

White Paper

# The Primary Capital Programme Towards a Pedagogy of School Design





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## Foreword

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) has attracted much attention both in the world of education and in the general media – partly because of its focus on large secondary school rebuilding and partly because of its method of private finance. The more recently announced Primary Capital Programme (PCP) has received less attention, possibly because it is more modest in scope and finance.

The aims of this short paper are to outline the background to PCP, to discuss some of the principles on which primary rebuilding or refurbishment may be built, and to stimulate debate and awareness of the PCP.

To help begin the debate and inform this document, RM hosted a round table discussion between school leaders, advisers, journalists, educationalists and those involved in the implementation of new-build schools. A full transcript of the debate is available as an appendix to this paper.

So, this document is part of an ongoing debate, to which we welcome your contribution. We would be delighted to hear from you via our dedicated PCP web pages at : [www.rm.com/primaryschoolsforthefuture](http://www.rm.com/primaryschoolsforthefuture)

Amanda Peck, RM Primary  
December 2007

## Executive Summary

The government has announced plans to rebuild and refurbish the primary school estate through its Primary Capital Programme (PCP). There is not the same awareness of the detail and implementation of this programme as there is with other building programmes. In response to this, RM has sought to raise informed awareness of the programme, of which this paper is a part. The paper is informed by a roundtable discussion between educationalists; the paper invites further contribution and comment.

PCP is a government programme that over 15 years aims to provide separate capital funding for the replacement or modernisation of half of all primary schools in England, concentrating on the 5% of schools in the worst condition and those in the poorest condition. 23 'Pathfinder' local authorities (LAs) are currently engaged with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in submitting plans and testing processes for the programme. These LAs will receive funding of £150 million in April 2008. It is very likely that funds will be used from other capital and revenue sources to supplement the PCP funding and thus ensure that the primary estate is developed.

Recent criticism by the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee into the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme

highlighted the need for full participation by schools in the planning process. To achieve this recommendation, this paper proposes a pedagogical approach to school design comprised of three stages: a vision of education for the school is debated and developed; this vision is translated into architectural and building plans for the learning spaces; integrated ICT and furniture requirements are established.

This pedagogy of school design is illustrated through a fictional example. Supporting examples are given from three schools, including Abbots Green Community Primary School where learning spaces have been designed to meet the physical, emotional, wondering and learning needs of its pupils.

Managing a successful new build or refurbishment is complex and it is unrealistic to expect head teachers to be able to do this in addition to the already considerable demands placed on them. The paper recommends that successful long-term partnerships require shared vision, communication, and leadership capacity.

The paper concludes with a call to action for the discussion to continue and for schools to apprise themselves of the situation in their local authority.

# 1. The Primary Capital What?

It's a perfectly legitimate question- what exactly is the Primary Capital Programme (PCP)? Well, to unpick the title, it refers to a government driven programme that, over 15 years, aims to provide separate capital funding for the replacement or modernisation of half of all primary schools in England. That's England only – not Scotland or Wales. And it is capital funding not a leasing or PFI programme, unlike the secondary-focused Building Schools for the Future (BSF). The spotlight will be on schools in the most deprived areas and those in the poorest condition. This constitutes an estimated 45% of all primary schools in England. Its stated aims are to:

- Fully equip primary schools for 21st Century learning, with schools at the heart of the community and children's centres in reach of every family;
- Support national policy aims such as raising standards and Every Child Matters;
- Rebuild, remodel or refurbish at least half of all primary schools;
- Address deprivation nationally and in every authority; and
- Respond to population changes.<sup>1</sup>

- 23 'Pathfinder'<sup>2</sup> local authorities (LAs) are currently engaged with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in submitting plans and testing processes for the programme. These LAs will receive their funding of £150 million in April 2008.

The timeline for the programme can be seen in Table 1 below.

The pathfinder pilot aims to test the longer term programme structure, systems and monitoring; to deliver high-quality exemplar projects in each region; and to build capacity and share good practice regionally. The pathfinder LAs will be expected to share their experiences and the learning they have gained with other authorities.



