

Briefing Note

Primary Capital Programme

Background

1. In his 2005 Budget statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out ambitious plans for a new, long term capital investment programme to rebuild, remodel or refurbish at least 50% of all primary schools in England. In 2006 the Department consulted widely on delivery options and around two thirds of respondents agreed with the proposed approach. Ministers have confirmed that the programme will run to the principles and timescales set out in the prospectus. Full details can be found in the prospectus *Every Child Matters: Primary Capital Programme. Building Schools at the Heart of the Community*. (DfES 2006).
www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank
2. The Department selected 23 authorities as pathfinders who will share £150 million in 2008 – 9. These authorities are required to test aspects of the programme prior to a national roll out, act as regional champions to build local capacity for delivery in their region and build one or more exemplar projects to open by September 2009.
3. From April 2009 all local authorities will share additional capital investment of £500 million per year. This sum includes funding for voluntary aided schools. Subject to future government spending decisions the programme will continue for 15 years. The capital allocations for local authorities were recently announced for the first two years of the national roll out: 2009-10 and 2010-11.
4. Local authorities are not required to bid for Primary Capital Funding but they are required to demonstrate a planned, strategic approach before the money will be released. The preferred method of assessment, set out in the June 2007 guidance to pathfinder authorities, involves the submission of a Primary Strategy for Change document to the DSCF by 31 March 2008. Those authorities that successfully demonstrate how they will use the Primary Capital Programme to improve Every Child Matters outcomes will have access to their allocations from 2009.
5. The Department believes that taking a strategic view of investment through the primary capital programme gives the best opportunity to provide 21st century facilities for all primary pupils. Strategic capital

investment should support national and local priorities, drive up standards, enable parents to choose from a diverse range of effective primary schools and secure the role of primary schools at the heart of the communities they serve.

6. The Department sees the benefits of a strategic approach as:

- A shared focus for investment with immediate investment decisions informed by long-term aims
- The long-term, system wide view should reveal new solutions to difficult problems
- Local planning, meeting the needs of the local authority area as a whole and of pupils, parents, communities and individual schools within it
- Pulling together diverse investment from many sources for greater impact
- Greater flexibility to deliver projects
- Efficient procurement ensuring value for money
- Clear local contribution to national policy objectives
- Streamlined, less burdensome processes from central government
- Better fit with other improvements to the engagement between central and local government

7. Local decisions are unlikely to be simple or easy. Decisions will have to be taken so that investment helps the children and schools that need it most. This may involve important resource decisions across services, or sensitive questions of for example, new models of organisation, rationalisation, amalgamation or federation. As commissioners of schools, authorities will be looking for strategic solutions based on:

- Consultation with key stakeholders -schools, other providers and local people and
- On a rigorous assessment of local needs and priorities.

Primary Strategy for Change

8. The Primary Strategy for Change should contain four core elements

- a. **Baseline Analysis.** Based on a thorough analysis of the latest available school-level data on places, building condition, educational performance, deprivation and extended services.

b. **Long term aims.** The authority's strategic aims, setting out what primary education will look like after strategic capital investment of up to 15 years. Local aims should fit with national programme aims.

c. **The approach to change.** How the authority will use the Primary Capital Programme to get from the base line position to the achievement of the long-term aims. It will address issues that influence investment decisions such as local challenges and priorities, planning, prioritisation, capacity building, design, ICT and procurement.

d. **The initial investment priorities.** Broad priorities for the first four years of the programme 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 and how they will contribute to the long-term aims. It should also specify school projects to be delivered in 2009-10 and 2010-11 which will feed into national monitoring. The section should also include funding that the authority will be committing or leveraging in from other sources.

9. The Primary Strategy for Change should take account of national output targets:

- 5% of the worst condition schools to be rebuilt or taken out of commission
- At least 50% of primary schools overall to be rebuilt, refurbished or remodelled to bring them up to 21st century standards
- Targeting to deprivation on locally decided criteria
- All remaining primary schools to continue to invest devolved formula capital

Process and timetable

October 2007	Project Plan
October	DCSF issues guidance on preparing Primary Strategy for Change
November	Consultation on criteria and methodology for prioritisation of school projects
December	Decision on criteria and methodology for prioritisation
January 2008	Consultation on initial investment priorities 2009 – 13 and school projects to be delivered in 2009-10 and 2010-11

March	Decision on Primary Strategy for Change
31 March	Submission of Primary Strategy for Change to DCSF
April	Design work starts on 2009-10 and 2010-11 school projects
June	DSCF completes internal assessment of PSfC
July	Further iterations if needed
April 2009	Investment begins

Draft