



# Construction Project Management for Schools

## 10 Top Tips

When project management isn't your key priority or skill it can be a daunting prospect to manage a capital works project in your school. The tips below, which are aimed at school projects where there is no direct HCC project management, give you pointers about where to focus your time get the best out of your project and avoid some of the common pitfalls.

### Tip 1: Confirm the project details/brief

At an early stage in the project, ensure that you have an agreed project scope. Write this down and be as specific as possible about what you want to achieve and if there are any key deliverables. If you need to share it or get it agreed by other stakeholders, eg the Governing Body, make sure you build this process into your programme. If you need to apply for Landowner Consent from HCC for the works or planning approval/Listed Building Consent from your District Authority, do it as soon as possible.

### Tip 2: People to help you/regulations to consider

Once you have confirmed your requirements, give some thought to who can help you to achieve the project, both school staff and external consultants. If you decide that you need external consultants, consider using those from the HCC Consultancy Framework (Lot 17) who are suitable companies monitored by HCC for the life of the Framework.

[http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/premises/documents/property\\_consultant\\_framework\\_list\\_jul17.pdf](http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/premises/documents/property_consultant_framework_list_jul17.pdf)

Remember, you may also need statutory approvals for utility services and/or Building Control Regulations approval for certain building works. <https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval>

You should also review your project in line with the Construction Design Management Regulations 2015 and comply with any requirements. Don't forget to ensure that you are happy with the way that works are going to be delivered safely, in and around a busy school. Key information to help you assess this will be contained in the contractor's Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) which should be reviewed and agreed before any works commence. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/cdm/2015/index.htm>



Under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 you will also need to review the implications for asbestos as part of your project planning and ahead of the works. All schools have an asbestos management survey which must be checked during the project planning stage. It is likely that an intrusive asbestos Refurbishment and Demolition (R&D) survey will be required to investigate inside ceiling voids, ducts, roof spaces and any other hidden areas.

It may be possible to design the project around known asbestos containing materials, alternatively asbestos removal may be necessary ahead of the main project starting. Note: if asbestos is disturbed or damaged during the project it could lead to delays, substantial extra costs and even potential prosecution.

All asbestos related information associated with the project must be sent to HCC via [asbestos@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:asbestos@hertfordshire.gov.uk) on project completion. The documents would include details of what, if any, asbestos was removed and from where together with the asbestos R&D survey, the Licensed Asbestos Removal Contractors Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) and any air monitoring reports. These documents will also be included in the Operation and Maintenance manual (see Tip 10 below).

For further help and advice contact [asbestos@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:asbestos@hertfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Tip 3: Good quality contract documents and a suitable contractor**

If you have elements of design in your project make sure you are clear about who is responsible for these. Who has responsibility if there are problems now and in the future? Are these responsibilities clear and captured in the appointment documentation?

When you appoint a contractor, take advice from your consultant if one is working with you on what will be the best form of contract for the works. This will ensure that the project is completed to required time, cost and quality and that the contractor is taking the appropriate level of responsibility. If, for example, you want the contractor to be responsible for the design of a particular part of the works, make sure that you choose the right form of contract to ensure that this is clear. If you are having a simple piece of work done, put your requirements to the contractor in writing and be comprehensive and clear.



HCC also has a Framework for Works which you are entitled to use

[http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/premises/documents/property\\_works\\_framework\\_list\\_jul17.pdf](http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/premises/documents/property_works_framework_list_jul17.pdf)

Like the HCC Consultancy Framework, the requirements for works and services were advertised, capable suppliers identified and an initial level of due diligence carried out on the companies listed. These companies are also familiar with the risks and requirements of working in schools.

You may be asked whether or not the contractor's staff need to have a Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check. HCC have advice and guidance on The Grid which will help you under the section 'Contractors & Third Party Agents'.

[http://www.thegrid.org.uk/schoolworkforce/human\\_resources/dbs/dbs\\_who/index.shtml](http://www.thegrid.org.uk/schoolworkforce/human_resources/dbs/dbs_who/index.shtml)

## **Tip 4: Who will make it happen?**

A key role in project management is the school's project leader. This applies to both large and small projects and is irrespective of whether or not you employ a consultant. Make sure that someone from your school is in overall charge and give them the support needed for achieving the project.

## **Tip 5: Establish a project programme and monitor it**

Projects large and small benefit from having a programme which identifies project timeline agreed and the key project milestones. These milestones will help you to manage the works, risks, any changes and alert you to any continuing problems which need action. Ensure that you monitor the progress of the project at regular intervals and update the programme to take into account the inevitable changes which will occur – remember, this is a live document during the project.

## **Tip 6: Keep the communication lines open**

Throughout the entire project, communication should be consistent, open, honest and clear. Make sure that you and/or the project manager keeps in touch with all key stakeholders and team members during the project process. Think about how you will do this, for example regular meetings, circulation of minutes, school bulletins etc.



## **Tip 7: Manage project risks**

In simple terms, a risk is defined as a potential problem, particularly one which will impact the project programme or budget. Make sure you have identified, at an early stage, what might de-rail the project and what actions you can take to mitigate this. Make a list and monitor the risks at regular intervals. Take action where needed. If you are working with a consultant, ask them to create and monitor a risk register. Put this together between you so that you capture all possible risks.

Prior to commencing any significant projects ensure school and contractor meet and agree key controls for significant risks (asbestos is always likely to be one of these). This meeting should be recorded as evidence of the risk management process. Other areas for discussion would include site set up, welfare arrangements, access, emergency procedures and ensuring school escape routes remain clear during the works. Schools should ensure they receive copies of the contractors Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS). (See also Tip 2.)

## **Tip 8: Take control**

In general, change (or 'scope creep', as it is sometimes called) happens when unplanned/new elements are added to a project that has already been approved. If not closely managed, problems can then occur when insufficient consideration is given to increasing the budget, adding more time to the programme and/or adding more resources to accommodate the change. If the brief does have to be changed, make sure that you are fully aware of the implications to time, cost or quality before you agree.

## **Tip 9: Get what you want!**

Both during and at the end of the project, go back to your brief/scope of works and measure progress and the deliverables against it. If you don't think that you are getting what you asked for, address this with either your lead consultant, where appointed, or direct with the contractor. It's generally harder to rectify problems after the project is complete than it is to do it along the way.



## Tip 10: Complete the project

Ensure that someone carries out an inspection of the finished project and that all areas of concern, or snags, are recorded and passed to the contractor for rectification. On small projects, defects may be obvious but on larger projects, and where consultants are working with you, you should do this together to make sure you capture everything of importance. If you are using a contract from the Joint Construction Tribunal (JCT) suite of contracts there are specific certificates that are issued at key stages to help you formalise the completion of the project. Make sure you are given these by your consultant.

Make sure that you are given the Operational and Maintenance (O&M) manuals for the project where this applies. The O&Ms contain the information required for the operation and maintenance of the works done and should be kept safe, as a working document, for future reference.

And finally...

If you have any further questions, please contact the Building Management Team through [schoolsbmt@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsbmt@hertfordshire.gov.uk)