



Pan London Back On Track- Scoping 'Safe PRU' buildings and physical resources

A report from the 'Developing a blueprint for a safe PRU work stream'

Background

Pupil referral units have historically occupied buildings which have become available due to the cessation of either educational or social functions. The leadership teams of the units have adapted the units in a skilful and creative way and have delivered a personalised curriculum for excluded pupils, pupils with medical needs and teenage mothers in environments which do not replicate the resources of a mainstream school.

The Department for Children Schools and Families '*Back on Track - A strategy for modernizing alternative provision for you people*' White Paper has created the potential for change and development within PRUs and underscores the requirements for pupils to be afforded the essential resources to be able to make genuine progress. The Building Schools for future programme has also enabled some local authorities to be able to review their alternative provision and provide the critical resource to be able to implement change.

Designs for new and redeveloped PRUs are necessarily in an evolutionary phase and the purpose of this document is to provide some design principles which may be an effective starting point for leadership teams who have the opportunity to refurbish or rebuild existing buildings.

Following consultation with a number of key professionals the following priorities were agreed to address in the development of a set of statements to improve the quality of alternative provision:

- Vision and values
- Partnerships
- Learning
- The learning environment
- Resources
- Personal development and well-being

It also became clear from carrying out this work that that further work would be required to develop a set of additional supporting documents to be used alongside the draft guidance to enhance school leaders understanding of the process as well as the 'drivers' and 'barriers' which are pertinent to this critical work.

A truly effective alternative provision should include/consider;

Vision and values

The starting point for developing safe and purposeful PRU buildings must be the vision, values and ethos that the provision stands for. This would usually be led by the senior leadership and formulated by all stakeholders of the school. The articulation of the vision is highly influential in shaping the early discussion with the design team and the importance of this process cannot be underestimated so that the final design of building is secure. The evaluation of the relationship between the design and the vision has to be revisited consistently to achieve the optimum result for all stakeholders. This professional conversation is a part of the pathway to success and its evolution has the potential to achieve good communication between all stakeholders.

In essence, the ethos of a school can be described as one which;

- 'Offers a level of care that can react and respond to its young people to help them get 'back on track'
- 'Enhances the potential for its young people to enter society and contribute fully.'
- 'Enables every student to maximize their potential'
- 'Is realistic about how to meet the needs of all young people in its care'
- 'Provides a therapeutic environment'
- 'Ensures that every young person feels that they matter and can succeed'
- 'Has a strong ethos which puts Continuing Professional Development (CPD) at the heart of its work'

The formulation of a school's vision and values will start even before the planning stage of the process. Senior staff must start to consider what type of provision they want to lead and how all stakeholders will feel when the school is in operation before they embark on the planning process. This will then help to 'guide' that process and help all those involved in the design process to clearly understand what the leadership wants the school to stand for and what the young people's experience will be on a daily basis.

Partnerships

Effective partnerships are one of the key components to truly effective PRUs. The aspirations of all partners for the future design must be managed skilfully so that effective communication about the professional needs of all disciplines takes place. Partners will be encouraged to be prescriptive about their requirements whilst retaining a high degree of flexibility to meet potential budgetary restrictions.

It was felt that anyone involved in any stage of the design process should be aware that consideration will need to be taken of the following aims when working;

- 'Agencies work together to provide high quality support informed by assessment of need'
- 'Streamlined effective communication takes place between all partners'
- 'Partnerships are built upon mutual respect which are honest'
- 'An effective design process which will truly involve all'
- 'Multi-use space for all professionals to share is fully utilised'

Staff involved in the planning for a new or refurbished PRU will need to utilise the knowledge and expertise of school staff who have previously worked effectively with a range of school partners. This will be particularly beneficial when considering how best to meet these aims.

