

TPM⁴Schools Newsletter

Autumn 2017

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Visit our website at: **www.tpm4.com**

The beginning of the school year brings all sorts of challenges. New school; school for the first time; the successes of the past year are now history and it all must be done again - somehow the problems of the past don't seem to dissolve into history quite as quickly as the successes. Then there are other challenges too - the regular events which fall throughout any school year need new and exciting presentation and then there is the challenge to dream up new ideas for Christmas performances. Are we really having to plan Christmas already?!

As I was reflecting on the beginning of this new school year I realised that it was 57 years ago this month that I started school. It is very easy to wax lyrical about how different the world is for those starting school today but as I reflected about what I might say in this article, I began to wonder if it was really true to say the world was a very different place.

The way we interact with others and communicate is clearly very different. If I wanted to play out with somebody I had to go round to their house, knock on their door and ask if they could come out to play. The only way I knew what was happening anywhere else, other than within a few hundred yards of where I lived, was through listening to the news on the crackly radio or reading newspapers. I am also sure that it is not just my memory playing tricks that I knew it was summer because the sun shone and it was winter because it was frosty and snowy. I was also taught that the four seasons of the year began on the 21st March, June, September and December whilst today the media insists they begin on the 1st of those months. In reality, climate change means that they don't begin or end at all. It's hard to discern from the weather which season it is.

We also believe things are very different because we don't remember how things operated in the past. Yes, communication is instant but in 1959 the postal service was so efficient in many parts of the country that you could send out an invitation for dinner in the morning and could have received a reply by lunchtime. The system providing that remarkable service in London was an underground railway which, just recently, has been opened to the public and might be a 'must do' next time you go to London.

But there is so much that has not changed at all.

In 1959 there were great concerns about the economy and our membership of the European Community as it was then. There was a huge divide between the rich and the poor and a lot of children living in poverty only being fed through school meals and free school milk. There was concern about the nuclear threat and how we might retaliate should some despot choose to launch an attack. There was concern about the economy and not least the falling value of Sterling against the Dollar. In Japan, Typhoon Vera caused vast flooding and deaths.

We think the world is a different place but there is an awful lot of truth in the statement 'that which goes round comes round' and the French proverb 'plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'. The underlying responsibility for teachers in schools has never changed. It's about helping and supporting young people to develop their gifts and talents so they will have the opportunity to go on and achieve for themselves and to be good citizens of the world. When the burden of all the other things weigh heavy on your heart, never forget despite all those who believe every profession today is about the paperwork, it is not. It is about those you are called to serve.



If you have recently welcomed new staff to your school e.g. Head Teacher, Business Manager or Site Supervisor, or the people in these roles have changed please remember to let us have up to date names and contact details as soon as possible.

Please email info@dbeservices.co.uk

An American student call Kent Keith was reflecting on his own education and what it actually meant for his future life. He wrote a book for his fellow students called The Paradoxical Commandments. The book would probably have been lost forever if it hadn't been discovered many years later that Mother Theresa of Calcutta had placed a copy of these commandments on her cell wall. For me they say much about what it is that we are trying to do when we commit ourselves to teaching anybody but particularly young people. I offer them to you as perhaps some small inspiration for the coming school year.

- The people you help today may criticise you tomorrow: but help people anyway
- People can be unreasonable, illogical and self-centred despite your best efforts: but love them anyway
- If you are successful you may find that people turn against you and you will face very difficult decisions: but succeed anyway
- Being honest and frank will inevitably make you vulnerable: but be honest and frank anyway
- What you have devoted your life to and spent years building may be destroyed overnight: but build anyway
- Give the world the best you have; you may well be kicked in the teeth: but give the world the best you have anyway

Best wishes
Peter

IR35 - Off Payroll Working Through Intermediary

If you have never heard of IR35 and nobody has ever asked you about it, then read no further!

This is not new legislation; it has been around since 2000 but for various reasons people, including Local Authorities, have got excited about it since it was updated in April this year. Some Local Authorities have written to schools saying that they must ensure that everybody who works for them is IR35 compliant. That's a huge task for at least two reasons. First, the number of different people that supply services to schools makes checking every person a huge task. Second, most contractors/suppliers that are asked this question won't know whether they are or, are not. We can assure you that everybody that we recommend, or arrange to work in school for you, is IR35 compliant. It will not surprise you that there are companies making lots of money out of devising tests and questionnaires so organisations can check whether they are IR35 compliant. There is a simple maxim in life that every bit of government legislation creates work for some and expense for others.

