



House of Commons  
Education and Skills Committee

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# **Sustainable Schools: Are we building schools for the future?**

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**Seventh Report of Session 2006–07**

***Volume I***

*Report, together with formal minutes*

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## The Education and Skills Committee

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### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are David Lloyd (Clerk), Jyoti Chandola, (Second Clerk), Nerys Roberts (Committee Specialist), Katie Phelan (Committee Assistant), Susan Ramsay (Committee Secretary) and John Kittle (Senior Office Clerk).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Education and Skills Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6181; the Committee's e-mail address is [edskillscom@parliament.uk](mailto:edskillscom@parliament.uk)

### Footnotes

In the footnotes for this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by the page number as in 'Ev 12'.

# Contents

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<b>Report</b>	<i>Page</i>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>7</b>
Acknowledgements	7
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
Background to Building Schools for the Future	10
The introduction of Building Schools for the Future	11
The current situation	12
The aim of the report	14
<b>2 The planning and procurement process</b>	<b>15</b>
Procurement problems	16
Learning the early lessons	20
Information and knowledge management	20
Economies of scale and scope for standardisation	21
ICT procurement	22
Time to think and time to change the culture of schools	23
Learning from Academies	23
The role of the Department	25
PFI and capital funding	25
Primary schools	28
Further Education	29
Linking BSF and college redevelopment	30
Redeveloping the remainder of the Further Education estate	32
Funding college redevelopment	32
Sustainability	34
<b>3 Educational transformation</b>	<b>36</b>
Local decisions versus Government policy	37
Developing the use of ICT	40
Future proofing	42
14–19 education	43
Personalisation	43
Accountability framework	45
Integration of secondary, primary and special needs education	45
<b>4 Sustainability</b>	<b>47</b>
Assessing environmental impact	48
The costs of reducing schools' carbon footprint	49
Infrastructure	51
Sustainable procurement	52
Educational sustainability and systemic change	53
Sustainable use of schools	53

<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>55</b>
	Is BSF the best way to spend £45 billion on education?	55
	The Management of the BSF project	56
	The role of the DCSF and a single gateway for BSF	57
	How will we know if BSF has been a success?	57
	Transforming education	58
	Sustainability	58
	Scrutiny of Building Schools for the Future	59
	<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>60</b>
	<b>Formal minutes</b>	<b>67</b>
	<b>Witnesses (Volume II)</b>	<b>68</b>
	<b>List of written evidence (Volume II)</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>List of unprinted evidence</b>	<b>70</b>
	<b>List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament</b>	<b>71</b>

## Summary

Building Schools for the Future is an immensely ambitious programme designed to rebuild or refurbish all secondary schools in England over 15 years at a cost of £45 billion, with local authorities participating in a series of 15 'waves'. It is the most comprehensive of a number of initiatives to improve the schools estate that the Government has introduced since 1997. As well as being a project to improve radically the fabric of school buildings and provide massive investment in ICT, it has been explicitly designed to transform the educational experiences of pupils and, more recently, to embed sustainability.

The project has been delayed against its original timetable, which would have seen 100 schools built by the end of 2007. As it is, the first mainstream schools built under BSF will open in September. There clearly have been problems with the authorities in the early waves of BSF, but the fact that the project has slipped from its early targets is not necessarily significant. What does matter is whether those authorities who have suffered delays have been able to resolve problems and come up with proposals that are robust and achievable, and whether lessons have been learned for those authorities coming into the process at later stages so there is no repetition of the same delays and difficulties. Our inquiry has led us to recognise the importance of early planning and so to believe that delay in the programme is a less significant risk to its success than inadequate preliminary thinking and clarity at a local level about what is required.

### *Time to plan*

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. As the comments collected by Teachers' TV show, 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.

There is a very strong argument that the initial 'visioning' phase should be lengthened. All authorities in the waves so far announced should already be addressing the issue of what they want of their schools. The difficulties faced by earliest waves of authorities in coping with deadlines suggest that this would be time well spent.

### *PFI funding*

While we accept that it is the viability of a project as it is developed that is the main risk factor in a BSF project, it seems to us that there are risks associated with PFI as a funding method. The Government needs to set out more clearly than it has done so far its assessment of the sustainability of the levels of revenue commitments across local authorities in general; how DCSF and Partnerships for Schools make judgements about how well authorities have planned to ensure that schools will be sustainable given projected future numbers of pupils; and the lessons that it has learned from those PFI funded schools

which have been forced to close.

#### *Local flexibility*

Given the amount of expenditure which is being authorised, it is right that the DCSF should satisfy itself that it is being spent appropriately. On the other hand, it does not look much like devolving resource and power to local level if there is a detailed check list of Government objectives which have to be addressed to allow a project to be signed off.

The Building Schools for the Future project is a bold initiative, and some of what we heard about the constraints on development at local level suggest that the Government is nervous about just how bold it has been. While it is important to ensure that expenditure is properly monitored, we have seen no evidence that local authorities have put forward particularly inappropriate plans for their BSF projects. The Government should have the courage of its convictions, and allow local authorities greater flexibility to develop local solutions within a clear framework of priorities, such as the need to promote innovative approaches to learning and the need to embed sustainability .

#### *Educational transformation*

If the Government is serious about wanting BSF to provide educational transformation, it ought to be encouraging local authorities to be innovative. The crucial question here, and one that the Department has not fully answered, is what do we want education to be in the 21st century? A clear statement of the national ambitions for 21st century education could help to provide guidance and challenge to the local decision-making process.

#### *ICT*

We believe that ICT is a vital area for the development of education over the coming years, but that does not mean that each school needs to have a bespoke system created for it which differs from systems in all other schools. We recommend that information about systems in use is made widely known amongst authorities in later waves of BSF so that they can take advantage of the experience of those which have already procured their ICT.

#### *Future proofing*

All BSF projects must be approached with a view not just to providing environments compatible with the current state of educational thinking, but with an eye to future needs and developments. As part of that process it is vitally important lessons are learned from the earliest schools and projects in the process. There should be a post-occupancy review of every school within the BSF programme so that a proper assessment can be made of what has worked well and what has caused difficulties, on procurement and construction issues and also on the design and conception of the school. These reviews should be given the widest possible circulation so that all those involved in BSF so that all those involved in BSF can ensure that mistakes are not repeated, that good ideas are adopted more widely and that the desired flexibility for the future is in place. Transformation waves and in the future, can use them to ensure that mistakes are not repeated, that good ideas of education for the 21st century will only occur if we learn the lessons about what works best.

*Accountability framework*

It is obviously important to safeguard the position of pupils currently in a school which is being rebuilt or refurbished. It is unacceptable to build schools for the future if the current generation suffers, but it is also clear to us that schools which are attempting innovative ways of delivering education should be given credit for that. There needs to be flexibility in the inspection framework to take account of a school's position in the BSF programme when that is appropriate. We recommend that Ofsted, in consultation with the DCSF, should draw up and publish for consultation a protocol on how its inspection regime is to be modified for schools in BSF.

*Sustainability*

The schools estate contributes 2% to national carbon emissions overall, but that figure represents almost 15% of UK public sector carbon emissions. If the Government is to meet a target of at least 60% reduction against the 1990 baseline, and if it intends to set an example by the way in which it looks after the public sector building stock, it clearly has to address the issue of schools' carbon emissions.

We welcome the extra funding the Government is to provide to help achieve its target of carbon neutrality. We hope that this will be carried forward into the general funding of the BSF programme. However, the Government should specify what proportion of the total carbon emissions will be achieved through carbon offsetting. The ideal would clearly be for all new school buildings and plant to be carbon neutral. To make schools sustainable there are likely to be extra capital costs, but these can be offset against lower running costs. While in Government accounting terms capital and revenue are always accounted for separately, it makes sense to shoulder higher capital costs if over the whole life of a building it has the same or lower costs as a building which is not constructed with the principle of carbon reduction in mind.

*Is BSF the best way to spend £45 billion on education?*

Our inquiry has focused on the way in which the BSF process is working and how the process might be more effective. We believe, however, that it is worth asking some searching questions about the basis of the project, if for no other reason than to give the DCSF an opportunity to restate the purposes of BSF and to demonstrate that it has discussed these difficult issues.

We are not arguing that BSF is a waste of money or that it should not proceed. Indeed it represents an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that all of the physical spaces which pupils occupy effectively support their learning. What we are saying is that, given the scale of the project and the amount of money proposed to be spent, there is a danger that everyone involved will concentrate on getting through to the end and that the question of whether the project's scope and aims remain appropriate will not be asked. This seems to us to be a good time to take stock of these issues, with the first of the mainstream BSF schools set to open in the autumn and all the authorities through to Wave 6 planning to reshape secondary school provision in their areas. We ask the DCSF in its reply to give us a considered response to the issues we raise here so that we can be assured that it does have a process of regularly reviewing the question of whether this is best way in which to spend

£45 billion on education.

*The role of the DCSF and a single gateway for BSF*

We believe that, within a basic framework, local authorities should be given more freedom to shape their local school system as they consider appropriate. One thing which could make life much more straightforward would be to establish one gateway for an authority's discussions with central Government about its BSF project. The DfES recognised the inefficiency caused by the need for schools to have multiple contacts with the Department on matters such as funding and standards when it introduced the Single Conversation with Schools. Something similar is needed for BSF. A single gateway would assist the DCSF and local authorities and schools to deal with the tensions that inevitably arise in programmes of this sort between creating maximum local decision-making and opportunities for maximum efficiency through standardisation and national purchasing.

*How will we know if BSF has been a success?*

We believe that there should be a set of clear objectives by which we will be able to judge how well the project is progressing. We ask the DCSF to define what it considers to be the key indicators that will demonstrate the success or otherwise of BSF. Given that new Public Service Agreement targets will be set this autumn for the new Comprehensive Spending Review, we also recommend that progress on BSF ought to be one of the areas which the Department should have as one of its high level targets.

## Preface

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1. The Building Schools for the Future programme is a hugely ambitious project to rebuild or refurbish all the secondary schools in England over a fifteen year period. It is ambitious in reach, in cost (the Government is providing around £45 billion in capital funding and PFI credits over the period) and in timescale. We were originally inspired to look at the issue because of the cost implications and to take a view on how effectively the very large amount of public money involved was being spent. While those cost and procurement issues remain of great interest, over the course of the inquiry we have also focused on the educational opportunities provided by the project and the way in which sustainability issues are being addressed.

2. While Building Schools for the Future is directed at secondary schools, there are separate extensive capital programmes for primary schools and further education colleges, and we have also looked at these during the inquiry. The current aim is to redevelop the whole of the further education estate; half has already been completed. The primary programme is designed to allow for the rebuilding, remodelling or refurbishment of at least 50% of primary schools.<sup>1</sup> Across these three sectors, therefore, there is an opportunity to provide new and improved facilities that is unlikely to arise again for many years. The key question is, from the point of view of value for money, fitness for purpose, educational transformation and sustainability, are we building schools for the future?

## Acknowledgements

3. In the inquiry we took evidence from:

- Jim Knight MP, Minister of State for Schools and 14–19 Learning;
- Parmjit Dhanda MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families;
- Sally Brooks, Divisional Manager, Schools Capital (Policy and Delivery), DfES;
- Tim Byles, Chief Executive, Partnerships for Schools;
- Martin Lipson, 4ps;<sup>2</sup>
- Michael Buchanan, Place Group;
- David Lloyd Jones, Studio E Architects;
- Angela Rawson and Janet Newton, Lancashire County Council;
- Allan Jarvis, Bradford BSF Project Team;
- David Kester, Chief Executive, and Hilary Cottam, Head of RED team, Design Council;

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<sup>1</sup> HC Deb, 9 March 2006, Col 71WS.

<sup>2</sup> The Local Government Association's Public Private Partnerships Programme.

- John Sorrell, Sorrell Foundation;
- Ty Goddard, School Works;
- Richard Simmons, Chief Executive, Commission on the Built Environment (CABE);
- Rob Shed and Barry White, Skanska;
- Mike Blackburn, BT Education and Local Government;
- Marcus Orlovsky, Bryanston Square;
- Nick Kalisperas, Director, Markets, Intellect;
- Martin Lamb, Area Director, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council;
- Graham Moore, Principal, Stoke-on-Trent College;
- John Widdowson, Principal and Chief Executive, New College Durham;
- Dr Stewart Davies, Business Commissioner, Sustainable Development Commission;
- Martin Mayfield, Arup;
- Stan Terry, Heads Teachers and Industry Limited (HTI);
- Alan Yates, Technical Director, BREEAM, Building Research Establishment;
- Chris Archer, Services Director, Children's Services Department, Nottingham City Council;
- Jim Burke, Principal, Academy of St Francis of Assisi, Liverpool; and
- Caroline Morland, Edunova Ltd.

4. We also held two seminars, one at the beginning of the inquiry and one once we had finished gathering evidence. The participants in the first seminar were: Andy Ford, Partner, Fulcrum Consulting, and CABE enabler for Sustainability; Phil Green, Director of Education, Bradford; Professor Stephen Heppell; John Houlihan, Local Education Partnership Acting General Manager, Integrated Bradford; and Sharon Wright, Creative Wit. Those who attended the second seminar were: Damian Allen, Executive Director, Children's Services, Knowsley Council; Dr Chris Gerry, Chief Executive, New Line Learning Federation; Professor Stephen Heppell; Martin Mayfield, Arup; Roland Meredith, Education Adviser; John Pilkington, Managing Director, Strategic Development, Amey plc; and Carole Whitty, Deputy General Secretary, National Association of Head Teachers.

5. The Committee visited the City of London Academy, Southwark; the Academy of St Francis of Assisi, Liverpool; Knowsley Council; and the New Line Learning Federation, Maidstone.

6. We established a consultation exercise facilitated for us by Teachers' TV through their website. Teachers, governors and other school staff were invited to give their views on what they wanted from the Building Schools for the Future programme, and 148 people

responded. Teachers' TV is also preparing a documentary on the inquiry process, which it intends to screen in conjunction with the publication of the report. We are grateful to Teachers' TV for the help that they have given us.

7. We are grateful to all of those who participated in the inquiry whether through providing evidence in person or in writing, through participating in seminars or participating in a visit. We are also grateful to Toby Greany, formerly of the Design Council and now of the National Council for School Leadership, for advising us during the inquiry.

8. As we came to the end of our inquiry, the DfES was divided into the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. Responsibility for BSF now rests with DCSF and we have reflected that in the text. However, some historical references to the DfES remain.

# 1 Introduction

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## Background to Building Schools for the Future

9. Building Schools for the Future is an immensely ambitious programme designed to rebuild or refurbish all secondary schools in England over 15 years at a cost of £45 billion. It is the most comprehensive of a number of initiatives to improve the schools estate that the Government has introduced since 1997.

10. When the Labour Government came to power in 1997, education was one of its main policy priorities. In his first Budget Statement on 2 July 1997, the Chancellor of the Exchequer allocated an additional £1 billion in revenue spending for education for 1998-99, as well as committing the Government to spending £1.3 billion over the course of the Parliament on capital expenditure for schools. He said:

“Economic success tomorrow will depend on investing in our schools today. But at the present rate of progress, many of our children will be educated for the 21st century in classrooms built in the 19th. Today, 1 million pupils are being educated in classrooms built before the first world war.

