.

To recommend a school or discuss further please contact Peter on 07970 923141 or email [peter@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:peter@dbeservices.co.uk)

Offer applies to current scheme members only.

## Another Op'nin', Another Show

... continued

It is about providing an environment where children and teachers feel safe to express themselves and experiment, without fear of being deemed a failure when things go wrong or because they forget the “silent starter”. It is about fostering community in which children and their families can be open and honest about the challenges life brings and their hopes and fears. It is about respecting people as individuals and providing the opportunities to allow them to grow to understand what they can and cannot do. We are all different. The comedian Tommy Cooper (another name from the past) used to say his family thought they were rich when they discovered they had a Rembrandt and a Stradivarius only to come back to earth when they realised Stradivarius couldn't paint and Rembrandt made terrible violins!

This September is ‘another op'nin' another show’; a new show, same venue, same stage, changed audience. It is a show in which history holds no future applause that rests on how each member of the cast performs in the coming days and months. The mission of the head, teachers and pupils remains much the same as it always has been but, for those who support and protect them, there are constant new challenges from regulators and bureaucrats who continue to pile more and more on the school oblivious to need, reason or resources. It is time for governors and those in management positions to learn to say “no” and protect the learning community from being stifled by rules, regulations, and results. They are all important in their place but a means to an end not an end in themselves. We can never return to the days of my one LP, and I don't regret that for one minute, but I do wish we could stop constantly changing the record, i.e. the message, to give people space to enjoy it, share it and learn from what works well and what could be improved.

If the schools attended by politicians' or OFSTED inspectors' children, adopted a carrot and stick approach to learning they would soon be complaining to the head. We must continue to play very loudly the same record proclaiming that in the main our schools are staffed by talented and devoted teachers who need to be allowed to get on with what they are good at.

I hope the new school year gets off to a good start and you have a good term. I will continue to sing your praises wherever and whenever I get the opportunity.

*Peter*

## Managing your own project



Schools are increasingly looking to save professional fees by managing projects themselves. Consequently,

we are often asked to provide quotes for fairly substantial projects. Whilst we understand this and there are lots of examples of where this has worked well and saved money, we also have a bucket full of examples of when things have gone badly wrong.

To help people to decide if they should manage a project we have provided, on the website [www.tpm4.com](http://www.tpm4.com) an information sheet to help schools make sure they have taken into consideration everything they need before embarking on what can be a very difficult and sometimes expensive self-managed project.

## Is doing as you're told value for money?

We all want value for money and it is quite right that Local Authority financial regulations for schools emphasise the need for everybody who spends public money to ensure that they achieve it. However, this is often at odds with the actions of some LAs who fail to differentiate between good practice and necessity by giving the impression, perhaps unwittingly, that everything they seek in H&S surveys and other documents is mandatory.

In our opinion the words “required”, “mandatory” and “statutory” are banded around like confetti. In the end what you do is up to you and we will support you. However, at the heart of our services is a desire to offer schools free independent advice so that they can ensure value for money in managing and maintaining the building, leaving as much of the meagre budget as possible for the purpose it was provided - educating the young people in your care.



## Electronic School Portal

The school portal has now been live since May. All schools within the TPM scheme should have received their login details to access their individual portal and we hope it has been tested and tried out. If login details are still required please email [nicole@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:nicole@dbeservices.co.uk)

The portal was created to help schools with the management of documentation relating to their school building. At the present time the portal contains everything required for school's regular servicing and gives quick access to current and past service reports. The portal also has the ability to hold other documents that a school may wish to upload, giving the benefit of having all documentation in one place - always useful at inspection time! We have already begun adding documents to the portal which we think will be useful, from school floor plans to copies of final statements.

We will soon be adding reactive invoices to the portal which will enable schools to immediately access all invoices which we have received, checked and require payment by the school. We feel this will be of great benefit to schools by lessening the incidence of invoices going astray, or going to spam boxes for example. You will be advised when this function becomes operational as we will no longer be sending invoices by email after this time.

A major advantage of the portal is that a single email alert will be sent through to the school's portal email address at the end of each day, when new additions have been made, so you will not need to constantly check for new information.