In simple terms IR35 is about ensuring that everybody pays the right amount of National Insurance and Income Tax. There is no simple test to see whether somebody is complying but there is a rule of thumb - is the person providing the service somebody that you would normally employ directly on your school payroll. As you are not normally likely to put a plumber, an electrician, a boiler engineer, a specialist Legionella contractor or an alarm company on your payroll there is no problem with IR35.

If, however you have a cook who is not on the payroll, or employed by a company or LA, but you were employing their personal service company to provide those services every day you would need to ensure that they confirmed to you that they were IR35 compliant.

My long experience of schools tells me that this is not an issue for virtually all the relationships schools enter into and you won't need to worry about it. If you want any further advice, I'm happy to do my best to provide it as long as you accept this is a very complicated piece of legislation which was never designed to cause problems for schools.

Winter 2017/2018!

Yes, it's time to fire up the school boilers again! We always advise checking that school boilers are working properly rather than waiting until the cold weather descends upon us. Boiler problems are always quicker to sort out when the boiler companies are not under severe pressure!

Glazing Surveys

If you have been advised to have a glazing survey at your school, we can arrange either a full glazing survey with report and recommendations or, if you believe your school glazing is compliant and simply want to check this out, a simple review to check windows and doors covered by the guidance. Please enquire on 01254 958850

What's New?

DBE Services New Processes from Autumn 2017



Breakdowns and Return Visits

We are always here to help schools with faults and breakdowns and try to glean as much information as we can so we can appoint an appropriate contractor to deal with the problem. We do our best to find the nearest available contractor to attend, at the earliest time possible and we expect any work undertaken to last for a reasonable length of time, depending on the type of job and/or any relevant advice provided by the contractor.

As you know DBE Services/TPM4 Schools does not apply any charge for this service. You only ever pay what the contractor charges for the reactive work.

Where a problem persists or reoccurs, we are usually asked by schools for a 'recall'. From Autumn 2017, if the fault persists or reoccurs we will reassess the best way of dealing with it. We have the highest expectations of the contractors and it is not just annoying for you that the issue is persisting but also to us and the contractor. Our normal response will be to ask the same contractor to reattend, on the same job number, and provide us with a report on why the matter has not been resolved.

Clearly not all issues can be resolved on the first visit but if a contractor has told us an issue is resolved, we will want to know why there is still an issue. This type of request will be shown on our job sheets as, **RAPW** 'reattending to assess previous work'. If the continuing issue relates to a failure by the contractor, we will expect them to rectify the problem as quickly as possible and report back to us why they failed to rectify it on the previous visit. This is all part of our quality control of our contractors.

We will assess all reports from contractors alongside information provided by the school. If we are satisfied that the continuing issue does not relate to the original job request; the contractor had already advised that they could not guarantee the original repair for whatever reason; or other contractors have interfered with the original work, we will determine whether it is appropriate for the contractor to charge for that visit. We will advise the school before any further work is undertaken.

The school will of course have the opportunity not to go ahead with the work but in that case a call-out fee may become chargeable as standard. We believe this approach will be fair to both the school and the contractor, whilst ensuring that we maintain our quality checks on the service provided to schools.



Quote Requests

We are always happy to arrange for quotes for work but we do strongly advise that quotes for work which is over £2000 are very difficult to compare and should normally be based on a specification prepared by a professional. We are always happy to advise on suitable people to provide this specification.

Most contractors provide quotes free of charge where they are straightforward e.g. from faults identified at a service visit or, where information about what is required is clear and access is readily available etc. However, where further investigations are required to provide a quote, there will usually be a charge which will normally form part of the quote.

Contractors require a minimum of 7 working days to provide us with a written quote which means urgent work should be dealt with as a call-out, where we can get a contractor to you either the same or following day. However, this will be a chargeable visit.

We assess every quote to determine whether it seems reasonable against the information provided by the school. If the quote does not fall within our expected parameters, we request a further quote from an alternative contractor. This can mean the lead time for competitive quotes is anything up to three weeks.