Learning

Truly effective learning can only take place when the environment young people work in enables them to benefit from high quality teaching and learning experiences which allow them to progress and achieve at their own pace at a variety of levels and according to individual needs. The resources which are available to support this learning must include a building which allows flexible usage so that all learners' needs and learning styles can be catered for. A demonstrable commitment to high quality resources for both pupils and staff will enable the emergence of high quality teaching and learning to take place. The creation of a dynamic curriculum will engage learners whose historical pathway has been one of disengagement. Pupils will be encouraged to find a link between their learning pathway and develop a commitment to continuing training and employment.

In order for this effective learning to take place, staff involved in planning and designing safe and effective PRUs must be aware of the following learning aims where the provision provides;

- 'An excellent facility where young people are able to learn effectively'
- 'A holistic approach to learning is always adopted by the school'
- 'A good link with the vision and values of the provision takes place'
- 'A genuine dialogue with young people and their families can happen'
- 'There is equality access for all'
- 'Good quality accreditation is the pathway to lifelong success'
- 'Different and flexible pathway routes for all young people exists'
- 'A curriculum that the young people enjoy and can achieve'
- 'Personalization underpins the curriculum offer for all young people'

Staff need to carefully consider how these aims can be met through the planning of a resource where young people feel safe and able to learn. The best provisions offer a flexible

environment where young people can follow a range of personalised learning pathways to success.

The Learning environment

The most effective new environments for learning provide places where young people can be inspired to learn in new and interesting ways. The environments being created need to carefully consider how young people can be kept safe and healthy and encouraged to take their learning into their lives outside of school. Staff involved in the planning and implementations of new PRUs need to consider the following statements when planning their work;

- 'Is not just a traditional educational establishment but a deliberate attempt to engage with the wider learning needs of the students'
- 'Allows the alignment of service provision and support services to be able to encourage multi-use ideas'
- 'Takes note of DCSF Building Bulletin 102' (see appendix E)
- 'Creates a safe, healthy and vibrant environment for all'
- 'Creates a secure environment which improves young people's perceptions of learning and themselves'

Resources

The emergence of high quality technology will require a commitment to continuing professional development for staff so that their capacity to adapt to the 21st learning styles of their pupils is secure. As well as providing the best possible building that is fit for purpose for young people to thrive and make progress. Those involved in the planning and delivery of new and refurbished short staff schools need to ensure that care is taken to plan for the best possible resource allocation. The focus group want to stress how important it is that strategic planning takes place throughout to ensure that there are adequate resources (human and physical) to ensure that all opportunities are taken to help the young people to be supported. Clearly the most important resource that a Head teacher has at their disposal within any school is its staff. Heads of PRUs need to carefully consider the following statements when recruiting, retaining, deploying, training and managing their staff;

- 'Must have the highest quality staff to be able to meet its vision and values'
- 'There must be agreed levels of standards for all'
- 'Must be able to recruit and retain the best staff possible'
- 'All staff must feel that their CPD needs and the Centre's are met'
- 'Enhance the status of the role'

- 'Staff must be helped to become 'Lead professionals' to work more closely with partner schools'
- 'Must build on existing B&A partnerships'

It is critical that Heads and management committees are clear about their roles and functions in relation to working with staff and in deploying their resources.

Personal Development and Well-being

The potential for PRUs to extend the learning beyond the statutory 25 hours is crucial to maximise the engagement of the learners. The opportunity to revisit the shape of the timetable emerges and may enable the establishment to improve more securely the attendance and motivation of the learners. Planners and school leaders need to be aware of the critical link between a young person's well-being and their school experience. Staff involved in the planning and implementation of PRUs have the unique opportunity to influence young people positively by promoting good and effective relationships. PRUs have the opportunity to act as 'hubs' where a range of agencies and partners can work carefully with young people and their families to support a number of aspects of young people's lives.