Access to the portal is via our website: [www.tpm4.com](http://www.tpm4.com)

Further information detailing some of the changes we have made since the launch of the portal will be sent through on a separate document. Look out for 'Version 2 New Electronic School Portal'

## Contractors Award

We are looking to launch an annual award system for contractors who work with us. We are all good at letting people know when things go wrong but it is rare that we praise good work. The basic criteria for this new award include:

- Customer Service
- Efficiency (First time fix in the majority of cases)
- Value for money

If you would like to nominate a contractor who has attended at our request and given good service, please email [peter@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:peter@dbeservices.co.uk) with a few words to support your nomination.



## DBER Job Numbers

When you ask us to provide a contractor for reactive maintenance, we log and issue our DBER job number to the contractor. This is how we check that the work completed compares with the original job request.

To ensure the integrity of this process we do not provide job numbers retrospectively, i.e. when work has already been completed on site and never when requested by a contractor. We only accept job requests made by the school.

Should you have one of our contractors on site, who you have initially contacted directly, but further work is required which you would like us to be involved with, please telephone the office on 01254 584690 before authorising the work to proceed. We will then contact the contractor and issue our official job number.

As our scheme is bespoke to your needs we never insist that you put all your reactive work through us. If you wish to contact contractors directly that is entirely your choice. However, in these cases schools should be aware that we cannot enter into any negotiation where things may have gone wrong or there is any disagreement.

## Top Tip!

Do you have all the correct contact numbers?

Don't leave it until you have an emergency to find out that you haven't! They are all available on our website: <http://tpm4.com/emergency-contact-details/>



## TPM is here to help

When we established the Total Property Management service nearly sixteen years ago, it was a favour to help a small number of schools who wanted honest and free advice to help them make decisions about building related issues. Whilst over the years it has developed into a much more comprehensive service, supporting hundreds of schools, our mission remains the same - to be a place any school can come for honest advice which costs nothing.

We are always happy to discuss individual issues or visit to do a 'health check'. As many of you know we are owned by six educational charities and this is all part of their service to education.

We can offer advice on almost anything relating to the buildings and through partners on virtually anything relating to the running of a school. We pride ourselves in demystifying much of the jargon and legislation that is thrown at schools and offering simple and often cheaper solutions. If we don't have the technical expertise we will almost certainly know somebody who does. We will be honest about what things cost; if it seems expensive we will tell you and offer alternative sources of supply; if it seems too cheap we will question what is being done for the price and if it seems about right we will tell you. It is your school and you must do what you feel is right for the children and community you serve. What we offer is a sounding board which costs nothing and can be accessed by telephone 01254 584690; email [info@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:info@dbeservices.co.uk); fax 01254 584699; on line by completing the enquiry form [www.tpm4.com](http://www.tpm4.com)

We were once described as Samaritans for school managers. Hopefully you will not get that desperate but we are here to help at any time.

## Improving our Services

We regularly review our services with a view to continuous improvement and the overriding question we ask ourselves is always, 'What do schools want?'

We would now like to extend this question to schools. If there is something or some service that we could provide, which we don't at present, please let us know. We are always willing to consider any additions which would further enhance our service to you.

If you have any suggestions please contact [peter@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:peter@dbeservices.co.uk)



## New Contractors

We are always on the lookout for good local contractors. If you would like to recommend a trusted contractor to us, please email [david@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:david@dbeservices.co.uk)

We will then check their suitability and ask them if they would like to be considered for our approved contractor list.

## Health and Safety as it used to be...Make sure you put the clasp in the hole!!!

On a recent trip to Ireland CEO Peter crossed by cable car to an island at the south west tip of Ireland. The only thing holding the cable car door shut was a hook and eye clasp (pictured below) which the passengers were advised to engage!



This may seem incredible to those of us who expect a plethora of fail-safe devices but there has never been an accident (yet) maybe because the responsibility to make the door safe rests with individuals in the car and is not abrogated to 'some other person'. It is a case of your life in your hands! Perhaps we would all be a lot safer if we accepted responsibility for ourselves (i.e. in the true spirit of Health and Safety rather than just the law) instead of living with the view that we can blame and make a claim against somebody else. What a different world we might live in if we replaced that dreadful slogan 'Where there's blame there's a claim' with 'where there's a risk it's for you to fix'!