We understand that schools do not always know what works may cost and we are happy to get a quote for you. However, if that quote comes in at under £400 and we believe it is reasonable, we will not be able to provide any further quotes at no charge. If you wish to have further quotes, you will either need to arrange them yourself or, if you wish us to arrange them, we will charge £25 per quote. This is to ensure we can continue to offer a free quote service.

From Autumn 2017, all new quotes will be uploaded to your school portal so that you have access to them as soon as they are received. You will receive an automatic notification advising that something new has been added to your portal. This further enhances the portfolio of documents stored on your school portal and replaces the previous email system.

If you have any difficulties accessing your school portal or need a reminder of your login details at any time, please contact Nicole (nicole@dbeservices.co.uk)

Planning for Summer 2018!

As crazy as this may sound, having just started the new school year, we would ask you to think about those larger property jobs which schools traditionally need to have undertaken during the school summer holiday.

We cannot over emphasise how important it is to get these jobs booked in early, as the summer months are the busiest times for all our contractors. We cannot guarantee that works can be completed during July and August without significant notice.



So, please be aware that our cut-off date for works to be booked during mid July to the end of August 2018 is 31st May 2018.

Help Us to Help You

When requesting a call-out through DBE Services, we rely on the best information that school can provide so that we can appoint the right contractor for the job at the earliest possible time.

Vague descriptions such as 'leak in classroom' for example, can sadly lead to unnecessary time being wasted or even the wrong type of contractor being sent, which the school will be liable to pay for.

It will help us greatly if you provide us with, the actual location of the problem within the school and a full description. For example, if it is a leak, what sort of leak is it and where is it coming from - the roof, the radiator, the drains, taps, wall mounted water heater, gas pipes etc. As you can see with this example each of these could require a different type of engineer.

If you are struggling to describe the problem, why not take a photo on your smart phone and enclose this with your job request, as often a visual reference will help us to get the right contractor to you as quickly as possible.

Local Authorities offer services, other people offer services, and we of course offer our Total Property Management service. You could equally well do it in house if you so wished. Despite what they say, Local Authorities do not have a right for that information. They only have a right to know that you have made arrangements to carry out all the necessary checks and testing.

Since Grenfell, Central Government has been asking Local Authorities to check lots of different things and one of the questions that has been asked is about compliance in schools. All responsible bodies which include Diocesan Boards of Education and ourselves have been asked similar questions. It will not surprise you that most of the questions have been related to high rise buildings, cladding and fire protection.

In our discussions with Local Authorities we do have some sympathy with their need to have access to information as and when it is requested by Central Government. If your Local Authority genuinely needs information to satisfy Central Government or other external agencies, we would be very happy to give them access to it and can do so through our systems. There is no need for you to have to complete extra forms if you don't want to. If you have any questions about requests from Local Authorities for information relating to compliance or building repair, I'd be very happy to discuss it with you and with them.

Take a fresh look at your TPM Portal

Your TPM School portal holds an ever-increasing number of documents which the school will find useful. This means that you have documents at your fingertips whenever you need them - particularly helpful when inspections are on the horizon!

Your portal includes a copy of your Annual Service Contract and statements, service reports from the current and previous years, reactive invoices for payment by school and, from Autumn 2017, quotes will also be uploaded. You can also upload other pertinent documents to the portal, such as school plans, if you wish.

Accessible from any on-line device, your portal has been in operation for almost eighteen months and has replaced the previous system of emailing everything to schools, which was problematic on many levels. If you would like your portal notifications to be sent to an alternative email address please let us know as soon as possible.

If you are new to the portal, or need any assistance accessing your information, please let us know on 01254 958850. We can either assist by telephone or arrange a visit to school if that would better suit your needs.

Local Authorities Seeking Information on Buildings

We are aware that some Local Authorities have been approaching schools and insisting that they provide information relating to compliance issues at the school. In our discussions with a number of Local Authorities it is very clear, and some of them acknowledge it, that schools sometimes feel 'threatened' by the language used which almost invariably includes the word 'statutory'. When we have challenged Local Authorities on this they have accepted that their language has not always been correct or helpful.

The Head Teacher and Governors are responsible for ensuring the school is safe and meets all the necessary requirements relating to the building. You can achieve that compliance in any way you feel is suitable.