Date	Action
January 07- March 08	DCSF tests processes with Pathfinder LAs
Summer/Autumn 07	DCSF announces Indicative allocations for 2009-11
November 2007	DCSF provides guidance to LAs on requirement to prepare and agree primary strategy for change
June 16, 2008	Year 1 funding available to Pathfinder LAs Deadline for submission of strategies for change
July /August 2008	DCSF approves LA strategies. DCSF confirms indicative funding
April 2009	Year 2 funding available
Sept 2009	Pathfinder projects complete
April 2010	Year 3 funding available
2023	Programme ends

Table 1: PCP Timetable

Well, so far so good – a funded scheme to replace or refurbish the national school estate where the greatest need exists. But how might it apply in your school?

## Is this funding heading towards my school? And how much could I expect if it were?

Let's start with the amount of funding nationally. The grid below shows the first three years of the programme:

Year	PCP Capital Funding
2008-2009	£500 million
2009-2010	£650 million
2010-2011	£1.1 billion
2011-2023	£500m p.a

Table 2: PCP Funding

<sup>1</sup> Full details can be found in Every child matters: Primary capital programme at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=9606](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=9606)

<sup>2</sup> The 23 pathfinders are: Barnet, Birmingham, Bradford, Cornwall, Darlington, Ealing, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Knowsley, Manchester, Newham, North Tyneside, Nottingham City, Rotherham, Sheffield, Solihull, Somerset, Swindon, Torbay, Waltham Forest, and Wigan.



This funding will be allocated via local authorities (LAs). By the end of March 2008, LAs will have submitted plans for the redevelopment of their primary estate in a document called, *Primary Strategy for Change*. You may well have been invited to participate in local consultations as the LA develops its plans. The exact funding allocations will be determined by the DCSF and this funding may well be supplemented by additional funds identified by the LA.

One important point to consider is that Devolved Capital Funding (DCF) will be reduced or removed for schools benefiting from the PCP funding. Those schools not allocated PCP funds will continue to receive DCF. The DCSF document, *Every child matters: Primary capital programme* gives the example of how a "medium size local authority" with "medium deprivation" might receive £11 million new investment over two years. The document also points out that distributing the funding across all LAs does bring some "drawbacks" resulting in the need "to work harder to achieve efficiency savings."

You can probably see then, that the amount schools receive will vary considerably depending on local need and local context. The fact that 23 'pathfinder' LAs are participating in pilot schemes also indicates that there are still decisions to be made about the details of funding allocation.

The funding provided by the Primary Capital Programme, bold though it is, is still insufficient to meet the ambitions and expectations of many authorities and schools. It is very likely that funds will be used from other capital and revenue sources to supplement the PCP funding and thus ensure that the primary estate is developed.

Additional funding sources include:

Capital	Revenue
BSF	SCHOOL FUNDING
PCP	LOCAL AUTHORITY
ASSET UTILISATION	GRANTS
	EXTERNAL FUNDING

Table 3: Additional Funding Sources

The message in all of this is to engage closely with your LA. For many schools, this will be a once in a lifetime opportunity; close engagement, dialogue and partnership with the LA, with the local community, and with parents, staff, governors and pupils will be key factors for successful rebuild, modernisation and school transformation – as we shall explore in the rest of this paper.

## 2. Towards a Pedagogy of School Design

In the summer of 2007 the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee published the results of its enquiry into the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. The committee was highly critical of a number of facets of BSF and the report offers some essential learning points for primary schools now embarking on their own programme of rebuild and modernisation. Perhaps one of the most striking comments from the committee is this:

*"A regular theme in our evidence was that people involved in BSF, particularly at the school level, did not have sufficient time to think about what they wanted for their new school. The participation of teachers, other school staff and pupils in the planning process is vital to the success of school redevelopment projects, and this needs to be acknowledged by all those involved."*

The report goes on to say that:

*"... those working in schools have a clear understanding of what is needed in a building to create a positive learning environment. Involving them in the earliest stages may require time, but will help to develop robust plans which will contribute to the success of the process."*

All too often, as the experience of BSF indicates, the focus on school rebuilding is on architecture rather than education. Not only that, the vision for education in the new build schools is often ill-defined or unclear. The select committee has something to say on this too:

*"The crucial question here ... is what do we want education to be in the 21st century?"*

What we are recommending in this paper is the need for a **pedagogy of school design**.

There are three stages to this.

In the first stage, schools engage in a debate to develop a vision of education, Secondly, this vision for learning is translated into architectural and building plans for the learning spaces. Thirdly, the ICT and furniture requirements, to meet the needs of planned learning activities, are established.

