

# **Delivering Free Schools (and how we could learn a thing or two from Casablanca)**

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# How it works

- Three application rounds a year with approvals expected in December, April and August
  - Capital grant is provided to cover the capital costs of setting up the free school (site and buildings)
  - All projects are conditional on finding feasible premises that are considered to be value for money
  - Keen on innovation in using all types of sites for schools
  - Default position for new build is modular construction
  - Very small schools are discouraged.
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# Roles and Responsibilities

## Education Funding Agency (EFA) Project Director (PD)

Oversees all site and capital elements of the project.

### EFA specialists

**Project Managers:** responsible for the day to day project management support for the entire school development process. Reports to the PD

**Technical Advisors (TAs):** advise on all technical (feasibility, design, cost, planning) elements of the proposed solution. Managed by the PM

**EFA ICT Adviser:** advises and supports on all ICT aspects, including the development of the ICT requirements and its procurement

**Property Agents:** Internal property experts plus DTZ and Jones Lang LaSalle undertake site searches, provides some planning advice & agree outline terms

**Legal Support:** Dickinson Dees (DD) and Veale Wasbrough Vizards (VWV) support EFA and Proposers with the legal aspects of the property work

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# Useful info: “Ready-Reckoner”

<i>Age range</i>	<i>Size (sq. m.)</i>
<i>Primary</i>	<i>350 sq m + 4.1m<sup>2</sup> per pupil</i>
<i>Secondary</i>	<i>1050 sq m + 6.3m<sup>2</sup> per pupil</i>
<i>Post-16 in a school</i>	<i>350 sq m + 7m<sup>2</sup> per pupil</i>
<i>Post-16 provision on its own</i>	<i>1050 sq m + 7m<sup>2</sup> per pupil</i>

For all-through schools, calculate and add the individual phases together

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# “Ready-Reckoner” - SEN

- **Primary pupils only; ambulant**
  - No of pupils x 15 + 700 = m2
  - **Primary pupils only; non-ambulant**
  - No of pupils x 21 + 700 = m2
  - **Schools with any secondary age pupils; ambulant**
  - No of pupils x 15 + 1050 = m2
  - **Schools with any secondary age pupils; non-ambulant**
  - No of pupils x 21 + 1050 = m2
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# “Ready-Reckoner” - AP

## **Without post 16 and up to 80 places:**

- No of pupils  $\times 15 + 350 = m2$
  - **Without post 16 and above 80 places:**
  - $(80 \times 15 + 350) + (\text{no of pupils} - 80 \times 6.3) = m2$
  - **Post 16 and up to 120 places:**
  - No of pupils  $\times 15 + 350 = m2$
  - **Post 16 and above 120 places:**
  - $(120 \times 15 + 350) + (\text{no of pupils} - 120 \times 6.3) = m2$
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# Useful info: Example sizes

- 2072m<sup>2</sup> for a 2FE primary school
- 4830m<sup>2</sup> for a 4FE 11-16 secondary school
- 3850m<sup>2</sup> for a 400 place stand-alone post 16 school

The EFA would not expect to be able to demonstrate VfM if required to buy, lease or refurbish buildings that are in excess of these figures

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# Capital funding

- Funding provides fit for purpose schools in a range of buildings **NOT** distinctively designed & expensive new builds.
  - The budget takes into account pupil numbers (and therefore the amount of space required)
  - Once a preferred site is identified, the option is assessed by EFA surveyors and they set a budget
  - This assessment considers the minimum level of refurbishment or remodelling work required to enable the buildings to meet statutory requirements and to be opened as a school for the stipulated number of pupils.
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# Let's take a step back....

BEFORE approval, the EFA:

- Works with LAs to identify appropriate sites
  - Helps free school proposers understand how site stuff works
  - Carries out some site visits to assess suitability
  - Commissions town planning reviews
  - Completes site searches via agents
  - Liaises with site owners to try and get in the best position to kick off if and when a proposal is approved
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# Beggars can't be choosers....

.....particularly in London and the South East

- Sites are hard to come by, in some areas it's impossible
  - There is competition for sites – independent schools, alternative users
  - Budgets are limited.
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# Key considerations – tenure

- Lease v freehold
- Length of lease and extent of works needed
- In some areas, we simply won't ever be able to find a suitable, VfM site

It's NOT a case of money being no object....

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# Key considerations – planning

- Use class as close as possible to D1 is preferable but not essential
- With a similar use class that implies the same sort of footfall as a school, change of use permission where needed will be easier to secure
- In areas such as those designated as employment zones it may be difficult to persuade planners to allow a change
- Listed buildings/conservation naturally present an challenge

**BUT....**

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# Changes to Planning Law (1)

**New Permitted Development Rights introduced on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013**  
designed to streamline the planning process to help ensure Free  
Schools can open on time.

They cover: -

**Minor operations** – fence, wall, gate up to 2 metres high

**Permanent change of use** to a school from business/office use,  
hotels, residential institutions, secure residential institutions and  
assembly and leisure use.

- Subject to approval of local planning authority of transport & noise impacts and contamination risks only
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# Changes to Planning Law (2)

**Temporary change of use** from almost all land uses to school for one academic year (1<sup>st</sup> August until 31<sup>st</sup> July) including:

- Erection, extension and/or alterations including a temporary school building but subject to detailed conditions/limitations
  - Where applicable works can be carried out when the SoS approves the site i.e. in advance of the school opening
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# Not so much of an issue....

- Type of construction
  - The look of the building
  - Multi-storey building
  - Proximity to other schools
  - External playground space – can, and should, be flexible
  - On-site sports facilities
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# Procurement of works

Various routes available:

- EFA National Contractors Framework
- Small works framework – July 2014
- Other National frameworks – e.g. SCAPE, LHC
- Regional Frameworks
- Local Authority Frameworks
- Other Procurement routes

LAs can deliver the capital aspects of free school projects themselves if they wish

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# Next...?

# The softer stuff.....

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# Proposer Engagement

**You get what you give**

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“I blow with the wind, and the prevailing wind happens to be from Vichy”

Capt Louis Renault  
Casbalanca (1942)

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# Antagonistic

- Why go to war on such unequal terms
  - Huge drain on resource
  - Reputational and educational risk
  
  - No visibility, No control
  - No commercial opportunities
  - Pot luck as to the benefits or otherwise
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# Agnostic

- Understand the political dimension
  - Recognise the imperatives
  - Don't support but don't seek to block
  
  - Some visibility but little control
  - A chance to plan a reaction
  - Limited commercial opportunities
  - Possibility to benefit an area
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# All-together

- Declare that you are ‘open for business’
  - Engage with proposers from day one
  - Provide resources and information
  
  - The best chance to influence and shape
  - Better ability to plan provision
  - Commercial opportunities for the LA
  - Better outcomes for the learning community
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# Swimming with the tide

- Pragmatism makes good business sense
  - Engagement makes educational sense
  - Avoid unwanted surprises
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“I think this is the beginning of a  
beautiful friendship”

Rick Blaine  
Casablanca (1942)

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# Being creative

But what does all this mean, practically?

The role of Academies?

The role of maintained schools?

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# Existing Free Schools



# Existing Free Schools



# Existing Free Schools



# Existing Free Schools



# Existing Free Schools



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