

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

January 2018

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## A New Year ... A New Challenge

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and New Year and found time for yourself and your family away from the ever increasing demands of school life. I have normally used my reflection in the newsletter to take a broader view on the challenges facing those of us who devote our lives to educating young people. Some may see this reflection as a bit more pragmatic and I promise to return to a broader reflection in the future but this comes from many conversations I have had with schools over the last term.

School budgets are very tight and, for many, balancing the budget is a constant battle which is not always won. This can only get more difficult not least if, as I believe they should, the government removes the enforced cap on teacher salaries as they have now done for other public services.

I have been involved in education for a long time! I tend to agree with a long standing Head who said to me, a few months ago, people think money is tight but it was much tighter in the early part of (his) career in the 80's and 90's. Any capital work was virtually a pipe dream and capitation was virtually non-existent. The difference then was people had no expectations of any money. LEA's did most things and you had no idea how much it cost. When you didn't get what you wanted, you blamed them and you were no different to any other school.

It reminded me a bit of the story of the Prodigal Son who wanted his father to give him his share of the money but when it was gone, realised that having complete charge of his own destiny was not all a bed of roses.

When money was apparently not an issue, in the Blair/Brown years, schools were keen to use the windfall on making the school look more attractive and improving frontline facilities for the children. It was inevitable if the infra structure was ignored that it would come back to bite later.

We are now finding that many schools are having problems with aging plant and equipment. Our contractors do what they can to keep things working but sometimes parts are obsolete or can only be sourced from abroad. The problem becomes more urgent when, to keep costs down, servicing has been reduced; alternative/backup options are purposely left out of commission; the only system working is the backup system, simply because at the time this was an alternative to repair.

## GDPR - Do these letters mean anything to you?

The general data protection regulation (GDPR) is a new EU law that will come into effect on 25 May 2018, to replace the current Data Protection Act. It's the biggest overhaul of data protection legislation for over 25 years, and will introduce new requirements for how organisations process personal data. It will affect how schools handle data and how we handle your data.

We only hold data to allow us to provide our services direct to you. The only people we share it with is the contractors who need to know how to contact you. One of the main tests is whether data is being used legitimately. Clearly if it allows us to deliver the services you have asked us to provide for your school, that is legitimate use.

If we are using generic school email addresses or the school telephone number, little will change. However, if we are using private individual emails or phone numbers, the individual owners will need to provide us with documentation to confirm they have given their consent. Most of the private telephone numbers we currently hold relate to Site Supervisors.

Keeping data up to date is also a focus of the new legislation. Clearly, we do not know when people leave their positions, so we will need you to ensure we have that information.

We will be writing to schools after Easter to let them know what they will need to do to keep us and them compliant.

Sometimes I think we and our contractors are expected to be miracle workers - in the words of the well-worn phrase "the impossible we can do but miracles take a bit longer". We are always willing to work with you to identify potential mission critical issues. There may still be no money to address the issues but at least we can help you seek solutions.

We are always keen to look at ways you can save money not least by reducing unnecessary servicing, some of which is done simply because "we have always done it."

When you ring in with an issue we try, when at all possible, to establish the exact problem so we can offer some preliminary things you might try to avoid contractor costs.

Last term I was saddened by the number of schools who either said they were too busy to do a bit of self-help or the person on the phone said, "it was not their job". I more than appreciate all the pressures on school staff but I can't help but feel it is a waste of scarce resources to send out a contractor to flick a switch, press a button or enter a code which is already available in school.

There is no going back to the days when you could pass on the responsibility and blame to an LEA, or other body. The benefits of a school managing its own budget to meet local need has, in most cases, to be preferable. However, unless the government starts to realise that public services cannot keep on finding efficiency savings and delivering high quality services with less, the system will reach breaking point.

We are here to help. If you would like help in reviewing your building management costs and how they might be reduced; support with identifying potential mission critical issues; honest, free advice about any building related issue, you only have to ask.

Best wishes  
Peter

## Access for contractors

All our contractors are aware that they may not be able to access occupied parts of the school during the school day e.g. classrooms or the hall. Some of our contractors have been discussing with us the problem of gaining access for long enough to complete a job.

We have examples of schools asking that contractors do not attend until after 3.30pm and then insisting they leave by 5.30pm when the Site Supervisor's normal day ends. Obviously if the contractor must return to complete a job because access to the school cannot be offered for a long enough period in which to complete the work, there will be an increased charge which will usually include contractor's travel time for the return visit as well as the additional labour charge.

I suspect this has become more of an issue as Site Supervisor hours are reduced to save money. We have asked contractors to be clear how long they expect a job to take, as far as they are able to (obviously there will be times when things don't go to plan and it takes longer), so schools can balance the cost of keeping the school open against contractor costs.



## How do we contact you during the holidays?

Has there been any change to your contact information e.g. staff changes?

Over the holiday periods in particular, we often find that contractors are unable to make contact with the school, either to arrange a visit or to discuss an ongoing job, as there is no one working in the school office. Where we have been provided with the Site Supervisor's mobile telephone number, we can usually make suitable arrangements but unfortunately an absence of the Site Supervisor's number can cause disappointing delays in getting work completed during school holidays.

Please could you ensure we have your up to date contact information, including your Site Supervisor's mobile details where appropriate, bearing in mind the item on Data Protection on Page 1.

Please send any updates to [info@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:info@dbeservices.co.uk)

## TPM Scheme - 50% fee reduction!

We are again offering all schools in the TPM Scheme the opportunity to reduce next year's management fee by 50%, by recommending a new school who subsequently joins the scheme.