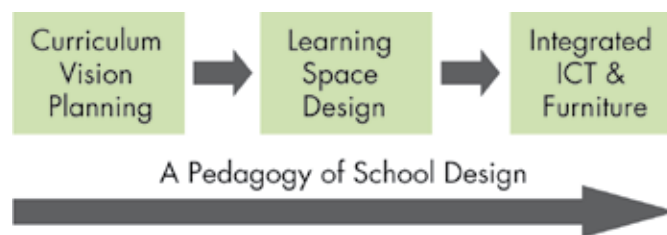


Figure 1: Towards a Pedagogy of School Design.

Let's follow the process that a school could adopt to achieve curriculum-focus in its new build or refurbishment. To do this, we'll choose a fictional school, Abingdon Park Primary and its desire to create a learning environment that children and teachers want to learn and teach in. One that is safe, secure, inspirational, exciting, and welcoming.

## (i) Vision Planning

In our example, Abingdon Park Primary School begins to consider what its aims are for learning. Even at this early stage, dialogue and partnerships is important. Schools that have successfully managed this process, talk of the importance of involving local communities, parents, staff, governors and the local authority. Developing a joint sense of ownership and a mandate for the vision are important steps in the building of the new school. What follows isn't an exhaustive list, there could well be other things that you might wish to add, but let's assume this is the basis for Abingdon Park Primary's educational vision.

- Embedding the principles of the five outcomes of Every Child Matters
- Developing effective and sustainable personalised learning
- Engaging pupils in learning
- Encouraging pupil voice
- Embedding effective inclusion practice across the school
- Ensuring breadth and depth in learning through more thematic teaching
- Educating for sustainable development
- Developing a professionally curious and qualified staff
- Developing global citizens.



## (ii) Learning Space Design

Different types of spaces support different styles of learning. Dr. Kenn Fisher<sup>3</sup> has developed the following image to illustrate this:

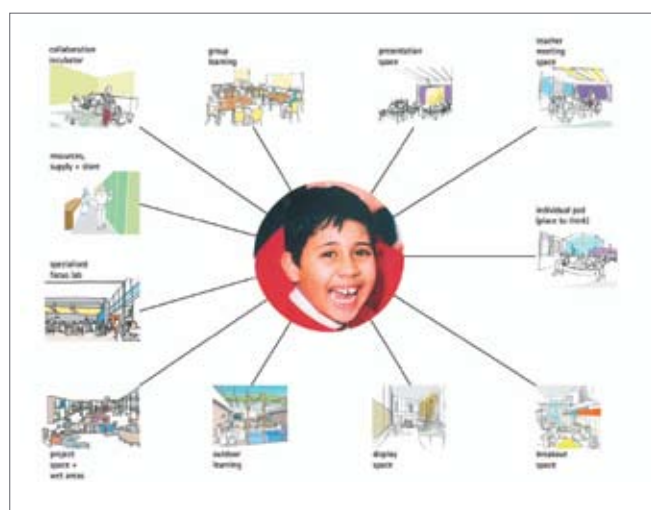


Figure 2: Learning Spaces

Abingdon Park School now starts to choose which type of spaces they will need to meet their curriculum aims. Again, communication is important to identify the needs of different stakeholders. Parents will have concerns for the well-being of their children. Teachers may have concerns for the accessibility of learning resources. The local authority architect will have requirements to ensure buildings are energy-efficient and cost-effective. Bringing parties together at an early stage develops shared ownership and reduces the burden on individuals, especially the head teacher. Indeed, delegating tasks and building the capacity of staff to accept responsibilities are important considerations in themselves.

Abingdon Park School's plans for different spaces for different styles of teaching and learning include:

- Collaborative working space
- Flexible/moveable learning spaces
- Accessible and secure storage space
- Space for specialised use
- Project space
- Wet areas
- Space for outdoor learning
- Spaces for thinking & reflection
- Display space
- Breakout space
- Presentation, large group space
- Teacher meeting space
- Dining, catering space.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Kenn Fisher 2006, Building Excellence - Linking the curriculum for excellence to the design of learning environments

### (iii) Integrated ICT & Furniture



Good primary school building design is not simply about physical shape, placement or structure. There are many other features needed to achieve a wonderful learning environment, for example furniture and ICT.