If our schools are to educate for the needs of the 21st-century economy, they must themselves become schools that are fit to learn in and equipped for the 21st century [...] I want schools not just to repair the roofs and the fabric, but to acquire the modern equipment and computers that they need. I have therefore decided to allocate cash from the remaining proceeds of the windfall tax for an immediate programme of capital investment to equip our schools with the infrastructure, technology and the bright modern classrooms that they need.”<sup>3</sup>

11. In the 1998 Budget, a further £90 million of capital funding was allocated: £35 million to remove the outside toilets still being used at 600 schools; £15 million to allow up to 500 schools to replace or improve their inefficient heating systems; and £40 million to provide extra classrooms to help the Government to deliver on its pledge that no child of 5, 6 or 7 should be taught in a class of more than 30 children.<sup>4</sup> This was presented largely as the Government intending to address a backlog of maintenance and repairs in the schools sector, although the DfEE did note that the improvements to heating systems would reduce fuel used and assist in reducing carbon dioxide emissions.<sup>5</sup>

12. In 1999 and 2000, various further announcements were made in what was known as the New Deal for Schools, all of which focused on the repairs backlog and the replacement of temporary classrooms. For example, in announcing how £600 million in the fourth round of New Deal for Schools funding was to be allocated in April 2000, the Department highlighted the fact that it would allow for the replacement of 1,500 “of the worst condition

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3 HC Deb, 2 July 1997, col 316.

4 DfES press notice, 1998/0143, 19 March 1998, *Blunkett spells end of Victorian era in English schools*.

5 *ibid.*

temporary classrooms”.<sup>6</sup> The then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, Rt Hon David Blunkett MP, said:

“[...] I am confident that the New Deal for Schools, along with our other capital programmes, will make a big dent in the backlog that has developed over the last 20 years and help our schools make a strong start in the 21st century.

“We are determined to improve the quality of the environment in which teachers teach and pupils learn, and address the scandal of crumbling schools. This investment will go a long way to providing the right conditions and at the same time play a part in regenerating local economies and boosting the surrounding communities.”<sup>7</sup>

13. The capital programme took on a different dimension later in 2000. In September, the Department announced capital expenditure of £7.8 billion for the years 2001-02 to 2003-04. As well as money for extensive repairs and modernisation, and a sum given directly to the head of each school for more routine expenditure, the funding was to be used to completely transform or replace 650 schools, both primary and secondary.<sup>8</sup> By this time the Government had committed approximately £10 billion to be spent on school repairs and rebuilding since coming into office.

14. In January 2001, when announcing further details of this investment, the then Secretary of State also drew attention to research undertaken by Pricewaterhouse Coopers which indicated that “Capital investment impacts positively on pupil performance, particularly in terms of improving teacher morale and motivating pupils”.<sup>9</sup> The research documents themselves were quite cautious about the link, but did say “[...]on balance, the research suggests that, where there are statistically significant effects of capital on performance, these are positive”.<sup>10</sup>

### ***The introduction of Building Schools for the Future***

15. The next shift in the Government’s thinking was signalled in speech by David Miliband, then Minister of State for School Standards, in October 2002. Rather than just repairing and replacing inadequate buildings, the redevelopment of schools was put forward explicitly as a means of improving educational standards. He said that the Government’s aim going into the future was to “focus the Department on developing capacity at local level to change children’s lives, and devolve resource and power to local level”. Within that overall aim, “On the capital side, it means moving from tackling the

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6 DfES press notice 2000/0160, 11 April 2000, *1,500 temporary classrooms will be replaced over the next two years—Blunkett*.

7 *ibid*.

8 DfES press notice 2000/0410, 27 September 2000, *Schools capital spending will be nearly£8 billion over next three years*.

9 DfES press notice 20010023, 18 January 2001, *Research shows better buildings boost performance...*

10 DfES Research Brief No. 242, *Building Performance*, January 2001.

backlog of outside toilets and leaking roofs to put the £3bn building and ICT budget, which will rise to £4.5bn by 2005-06, at the service of educational transformation”.<sup>11</sup>

16. Just four months later, in February 2003, the consultation document on BSF was published and the project to redevelop every secondary school in England was born. In the foreword, Charles Clarke, then Secretary of State, and David Miliband said that “Schools should inspire learning. They should nurture every pupil and member of staff. They should be a source of pride and a practical resource for the community”. They added that the consultation paper set out an exciting vision: “It is about using capital investment to deliver much higher standards of education and to transform learning and working environments in schools”.<sup>12</sup> As we shall see, the theme of transforming learning has resonated strongly through the programme ever since, although there is no clearly set out, well-developed and widely understood explanation of what transforming learning consists of and is designed to achieve.

17. The launch document for BFS, published in February 2004, confirmed the Government’s aims and gave information about the procurement being brought forward in waves of local authorities. It continued to be explicit about the use of the BSF as a tool for educational transformation. In neither document, however, was there any mention of environmental or any other kind of sustainability.

**18. It is worth emphasising the scale and scope of BSF; there is no project like it anywhere in the world. Not since the huge Victorian and post-war building waves has there been investment in our school capital stock on this scale, and of course the potential for new ways of learning has moved on considerably since then. Investment in the three decades before BSF was announced had been minimal, meaning that there were very few architects, procurement experts or head teachers in the system with experience to build on. Even the research base has little to tell us about how we should design sustainable learning environments for the future.<sup>13</sup> We welcome the ambitions of the programme and intend this report to assist in maximising its effect on improving the quality and sustainability of the environments for learning in this country.**

## The current situation

19. This then is the Government’s vision: to renew all secondary schools and install high quality ICT as a means of transforming the learning experience and raise attainment. Three years on, however, it is difficult to assess how the project lived up to the vision so far. This is principally because no mainstream BSF school is yet open.<sup>14</sup> In the BSF launch document, the plan was for the first school to open in mid 2006, with 100 schools open by the end of 2007, and 200 by the end of 2008.<sup>15</sup> The first BSF school, the Speedwell School in

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11 Speech on 8 October 2002 to the Conference of Independent/State School Partnerships in Brighton: DfES press notice 2002/0185.

12 *Building schools for the future consultation on a new approach to capital investment*, DfES, February 2003.

13 *The impact of school environments: a literature review*, Design Council, 2005.

14 Two special schools in Solihull were opened under the BSF banner in June 2006: see Q 765. See, however, the discussion of the CABE audit of schools built before BSF in paragraph 59 below.

15 *Building schools for the future: A new approach to capital investment*, DfES, February 2004, p 32.

Bristol, will now open in September this year. There have therefore been delays across the whole programme. As the DfES said in its memorandum:

“There has been significant slippage in BSF projects in waves 1-3, with the majority of projects behind the ideal project timelines. Key common factors behind such slippage include: lack of capacity or experience in delivering large projects in local authorities; insufficient corporate support and leadership; insufficient involvement of school improvement teams (as opposed to solely property) at local levels; inaccurate pupil place planning (omission of SEN numbers has for example been a common flaw); planning obstacles, including unavailability of sites in London in particular; difficulties in agreeing Education Visions at a local level; and poor stakeholder engagement or consultation.”<sup>16</sup>

20. Tim Byles, who took over as Chief Executive of Partnerships for Schools, the body charged with delivering the national programme, in the autumn of 2006, was quoted in the *Times Educational Supplement* in January as saying:

“Everyone across government accepts that the early targets were not based on any experience and were not realistic. We will reset the baseline this year so we have realistic objectives [...]. The authorities that were chosen first were those with the greatest needs and some of those have found it difficult to deliver [...]. But we are significantly reducing the problems and I am confident that we can deliver.”<sup>17</sup>

This delay has been picked up in the press, with the clear message being sent that the project is failing.<sup>18</sup>

21. Other concerns have been expressed. The Design Council warned that if good design and a good design process were not integrated properly into the process then the schools that are built would be unlikely to be fit for purpose for the long term. David Kester, Chief Executive of the Design Council, told us:

“In the end this building programme is happening, it is rolling out, it has a timetable against it, there are some risks in the system and everybody is going to watch out that those risks do not end up messing the whole system up. There is a real possibility that we shall not get the innovation and creativity that we really want. If we want to have great schools that are fit not just for the next ten years, but 50 or 100 years—and of course our Victorian schools have lasted over 100 years—then what are we actually going to do now that is going to ensure that the sort of schools that we creating are going to endure and support us in the long term? That means some really smart, clever thinking upfront and once the ball is rolling and the procurement exercise has started, it is going to be too late, which is where we have been advocating early design processes.”<sup>19</sup>

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16 Ev 169

17 “Delays in secondary rebuilding”, *TES*, 12 January 2007.

18 See, for example, “Pupils kept in crumbling classrooms by red tape”, *The Times*, 15 January 2007, p. 1.

19 Q 132

**Our inquiry has led us to recognise the importance of early planning and so to believe that delay in the programme is a less significant risk to its success than inadequate preliminary thinking and clarity at a local level about what is required.**

22. The place of sustainability in the project has also been a cause of concern. As mentioned above, neither the BSF consultation document nor the launch document discussed sustainability. The Sustainable Development Commission told us:

“[...] while a vision for sustainable schools has recently been published by the DfES, its implications in terms of the design of school buildings has not been sufficiently thought through. The Government is not yet aware whether its capital investment programmes will result in the schools estate producing higher or lower carbon emissions, nor what the impact will be on water demand, waste production, traffic or other environmental factors. The communications of the delivery body, Partnerships for Schools, make scant reference to sustainable development. This is extremely worrying.”<sup>20</sup>

### The aim of the report

23. It is clear that, given the current position of the BSF programme, we cannot yet make any definitive judgements about its success or otherwise. It is behind schedule, but there are opportunities for it to catch up with the timetable, and it is still possible that it will be completed within the broad fifteen year plan. Even if it is possible to complete the project in the overall fifteen year timescale, however, it is far from clear that it would be sensible to do so, or whether the main concern should rather be to complete it appropriately.

24. What we are seeking to do in this report is to comment on work in progress and to make recommendations about the ways in which the process might be improved. At this stage of the BSF project, it seems to us that there are three key areas which need to be examined:

- Is the planning and procurement process working effectively, and if not, how does it need to be changed?
- Is educational transformation, clearly one of the main aims of the Government in establishing Building Schools for the Future, really at the heart of the process?
- Has sustainability been adequately defined, and does it have a sufficiently high profile?

## 2 The planning and procurement process

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25. Capital funding for schools is delivered in three ways; through devolved funding for schools to spend how they wish on buildings and ICT; through targeted funding for local authorities which, as the DfES told us, allows “high priority building projects to be progressed which cannot be tackled through formulaic allocations, or await BSF”;<sup>21</sup> and through the strategic approach provided by Building Schools for the Future and the primary programme.<sup>22</sup> Approximately 43% of capital spending is devolved funding, 13% targeted and 43% strategic.<sup>23</sup>

26. There are various distinctive elements to the BSF delivery process. One is that authorities are being brought in to the programme in fifteen waves, rather than all at once, and many authorities find themselves in two or more waves (Lancashire is in six).<sup>24</sup> Another is that local authorities are required to look at provision across their areas to make a judgement about what is needed, rather than look at schools individually. A third is that this is not just a building programme, but is intended to be a programme of educational improvement in which the learning and teaching environment plays a key role. Priority has also been given to those areas with greatest educational and social need.<sup>25</sup>

27. Initially there were four phases to the approval process that each local authority had to negotiate:

- An Education Vision, setting out strategic plans for the future of education in its area;
- A strategic business case, setting out how it will use BSF to achieve its education aims;
- Outline business case, with more detailed plans for its initial phase of BSF work, which can then go forward as the authority begins to seek expressions of interest; and
- Once the competition has been resolved, and a preferred bidder has been identified, a local education partnership (LEP) is created to run the project locally.

From wave 4 onwards, the education vision and strategic business case phases have been simplified and replaced by a document combining both functions, called Strategy for Change.

28. Partnerships for Schools told us:

“LEPs, which will be created for the vast majority of Local Authorities, are local delivery vehicles, partnerships between the Local Authority (10%), the successful

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21 Ev 166

22 We discuss the primary programme in more detail later in this report.

23 Ev 165

24 Q 1

25 Ev 166

private sector partner (80%) and Pfs (10%). Each LEP has a clearly specified long term partnering contract with the LA as strategic commissioner, and then individual contracts will be agreed between the LEP and LA for individual school projects over the life of the long term partnership. The individual school contracts are either PFI or conventional, depending on which offers best value for money. The presence of the Local Authority and Pfs as shareholders in the LEP ensures a degree of transparency and alignment of interests in the delivery of the long term local investment programme which has not been present in other forms of procurement. This procurement and delivery approach was specifically designed to meet the long term educational and efficiency objectives of the BSF programme.<sup>26</sup>

## Procurement problems

29. A number of problems with the procurement process were identified to us during the inquiry, in particular regarding consultation with school staff and pupils about what was wanted from new school buildings, and the capacity of those involved at the local level to manage and deliver projects. David Kester of the Design Council told us:

“if we have a very coherent vision for what we are looking for, if a teacher actually knows how to get the most out of the design process, knows the problem that they are trying to solve, then they will get a good solution at the end. Half the problem here that we have when working on a £45 billion programme is that this is the first big capital project that most of the clients have ever run and it may be the only one they are going to run at this level. They are going to oversee perhaps a £20 million new school build and are they a design savvy client? Are they going to get the most out of that process? Are they going to understand the art of the possible? That is a big question. It is very difficult to do that and what you really need to do is make sure that all of those people involved at the decision-making end of the tree know how to manage that process very smartly and know what is possible, get the most out of it and know the questions to ask.”<sup>27</sup>

30. Setting the vision is only the start of the process for BSF. There is a need for Heads and other staff of schools involved in redesigning their environment to systematically review almost every other aspect of what is taught, how it is taught, and how schools are run at the same time. With all the changes in train around Every Child Matters and secondary curriculum reform, for example, this adds up to a massive programme of change across localities and within individual schools. Change on this scale requires a significant and systematic investment in informing people about the proposed changes and the reasons for them if staff, parents and learners are to be brought along and support the process, but this is not a skillset that most authorities have. Knowsley Council informed us that they are spending £3-5m on this ‘culture change’ process over the BSF period, but this is their own choice and the restrictions on using Treasury capital money for ensuring that the BSF process is successful remains a significant problem.