The design and implementation of new and refurbished schools can support this aim by considering the following statements;

- 'Engages young people through the planned use of praise, rewards and sanctions'
- 'Ensures that approaches to address conflict and bullying are well established'
- 'Ensures that young people are made aware of the mechanisms which are in place to support them,
- 'Ensures 'buy in' from partners to enable B & A partnerships to be effective'
- 'Excellent practice to be visited'

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A – Focus group membership

- Thelma Bartlett – Executive Head teacher, New River College, CEA@Islington and joint Coordinator
- Mark Vickers – Olive Education and joint Coordinator
- Gary Lefley – Head of The John Barker Centre, Redbridge
- Jeanette Lowe, Executive Head, Newham
- Poppy Berry, Headteacher , Agincourt House, Camden
- Liz Tonge, The Learning Trust, Hackney
- Anthony Peltier, Executive Head teacher, Southwark
- George Crosbie, Head of Pupil Support Service, Kensington and Chelsea
- Alan Dale, Alan Dale Education Architects Ltd, Derbyshire
- Martin Evans Watkins Gray International LLP, London
- Joe Woodyatt, Impactlives, Bradford

In support of the work of the group;

- Fern Edwards, Principal Policy and Project Officer, Policy and Public Affairs – Communities, London Councils
- Luke Roberts, Restorative Justice work stream Lead, Croydon
- Mike Brooks, The Arts Council
- Rosemary Watt-Wynass, The Princes Trust

Appendix B- Overview of research undertaken into how to develop safe PRU

The research undertaken looked at a range of studies and initiatives throughout London and England. This document offers an overview of the key messages and themes which have emerged and should be considered alongside the Back on Track focus group's recommendations contained within their paper on 'Scoping safe PRU and physical resources.'

What are the important relevant messages from DCSF; ('Learning environments for pupil referral units' – DCSF 2007)

- PRU have a key role to play in improving learners' behaviour, attendance and attainment. They should provide a supportive environment which assists in achieving these aims.
- It is essential that there is good quality accommodation to provide for pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced and relevant education, and to support their well-being.
- PRU should present a positive image to the community they serve and reflect the significance of their role in the education of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.
- Pupils should feel safe and secure on the school premises.
- PRU should be designed to have the appropriate level of safety and security.
- Pupils, staff and visitors, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities should be safe and secure at all times but a PRU should not be institutional.
- It is good practice to have an attractive external appearance with a positive relationship to the surroundings, including both hard and soft landscaping.
- When creating a schedule of accommodation, and selecting the appropriate range and type of spaces, checks should be made to ensure there is sufficient area to support the activities planned.
- For general teaching spaces a space of 50-54m² supports one teacher, an assistant and 6-8 pupils

Appendix C - What are the relevant messages from OFSTED (From reports and publications)

'The most successful pupil referral units (PRUs) are offering pupils a 'second chance' in mainstream education by setting them high expectations, offering them an interesting and relevant curriculum and focusing on improving their academic and personal development and confidence.'

An Ofsted survey of 28 good or outstanding PRUs sought to identify what contributes to effective practice. It also reveals some of the barriers to it. The relevant messages for those involved in designing and improving current provision include;

'The barriers may include inadequate accommodation, pupils of different ages with diverse needs arriving in an unplanned way, limited numbers of specialist staff to provide a broad curriculum and difficulties reintegrating pupils into mainstream schools. The success of PRUs depends on their responses to these challenges and the support they receive from their LA. The report also underlines the need for schools and LAs to provide adequate data and work with PRUs in reintegrating pupils into mainstream education.'

'Successful PRUs visited had a clear sense of purpose. They focused strongly on pupils' academic and personal development and on increasing their confidence to prepare them for mainstream school or for the next stage of their life. They provided an interesting, relevant and appropriately accredited curriculum.'

'Ensure that PRU accommodation is suitable and that improvements are made urgently where necessary.'