Because different types of spaces support different styles of learning, there will be a need for different types of furniture - with flexibility, ergonomic design, adjustability, ease of storage and safety being important considerations. To take that last point, safety. In areas where pupils move freely, cupboard doors that open completely back on themselves provide protection if pupils were to run into them. In areas where children will work collaboratively in research, tables that integrate power points and cabling will allow the easier use of laptop and mobile computing devices.

ICT provides a powerful set of tools for teaching and learning. Rather than being seen simply as PCs at the back of the classroom, ICT should be fully integrated into the teaching and learning. There's little doubt these days that a strong link exists between good ICT provision and high standards. Outside of the classroom, ICT has become 'mission-critical' for school management, assessment and inter-agency communication. It makes considerable sense therefore for ICT to be an integral part of the design of a school. To 'tack' ICT provision at the end of the build process will be inefficient and, ultimately, far less effective.

As with furniture, ICT requirements will differ according to space and use. Some aspects of ICT can be seen almost in the same way that you would see something like electricity. A school building without electricity would be unthinkable today, as would a school without network infrastructure - certainly cabled and probably wireless. Other aspects of ICT provide essential foundations for ICT in teaching and learning: network servers, broadband access and a learning platform, for example.

There's an essential administrative and management function to ICT that will also require planning at the outset. School life can run more smoothly and securely with the use of ICT for such purposes as electronic pupil registration, cashless catering systems and CCTV. In

the 21st century, primary schools are complex organisations. School leaders and managers need access to timely and accurate pupil records, and need to share this data securely and safely with local authority and government agencies. Parental communication can be enhanced considerably too through the use of ICT, for example through text-messaging services.

Within the curriculum, ICT directly supports both teacher and pupil. In learning spaces where teachers present to pupils, teachers will use interactive whiteboards, data projectors and visualisers as key teaching tools. Pupils will use ICT for data-logging and control; for creativity in audio and video presentations; and to support research and independent learning. In areas where pupils are engaged in group-based work, mobile and laptop devices will be more appropriate. Learning spaces will need to be able to support this variety of learning through flexibility in furniture and space design, access to power and network connections, and storage space.

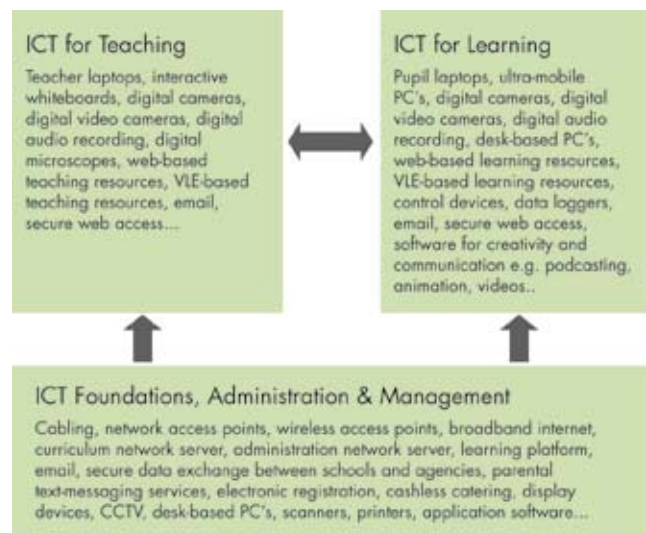


Figure 3: Integrated ICT

Some of the ways in which furniture and ICT may support different learning spaces and different learning activities is illustrated in the following diagram.