31. The CBI made a similar point about the capabilities of local authorities:

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26 Ev 181

27 Q 119

“The capacity and ability of local authorities to deal with the levels of commercial sophistication needed to create the type of partnership on which the success of BSF depends is of major concern. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a marked disparity in procurement capacity and experience between different local authorities. There are some very good local authorities but the overall picture is of shortages of skilled and experienced procurement staff. This has added to the complexity of BSF and increased delays.”<sup>28</sup>

32. John Sorrell of the Sorrell Foundation emphasised the need for consultation with pupils, and was concerned that often that consultation was only lip service:

“Very often what happens is the school is designed basically and then the kids are brought together for an hour, they are shown the designs of the focus group and at the end of it boxes are ticked. What I am calling for is a much, much deeper involvement of pupils in the overall client stakeholder group, and it is a big group because you have head teachers, teachers, parents, governors, local community, the LAs. It is a very, very big stakeholder group on the client side. The ones I plead for are the children because they are the ones who are likely to be left out of the discussion. It is making a big mistake if we do not involve them properly. Of course they are not designing the schools, what they are doing is helping to inform the people who are designing them and that is the whole point. If you create a great vision, a great brief and you have a great designer working with that great brief then you have a good chance of getting a good result.”<sup>29</sup>

33. Another issue that came up regularly in evidence is that people often feel rushed into making decisions and therefore do not feel that they can become involved adequately in the process. Janet Newton of Lancashire County Council said that for a successful project “I think it is a case of making the time at the beginning, recognising the commitment and making sure that you get it right, and I would say up to 12 months as a minimum before you even get on site.”<sup>30</sup> It is clear that in many instances in the first waves of BSF, despite the fact that timings may have slipped, many people concerned did not get 12 months to think about what they wanted, and that it could often be as little as 12 weeks. Ty Goddard of School Works said that:

“[...] the participation with stakeholders, both under Building Schools for the Future and all sorts of other capital streams is patchy at the moment and at times the frenzied 12- or 13-week process does not actually help to get views of stakeholders early enough and in fact could actually make it worse. What happens is that you duplicate processes of finding out what clients, what teachers, what pupils actually want.”<sup>31</sup>

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28 Ev 274

29 Q 130

30 Q 23

31 Q 178

34. The survey conducted by Teachers' TV showed that school staff do have very clear ideas about what is important in rebuilding or refurbishing schools, which illustrates the importance of that initial phase. Teachers' TV told us:

“Our view of the key messages that surfaced from these comments is as follows:

**SPACE:** This was the most common concern and hope. More of it, more rooms, wider corridors, larger outdoor spaces, office space for support staff, and much, much more storage space.

**“SUSTAINABILITY:** The second most common theme. Many comments about energy efficiency, such as the use of solar panel, but also recycling, carbon offsetting, and school travel, in particular better facilities for cyclists.

**“IMPROVED CONSULTATION:** Another key theme, in particular the need for early and sustained consultation with teachers and pupils, to ensure the final designs were created with the end-users in mind.

**“ICT/TECHNOLOGY:** Many were keen to extol the positive potential for new technology in schools, but warned that designs need to take ICT use properly into account. For example, rooms that could be blacked-out properly for IWB use.

**“TEMPERATURE CONTROL:** Over-heating due to poor design, and better insulation to deal with this and winter chills, came through again and again as an issue. Concerns were raised about the tendency to have large windows/glass panels in new designs without consideration of the impact in hot, sunny summers.

**“FAIRER FUNDING:** Several were worried about apparent weaknesses in the funding allocation system, with some Authorities and schools not receiving what they feel is their correct share of the pot.

**“SCHOOLS FOR THE COMMUNITY:** 100% support for the idea of schools extending the use of their facilities to the local community, by those who suggested that new designs need to take account of this.

**“FLEXIBILITY:** Several raised the point that classrooms and schools need to be able to adapt quickly and easily to new requirements and ways of working, so they need to be designed with flexibility in mind.”<sup>32</sup>

**35. 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. As the comments collected by Teachers' TV show, 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.**

36. The evidence presents us with a rather confused picture, of missed deadlines within the programme but also of insufficient time to consult and think through issues. As the DfES acknowledged in its written evidence, most slippage occurs at the pre-procurement and planning stage,<sup>33</sup> and Tim Byles argued that, while giving priority to those areas with high levels of deprivation and low levels of attainment was appropriate, “local authorities with schools that meet these criteria (not surprisingly) have typically had a number of other challenging issues to tackle in their area. As a consequence, the degree to which these authorities were sufficiently prepared and resourced for BSF was not always ideal.”<sup>34</sup>

37. The main way in which the Department and particularly Partnerships for Schools [PFS] have sought to deal with this problem is by adding a third criterion for prioritising authorities from Wave 4 onwards, namely an authority’s preparedness for BSF and capacity to deliver. Precisely how this judgement is made was not made clear to us, but Tim Byles did tell us that, in addition,

“[...] the Chief Executive of the local authority must also sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Partnerships for Schools, which I personally countersign. This document sets out very clearly the roles and responsibilities of both PFS and the local authority so that expectations are clearly defined from the outset.”<sup>35</sup>

38. Sally Brooks, Divisional Manager, Schools Capital (Policy and Delivery) at the DfES, argued that much of the delay could not have been foreseen:

“It was a very ambitious timescale, and we have slipped from that and we need to acknowledge that, but I think we got as much as we could do ready, and we did set up PFS, which was crucial in terms of giving a very hard-nosed delivery focus to the programme that was not swayed by ministerial decisions every five minutes. I think we have done okay. I think there were things we could have spotted before we started that we did not, but I do not think there were many. I think most of what we have learnt since we started are things we would only have learnt by doing.”<sup>36</sup>

**39. There clearly have been problems with the authorities in the early waves of BSF, but the fact that the project has slipped from its early targets is not necessarily significant. What does matter is whether those authorities who have suffered delays have been able to resolve problems and come up with proposals that are robust and achievable, and whether lessons have been learned for those authorities coming into the process at later stages so there is no repetition of the same delays and difficulties.** Momentum is important in a long term project but, as we said earlier, rushing to complete the programme must not take precedence over the need to do the job properly. The target that the DfES must keep in mind is the successful completion of the Building Schools for the Future project, not completion of the project by an arbitrary deadline. Successful completion also requires an understanding of how to measure success, a point we will return to later in the report.

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33 Ev 169

34 Ev 204

35 *ibid.*

36 Q 620

## Learning the early lessons

40. There are a number of issues that have been drawn to our attention during the inquiry which, if they could be speedily resolved, would smooth the way considerably for authorities in later waves of the project. There are a number of themes;

- how to disseminate information so that people do not keep re-inventing the wheel;
- what scope there is for economies of scale and standardisation in some aspects of the project;
- giving time to allow authorities and schools to develop their ideas; and
- how the roles of Partnerships for Schools and the DCSF might develop.

## Information and knowledge management

41. One of the things that has happened in the early waves is that people have been working through the planning and procurement system, and problems and difficulties have become apparent and have needed to be addressed. As we pointed out above, there were very few people with experience of building new schools in the system at the outset, so the learning and knowledge management aspects of the programme as it progresses must be key. It would be a real missed opportunity for the BSF programme if the lessons that people had learned in that process were not taken on board by others following behind.

42. We are disappointed, therefore, that neither DCSF nor PfS has established sufficient knowledge management processes which would enable local authorities and schools to share their experience and learning and to access examples of best practice as they progress. In fairness, both the Department and PfS run occasional conferences to bring stakeholders together to share and discuss issues, while developments such as offering CAGE<sup>37</sup> enablers to help authorities with design decisions, support for authorities from 4ps on procurement and NCSL's BSF Leadership Development programme for head teachers and senior staff in schools are all positive developments. Nevertheless, we heard a number of suggestions about how to improve the sharing of knowledge across the system. In Knowsley, for example, we heard arguments in favour of a national BSF forum, to enable the different participants to understand each others' roles better and allow best practice to circulate. Equally, we make the suggestion below that all completed schools should be required to undertake and publish post-occupancy evaluations so that lessons about what works and what does not are made explicit.<sup>38</sup>

43. Another way of spreading knowledge would be by the secondment of individuals from an authority which has developed its BSF proposals to an authority where they are just beginning, or by involving people from an authority in an earlier wave in the initial development of proposals for an authority in a later wave. BSF is not just a matter of a few authorities building a few new schools; this is a project which will affect every secondary

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37 Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment.

38 See paragraph 124.

school in England, and if it is to be done strategically then authorities must be encouraged to engage with each other about what works, what does not and what the pitfalls are.

**44. The DCSF and Partnerships for Schools should develop as a priority a knowledge management and learning strategy to support authorities, schools, contractors, suppliers and others involved in BSF to share best practice and learning as the programme develops.**

### *Economies of scale and scope for standardisation*

45. Given the size of Building Schools for the Future and the vast amount of money that it involves, it is important that it should operate as efficiently as possible. Part of that is to avoid ‘re-inventing the wheel’, but it is also about using the size of the project to the advantage of all in order to make cost savings. The question is, is Building Schools for the Future a market maker? That is, is the desire of companies to participate in the scheme such that there is a significant amount of leverage which authorities as clients can bring to bear to get the best possible deals? In order for this to happen, various procurement issues would have to be addressed *en masse* rather than by each individual project in individual areas. This would be true for example for building materials, ICT and other electrical equipment and furniture (driving down the price of longer lasting but more expensive furniture to make it more affordable).<sup>39</sup>

46. The argument against this way of working is that it suggests a blanket approach to projects across the country thereby taking away some of local authorities’ autonomy. The decisions, however, might relate to services which do not have to be infinitely flexible. We discussed with Nick Kalisperas of Intellect and Mike Blackburn of BT Education and Local Government whether different schools needed different IT systems. Nick Kalisperas said that

“There will be an element of standardisation, a baseline, [...] which every school should reach, but over and above that one size does not fit all, nor should it.”<sup>40</sup>

47. Mike Blackburn agreed that most of the variation would be in the software that was used rather than the hardware. He also agreed that some elements of good practice, such as having integrated and flexible IT provision rather than a small number of fixed computer rooms, could be the basis for a degree of standardised provision.

48. In a similar vein, David Lloyd Jones of Studio E Architects told us that while there might not be a standard design for all school buildings, some aspects of every school were likely to be the same:

“Every school is a unique product, but the ingredients that go into it do not necessarily have to be unique. As a case in point, in Sustainable School Buildings the facade becomes very important because there is so much going on there, you want to get air in, you want to get light in, you want the views out, you are wanting to do it at different times, you want to keep the sun out at times, and so on and so forth, and so

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<sup>39</sup> There is also the issue of sustainable procurement, which we address in Chapter 4.

it is quite a sophisticated package, and to do that from scratch for each new school is counter-productive. If we can develop something that works under most conditions and we can apply it to a variety of schools, then obviously there is mileage to be made out of that.”<sup>41</sup>

49. There is clearly a balance to be struck between central prescription and local autonomy, but **there is a strong argument that on the basis of cost and time savings some of the choices on these nuts and bolts issues could be restricted. PfS have made some progress on this with, for example, guidance on the general principles for design of toilet blocks.**<sup>42</sup> There needs to be a discussion about how to build on this kind of initiative to make the most of the market position of Building Schools for the Future on a whole range of procurement issues.

### **ICT procurement**

50. More generally on ICT, we were told that the ICT industry considered that the current procurement method would not provide the best available solutions. Nick Kalisperas said:

“[...] what we want to see is technology in this programme being used to effect real change, and that currently is not being reflected in the way procurements are being taken forward [...] we are looking at developing a programme for schools for the future, therefore the procurement has to be structured in such a way to take advantage of technological development. That is not how that procurement is currently structured at the moment.”<sup>43</sup>

51. Another significant issue with ICT is ensuring that there is provision within contracts to enable technology to be renewed. Mike Blackburn told us:

“Most of the contracts that we get involved with are ten or fifteen year contracts – a fifteen year contract will have a minimum of two refresh periods built into the finances up front so that everybody knows it is there, at year five there will be a complete refresh, at year nine there will be a complete refresh. That is already discussed and debated; what you do not know is what it is going to be refreshed with, but you do know that there comes a point where you have the funding in the contract all agreed and you can now refresh the technology.”

**52. We ask the DCSF to respond to the criticism of procurement of ICT, and to set out its plans for ensuring that ICT procurement within BSF does enable technological development to be properly taken into account.**

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41 Q 84 -85

42 See *New toilet designs to help combat bullying in BSF schools*, PfS press notice, 25 April 2007.

43 Qq 261, 263

### *Time to think and time to change the culture of schools*

53. A regular theme in our evidence, as discussed earlier, was that people involved in BSF, particularly at the school level, did not have sufficient time to think about what it was that they wanted to do. **There is a very strong argument that the initial ‘visioning’ phase should be lengthened. All authorities in the waves so far announced should already be addressing the issue of what they want of their schools. The difficulties faced by the earliest waves of authorities in coping with deadlines suggest that this would be time well spent.** Equally, there is a strong argument for funding local authorities and supporting them to run ‘culture change’ programmes that will help ensure that the key stakeholders in an area understand the aims of the project and change their practices accordingly.

54. There was general agreement in evidence that for a good project maximum involvement was needed from authorities and head teachers who were well informed and knew how to be good clients and from students who were consulted and who were allowed to have a significant say in the outcome of the project. **The development for all BSF projects of ‘good clients’ who are knowledgeable about the process should be a key aim for authorities, Partnerships for Schools and the DCSF.**

### *Learning from Academies*

55. When we began this inquiry we thought that there would be much to be learnt from the progress of the Academies programme. It is not clear how that experience has informed BSF, but it is interesting to look at the evaluation of the Academies programme being undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for comparisons. In the second evaluation report, based on fieldwork done in spring 2004, PwC found that

“[...] around two thirds of staff responding to the survey suggested that staff were not involved in the development and design of the new buildings. Similarly, only one half of staff thought that the provision of staff work areas in the new buildings was good, and two fifths indicated that teachers did not have dedicated work spaces and offices for preparation and planning [...]. This feedback from staff is reflected in the clear sense from the interviewees that, whilst the ‘bold statement’ aspect of the new Academy buildings was important, there had perhaps been too much emphasis on this at the expense of some of the more practical requirements of modern teaching and learning spaces.”<sup>44</sup>

56. In the third report, PwC makes recommendations for the process of implementing the Academies initiative, which obviously have a clear resonance with what is happening in BSF. It recommends 12 to 18 months lead-in time for principals of a new Academy, which could be likened to the visioning process that heads of schools in BSF are being required to undertake. It also notes that there were considerable stresses where the leadership team had to continue running the school being replaced and plan for the new school.<sup>45</sup>

57. There are also clear parallels with the procurement process for BSF:

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44 Academies Evaluation 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual report, PwC for DfES, section 3.55 to 3.56.

