**Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS): Note of Updates to the GEMS Guidance**

**Introduction**

On the 14 October 2020 several new updates were added to the Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) website. Most of the changes are in response to feedback though some are in response to changes in guidance and/or legislation. Below is a summary of the relevant changes, highlighting elements of interest to the Catholic sector. The vast majority of the changes are reorganisation/restructuring of the guidance, this is echoed by the information available from the DfE on the website.

**Fundamentals of good estate management**

* Minor updates based on feedback from users.
* Under “take a strategic estate management approach”
  + Estate vision section now defines in years the length of medium to long term (5-10 years). It also now mentioned consulting with stakeholders in particular landowning parties and that it should be signed off by the board.
  + Estate strategy now includes “identify projected funding for estate development” and “outline anticipated outcomes and improvements to deliver the educations strategy”
  + Asset management plan should now also “include data and information about the estate”
  + New subsection on strategic review and the benefits of completing a strategic review.
* “document your processes and procedures” is now called “plan and organise estate resources”
  + Under budget and finance this plan should now include actual and potential funding sources
  + Procurement is now called “buying goods, works and services” this plan should now include purchasing arrangements for capital and revenue expenditure.
  + This section also previously included a subheading on data and data management.
  + Emergency planning should now be linked to the estate risk assessment which has considered a variety of different scenarios.
* Understanding your land and buildings
  + Reference to data and information (and keeping it secure) is now found under this section.
  + Under condition it is now noted that the condition will also inform the estate budget.
* “manage your energy and water usage” is now “manage estate performance and sustainability”.
  + Under “managing and reducing your energy and water usage” reference is now made to “reducing energy and water use” and “maximising energy efficiency in buildings”.
* A new section “maintain your estate” has been inserted. This explains what should be included in a maintenance plan. This plan should include a prioritised programme of works and list of who is responsible for land, buildings and equipment.
* The health and safety section has been moved to the bottom. Under the compliance section the new version no longer mentions keeping “records to document your compliance”, but it does now include a link to more information on H&S compliance.
* The plan and carry out estate projects section remains unchanged.

**Strategic estate management**

* Minor updates based on feedback from users. It now contains the following sections:
  + Overview of strategic estate management
    - This includes the information that was previously found under “what is strategic estate managing”
    - Additional factors (under the sub-section on what factors influence how you manage the estate) have been included. These are:
      * How effectively the current facilities meet the specific educational needs of the school
      * The type, size and nature of the body responsible for the school
      * Availability of funding
      * Terms of the funding agreement
    - A link has also been provided to guidance on what information the school should aim to have.
    - Under estate strategy it is expected that it will also “set out specific outcomes and timescales”
    - Asset Management Plan – what should be included in the asset management plan has been changed slightly to make it clearer and less verbose. It also includes reference to how building and maintenance work will be prioritised. Under the importance of an Asset Management Plan reference is now made to “optimis[ing] the use of properties in the estate”
    - The previous subsection on “estate management plan” has ben removed. The strategic review elements have been subsumed into its own subsection.

**Planning and organising your estate resources**

* This is a new section – most of the previous content was found in the old section entitled “overseeing the estate”.
  + A new subsection is included on PFI schools and who to contact with queries.
  + Details are provided on how to assign responsibility and governance arrangements.
  + Under organisational capability links are provided to the Institute of School Business leadership professional standards and the Education Estates Working Group framework.
  + The performance management of the estate section which was found in the old “overseeing the estate” has not been replicated in this new section.
  + Under the procurement subsection (buying goods and services) additional information included on procurement options including the NEPRO framework. For schools with a religious character it is noted that they should refer to diocesan procurement procedures.

**Understanding and managing your land and buildings**

* This section now includes the subsection on data management which was found previously in a different section. It also includes the detailed information on conditions surveys which was previously found in maintaining your estate.
* The information found in the old “condition, suitability and sufficiency” subsection can be found divided over two subsections in the new version.
* With regards to legal interests there is a new paragraph which states “Land and property law can be very complicated. Always seek appropriate professional advice. If you’re a school with a religious character, you should always contact the trustees of the school and the diocese or other religious authority when considering any transactions involving the land and buildings.”