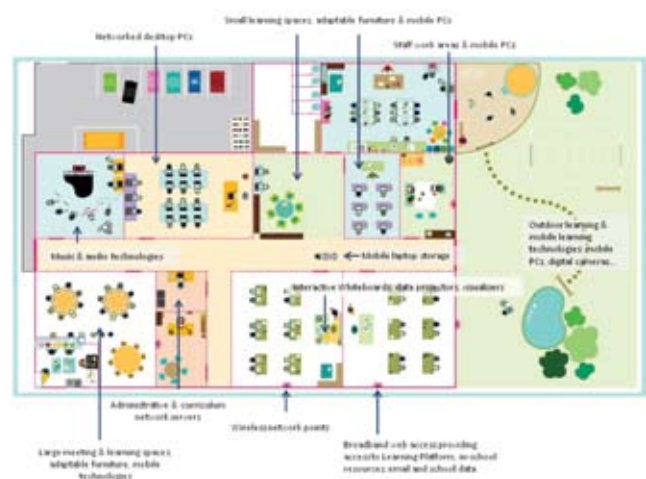


Figure 4: Integrated ICT & Furniture

### 3. School Design in Practice

Although Abingdon Park Primary School is a fictitious example, the pedagogical approach to school design is something that is happening, in real schools. For example, Kingsmead Primary School<sup>5</sup>, Cheshire, has put sustainability at the heart of its educational vision to develop a learning school for the 21st century. The result can be seen in both curriculum and in buildings.

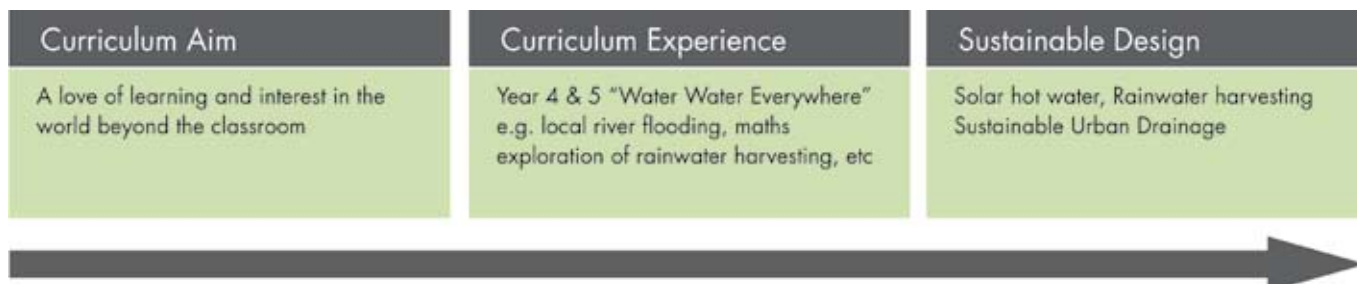


Figure 5: Curriculum Aims to School Design



In a central city location where space is at a premium, Hampden Gurney School<sup>6</sup>, Westminster has ensured that the space provided is driven by a focus on learning to create a multi-level 'vertical school' over six levels. Age-banded 'play decks' provide all-weather, easy access, multi-functional spaces. The curriculum need for extended learning classroom space and a space for curriculum enrichment in science, arts, geography has resulted in the creation of a Technology Garden. There have been drawbacks, for example high energy consumption, but the lack of physical space for building has not hampered the curriculum vision for the built environment.

Our final example is Abbots Green Community Primary School<sup>7</sup> in Bury St Edmunds, a new build first phase school in Bury St Edmund's tertiary middle-school system. Here, head teacher Alex Bedford has worked closely with teachers, parents, the local authority, builders, architects and pupils in creating practical, efficient and motivational learning spaces – both indoors and outdoors. What sets the building apart is its strong curriculum vision foundation. The school vision is based on Maslov's hierarchy of needs but translated into more readily understood terms. At the base of the triangle are 'physical' needs, followed by 'emotional', 'wondering', and 'learning' needs. The entire school building is designed to meet these needs.



Figure 6: Hierarchy of Needs at Abbots Green

For example, the building's orientation ensures that plenty of natural light is available but also ensures that no direct sunlight intrudes harshly into the learning spaces. The simple direct layout means that children are never lost, while the strategic use of windows ensures that children can always be seen. Sustainability has been an important part of the development too. Once again, the link between learning and the built environment has been consciously planned. For example, the school takes advantage of the learning opportunities provided by the wildlife-encouraging energy-efficient grass roof.

Technology has a part in creating these supportive and inspirational environments too. Positioned around the school are LCD screens that automatically display images and play sounds at breaks, lunchtime and other changes of school day without bells. It's part of the intention to create a calm atmosphere and extend the school's highly effective practice in inclusion to all children in the school. This can also be seen in the sensory room, which is used widely across the school. ICT is fully embedded throughout the school, for example in wireless whole-school network, mobile learning technologies and the use of DVDs and digital resources for interactive whiteboards. There is also a dedicated sensory room that not only supports the physical and emotional needs of young children but also provides a space for wonder and learning. It's an example in a nutshell of how the curriculum vision has driven the outcome of physical building and used technology creatively.