45 Academies Evaluation 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual report, PwC for DfES, p 36.

*“Enhancing the process and outcome of new Academy buildings; additional support and guidance should be provided by the DfES to facilitate a smoother project management of the new Academy buildings, and ensure that they are fit-for-purpose in relation to 21st century learning. Based on the research evidence, a number of specific suggestions can be made:*

- The contractual agreements with project managers, builders and architects, should include a post-occupation review and a clear process and date for completion of all outstanding problems identified by this;
- Utilities, security and maintenance costings should be modelled as part of the design phase of all Academies;
- Academies should be encouraged to consult more widely with users of the buildings, particularly staff and pupils, as the evidence suggests that this will facilitate the achievement of a fit-for-purpose, practical design; and
- Related to this, architects and other stakeholders should be encouraged by the DfES to strike an appropriate balance between the ‘look’ and ‘feel’ of new Academies, and their practical and fit-for-purpose design aspects.”<sup>46</sup>

**58. The clearest message of all, therefore, from both BSF and the Academies programme is to take the time to get it right at the beginning and to maintain dialogue the users of the building. To give authorities and schools the time to think about what they want to do and the way that they want to do it is the best way to ensure that what emerges at the end is an excellent learning environment, rather than a striking building which does not meet the needs of its users as well as it should.** PwC recommend 12 to 18 months lead-in time for Academy principals and something similar would clearly be of great benefit for all BSF school projects. It would allow detailed and continuing dialogue between clients, architects and developers, which is vital if the buildings are to be appropriate and fit the users’ needs. The Academies capital programme is now within the remit of PfS and BSF, which ought to mean that emerging lessons are more easily identified and shared.

59. Lessons should also be learned from the CABE audit of schools built before the introduction of BSF. This study, published in summer 2006, looked at 52 completed schools, including Academies. It found that the majority of new schools were not taking the opportunity provided to address issues of educational transformation, and failed to use inspirational design to support delivery of the curriculum.<sup>47</sup> In support of those findings, Richard Simmons of CABE said that it was possible to be selected for a PFI scheme through a good finance package and a good maintenance and management package, but without a high quality design.<sup>48</sup>

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46 *ibid*, p 57.

47 Ev 50

48 Q 179

### **The role of the Department**

60. We heard informally from authorities in the early BSF waves that they had to respond to as many as 12 DfES policy teams (as they then were) in developing their BSF bids. If true generally of the BSF project it suggests a lack of co-ordination within the Department which needs to be addressed. Clear lines of communication are vital if a project as ambitious as BSF is to produce the best possible results, and we return to this issue in our general conclusions.

### **PFI and capital funding**

61. We explored some of the issues concerning the use of the private finance initiative rather than capital funding direct from the Government. The DfES told us in evidence that all PFI funding for school buildings now comes through the BSF programme, and that half of BSF funding is now PFI credits and half conventional capital spending.<sup>49</sup> 4ps told us that:

“The original intention of the BSF programme was to have a clear split between new build schools which would be created and maintained under PFI contracts, and refurbished schools which would be the subject of DBOM contracts (Design, Build, Operate and Maintain—in other words PFI without the private sector investment). This would have meant that all BSF schools would be properly looked-after under long-term facilities management contracts integrated with the risk transferred to the private sector.

“The reality is that DBOM has become just ‘Design and Build’, with possible non-mandatory and quite separate facilities management (FM) contracts. In addition, many of the schools that were expected to be procured under PFI are now to be conventional capital projects using Design and Build contracts.”<sup>50</sup>

62. PFI has been contentious since its inception, with proponents saying that it allows greater capital investment more quickly than could be the case with conventional capital expenditure and critics arguing that it amounts to a kind of privatisation, putting too much control in the hands of the private sector. The long-term contracts, which last for 25 to 30 years, have also been criticised for being too inflexible, and concerns have been raised about how those contracts can be renegotiated if the schools to which they relate are no longer required.

63. In the light of the comments by 4ps, we asked the DCSF how the decision was taken on whether a project should be financed through PFI or conventional capital funding. In response, Partnerships for Schools told us:

“For planning purposes the programme level working assumption for BSF is that where local authorities plan to rebuild 70% or more of the existing floor space of a school, then a PFI procurement is likely to maximise the value for money of the project. For schools with a smaller proportion of new build, a design and build (conventional capital) route is likely to achieve better value. Of course, local

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49 Q 626

50 Ev 180

circumstances play a part in decision making and these are always taken into account before a final decision is reached.

Across the BSF programme, we expect about half of the gross floor area of the schools estate to be rebuilt, attracting PFI credits, with the anticipation that the other half will be remodelled or refurbished using conventional capital funding. However, this will vary from project to project and from authority to authority.”<sup>51</sup>

We take it from this statement that authorities will therefore know from an early stage of development of projects which funding method they will be using.

64. We were also interested in the revenue costs associated with PFI and with conventional capital. PfS told us that, under PFI, authorities are reimbursed through the revenue support grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government for the initial capital costs, life cycle replacement capital and some of the private sector partner’s costs relating to finance and taxation. Costs of so-called ‘soft’ facilities management (cleaning and security), ‘hard’ facilities management (building maintenance), utilities charges and buildings insurance are expected to be met by local authorities and schools. As an example, PfS told us that “we can expect total annual revenue costs for an authority awarded £100 million of PFI credits to be in the region of £8 million. Of this, over 90% will be supported by central government.” In total £3.75 billion in PFI credits have been awarded to BSF for the period 2004 to 2008.

65. For projects funded by conventional capital, decisions on funding life cycle replacement lie with local authorities and schools:

“This approach does allow the authority and schools greater management flexibility over making payments but in turn increases the risk that a whole life approach might be ignored.

“PfS told us that because the risk transfer to the private sector is greater under PFI, ‘the costs can be greater’.”

66. We also asked about risks associated with each method of funding. The response was that the risk lay in the way the project was constructed rather than the funding method:

“The risks here are more to do with the underlying procurement decision than in respect of the funding method. The type of funding supports the procurement decision which will have been determined by a comprehensive and auditable value for money assessment.”

**67. While we take the point that it is the viability of the project in the first instance that is the main risk factor, it seems to us that there are risks associated with PFI as a funding method.** The first is the revenue cost. PfS indicated that £100 million of PFI credits would give rise to £8 million a year in revenue costs, of which the authority would have to find approximately £800,000 from within its own resources (£20 million over the life of a 25 year contract). Given that the cost of a newly built school is in the region of £20 million, many authorities will be funding much more than £100 million of credits.

68. Secondly, there is the risk of a school becoming unviable through a fall in pupil numbers. While this is clearly the kind of problematic original procurement decision that PFS was referring to, it can be extremely expensive if it happens to a PFI school. We are aware of three instances where PFI funded schools have closed or are closing leaving the relevant authorities with continuing financial commitments: a school in Brighton, which closed after three years, leaving the authority having to pay at least £4.5 million to release itself from the PFI contract<sup>52</sup>, a school in Clacton which is to close after five years because of falling rolls<sup>53</sup>, and a school in Belfast which is to close this summer after five years, for which the authority is committed to paying £370,000 a year for the next 20 years.<sup>54</sup> **We ask the DCSF to make a clear public statement on how many PFI schools have closed prematurely, what the overall cost to the public purse has been and how it monitors schools in danger.**

69. On the figures given to us by PFS, the £3.75 billion in PFI credits already allocated to BSF will give rise to approximately £300 million in annual revenue payments. If half of the projected total BSF cost of £45 billion is funded under PFI that would on this basis mean total annual revenue costs of £1.8 billion pounds, of which around £180 million would have to come from authorities' own resources. **We ask for confirmation that local authorities are required to set out in their BSF plans the full revenue costs of the project and details of how they plan to meet them over the full term of the contract.**

70. One of our main concerns in this report was to assess whether the BSF project was giving value for money. The scale of the project mean that the costs associated with the PFI portion of the funding allocation are very large indeed and, as PFS acknowledges, the revenue costs are higher for PFI projects than for those funded by conventional capital mechanisms. The details of a PFI schools contract are crucial. There are risks associated with issues such as: the full degree of risk transfer; whether a school building designed in 2007 will continue to be appropriate in 2032;<sup>55</sup> and the possible need to vary the contract over time without incurring heavy cost penalties (attempting to ensure that the initial contract covers all possibilities for a 25 year period is, we believe, virtually impossible). We have already seen that some existing PFI schools have closed, with continuing cost implications for the authorities concerned. Indeed, the use of PFI as a method of funding requires local authorities to take risks on behalf of schools over which they have little control.

**71. The Government needs to set out more clearly than it has done so far its assessment of the sustainability of the levels of revenue commitments across local authorities in general; how DCSF and Partnerships for Schools make judgements about how well authorities have planned to ensure that schools will be sustainable given projected future numbers of pupils; and the lessons that it has learned from those PFI funded schools which have been forced to close.**

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52 "The school that died of poverty", *The Guardian*, 9 August 2005.

53 *£25 million school shut after five years*, BBC News Online, 10 July 2007.

54 *Buy now, pay later*, BBC News Online, 21 June 2007; "PFI school to cost £7.4 million after closure", *The Guardian*, 23 March 2007.

55 See the section on future proofing for further discussion of this issue.

## Primary schools

72. Primary schools are not included in BSF, but there is a separate programme to provide for the rebuilding, remodelling or refurbishment of 50% of primary schools over the next 15 years, which was announced in March 2006.<sup>56</sup> It is designed in a very different way to Building Schools for the Future. BSF has begun in areas with traditionally high levels of deprivation, while the primary programme is targeted to “address deprivation nationally and in every authority and responding to population changes”.<sup>57</sup> However, authorities are not being brought into the programme in waves; there will be regional pilot schemes in the first year, in 2008, and after that all authorities will benefit from access to funding from 2009.<sup>58</sup> The DfES is encouraging authorities to use funding from as many different sources as possible—other central government agencies, local authority investment and the private sector as well other DfES capital for primary schools—in order to achieve the greatest possible effect. The money available will be £150 million in 2008-09, increasing to £500 million in 2009-10, with £7 billion planned to be available over the life of the programme.<sup>59</sup>

73. The DfES told us that the aspiration for the programme was that :

“[...] we would hope to rebuild or take out of use, as a minimum, at least the 5% of school buildings in the worst physical condition nationally, and to improve or take out of use the 20% of the worst condition buildings in our most-deprived communities. With strategic and joined-up planning and funding, we would hope to exceed these targets. Other schools benefiting from the programme will have substantial improvements. The programme should also contribute to other national aims such as to raise standards, improve school food or promote sport and languages.”<sup>60</sup>

74. The Government clearly has significant ambitions for this programme as for BSF, but it is not so wide-ranging (not all schools will be affected) nor is an equivalent amount of money being made available. This may be because primary schools are much smaller than secondary schools and may not be expected to have the same specialised features as secondary schools. On the other hand, there are in the region of 20,000 primary schools, so 10,000 schools are expected to benefit, which is a very large number. A crude calculation gives a figure of £700,000 per primary school in the programme. There will clearly be a wide variation on that, with some rebuilt and some refurbished, but it is a marked contrast to the £20 million that is likely to be spent on a new secondary school.

75. Unlike the original BSF launch document, the primary document specifically refers to sustainable design.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps therefore a better cost comparison is to look at a new primary school built on sustainable principles that might be presumed to embody much of what the Government is trying to achieve. Green End Primary School in Manchester, which

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56 *Every Child Matters: Primary capital programme*, DfES, 9 March 2006.

57 *ibid*, p 4.

58 *ibid*.

59 Ev 172

60 *ibid*.

61 *Every Child Matters: Primary capital programme*, p 36.

provides for 340 children, uses rainwater to flush toilets, uses natural lighting wherever possible, and is naturally ventilated. It cost £4.6 million to build.<sup>62</sup> While the budget will provide capacity to build many such schools, others are likely to have to make do with far less.

76. £7 billion is a great deal of money and what this programme appears to provide is a parallel system to the standard devolved capital allocation that local authorities would otherwise use for improvements to their primary estate (and which was presumably used to build Green End). It is not clear, however, what difference there is in principle between the primary and secondary estates which leads to them being treated in such different ways not in terms of investment but of approach. The Primary programme emphasises the five Every Child Matters outcomes, talks about mastering basics of literacy and numeracy and the need for children to become enthusiastic and confident learners across the curriculum. It also talks about investment in ICT. It does not however, have the same explicitly transformational aim that is part of BSF.

77. We received little evidence on the primary programme, so we are not in a position to draw detailed conclusions. The contrast in structure between BSF and the primary programme, however, is striking. One concern, therefore, is the extent to which the two are joined up. For example, the primary programme is not explicitly about educational transformation. Personalisation is put forward as central to primary education, as it is in secondary but again, as we will discuss in the next chapter, in neither primary nor secondary is the nature of personalised education sufficiently defined.

78. These challenges could be addressed more effectively if the DfES could ensure that:

- **all involved in delivering the primary programme have a clear view of how it interacts with BSF;**
- **explicit national goals are set out to assist those at local level who are making hard choices, including clear guidance on what DCSF means by personalised learning in the primary context; and**
- **as with the BSF programme there must be real clarity about how and to what extent this £7 billion programme is to contribute to transforming education.**

## Further Education

79. Further education is another sector which has been renovating its estate over recent years. As the Learning and Skills Council told us:

“Since incorporation [of FE colleges] in 1993, about half (3 million m<sup>2</sup>) of the projected size of the further education estate (6 million m<sup>2</sup>) has been renewed or modernised. In 1993 the condition of the FE estate was very poor with less than 5% of the estate classed as excellent. By 2004-05 this had risen to about 40% with the

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62 “Light fantastic”, *Education Guardian*, 27 February 2007.

percentage of excellent quality floorspace rising at about 7% a year at the current rate of modernisation and renewal.”<sup>63</sup>

It also said that it had been estimated that the cost of completing that renewal and modernisation over a five year period was estimated at £7 billion, taking into account the need for further investment to address issues arising from 14–19 reform and the Skills Strategy.<sup>64</sup>

80. We thought it important to look at what is happening in the FE sector for a number of reasons: to see what lessons might be learned for the BSF programme; because FE links in to the secondary education through changes to 14–19 education; and because it has its own challenges in terms of sustainability, good design and future learning needs.