**Performance management and sustainability**

* New section added. It contains the information previously found under energy and water management.
* It also includes information on performance management of the estate which was previously found under “overseeing the estate section”. New information has been included on the Technical Annex 2H of the Genetic Design Brief for benchmarking, CIBSE’s energy benchmarking tool and other resources. It also now notes that some MATs use business intelligence dashboards to support their work and an example has been included on this topic.

**Maintaining your estate projects (previously maintaining your estate).**

* Minor changes have been made following feedback from users.
  + New section on maintenance planning and what to include in the plan including how to prevent/minimise disruption. There was an old section on maintained planning, but this has now been split into two sections (the second section being prioritising maintenance works).
  + The section on condition surveys has been condensed. It is now found under “understanding the condition”. It now provides links on conditions surveys and procuring professional services.
  + Includes link to HSE information on safe maintenance.
  + Under the certification subsection there is now a distinction drawn between the equipment found in most schools, vs found in many schools.
  + Site security now includes a link to the guidance on school and college site security.

**Health and Safety**

* This section has been updated to include more information on responsibilities (“who is responsible for health and safety”), and new guidance/links from the HSE. With regards to schools with a religious character it notes the importance of seeking consent from the trustees in relation to any dealings with the land.
  + The previous introduction provided more background information on the HSWA.
  + The subtopics on the various risks (i.e. fire safety) have been reordered from the previous version but the content appears similar.
  + Under Radon a reference is now made to the 2017 Regulations.

**Managing your estate projects (previously known as “estate projects”)**

* Minor updates to the content based on feedback from users.
* A new link has been included to guidance on understanding duties under the CDM Regulations 2015.
* The previous section on “complete preliminary activities” has been moved further down this section.
* Under effective project planning a link has been provided to the checklist “plan and manage your project”.
* A link to preliminary activities is included in the “have the risk skills in place” subsection. Along with ensuring that school staff are fully trained on any new equipment.
* Under preliminary activities information is now included on what should be considered before starting a project and what the benefits are in taking these steps.
* Under defining the scope of your project, a link has been provided to the Constructing Excellence factsheet.
* A new subsection on project handover has been included.

**New tools and checklists**

* The new list of tools and checklists include:
  + A list of the benefits of good estate management
  + An interactive version of the GEMS self-assessment tool which will automatically generate an action plan for you
  + An interactive tool to help you track compliance with health and safety and building regulations and inspections
  + Updates to the top 10 questions for governing boards
  + A new tool to help schools prioritise maintenance projects and tasks.
  + A checklist that schools can use to reduce their energy and water usage.

**Skills and knowledge**

* This section has been updated to include links to:
  + The competency framework for governing boards
  + ISBL professional standards
  + A new competency framework under development for school estate managers
  + How to secure professional support.

**Cross references to asbestos information**

Cross references to asbestos information can be found in the following parts of the document:

* Planning and organising your estate resources
  + Under ‘dealing with emergencies’ estate managers are prompted to consider the legislative and procedural requirements if an asbestos disturbance/damage occurs.
* Health and safety
  + Under estates documentation it is noted that an asbestos register and management plan is required by law
  + Under information and training it is noted that legislation may require specific training on aspects of estate health and safety for example in respect of asbestos.
  + Under Asbestos – there is a link to the guidance on asbestos management in schools. It provides a very brief overview of the H&S issues relating to asbestos. HSE provide guidance about asbestos health and safety, includes advice on selecting a competent asbestos surveyor.
  + Under contractor competence and ensuring that contractors are safe on-site GEMs notes that the contractors should be provided information about asbestos before any work is started.
* Understanding and managing your land and buildings
  + It is noted that conditions surveys should include information on asbestos.
  + With regards to when to survey it is noted that if refurbishments are being conducted in a building that contains asbestos then a refurbishment and demolition survey may be required. A link to the ‘asbestos management in schools’ guidance is provided here.
  + CDC reports do not include information on asbestos or other hazardous materials.