<sup>5</sup> [www.kingsmead.cheshire.sch.uk](http://www.kingsmead.cheshire.sch.uk)

<sup>6</sup> [www.hampdengurneyschool.co.uk](http://www.hampdengurneyschool.co.uk)

<sup>8</sup> [www.abbotsgreen.co.uk](http://www.abbotsgreen.co.uk)

## 4. Partnership

Talk with schools engaged in the process of rebuild and refurbishment and one thing becomes very clear: head teachers cannot manage this process alone. This is no criticism of head teachers. It's simply recognition of the fact that the skill-base and capacity of head teachers does not extend to school rebuilding, and why should it? However, when head teachers are involved at an early stage and throughout, an outcome where the school is delighted with its new facilities is more likely.

The key, therefore, is partnership.

Partnership is built on three assets:

- Shared vision
- Communication
- Leadership capacity.

A successful partnership built on these principles is also one that is more likely to stand the test of time and lead to successful long-term relationships.

### (i) Shared vision

Building a shared vision extends to the whole-school community; to parents, local business, staff, governors and pupils. The Sorrell Foundation<sup>8</sup>, for example, has a Joinedupdesign process for developing small and large projects in school with the active participation of pupils in working with architects and planners. Pupils act as clients. Clearly there are many opportunities for learning too. The programme itself may not transfer exactly to your circumstances but there is a lot to be gained from its principles and practice. The foundation has also established a Young Design Centre to explore what young people want from design at school.

Parents too will have a keen interest in the development of the school. Central to parents' concerns are the health, safety and well-being of their children. Experience suggests that early involvement of parents in the planning process helps create strong practical and moral support for the project. The same is true of staff and governors. Local businesses are an often neglected area of interest and support.

In many ways, this is about developing a shared vision for the school; as the vision develops across the different stakeholders, so too does support. It becomes a mandate for change



Figure 7: Partnership

### (ii) Communication

Implicit in this vision-building process is need to communicate openly and regularly with all partners in the project. Channels for communication include presentations, meetings, visits, email, school website and newsletters. The practice of communication should also be managed within the project partners. For example, there may be different suppliers providing furniture, ICT, play items, books and resources. Insisting on a means of communication where suppliers

communicate with each other can save considerable time and energy. There's an important additional benefit too when schools can ask suppliers to seek and source innovative solutions rather than trying to do this themselves.



Figure 8: Supplier Communication

### (iii) Leadership Capacity

The process also hinges on the ability of head teachers to delegate. At the same time as leading and managing a busy school, head teachers are expected to be actively involved in their new build or refurbishment. This will not be achievable unless there is some means of building capacity. At Abbots Green Community Primary School, building capacity meant sharing leadership and developing the skills of more junior staff.

Partners in this process also include those agencies external to the immediate school community. Working closely with builders and architects will be essential if the vision developed with the school community is to be successfully implemented.

Central to this whole process is the local authority - likely to be your key partner in the development of the project, from identification of need, through planning and to project completion. Expertise exists in local authorities that it would be unreasonable to expect in the school. Forging a strong partnership with the LA helps extend the capacity of the head teacher. For example, procurement is a specialist area of expertise and experience. It makes considerable sense therefore for local authorities to be central to the three-way supplier/LA/school relationship.

## 5. Next Steps

In this document we have recommended a pedagogical approach to school design for new build or refurbishment and we have emphasised the importance of partnership; principles that are informed by a recent roundtable discussion between school leaders, advisers, journalists, educationalists and those involved in the implementation of new-build schools. We would very much like to extend this discussion. Perhaps you will want to share this document with colleagues and use this as a basis for your own thinking?

If you are a school leader, one starting point could be to contact your local authority and discuss its plans for PCP. Perhaps you have had notification of plans affecting your school, in which case you may be beginning the process of building the vision across your whole school community. Perhaps, action has already begun and you are already engaged in building partnership.

Whatever your circumstances, we hope this document and its accompanying web pages provide a useful source of information and a stimulus for further debate.

Do visit us at [www.rm.com/primaryschoolsforthefuture](http://www.rm.com/primaryschoolsforthefuture) where you will find useful materials and means of communication.

<sup>8</sup> [www.thesorrellfoundation.com](http://www.thesorrellfoundation.com)