### **Linking BSF and college redevelopment**

81. One of the comments that was made forcefully to us was that there is insufficient linkage between capital funding for the different sectors. Graham Moore, Principal of Stoke-on-Trent College, told us:

“We work quite closely with our schools. The secondary heads and the two college principals, the sixth form college and ourselves, meet together regularly, once a month or so. We have good relationships. We have a lot of students from the local schools into the colleges, so that relationship works quite well. We are developing cluster ideas with the local schools. But, when we come to the building programme, we are trying to say, ‘Look, if you have a cluster of schools, what vocational specialisms are you going to put in each school? How is the *Building Schools for the Future* going to link to that? What facilities do you need post-16 in the colleges to match that?’ Then, when we talk to the local authority, who are supportive, they say, ‘Well, *Building Schools for the Future* money is specifically *Building Schools for the Future* money. It cannot be used for colleges.”<sup>65</sup>

82. Martin Lamb, Area Director, Hampshire and Isle of Wight for the Learning and Skills Council, when asked why it was not possible for colleges to receive a share of the funding for 14–16 year-olds, for whom many colleges make provision, said that

“[...] the answer probably is that it is because of the way the Department has designed the capital flow. We have capital funding from the Department that is for colleges and school sixth forms for 16-plus. Local authorities, through their BSF and normal capital routes, have the capital funding for pre-16s [...] the current arrangement [...] is that BSF money in local authorities for 14–16 year olds has to be used on school sites; it cannot be used for 14–16 facilities on college sites. That might an area where a little bit more flexibility would be helpful.”<sup>66</sup>

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63 Ev 90

64 *ibid.*

65 Q 350

66 Q 372

83. Collaboration between different institutions in different sectors happens across the country and is something that we welcome. To take the new 14–19 Diplomas as an example, there is explicit recognition that one school on its own will be unable to provide all the 14 Diploma lines when they become available, and so there will have to be co-operation between different institutions. Graham Moore told us that in his view the FE sector was more flexible on that score than the schools sector, and we have no reason to disagree. **In order to provide properly integrated secondary education in any given area, the funding systems in place should be designed to encourage working in partnership. The DfES should examine the way BSF, further education and primary capital projects are funded to ensure that partnership working designed to increase the range of learning opportunities available to students is rewarded and that there is as great a degree of flexibility as possible to help local authorities, schools and colleges to maximise the benefit for children and young people in their areas.**

84. Other factors also make it difficult to link up BSF and college redevelopment. As Martin Lamb told us:

“One of the features of *Building Schools for the Future* is that it is in [...] 15 waves and if you are at the end of the programme the money does not start to arrive until well into the 2015 area. One of the challenges [...] in my previous role in Berkshire, was that none of the unitary authorities in Berkshire were in the early phases of *Building Schools for the Future*, so, in terms of doing a college development—and I was deeply engaged in the one at Bracknell and Wokingham for the new college on the main Bracknell site—there was no possibility of linking it to *Building Schools for the Future* because at that time, and still, Bracknell are well down the *Building Schools for the Future*. There is a critical timing issue.”<sup>67</sup>

85. John Widdowson, Principal of New College Durham, said that where there had been college redevelopment in advance of BSF it was important that authorities took that into account:

“[...] where these new-build colleges have occurred, then it is about influencing the process under BSF with their partner schools, so not replicating facilities within schools, and that is about communication and talking at a fairly basic level about what goes into the design so that [...] every school does not build a construction centre when there is a perfectly good and serviceable one capable of expansion in the college. So, it is about collaboration, it is about talking at the early stage before things start to get put into bricks and mortar or steel and concrete, and then reaching agreement at a very local level.”<sup>68</sup>

**86. These examples show how complicated it can be to achieve integrated provision from different sectors, but they also illustrate that the only way to ensure that there is effective educational provision in an area is through the co-operative efforts of those working locally. With the division of DfES into Children, Schools and Families and**

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67 Q 388

68 Q 446

**Innovation, Universities and Skills this level of co-operative effort will be equally important at the national level.**

### ***Redeveloping the remainder of the Further Education estate***

87. As the LSC told us, while half of the estate has been redeveloped, it remains a substantial task to complete the job:

“[...] around 50% of the estate mostly dating from the 1950s and 1960s still requires renewal, is inefficient and hinders flexible, high quality delivery. Some of the poorest premises still support the most disadvantaged learners (for example specialist provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities).”<sup>69</sup>

88. We asked Martin Lamb if it had been the case that the choice of the colleges that had been redeveloped so far had been arbitrary. He agreed that the LSC “had very much been reactive to colleges”. Now, however,

“I think we have got to the stage now where it must be a more planned and reactive programme by the LSC where we are discussing with every college its future building strategy because we have a window of opportunity in the current [Comprehensive Spending Review] capital time where there is funding available for colleges.”<sup>70</sup>

He also said that he felt that renewing the remaining 50% of colleges “will be more challenging”,<sup>71</sup> partly because the LSC is encouraging authorities to be bolder and to consider redeveloping complete sites rather than partially rebuilding.<sup>72</sup>

### ***Funding college redevelopment***

89. The capital funding arrangements for FE colleges are very different to those for schools. As the LSC told us:

“Projects are financed by colleges through a combination of long term borrowings, receipts from the sale of redundant property assets, contributions from reserves and grant support, principally from the LSC but also in some cases with support from other public bodies such as Regional Development Agencies.”<sup>73</sup>

90. John Widdowson said that the redevelopment of New College Durham had cost over £35 million, and that it had been funded by a 35% grant from the LSC, the proceeds from selling one site and a similar amount from borrowing.<sup>74</sup> Graham Moore said that the position with Stoke was similar; “about a third, a third, a third”.<sup>75</sup>

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69 Ev 90

70 Q 405

71 Q 406

72 Q 407

73 Ev 92

74 Q 403

75 Q 404

91. We asked if the FE sector considered itself to be an afterthought to other people's programmes. John Widdowson said that, given that the FE sector has dealt with difficult cases,

“What we have is symptomatic of that filling of the gaps, if you like, and the difficult to define role that the sector has, because it does those things that other people do not a lot of the time and it deals with those people that other parts of the education world do not deal with as well as we would all want. I think that makes it quite difficult sometimes to put us in the right position [...]. None of us want to be in debt. I do not want to be in £9 million of debt from the building we have built, but it is worth it if you look at the difference it makes to the students who come in and the way it raises their aspirations.”<sup>76</sup>

92. Graham Moore said that

“It may not appear as fair for the FE as the other two sectors, but it is the best deal that FE has ever had. I think we ought to say that very clearly. We are in a position where we can see a transformation. Yes, we might not like to bear the burdens and we see other people perhaps not having to bear the burdens that we do, but I think we are always being entrepreneurial and we will get on and do it because we understand that it is in the best interests of our students and it makes a difference.”<sup>77</sup>

93. The most positive element of this funding arrangement is that the colleges feel in charge of what they are doing. John Widdowson told us:

“I still think that the control that the current system gives to college governing bodies, working with the LSC and others, allows us to respond in a way that a bigger system might prevent.”<sup>78</sup>

Graham Moore agreed:

“[...] what we do get in the FE sector, whether it is for good or bad, is what we really ask for because it is for us, it is for the future, it matters to each institution. We spend a lot of time trying to get it right with our staff and our students and I think those are more individual buildings, more interesting buildings, more fit for purpose buildings.”<sup>79</sup>

94. Given the high profile that PFI has in Building Schools for the Future, it was interesting to see that it is almost entirely absent from the FE sector. Martin Lamb told us:

“There is, I think, only one PFI project in England, which is at Newbury College in Berkshire, and it probably is that the conventional wisdom is that PFI projects are required to be of a certain size and most individual college projects do not reach the size to make PFI a useful way forward; but, as bigger projects come along, that debate might change because there are certainly now projects in the design stage that might

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76 Q 387

77 *ibid.*

78 *ibid.*

79 Q 440

end up at £80-100 million, and that is probably closer to the PFI size of where people believe PFI is the most useful route. Smaller projects traditionally have not been seen as good for PFI, as I understand it.”<sup>80</sup>

95. It was very interesting to see the way that the funding arrangements that exist in the FE sector, while raising concerns about the level of debt that colleges may have to carry, do appear to give colleges a real sense of ownership of their projects. This may also be because of the way the sector is structured and the institutional controls that come through incorporation. It is possible that really large projects might be developed under PFI, but that would presumably only have an attraction if the whole project cost could be covered. Otherwise colleges could be faced with financing a long-term PFI contract, and funding borrowing, and possibly having to find funding from asset disposal, which appears too substantial a risk even for a sector which wants to be entrepreneurial. **We ask the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills to set out its policy on the appropriateness of PFI as a means of financing the redevelopment of colleges.**

### **Sustainability**

96. Sustainability is part of the calculation made when the LSC is assessing a project. Martin Lamb told us:

“I hope we take a commonsense approach [...], which is, on the one hand, we are looking to sustain the best possible value for money for the investment of public money in college buildings but at the same time that we do not reduce that to a non-creative, non-individual approach. We are just in the process, this month, of publishing new guidance on the whole capital project scene, including changed advice on sustainability, where we will now take sustainability issues that bring an upfront cost, such as the electric panels, and, if there are particular additional costs associated with sustainability, we will now bring in additional uplift to the cost parameters we use for sustainability.”<sup>81</sup>

97. When the LSC launched its prospectus for its capital programme in February 2007,<sup>82</sup> it made specific commitments on the sustainability of new college buildings:

“In future, to qualify for LSC capital funds all proposals will need to address Sustainable Development by:

- meeting and preferably exceeding, the requirements of Part L of Building Regulations;
- ensuring that the completed development meets the criteria to achieve excellent Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) ratings;

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80 Q 425

81 Q 375

82 ‘Building for Skills: A prospectus for the Learning and Skills Council’s capital programme’, LSC, 6 February 2007.

- maximising the use of natural lighting and ventilation by, for example, using wind and solar power to generate light and heat and by collecting rainwater to reduce water usage and;
- embedding the principles of sustainability in the design of buildings and building systems; and
- the LSC will allow an additional 5% of building costs to be ring fenced and used for Sustainable Development.”

**98. We applaud the commitment shown by the LSC in stating these principles that need to be met and providing funding to offset any additional cost (although not all sustainable features incur extra costs).<sup>83</sup> This checklist would be useful for anyone seeking to build sustainable educational buildings, not just Further Education colleges.**

### 3 Educational transformation

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99. There was a clear aspiration from the outset of Building Schools for the Future that local authorities should use this opportunity to transform secondary education in their areas. As it said in the BSF launch document,

“At the heart of Building Schools for the Future is a desire not only to rebuild and renew individual secondary schools, but also to help LEAs to reform and redesign the pattern of education, for example working with local Learning and Skills Councils to best serve each community for decades to come. It is an opportunity to think differently about all aspects of the process of developing and delivering new schools, exploring such questions as:

- What do we want education to be in the 21st century?
- How can we learn from the best current schools?
- What is the right pattern of local provision (for example, the Location and size of schools, or the relationship between primary, secondary and post-16 provision, or collaboration between schools and further education colleges)?
- How can we best translate the vision into specific schemes and projects?
- What kind of leadership is needed to achieve this?
- How can we best involve schools and communities along the way?
- How can we create the most productive partnerships with the private sector?”<sup>84</sup>

100. **The crucial question here, and one that the Department does not answer in this document, is what do we want education to be in the 21st century?** Does it mean enabling more children to attain at a higher level using the current measures of achievement; for example, a greater proportion gaining 5 A\* to C GCSEs, including English and Maths, or taking A levels? Or does it mean taking a more fundamental look at how children learn and what they need to learn, and provide facilities to enable that to happen?

101. HTI told us:

“School leaders, governors, teachers, students and communities need assistance in building a vision for their school of the future. Without that kind of support we will simply get more of what we have now and the transformative opportunities presented by BSF will be lost both in building design and pedagogic practice.”<sup>85</sup>

102. People that we spoke to emphasised that having a clear vision of what is wanted is vital. Michael Buchanan, Education Director of Place Group, told us:

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<sup>84</sup> *Building schools for the future: A new approach to capital investment*, DfES, February 2004, p 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ev 128

“I think that buildings are not the answer to transformation in education. They can assist and they can assist particularly in removing obstacles to a more flexible curriculum and so on, but they form part of an education vision which is also very much to do with leadership and curriculum and working practices, and so on, so the building can support a lot of changes within education other than physical changes, cultural and working changes, and I think they are very significant in terms of schools as organisations. Because schools, of course, are not factories, they are not conveyor belts, they are places where human interactions take place, and therefore all the factors which affect the quality of human interactions are important.”<sup>86</sup>

103. Caroline Morland of Edunova described how, in the projects with which she had been involved, the attempt had made to ensure both that aim for the project was clearly identified and that sufficient flexibility was incorporated to allow for future development:

“We are building in choice, so the solutions that are coming out now are more around the plural world, that the building will be fit for multiple ways of doing things with different configurations and different deployment of technology and internal structures. So, we are not backing one horse. We are not saying we can look into a crystal ball and we know what it is going to be like in 15 years’ time for that school. What we are saying is it could be this, it could be that and it could be another and this building will be resilient to certain forms of adaptation to enable it to operate irrespective of which model ends up evolving and developing in that community and in that school [...]. There are probably four or five scenarios that we test a technical building against rather than 150, but what we are striving for is that we are not making that determination, we are not forcing a single pathway in terms of the infrastructure, and we are enabling the building to move depending on how the educational emphasis goes.”<sup>87</sup>

**This suggests that, as we commented earlier, the early phase of development of what is now called the Strategy for Change is key to the success of the whole process. People need to be given enough time to think through the issues about how secondary education should be provided in their area before they are required to start making firm decisions. A clear statement of the national ambitions for 21st century education could help to provide guidance and challenge to this local decision-making process.**

### Local decisions versus Government policy

104. On delivery, there is another vital question; what freedom do local authorities, schools and others have to take decisions and provide solutions at local level? To what extent does the DfES, with an eye on other education policy objectives, seek to second guess what is best for a given area?

105. For example, the DfES in its memorandum said that a local authority has to demonstrate that it has robust proposals on a number of issues including school improvement, and would need to show it had considered Academies where “appropriate

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86 Q 33

87 Q 573

and relevant”.<sup>88</sup> The Schools Commissioner told us that part of his role was to encourage local authorities to make use of the BSF opportunity to address a number of the Government’s main priorities, including—

“Increasing the diversity of secondary school provision in their area, particularly by supporting schools to become self-governing Foundation Schools, Trust Schools or Academies;”<sup>89</sup>

106. Janet Newton, Project Director of the BSF Project Team for Lancashire County Council told us what the experience had been in developing the project for Burnley and Pendle without including Academies:

“We started in 2002 looking at the circumstances in Burnley and Pendle, and we developed with our schools a vision for education in the school community, we had a series of conferences with the educational community, the wider stakeholder groups, and we invited the DfES to be present at our conferences. It was in the early stages of the Building Schools for the Future, before the bid went in in October 2003, and we were exploring collaboration, collaborative working, federations, how many schools we should have, the location of the schools and should we have an academy, and one of the objectives that we have in Burnley is parity of esteem [...] Parity of esteem was one of the clear objectives that we wanted to achieve, and there was overwhelming support from the entire education community and stakeholders not to have an academy in Lancashire, or in Burnley and Pendle [...]. We had to robustly indicate [to the DfES] why an academy would not be appropriate in Burnley and Pendle. Lancashire is a very large authority, and what is necessary in Burnley and Pendle as a solution may not fit elsewhere in Lancashire, but it was not appropriate for what we were doing in East Lancashire.”<sup>90</sup>

107. There is a real conflict here between different Government aims. **Given the amount of expenditure which is being authorised, it is right that the DfES should satisfy itself that it is being spent appropriately. On the other hand, it does not look much like “devolving resource and power to local level” if there is a detailed check list of Government objectives which have to be addressed to allow a project to be signed off.** The fact that Lancashire, from which we took evidence, and Knowsley, which we visited, have been given the green light with projects that did not contain Academies indicates that there is some flexibility, but it is flexibility that has been hard won by determined local authorities, and many may consider that this is a battle best avoided.