What are the key messages which have emerged from the research? (DCSF, BBC, NCSL, University of Leeds)

- There are currently 70,000 pupils involved in PRU
- Standards of accommodation in PRU are improving but are still struggling to overcome problems caused by inadequate accommodation
- Planning needs to be carefully coordinated taking full consideration of all regulations, particularly '*Building Bulletin 102: Designing for Disabled Children and Children with Special Educational Needs and DfES Learning Environments for Pupil Referral Units*, and OFSTED's '*Establishing successful practice in pupil referral units and local authorities*' (2005/06)
- *The Steer Report – 'Learning Behaviour: Lessons Learned', April 2009* outlines key developments and improvements in behaviour management. Staff should carefully consider these messages when embarking on the planning process for an improved/new provision, particularly when focusing on creating new, positive learning environments.

Appendix D - Key points from the best practice visits/ Lessons learnt from existing projects

Background

Best practice visits took place to a range of PRU within London and the UK. The purpose of these visits was to seek to establish what different types of practice was currently taking place in a number of different contexts as well as investigate whether any key messages emerge which would be relevant to this particular project. The majority of the schools visited had and were currently involved in BSF/refurbishment projects at varying stages of the process.

The PRU visited were all different in their contexts. They included provision for pupils from Key stages 1, 2 and 3 and featured a wide range of very different locations, including;

- A purpose built new facility
- A series of temporary buildings
- A collection of five different buildings making one overall college in a London borough
- A refurbished building on a mainstream school site
- An 'All through' school for Key stages 1-4 in one school building with separate sections

The key messages which emerged from the visits should provide staff involved in developing safe PRU with some useful support;

- Talk to staff who have already been involved in design/refurbishment projects to understand the time commitment involved. This will help with looking at capacity within your organisation throughout this process.
- Start discussions with the Local Authority as soon as possible to support you in your work.
- Visit local projects who have already been involved in BSF/refurbishment projects.
- Familiarise yourself with '*Building Bulletin 102: Designing for Disabled Children and Children with Special Educational Needs*' at the start of the process.
- The schools had all clearly spent considerable time developing their vision/values/ethos . There was some exceptional practice which focused on ensuring that the pupils in their care were clear about the expectations placed upon them, sometimes in very challenging contexts.
- The schools who appeared to have had the most success in developing their environments to support safe and calm learning had involved their young people in the process. Very high levels of mutual trust existed in these schools.
- There was a wide acknowledgement that ensuring the right levels of resourcing was one of the biggest challenges the leadership of the school's visited faced. The most effective school's visited had been very imaginative and skilful in how

they have used their staff and spaces flexibly to provide interesting and flexible curriculums for their pupils.

- Partnership working only appeared to be working effectively in the schools who had found ways to enable the work to feel that it was integrated into the school day. This seemed to work best where staff from the partner agencies felt that they were valued, particularly by being given a space to work (could often be shared)
- The schools who had found ways to integrate and involve their premises staff in the workings of the school appeared to have benefited by creating cleaner and more purposeful environments for the pupils to learn. These environments always included lively and vibrant displays of pupils' work, even in the most temporary and out of date classrooms.
- The schools with the most purposeful and active atmospheres appeared to have made a link between clarity of purpose and student expectations. They all had very clear messages displayed around the school to help their pupils to know who their staff were and what the expectations of the school were.

We would like to thank all the staff at the schools visited for their willingness to be involved in the project and for their openness to discuss the work of their schools.

Appendix E - Building Bulletin 102 – ‘Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs’

This DCSF (now DfE) publication was produced to inform the development of school building design, whether mainstream or special so as to provide guidance on fully inclusive environments for all children with SEN and disabilities. In the context of designing “Short Stay Schools” (SSS), previously referred to as PRUs, it is particularly helpful in the area guidelines and learning and social space requirements associated with students with special needs arising from “behavioural, emotional, and social difficulty” (BESD).