A number of schools have successfully introduced schools to us and in one case their school management fee reduced to zero!! If you know a school who is interested in joining our scheme and you would like to recommend them to us, please contact Nicole at [nicole@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:nicole@dbeservices.co.uk)



## Asbestos Awareness Training

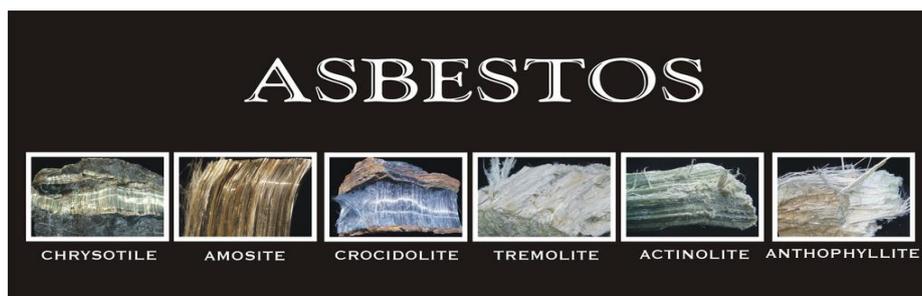
As you are all aware, the 2012 Control of Asbestos Regulations requires that those who manage the school building must have completed the course on **Asbestos Awareness Training** and kept that knowledge up to date.

We used to provide this service through our own webinars. The charges we made to schools were simply to cover our costs but often, after the webinar was delivered, schools failed or refused to settle invoices for numerous reasons. Often this was because they had just decided that at the time of the webinar it was no longer convenient for them to take part. We have therefore decided to resource this service through an external provider but have negotiated with that provider reduced rates for those who wish to book through us.

The course offered is excellent and anybody who follows it will have a deep and intense knowledge of the issues that asbestos can cause. Peter, our Chief Executive, has completed the course and has received his certificate. It takes approximately two hours to complete but the advantage of this course, over a webinar, is that you can dip in and out as you like, so it can be done over several days if you do not have the time to complete it in one go.

If you book directly with the company the charge would be £25 per person. However, if you book through us you will get a 20% reduction and the cost will be just £20 per person.

We would recommend that the Head, Business Manager and Site Supervisor all complete this course. If you would like further information, please e-mail [nicole@dbeservices.co.uk](mailto:nicole@dbeservices.co.uk)



## Quotes

We include this item again as a reminder for our colleagues of the change of process regarding the provision of quotes.

We are always happy to arrange for quotes for work but strongly advise that quotes for work which is over £2000 should normally be based on a specification prepared by a professional, as they are often difficult to compare. 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 for this service.

We are often asked if we can provide quotes as a matter of urgency and whilst we always strive to do our best for schools, contractors require a minimum of 7 working days to provide us with a written quote. Consequently, if your need for a quote is very urgent this should be dealt with as a call-out. 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 free of charge. If you wish to have further quotes, you will either need to arrange them yourself or, if you wish for us to arrange them, we will charge £25 per quote.

All quotes are now uploaded to your school portal so that you have access to them as soon as we receive them. You will receive an automatic notification advising that something new has been added to your portal.

## Never be without the emergency contact details

If you have an iPhone or smartphone you can add an icon to your homepage that will take you directly to the emergency contact details. Simply open the page <https://tpm4.com/emergency-contact-details/> and touch the icon which allows you to email etc. and there should be an option to add to the home screen. You can do the same on your office or laptop computer by creating a shortcut to your desktop.

## Remedial work following five-year electrical tests

When you have your five-year fixed wiring test undertaken, the company will give you a report which will place any recommendations into four categories C1, C2, C3 and F1.

C1 requires immediate action and in virtually every case this will have been rectified by the contractor at the time of the test. If it can't be, they will already have informed you and placed a warning notice on the item of equipment.

C2 is a potentially dangerous defect, these might be things that don't pose an immediate threat but are likely to become a danger in the future. You should carry out this work.

C3 indicates that the equipment does not comply with the regulations but isn't dangerous.

You must do C1 recommendations immediately. In most cases they will already have been addressed before the report reaches you; C2 recommendations need doing and the governors could be liable if an accident happened and they had not done anything about them. C3 recommendations can be treated as advisory and to be done when money allows.

The other category is F1. This does not appear very often but it means, 'Further investigation required without delay.' You should address these issues immediately.

We will provide you with the report and a quote for getting the work done, broken down into the categories as above. We are very happy to assist you with arranging remedial work but the responsibility rests with the head teacher and governors.



If you want a further quote you will need to contact us. We will not chase you over this work other than to confirm you have received the report.

## Helping us to help you

If a matter is Mission Critical i.e. it has the potential to close the school, we insist that our contractors attend within four hours and, on many occasions, they are there much quicker than that.

If there is any issue about attending quickly, e.g. sometimes contractors are very busy or have their own staffing difficulties due to illness etc., it is referred up to our Chief Executive, Peter who will then speak to the company at a senior level.

In the last few weeks, due to the high number of mission critical issues and the high level of staff illness due to the flu, which is engulfing Britain, Peter has been called into action more than usual.

On more than just the odd occasion, when the contractor has arrived on site, the problem has already been solved but nobody had informed us, so we could not stand the engineer down. Clearly that incurs a call-out charge for the school but it also means that the engineer is not available to attend another urgent issue. Sometimes that will be another school in our scheme, so it can also affect the family.

If a call-out is no longer required, please could you let us know immediately, preferably by phone (01254 958850) so that we can cancel the engineer. However, as can sometimes be the case, if the engineer has already been deployed, due to the urgency of the job and is already near to the school before being stood down, there may still be a charge.

## Contractor checks

We are often asked by schools, usually as a direct result of a request they have received from their Local Authority, about the checks we make on the contractors we use.

For your peace of mind, we only deploy contractors that meet our requirements and you can find information regarding the checks we make, on our website: [TPM4.com](https://tpm4.com)