108. The Building Schools for the Future project is a bold initiative, and some of what we heard about the constraints on development at local level suggest that the Government is nervous about just how bold it has been. **While it is important to ensure that expenditure is properly monitored, we have seen no evidence that local authorities have put forward particularly inappropriate plans for their BSF projects. The Government should have the courage of its convictions, and allow local authorities greater flexibility to develop**

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88 Ev 167

89 Ev 329

90 Qq 105-06

**local solutions within a clear framework of priorities, such as the need to promote innovative approaches to learning and the need to embed sustainability.**

109. There is a further complication to the question of who should be in charge of the developments in any given area. There is a real tension between the Government's aims for local areas with BSF and the increased autonomy of schools. With local authorities having less control over schools than ever, with schools having a very large degree of control over their own future and with the DCSF micromanaging policy from the centre, the ability of local authorities to shape the pattern of schooling in their own areas is inevitably constrained.

110. There are ways in which real local innovation could be encouraged. Authorities in later waves of BSF are being given the opportunity to redevelop one of their schools, in a policy known as One-School Pathfinders. Sally Brooks of the DfES told us that these schools were

“a down payment on BSF, if you like, it is not separate. So local authorities have been required to tell us how it fits into their overall strategy. Obviously, a local authority that is going to be in wave 14 will not have fully worked out a strategic plan for its whole school estate in ten years' time, but they should have an overview of what they intend to do and they need to demonstrate to us, if they are rebuilding a new school in that area, that they have their pupil place planning which says it is going to be needed, that they have integrated it into where they want to put the new school when they do get BSF, that, for example, if they are focusing a certain specialism on that school, the facilities are going to be available to the other schools in the area. That is absolutely part of what they have got to tell us before they get the money.

111. We agree that the One School Pathfinders need to be seen as part of an authority's overall BSF project, but we would like it to be taken further. **The DCSF should place a requirement on local authorities to ensure that One School Pathfinders are used as test beds for ways to transform education.**

112. Similarly, local authorities could be encouraged to find innovative ways of delivering education in schools in order to transform learning. Knowsley has gone for a radical approach, closing eleven schools in its area and replacing them with seven new learning centres which will be built as a series of flexible spaces rather than having large numbers of individual classrooms. Knowsley is an area which historically has had low levels of achievement amongst its young people and the local authority has taken the opportunity of BSF to try to do something innovative in order to improve that situation. As we noted above, however, in order to do something like this Knowsley has had to justify its actions to the DfES throughout the process, and this is something that many authorities may choose not to do.

113. We gained an insight into how the Knowsley restructuring might work in practice when we visited the New Line Learning Federation of schools in Maidstone. This is a hard federation of three schools,<sup>91</sup> one an oversubscribed school where pupils have high levels of attainment, and two others serving disadvantaged communities which are operating

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91 That is, three schools with one governing body.

somewhat below their capacity. The federation has introduced flexible learning spaces—called learning plazas—enabling pupils to be taught in year groups in a variety of different activities within the same curricular area and with the levels of support and pace being varied with ability. A great deal of effort is made to engage the pupils in learning, and an equal effort is made to understand pupils’ behaviours and background so that the schools can help them to overcome the difficulties that they face.

114. Pupils from certain social and ethnic groups have persistently low levels of attainment at school, and current practices and policies have not produced a sustained, system-wide improvement for them.<sup>92</sup> **If the Government is serious about wanting BSF to provide educational transformation, it ought to be encouraging local authorities to be more innovative.**

### Developing the use of ICT

115. A greater and more sophisticated use of ICT is another of the main aims of the BSF project. The DfES told us:

“The BSF approach to ICT is founded on the following principles:

- ICT provision should be seen as the ‘fourth utility’ by teaching staff, staff and pupils. From their perspective it should be simple to use, and integral to the school environment—from the building design stage onwards;
- ICT provision should be viewed as a service that establishes the basis for the long term use of ICT; and
- ICT provision should be seen as an agent for change, enabling teaching staff and pupils to transform the way they work.

“The funding allowance for ICT within BSF is at unprecedented levels. At the heart of these principles is a philosophy that new schools will be designed and built around the use of cutting edge ICT, including teaching and learning, school management and buildings management systems and solutions. The aim is to optimise the educational impact of ICT, in a way that ‘retrofitting’ ICT to existing school buildings cannot hope to emulate.”<sup>93</sup>

116. While the last sentence of that statement raises questions about how schools which are being refurbished rather than rebuilt will deal with the integration of ICT, it is clear that a great deal of faith is being placed in the benefits that ICT will bring over the coming years. The key issue here seems to be maintaining flexibility, both for the hardware and for the software and the way in which teaching and learning may develop. Nick Kalisperas of Intellect told us:

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92 See, for example, Education and Skills Committee, *Seventh Report of Session 2002-03, Secondary Education: Pupil Achievement*, HC 513, October 2003; and *Tackling low educational achievement*, Robert Cassen and Geeta Kingdon, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 22 June 2007, <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2063-education-schools-achievement.pdf>.

“[...] where you have got, say, an inner city secondary school as opposed to a secondary school in a rural location, the inner city school is probably going to want something which is much more classroom-based because of the geographical location of its pupils, they will be much more within the classroom, whereas those within a more rural location will be more geographically spread. Therefore, you are looking at potentially offering people things such as distance learning, greater distance learning and perhaps the use of mobile devices. I think that sort of difference needs to come to the fore and we need to be aware of it so companies [...] can develop solutions which are tailored to meet the needs of individual schools as opposed to developing, say, one standard solution which, ultimately, probably will not do what it is supposed to do.”<sup>94</sup>

117. There was acknowledgement from witnesses, however, that, as we discussed earlier, while each school would have particular needs, the range of different computing options across the schools estate would not be huge. Mike Blackburn of BT Education and Local Government told us:

“I would absolutely agree that there are not thousands of different options for this, but you have to be able to allow that innovation and use in the classroom to be taken forward by the teacher and the pupil as well in the way they want to take them forward”.<sup>95</sup>

**118. We believe that ICT is a vital area for the development of education over the coming years, but that does not mean that each school needs to have a bespoke system created for it which differs from systems in all other schools.** Apart from anything else, in the future, with the development of greater collaborative working between institutions on 14–19 education, for example, it will be important for systems to be compatible with each other and for students not to have a huge range of different systems to contend with. **We recommend that information about systems in use is made widely known amongst authorities in later waves of BSF so that they can take advantage of the experience of those which have already procured their ICT.**

119. An argument which BT made against the Government’s approach to IT is that, while it is central to the BSF programme, its use is not sufficiently radical:

“The role of ICT in BSF is being seen as that of a supplementary teaching and learning facility rather than a transformational tool. This actually adds unsustainable cost and little is being done to change the existing cost and environmental parameters. This means that BSF projects are likely to end up with the same number of schools, teachers, teaching assistants, the same curriculum, hours of operation and unproductive holiday periods [...].

“ICT has not been established as a differentiator in BSF. The approach we have seen has been to procure ICT to satisfy a minimum standard at least cost. This has

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94 Q 285

95 Q 288

resulted in many of the opportunities for innovation, value-add and transformation that ICT can facilitate being lost.”<sup>96</sup>

120. There does appear to be a lack of confidence in the DfES’ approach to ICT. The DfES acknowledges that it is of central importance, but appears to see it as something with which pupils need to be familiar and to master rather than something which might revolutionise learning. It is perhaps wise not to make too great claims for one particular mode of learning, and technology can fail to live up to expectations, but if the Government is serious about engaging a larger proportion of the school age population in effective learning new approaches will be needed, and ICT does offer one way of transforming the school experience. The risk is that, when there is no clear guidance, ICT may be used as a tool by pupils but its potential to monitor their progress, manage their learning and inform decisions about future teaching will be under-used. **Guidance on making the most of ICT and examples of good practice should be issued by the DCSF.**

### Future proofing

121. The issue of how to ensure that new schools remain fit for purpose in the long term—perhaps for the rest of the century—is one that goes beyond the provision of ICT. Throughout our evidence, witnesses argued for flexibility to ensure that schools are able to adapt to circumstances which we as yet cannot foresee.

122. Hilary Cottam from the Design Council told us:

“When you are talking about future-proofing, if we just think about the way that learning has changed since the 1950s, even if we could build schools which encapsulate that and think about the whole way we understand cognitive behaviour and things like that very differently now to 50 years ago, if we could make schools address that, we would have moved forward, never mind what the future proofing is going to be. A lot of these things are technologically based, they are about flexibility within systems, they would allow for further future proofing into the years to come.”<sup>97</sup>

She also argued that there needed to be a proper investment in evaluation of projects once completed, which was not currently happening.<sup>98</sup>

123. John Sorrell of the Sorrell Foundation told us:

“What I believe is very important is that over the next two to three years, a vital period, we need to be looking very, very, very hard at this and looking at and learning what is developing, as the visions are created, the briefs are created, the early schools are being done. This has to be a central question as we are doing it, because we shall learn as we go along what we need to do to create the kind of flexibility for those schools of the future, to do a future-proofing you are describing. We should not be at all sure at this moment that we have got it right, but we could over the next

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96 Ev 66

97 Q 143

98 *ibid.*

two to three years because in a way what we are into is a kind of phase of prototyping.”<sup>99</sup>

124. We agree that all these BSF projects must be approached with a view not just to providing environments compatible with the current state of educational thinking, but with an eye to future needs and developments.<sup>100</sup> As part of that process it is vitally important lessons are learned from the earliest schools and projects in the process. **There should be a post-occupancy review of every school within the BSF programme so that a proper assessment can be made of what has worked well and what has caused difficulties, on procurement and construction issues and also on the design and conception of the school. These reviews should be given the widest possible circulation so that all those involved in BSF, in the current waves and in the future, can use them to ensure that mistakes are not repeated, that good ideas are adopted more widely and that the desired flexibility for the future is in place. Transformation of education for the 21st century will only occur if we learn the lessons about what works best.**

### 14–19 education

125. One of the key issues in secondary education in the coming years will be 14–19 education. The Government is committed to the introduction of 14 diplomas to be available to all students in the age group across England by 2013, although it explicitly says that it does not expect any school to be able to provide them on their own, and that they will be delivered collaboratively by schools and colleges across an area.<sup>101</sup> In the section on FE above we noted some of the problems in linking BSF with redevelopment of colleges. **When planning the development of schools in an area, local authorities must ensure that the way provision for 14–19 education is to be made and in which responsibility for delivering each of the diploma lines is to be shared is considered at an early stage. It is important that schools should be seen as a system, not just individual institutions.**

### Personalisation

126. One of the main current Government initiatives on schools is the drive to make education more personally tailored to individual students. It is highlighted as a key issue in the BSF launch document<sup>102</sup> and is mentioned in the DfES memorandum as one of the areas in which an authority must demonstrate that it has “robust proposals”.<sup>103</sup> The Secretary of State set up a review on personalised learning which published its report in January this year.<sup>104</sup> It commented specifically on the way in which the redevelopment of schools through BSF gave the opportunity to ensure that schools were designed to deliver effectively personalised learning:

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99 *ibid.*

100 Not least because of the potential financial consequences of failing to do so: see the section above on *PFI and capital funding*.

101 For a full discussion of 14–19 diplomas, see Fifth Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2006–07, *14–19 Diplomas*, HC 249, 17 May 2007.

102 *Building schools for the future: A new approach to capital investment*, DfES, February 2004, p 9.

103 Ev 167

104 *2020 Vision: Report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group*, DfES, 4 January 2007.

“There is no single blueprint for a school designed for personalising learning. However, the experience of those that have made progress in this area would suggest that spaces will need to:

- be flexible enough to allow for a variety of learning and teaching approaches and greater diversity in the size and age mix of pupil groupings;
- be familiar and welcoming for parents and the wider community, inviting and encouraging them into school;
- emphasise participation and collaboration, through being open, safe and inviting;
- support interaction, knowledge sharing and learning amongst teachers and support staff; and
- use technology—both within and outside classrooms—to enhance learning.”<sup>105</sup>

127. Sally Brooks of the DfES told us that:

“I think personalisation, in as far as it affects Building Schools for the Future, [...] is about making sure, not just that the ICT allows pupils to have access wherever and whenever but that the spaces that you are designing into a school allow small, quiet work spaces that individual pupils can access, that they allow group spaces where a group of people can sit together and work around a single white board on a project, that they allow places where 60, 90 people can sit together in a lecture hall and see what is happening and where, in fact, schools can link with other schools so that you can have experts coming into one school to give what would be a very valuable lecture at secondary level and schools in the area can link in through their IT and appreciate it.”<sup>106</sup>

128. Personalisation is a key element in the Government’s plans to improve levels of attainment. It does not appear, however, to be a radical or transforming policy. The report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 review group has a chapter entitled *Realising the vision—designing a new school experience*, but the experience that it describes is one that would be very familiar to recent generations of pupils. Everything that it suggests is reasonable, but it suggests incremental improvement rather than transformation.

129. When we asked Jim Knight what educational transformation meant, he told us:

“It is fundamentally about teaching and learning and a focus on standards. There is a role for diversity and choice in terms of accountability and ensuring that we do not have complacency in the system, but fundamentally it is about the development of teaching and learning, the personalisation. We are working through our response to Christine Gilbert’s review on teaching and learning for 2020, but one of the interesting aspects to that is the notion of learners learning from each other more, of teachers facilitating learning and teaching people how to learn, the skills to learn, as much as teaching the knowledge itself. That sort of development is, I think, at the

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<sup>105</sup> *ibid*, page 25.

<sup>106</sup> Q 629

core of it alongside giving learners choice over curriculum, choice over qualifications, which is part of the 14–19 changes, for example.”<sup>107</sup>

130. This takes us some way to understanding the Government’s views, but more is needed. If personalisation is to provide a solution to improving attainment, schools need clearer guidance on how to adapt their physical environment, teaching methods and curriculum in order to deliver it successfully. **The DCSF should provide a clear vision of what it wants from personalisation, with guidance about how it might be realised in BSF projects, not as a prescription but in order to inform the debate on how schools should operate in the future.**

### Accountability framework

131. A further issue that needs to be looked at is the way in which schools are held accountable for their performance when they are in the BSF process. This was an issue raised with us during our visit to Knowsley; the difficulty of managing local change while complying with national prescription. That is, inspection and audit procedures take no account of the effects of implementing a programme whose aim is to transform education, so that those who take the Government’s exhortation about the need to transform the educational process expose themselves to the risk of criticism from the inspectorate, and this may help to make authorities and schools more cautious in what they are seeking to do. It is in our view unreasonable for schools and authorities to be required to give equal priority to every other Government policy initiative when BSF is in progress.

132. It is obviously important to safeguard the position of pupils currently in a school which is being rebuilt or refurbished. It is unacceptable to build schools for the future if the current generation suffers, but it is also clear to us that schools which are attempting innovative ways of delivering education should be given credit for that. There needs to be flexibility in the inspection framework to take account of a school’s position in the BSF programme when that is appropriate. **We recommend that Ofsted, in consultation with the DCSF, should draw up and publish for consultation a protocol on how its inspection regime is to be modified for schools in BSF.**

### Integration of secondary, primary and special needs education

133. Transformation of a different kind can take place by using the variety of funding streams available. In our inquiry into special needs education, we visited Darlington Education Village, which on one campus site housed three schools, primary secondary and special needs, and allowed the use of shared facilities of a high standard as well as allowing pupils attending the different schools to learn together in appropriate circumstances. Similar projects have been developed elsewhere.