It is also worth noting that this document supersedes and replaces:

- Building Bulletin 77: Designing for Pupils with Special Educational Needs, Special Schools 1992 (This is still referenced in “Learning Environments for Pupil Referral Units”, published by DfES, 2007)
- Building Bulletin 91: Access for disabled People to School Buildings 1999
- Building Bulletin 94: Inclusive School Design 2001

This document is not meant to be prescriptive but is intended to be advisory. It is also important also to recognise that designs for all special needs requirements, including SSS provision, should always evolve through close consultation with all stakeholders (Schools, SEN experts, Children’s Services departments, parents, students and local need).

The bulletin is divided into six parts as outlined below:

<p>Part A Background and Briefing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sets out the essential information underpinning design for children and young people with SEN and disabilities:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context and special educational provision • Children’s SEN and disabilities • Meeting children’s needs • Planning and building projects, including the process and the briefing contents
<p>Part B The Design Approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addresses whole school design issues and ‘inclusive’ design principals which should underpin all elements of design for children with SEN and disabilities. The principals should be used as a reference for any project of this kind.
<p>Part C Design School Spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looks in more detail at specific spaces and covers:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needs to be included in designs for children with SEN and disabilities • Key design points • Charts showing area guidelines <p>NB The middle section of Part C is divided by phase of education. The guidance in these pages can be put together to suit the age range of any school.</p>
<p>Part D Detail Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on what is relevant for school building projects for children with SEN and disabilities, including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Construction • Environmental services • Furniture, fittings and equipment (FF&E) and ICT
<p>Part E Case Studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The case studies illustrate many of the points raised in other sections of this book and show some of the wide range of approaches to meeting the needs of children with SEN and disabilities.
<p>Part F Annexes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sets out further detailed information on legal aspects, education accessibility, as well as typical model schedules of accommodation for special schools.

Appendix F - Design standards applicable to PRU projects

Statutory legislation

- All current Education Acts, including School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Education Act 2002
- The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999
- The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 (Administrative Memorandum 2/81)
- The 1996 School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) Regulations
- Fire Precautions Act 1971
- Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Work Place (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- Food Safety Act 1990
- Food Hygiene Regulations 1995 and 2006
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Building Regulations (2010) approved documents
- 1997 Constructional Standards for School Buildings, revision 1 May 1998
- Control of Asbestos Works Regulations 2006
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) 2002
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007
- Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996

Department for Education (DfES) (DCSF) Guidance documents

- BB67 Crime prevention in schools: practical guidance
- BB69 Crime prevention in schools: intruder alarm systems
- BB71 The outdoor classroom
- BB75 Crime prevention in schools: closed circuit TV surveillance systems
- BB78 Security lighting
- BB80 Science accommodation in secondary schools: a design guide
- BB81 Design and technology accommodation in secondary schools: a design guide
- BB85 School grounds: a guide to good practice
- BB86 Music accommodation in secondary schools: a design guide
- BB87 Guidelines for environmental design in schools
- BB88 Fume Cupboards in Schools
- BB89 Art accommodation in secondary schools: a design guide
- BB90 Lighting design for schools
- BB93 Acoustics in schools
- BB95 Schools for the future
- BB98 Briefing Framework for Secondary School Projects
- BB99 Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects
- BB100 Design for Fire Safety in Schools
- BB101 Ventilation of School Buildings
- BB102 Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs
- DfES Learning Environments for Pupil Referral Units 2007
- SSLD1 Partitions in Schools
- SSLD2 Floor Finishes in Schools
- SSLD3 Toilets in Schools
- SSLD4 Lighting Systems in Schools
- SSLD5 Roofing Systems in Schools
- SSLD6 Internal Stairways in Schools

- SSLD7 Internal Doorsets in Schools
- SSLD8 Sprinklers in Schools
- DfEE “Standards for School Premises” Feb 2000 Ref: DfEE 0029/2000

British Standards and Codes of Practice

- BS4163:2007 Health and Safety for design and technology in schools and similar establishments
- BS6465 Sanitary Installations
- BS7671:2008 IEE Regulations 17th Edition
- BS8300:2009 Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people
- BS9999 Code of Practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings