

Managing a School Building Project – What must a Board of Management do?



You have received approval from the Department of Education and Skills (DoES) for building works. The works may be for a major extension or re-building of the school or may simply involve some minor M&E works. Either way, the board of management need to understand how to manage the project on behalf of the school.

The most important thing to note is that the board of management is the client for the project and as such, is responsible for managing the project on behalf of the school. The DoES provide the funding and will assist the board where possible but do not have a formal role in the project. It is advisable to appoint a member of the board as well as the principal to manage the project on a day to day basis.

Appointment of Design Team

The first issue will be the appointment of the design team. For larger projects this may include an architect, a quantity surveyor, a mechanical and electrical consultant and a structural engineer. The architect will be the leader of the design team. For smaller projects one consultant will suffice and the consultant should be appropriate to the works being carried out. You may have had an architect involved in the preparation of the application to the DoES for funding. That architect does not automatically become the architect for the project. You must follow the [DoES guidelines for the engagement of consultants](#). Once the consultant is selected ensure that the standard conditions of engagement are entered into in writing and that fees are clearly agreed in advance.

Design of Works

The board of management should ensure that the consultant is familiar with the DoES guidelines for the operation of these projects and that the procedures in [TGD 007](#) are followed. The most important document at this stage is the scope of works. It is vital that the board of management and the principal actively engage with the architect in designing the scope of works to be carried out. The board must have a full understanding of the works that will form part of the contract and be satisfied that all necessary works are included in the scope of works. The DoES will not provide additional funding for extra works so it is crucial to ensure at this stage that all necessary works are included.

The architect will at this stage apply for all necessary planning and other regulatory approvals. It is important to ensure that approval is sought from the DoES at this stage in respect of any extra costs attached to such approvals.

Tendering Procedure

Once the works are properly designed and costed the project will go out to tender to select a contractor to carry out the works. Your consultant will conduct the tender competition on your behalf but the board need to be actively involved in this process and ensure that the consultant runs the competition in accordance with the [DoES guidelines](#).

Commencement of Works

At the end of the tender process the contractor will be appointed. Construction should commence as quickly as possible. The board must actively engage with the consultant in ensuring that the contract is properly administered. Regular site meetings should be held and they should be attended by a member of the board as well as the principal and the contractor and design team. Minutes should be kept of those meetings.

The board need to ensure they understand the process involved with the following:

- Change orders – Compensation Events/ Delay events
- Interim Certificates
- Substantial Completion
- Defects Certificate and Final Account

The board should insist on being involved in any change orders made by the consultant and the cost implications of such instructions. The board must ensure at all times that the works can be completed within budget. If additional funding is necessary prior approval must be sought from the DoES and works should not be carried out without such approval. The board must be satisfied that works proposed to be certified in interim certificates have in fact been carried out. Once interim certificates are issued the contractor is entitled to payment within 15 days and can suspend works if not paid.

The board must be happy that the works are substantially complete before the certificate of Substantial Completion is issued. Substantial Completion means that the school is ready for handover and should be ready for children to walk into. There should be nothing more than very minor snags outstanding at that stage. If the board is not satisfied that is the case then it needs to ensure a certificate is not issued.

The defects period will typically last for 12 months and is a period when the contractor must return to rectify any defects which arise. At the end of that period the final account will be agreed and the defects certificate will issue. On payment of this certificate your project is complete.

Defects

In the unfortunate event that defects emerge it is important that the board act quickly and take a pro-active role in managing such defects. The first point of contact is to the original design team and contractor who will be in the best position to rectify the defects. If defects persist however the board need to engage an independent expert to inspect the defects in order to ascertain the cause. A claim for construction defects can only be brought within six years of the works being carried out (or in some cases within six years of the defects occurring) so it is important that any defects are closely monitored.

For further information and assistance contact [Susan Bryson](#)

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