134. Chris Archer, Services Director, Children’s Services Department, Nottingham City Council, explained what his authority was doing:

“[...] we have a campus where a brand new special school is going to be created from the closure of two highly successful special schools already, to create a centre of excellence which will sit side by side with our full service extended school, which is to be heavily refurbished, but will also sit on the site of a primary school, also sit on the same campus as the local tartan running track and the sports centre and the proposed new competition-standard swimming pool. So, what we are aiming for is a campus of some magnitude here.”<sup>108</sup>

135. This model clearly has an appeal educationally, in allowing economies of scale. It may be one way of addressing the dip in attainment shown by some pupils in transferring from primary to secondary school, by making it a smoother process, or indeed by making some schools all age schools. We believe it also has benefits for special needs education, offering a good flexible alternative to the simple choice between mainstream and special schooling.

## 4 Sustainability

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136. Sustainability was not mentioned in the Building Schools for the Future launch document, but in the three years since then the issue has risen to the top of the political agenda.

137. There have been three particularly significant developments in the debate in the time that we have been holding this inquiry. First came the Stern Review, in October 2006, setting out the economic consequences of climate change and putting forward ways in which the problem might be addressed. In the chapter on ‘Adaptation in the Developed World’, the report says that “Government has a role in providing a clear policy framework to guide effective adaptation by individuals and firms in the medium and longer term”. One of the four key areas it outlines where the Government should provide this framework is:

“Land-use planning and performance standards should encourage both private and public investment in buildings, long-lived capital and infrastructure to take account of climate change.”<sup>109</sup>

138. Secondly, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) produced a number of summaries for policy makers setting out the effects of climate change and the policy initiatives that are needed to combat those effects. In its summary *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, it too comments on the need to make adaptations in order to diminish the adverse effects of climate change.<sup>110</sup> In language very similar to that of the Stern review, it says that

“One way of increasing adaptive capacity is by introducing the consideration of climate change impacts in development planning, for example by [...] including adaptation measures in land-use planning and infrastructure design.”<sup>111</sup>

139. Third, and most directly relevant to our inquiry, the Government published its Draft Climate Change Bill. This included provisions to incorporate in statute the Government’s previously announced target to reduce UK carbon emissions by 60% by 2050 compared to a 1990 baseline.<sup>112</sup>

**140. As the Sustainable Development Commission told us, the schools estate contributes 2% to national carbon emissions overall, but that figure represents almost 15% of UK public sector carbon emissions.<sup>113</sup> If the Government is to meet a target of at least 60% reduction against the 1990 baseline, and if it intends to set an example by the way in which it looks after the public sector building stock, it clearly has to address the issue of schools’ carbon emissions.**

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109 *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change*, HM Treasury, 30 October 2006, p 416.

110 *IPCC, Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptations and Vulnerability, Summary for Policymakers*, Brussels, 13 April 2007, p 19.

111 *ibid.*

112 Draft Climate Change Bill, Cm 7040, EFRA, 13 March 2007, paragraph 5.4.

113 Ev 115

## Assessing environmental impact

141. The principal indicator of environmental impact used in the Building Schools for the Future programme is the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method for schools—known as BREEAM schools. There was a great deal of discussion with witnesses about whether this indicator—on which all new schools have to have a score of very good, just below the best score of excellent—helps to show whether a school has been built sustainably or not.<sup>114</sup> The Sustainable Development Commission provided a very detailed critique of BREEAM schools, comparing it with the Government's own document on sustainability in schools and finding it wanting.<sup>115</sup> The SDC told us:

“The major drawback of BREEAM Schools is that it does not encapsulate a vision for sustainable school buildings and is therefore unable to inspire, and is not designed to assist with the basic design decisions necessary to make the most of the current capital investment opportunities. The current urgency on the climate change situation and lack of progress towards sustainable development demands a very much stronger response than BREEAM and the question of whether to seek BREEAM ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ is something of a red herring as neither would on its own create a generation of sustainable school buildings. If BREEAM is the limit of the aspiration, BSF and other capital programmes will fail to support schools sufficiently in meeting these goals.”<sup>116</sup>

142. The BREEAM schools tool is a check list, giving credit for different environmentally beneficial actions in building a school (giving credit, for example, for using a brown field site rather than a green field site). Martin Mayfield of Arup, who was one of those who argued that BREEAM was insufficient as a measure of sustainability, told us:

“It is a reasonable tool to guide teams in improving the sustainability credentials of a building. However, it has two characteristics which render it currently inappropriate as a methodology to achieve the degree of carbon emissions required to achieve the 60% reduction target

- Only around ⅓ of the assessment relates to carbon emissions.
- BREEAM ‘excellent’ can be achieved with a relatively minor improvement in carbon reduction.

“These issues need to be addressed if BREEAM is to be used to support the headline reduction target.”<sup>117</sup>

143. The DfES argued that BREEAM was a useful tool, but acknowledged that however high a project scored it would not necessarily indicate low carbon emissions or carbon neutrality. Sally Brooks told us:

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114 See for example questions 517 to 537.

115 Ev 116

116 *ibid*

117 Ev 155

“We will set up something separate which is just about carbon use, which says, ‘This is a stand-alone expectation that carbon reduction of  $x\%$ ’ or ‘Within BREEAM the carbon bit is mandatory and you cannot offset the carbon against the others.’ I think we are looking at mandatory expectations around reductions in carbon emissions.”<sup>118</sup>

144. The Minister for Schools, Jim Knight MP, has been quoted as saying that separate carbon tests and offsetting schemes were being considered: “A separate carbon test is a real option”.<sup>119</sup> Since then the Government has announced that in future all new school buildings within BSF will have to be carbon neutral, although it appears that at least some of improvement this will be achieved through carbon offsetting rather than carbon neutral designs.<sup>120</sup>

### The costs of reducing schools’ carbon footprint

145. The challenge of requiring all new schools to be carbon neutral is substantial, not least because, as yet, no school in England *is* carbon neutral.<sup>121</sup> We asked some of our witnesses about what it would cost to build schools with a significantly reduced carbon footprint. Dr Stewart Davies, Business Commissioner at the Sustainable Development Commission, said that for a 60% reduction against the 1990 baseline the SDC’s best estimate was that

“[...] somewhere in the region of 15%, 20% is what it would cost, but [...] if a programme as large as BSF went consistently for that style of construction and level of requirement, then you would have the traditional learning curve in business that reduces costs, so I think there should be a good opportunity, as the BSF programme went on, for that cost difference to come down. The second point is that, of course, you get some of that up-front cost back in lower operating costs, and it may be that it is a ten-year payback, but in the life of the schools programme you may well get your money back as you go along. The third point I would make on cost is the opportunity for standardisation. If, instead of doing things 500 different ways in ten different colours, you can actually reduce that to 50 ways in five colours, you can get a cost reduction as well. There is an additional cost upfront at the moment that is not factored into financial model that dictates the allowed cost per square metre and we need to change the financial model against which schools are being procured to get fast enough progress in this area.”<sup>122</sup>

146. Martin Mayfield agreed with Dr Davies on his point about costs per square metre:

“[...] we need to move the datum from cost per square metre to cost per pupil to allow greater innovation around how to deliver the curriculum. The amount of money that councils get given by the Government is based upon a standard which

118 Q 711

119 *TES*, 30 March 2007, “National rebuilding scheme goes eco-friendly”.

120 *TES*, 27 April 2007, “Official: all new schools must be carbon neutral”. The new policy applies to schools which had not yet been designed at the time of the announcement.

121 The Building Research Establishment has commissioned Willmott Dixon, architect White Design and engineer Max Fordham to build a carbon neutral mini-school as an exemplar. See Willmott Dixon builds model for zero-carbon schools <http://www.building4jobs.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=3084078>, and Yvette Cooper launches world leading sustainable buildings on BRE’s Innovation Park, <http://www.bre.co.uk/newsdetails.jsp?id=443>.

122 Q 541

relates to area, so if we can take that out of the picture and relate it to pupils, you can then look at innovation, reduce the size of that school or optimise the size of that school to deliver the curriculum.”<sup>123</sup>

147. Martin Mayfield also argued that there should be a greater degree of flexibility over building standards for different aspects of a school’s construction, which were often in conflict:

“Building bulletins were originally produced by DfEE as guidance for school designers. So, they were produced as guidance documentation but they are now used within the BSF environment as benchmarking and in a much more legislative manner. They are giving standards rather than guidance, so the language of them is not quite right [...]. For instance, the acoustic guideline drives for a very high level of acoustic quality which drives for buildings to be sealed, which drives for buildings to be air conditioned and the carbon emissions of an air conditioned building is around double that of a naturally ventilated building. So, it is pushing it in the wrong direction for good reasons but there are contradictions there which need to be addressed.”<sup>124</sup>

148. We asked the Minister for Schools whether, if the additional costs of reaching BREEAM ‘excellent’ rather than BREEAM ‘very good’ could be adequately quantified, the Government would increase capital allocations to individual schools to allow that rating to be achieved. Jim Knight told us that the answer might be to take action specifically on emissions rather than across the range of factors that BREEAM takes into account:

“It might be that we are able to allocate a specific sum per secondary school that we would want to see in exchange—a reduction in the energy usage, an increase in energy efficiency, a certain proportion produced by renewables and, possibly, the use of offset. Those are the three tools for carbon neutrality. It may be that, if we were to be able to allocate more resource, we would set targets on all three of those.”<sup>125</sup>

149. As well as the announcement that all new schools are to be carbon neutral, the Secretary of State said in a speech to the NASUWT conference in April that the Department was setting aside £110 million over the next three years to help provide 200 low carbon schools. He said that “If we succeed, this could result in 2,000 carbon neutral secondary schools, enabling us to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 8 million tons over the next decade”.<sup>126</sup> This investment does not however equate to the 15 or 20% extra funding the SDC estimated would be required to reduce significantly schools’ carbon footprint.

**150. We welcome the extra funding the Government is to provide to help achieve its target of carbon neutrality. We hope that this will be carried forward into the general funding of the BSF programme. However, the Government should specify what**

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123 *ibid.*

124 Q 469

125 Q 851

126 Speech by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills to the NASUWT conference in Belfast, 10 April 2007 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/speeches/media/documents/NASUWTfinal.doc>.

**proportion of the total carbon emissions will be achieved through carbon offsetting. The ideal would clearly be for all new school buildings and plant to be carbon neutral.** To make schools sustainable there are likely to be extra capital costs, but these can be offset against lower running costs. While in Government accounting terms capital and revenue are always accounted for separately, it makes sense to shoulder higher capital costs if over the whole life of a building it has the same or lower costs as a building which is not constructed with the principle of carbon reduction in mind.

151. We also consider that the Government should take seriously other suggestions for reducing schools' carbon footprint. The possibility of funding schools on a per pupil basis rather than a per square metre basis is one that could mesh with educational transformation as well as sustainability. For example, if students in the future are likely to be spending less time in school because of collaborative arrangements for education in the 14–19 phase, less space may be needed. **We recommend that the Government provides funding on the basis of an amount per pupil rather than an amount per square metre where authorities request it.**

152. As we discussed earlier, opportunities for standardisation in ways which improve cost effectiveness without unnecessarily constraining local decision-making should be maximised and the ways in which different building standards potentially conflict should be examined in order to help local providers to make appropriate decisions. The different standards could be made more flexible; a slightly reduced acoustic standard might be acceptable if in consequence the school could be ventilated naturally. **Greater flexibility on building standards, emphasising that they are guidance rather than requirements, would allow authorities at local level a greater degree of choice over their school estates, and allow them to find the most suitable ways of making schools in their area more sustainable.**

## Infrastructure

153. It is very difficult for a school to be sustainable in isolation. There is a wide range of other factors that have to be taken into account as shown by the DfES' action plan on sustainability which lists eight 'doorways', including amongst other things transport, purchasing and waste, energy and water and inclusion and participation.<sup>127</sup> The construction of a school could be undertaken in the most sustainable way imaginable, but it would mean little if the only way pupils could get to the school was by car. As Martin Mayfield told us "a sustainable school is only as good as the infrastructure in which it sits. So, it will not get there on its own, it needs to be part of a waste, transportation and energy infrastructure that supports it in the right manner."<sup>128</sup>

154. The DfES' sustainability action plans says that by February 2008 the DfES' capital investment programmes will be in full alignment with the aims of the strategy, and that the Strategy for Change document that is produced at the beginning of the BSF process for each authority is being revised "to require local authorities to align their BSF visions with

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<sup>127</sup> *Sustainable Schools for Pupils, Communities and the Environment, An Action Plan for the DfES*, April 2007.

the eight doorways”. We welcome this move, as it will mean sustainability will have a prominence in each BSF project from the beginning.<sup>129</sup>

## Sustainable procurement

155. Sustainable procurement is another important element of the whole sustainability issue. In 2005, DEFRA and the Treasury jointly established a Sustainable Procurement Task Force, which produced a report in June 2006.<sup>130</sup> The Sustainable Development Commission told us:

“The sheer scale and profile of the BSF programme make it a test case of the Sustainable Procurement Task Force’s highly relevant findings. The SPTF report recommends that Government uses public buying-power to support social, economic and environmental aims, transform markets, and deliver real long-term efficiency and sustainability improvements. The SPTF identifies schools as a priority area and recommends that DfES and HM Treasury work together to ensure that BSF is meeting high sustainability standards and to learn lessons for other capital projects. Giving priority to the implementation of the insightful and pragmatic recommendations of the SPTF report would greatly enhance the likelihood of success of the BSF programme in delivering sustainable schools.”<sup>131</sup>

156. Stan Terry of HTI suggested to us that one area where more could be done was in recycled building materials, with more being demanded of the construction industry:

“I look at the study that WRAP [Waste Resources Action Programme] did, the Davis Langdon study, which actually identified that you could put up to 30 % of recycled material into new building, new school buildings in this sense, and it would not impact on cost. The Partnership for Schools has reduced the level to 10 per cent. Why? I think they identified in that study that you could save up to 4,000 tonnes of waste material going to landfill, but they have opted for a lower standard.”<sup>132</sup>

157. John Widdowson of New College Durham told us that recycling of building materials had been a significant part of the college’s redevelopment project:

“[...] we demolished everything on site. There was not a single square metre on a 28 acre site that was not touched by the build and none of it was taken off site. It was all recycled and used to re-level and as foundations for buildings and roads [...]”<sup>133</sup>

158. Procurement of building materials and procurement of the goods and services schools require when in operation both have a significant effect on a school’s sustainability. **We ask the DCSF and Partnerships for Schools to tell us how the recommendations of the Sustainable Procurement Task Force are being implemented in BSF. We also ask for a**

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129 Sustainable Schools Action Plan, page 39.

130 *Procuring the Future: sustainable procurement national action plan*, DEFRA, June 2006.

131 Ev 123

132 Q 476

133 Q 371

**response on whether they consider that using 30% of recycled material in construction would be cost neutral and, if so, whether they will consider raising the level required.**

## Educational sustainability and systemic change

159. It is not just the physical school environment that needs to be sustainable. Methods of teaching and learning, particularly when they involve considerable innovation, also need to be established for the long-term. The danger is that a head or senior management team may have a particular vision which they pursue successfully, but that the drive to continue departs with them when they leave the school, and so the school reverts to more traditional methods.

160. The sustainability of the approach to learning relies on the people, methods and governance in a school or group of schools. The challenge is to find a way to ensure that when new and transforming ways of learning are introduced they form a baseline from which the school can make progress in lifting levels of attainment rather than being a short-lived experiment. We have found no straightforward answer to this issue in the course of the inquiry, but it is an issue that needs to be examined if effective new ways of teaching and learning are to become established and help in making systemic improvements rather than being isolated beacons fuelled by the vision and enthusiasm of particular individuals.

## Sustainable use of schools

161. A school may be built to the most exacting sustainable standards, but if the people using the building do not use it in a sustainable way, then the benefits may not be apparent. Sally Brooks of the DfES pointed out that in a survey of schools designed to be sustainable energy use in the early years of operation had in some cases been much higher than anticipated.<sup>134</sup>

162. The Sustainable Development Commission made a similar point in its memorandum, and argued that “Better incentivisation arrangements will need to be developed to ensure schools are maintained and operated to minimise emissions. It may be worth considering the payment mechanism developed by the Department of Health for health buildings, which includes incentives for continuous reduction in energy consumption”.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, HTI said that BSF “will require efficient management of school buildings which should result in lower energy and water bills”.<sup>136</sup>

163. One way to help ensure that schools are managed in a sustainable way is to involve the pupils. Jim Burke, Principal of the Academy of St Francis of Assisi in Liverpool, a school built on sustainable principles and which has an environmental specialism, told us:

“We have eco councils in each year group and we have a school eco council and they are the driving force behind a lot of the energy savings and the waste management.

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134 Q 700

135 Ev 120

136 Ev 128

They are involved in a lot of the decision-making and that is how students, as you say, we are trying to prepare consumers of the future, and this has been one mechanism which we have already found to be very beneficial.”<sup>137</sup>

This was something that we also saw when we visited the Blue School in Wells for our inquiry into Citizenship Education.

164. The message here is that, as with issues with infrastructure, there are a huge number of different factors which go towards making a school sustainable. There is the physical structure itself; there are issues about whether or not to incorporate sprinklers, on which we had a significant amount of evidence in favour from outside the education professions;<sup>138</sup> and there are questions about the fixtures and fittings and the need to spend more money than the bare minimum to ensure furniture is robust and, as the charity BackCare told us, to ensure that children do not suffer pain and discomfort.<sup>139</sup> On that last point, it may make more sense to lease those fixture and fittings rather than to buy them, which would help with flexibility and future proofing, and so aid sustainability in that way. All of these issues need to be kept in mind when trying to deliver sustainability in schools.

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137 Q 605

138 West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service [Ev 268]; Zurich Municipal [Ev 227].

139 Ev 274

## 5 Conclusions

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165. The amount of money spent on improving the secondary school estate has increased dramatically over the last ten years and the problems of buildings in disrepair, poor quality temporary classrooms and inadequate toilets and heating systems have been addressed. Building Schools for the Future has taken the issues surrounding the schools estate into a different dimension, as it argues for properly designed new school buildings as a means of improving attainment and transforming education.

166. The planned rebuilding or refurbishment of the entire secondary estate provides opportunities for improving the quality of learning environments, for addressing issues of how best to engage children in learning and to make a significant contribution to issues of sustainability. Before we take a further look at the way these issues are being managed within BSF, however, we think it important to address a more fundamental question.

### **Is BSF the best way to spend £45 billion on education?**

167. Our inquiry has focused on the way in which the BSF process is working and how the process might be more effective. We believe, however, that it is worth asking some searching questions about the basis of the project, if for no other reason than to give the DCSF an opportunity to restate the purposes of BSF and to demonstrate that it has discussed these difficult issues.

168. In essence, the question here is whether, in a system where the problems of leaky, dilapidated schools have been addressed effectively over the last decade, the commitment to rebuild and refurbish all secondary school buildings through BSF makes sense. Is the £45 billion budget too much money to be spending on 'hardware' (buildings) rather than 'software' (people and practices), when the crucial factor in improving attainment is the quality of the educational experience in schools rather than the quality of the built estate?

169. The Minister for Schools told us that 800 or so schools had already been rebuilt during the lifetime of the Government before BSF comes on stream.<sup>140</sup> There must at least be a question about the extent to which the secondary schools amongst these 800 schools will need to be rebuilt or refurbished over the lifetime of the project. There is an argument for a more targeted approach. BSF has begun by providing resources to areas with low levels of educational attainment. Once those areas which have lower than average levels of attainment have their projects in place, it could be argued that investment to replace buildings becomes less of a priority. That might be the point at which BSF could be drawn to a close and a different approach to capital and other investment in schools could be adopted.

170. Money might be used explicitly to make buildings more environmentally sustainable, or be invested in teacher training and innovative approaches to teaching, or even used in different educational sectors altogether, such as early years and the foundation stage or research in higher education.

171. **We are not arguing that BSF is a waste of money or that it should not proceed. Indeed it represents an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that all of the physical spaces which pupils occupy effectively support their learning. What we are saying is that, given the scale of the project and the amount of money proposed to be spent, there is a danger that everyone involved will concentrate on getting through to the end and that the question of whether the project's scope and aims remain appropriate will not be asked.** This seems to us to be a good time to take stock of these issues, with the first of the mainstream BSF schools set to open in the autumn and all the authorities through to Wave 6 planning to reshape secondary school provision in their areas. **We ask the DCSF in its reply to give us a considered response to the issues we raise here so that we can be assured that it does have a process of regularly reviewing the question of whether this is best way in which to spend £45 billion on education.**

### The management of the BSF project

172. The problems that exist with the management of BSF all stem from the fact that the programme aims are diffuse. The declared aims shift over time, which does not help local authorities in their attempts to do the best they can to provide improved school buildings and more effective education in their areas. The good news is that the project is still at an early enough stage for problems to be effectively addressed.

173. One of the main issues is the way in which the project is managed overall. Too many organisations and parts of organisations are involved in approving projects. Partnerships for Schools is designed to be the delivery vehicle, and it does appear to be becoming more effective under its new leadership, but it still appears to be essentially a construction procurement organisation without a full understanding of all the other factors that local authorities are supposed to balance in drafting their proposals. The DCSF itself has an interest through its schools capital division, where formal responsibility for the project lies, but various other divisions of the Department have a role too, each requiring the part of the bid relating to their area of responsibility to be approved separately. The Schools Commissioner also has a role. We have been told that different parts of the DCSF wait passively for authorities to come to them to deal with their particular area of responsibility. This is clearly inefficient and unhelpful for local authorities.

174. As was noted in the Capability Review of the DfES which was published last year,<sup>141</sup> the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners, published in 2004, said that the aim was for the Department to become more strategic. The review concluded that this strategic approach now needed to be put into practice,<sup>142</sup> and we consider that the BSF programme would be a very good place in which to introduce some more strategic management with less day to day intervention. As the Capability Review noted,

“Recent White Papers have identified new roles for local authorities, in particular around commissioning services. However, the Department has not yet clarified and

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141 *Capability Review of the Department for Education and Skills*, Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, July 2006.

142 *ibid*, page 18.

communicated a coherent view of local authorities' responsibilities and how they fit together in driving delivery."<sup>143</sup>

We believe that many local authorities would identify with this as their experience of BSF.

**175. The BSF project provides a good test as to whether the DCSF has taken on board all of the lessons of the Capability Review, and at present it appears that it has not. More effective strategic planning, a more clearly defined view of the role of local authorities and less micro-management would undoubtedly help the authorities who are developing their plans for BSF.**

### ***The role of the DCSF and a single gateway for BSF***

176. We discussed earlier the need to bring greater clarity to the role of local authorities. The Government has to decide whether it really is going to “focus the Department on developing capacity at local level to change children’s lives, and devolve resource and power to local level”, in respect of BSF. Currently, as we suggested earlier in the report, the Department appears reluctant to give local authorities a substantial degree of autonomy over how they design education for their communities. **We believe that, within a clear basic framework, local authorities should be given more freedom to shape their local school system as they consider appropriate.**

177. **One thing which could make life much more straightforward would be to establish one gateway for an authority’s discussions with central Government about its BSF project.** The DfES recognised the inefficiency caused by the need for schools to have multiple contacts with the Department on matters such as funding and standards when it introduced the Single Conversation with Schools. Something similar is needed for BSF. The logical place for this gateway is Partnership for Schools, but a Partnership for Schools that has people who can address questions about transformative learning and other policy issues as well as more bricks and mortar issues. A single gateway would assist the DCSF and local authorities and schools to deal with the tensions that inevitably arise in programmes of this sort between creating maximum local decision-making and opportunities for maximum efficiency through standardisation and national purchasing.

### **How will we know if BSF has been a success?**

178. What will success in Building Schools for the Future look like? How will the DCSF know if the £45 billion provided for Building Schools for the Future has been well spent?

Will it be:–

- If all secondary schools are rebuilt or refurbished within the timescale?
- If schools has transformed educational provision?
- If all secondary schools have been redeveloped to sustainable standards?

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143 *ibid*, page 20.

179. There are clearly other issues which need to be defined in order for these questions to be answered, but this is not intended to be a rhetorical question. We set out below recommendations for ways in which we consider the process can be made more effective and more transparent, by bringing clarity and focus. **We believe that there should be a set of clear objectives by which to judge how well the project is progressing. We ask the DCSF to define what it considers to be the key indicators that will demonstrate the success or otherwise of BSF in its response to this report. Given that new Public Service Agreement targets will be set this autumn for the new Comprehensive Spending Review, we also recommend that progress on BSF ought to be one of the areas which the Department should have as one of its high level targets.**

### *Transforming education*

180. As we said earlier, there needs to be a proper discussion about what transforming education actually means. One witness told us

“Henry Ford used to quip that when asked what people wanted in the way of transport, they were likely to respond with ‘a faster horse.’ That’s a real problem for modernisers caught between the realisation that the current ways of working in schools are outmoded, but future models remain unproven.”<sup>144</sup>

181. The DCSF website emphasises that ‘diversity and collaboration’ are ‘the two main vehicles for raising standards and driving improvements in teaching and learning’; but it has not provided a clear steer on what changes schools need to make on the ground to transform education. As a result schools will assume that it probably favours the ‘faster horse’: more of the same, with better levels of attainment generally and more intensive use of ICT. If it does want to be more imaginative—and we believe that it should be—then there needs to be a more explicit discussion of what might be done. There should not be a prescriptive approach, but, as we suggested with our recommendations on One School Pathfinders and Ofsted, **schools and authorities should be supported and encouraged by the DCSF, and by Ministers in particular, to explore new approaches which may help to improve attainment overall and particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who typically have low levels of engagement with the school system.**

182. We have recommended that there should be a knowledge and learning strategy to share and resolve issues arising from the BSF procurement and design process. It would be equally valuable to have a more systematic approach to sharing innovations in pedagogy and approaches to learning as part of the process of enabling local authorities and school leaders to come to judgements on how they might address the question of transforming education, perhaps through a new national centre for pedagogy.

### *Sustainability*

183. The issue of sustainability was not addressed when BSF was launched, yet now it is a central part of the project. We welcome this change, but it is not yet clear how the

aspirations on sustainability will become reality. Again flexibility and the encouragement of innovation are key.

184. We look forward to examining the experience of those projects that will benefit from the £110 million being provided to produce 200 low carbon schools over the next three years. The Government must also make judgements on the costs of projects on the basis of whole life costs and not just the capital cost of the initial construction. It must continually be emphasised that sustainability is not just a matter of low carbon emissions; it also relates to matters such as transport infrastructure, sourcing of food, community links and possibilities for economic regeneration.

**185. The policy initiative that all new schools designed from now on must be carbon neutral is welcome, but it is now important that the policy is effectively delivered. We would welcome further information on how the carbon emissions of school buildings are going to be measured, and we urge a consistent approach for all schools.**

### Scrutiny of Building Schools for the Future

186. Finally, we regard this report as the beginning of the process of scrutiny of Building Schools for the Future, not as an end in itself. This inquiry has ranged over a very large number of issues, not all of which we have been able to discuss here in the detail that they deserve. We encourage our successors to examine how the difficulties we have identified are addressed, and we look forward to seeing the schools as they open. **The Government's increased capital expenditure on schools is welcome; the task now is to ensure that is spent as effectively as possible.**

## Conclusions and recommendations

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### Background to Building Schools for the Future

1. It is worth emphasising the scale and scope of BSF; there is no project like it anywhere in the world. Not since the huge Victorian and post-war building waves has there been investment in our school capital stock on this scale. (Paragraph 18)
2. We welcome the ambitions of the programme and intend this report to assist in maximising its effect on improving the quality and sustainability of the environments for learning in this country. (Paragraph 18)

### The current situation

3. Our inquiry has led us to recognise the importance of early planning and so to believe that delay in the programme is a less significant risk to its success than inadequate preliminary thinking and clarity at a local level about what is required (Paragraph 21)

### Procurement problems

4. 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. As the comments collected by Teachers' TV show, 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. (Paragraph 35)
5. There clearly have been problems with the authorities in the early waves of BSF, but the fact that the project has slipped from its early targets is not necessarily significant. What does matter is whether those authorities who have suffered delays have been able to resolve problems and come up with proposals that are robust and achievable, and whether lessons have been learned for those authorities coming into the process at later stages so there is no repetition of the same delays and difficulties. (Paragraph 39)

### Learning the early lessons

6. The DCSF and Partnerships for Schools should develop as a priority a knowledge management and learning strategy to support authorities, schools, contractors, suppliers and others involved in BSF to share best practice and learning as the programme develops. (Paragraph 44)
7. There is a strong argument that on the basis of cost and time savings some of the choices on these nuts and bolts issues could be restricted. PFS have made some progress on this with, for example, guidance on the general principles for design of toilet blocks. There needs to be a discussion about how to build on this kind of

initiative to make the most of the market position of Building Schools for the Future on a whole range of procurement issues. (Paragraph 49)

8. We ask the DCSF to respond to the criticism of procurement of ICT, and to set out its plans for ensuring that ICT procurement within BSF does enable technological development to be properly taken into account. (Paragraph 52)
9. There is a very strong argument that the initial 'visioning' phase should be lengthened. All authorities in the waves so far announced should already be addressing the issue of what they want of their schools. The difficulties faced by the earliest waves of authorities in coping with deadlines suggest that this would be time well spent. (Paragraph 53)
10. The development for all BSF projects of 'good clients' who are knowledgeable about the process should be a key aim for authorities, Partnerships for Schools and the DCSF. (Paragraph 54)
11. The clearest message of all, therefore, from both BSF and the Academies programme is to take the time to get it right at the beginning and to maintain dialogue the users of the building. To give authorities and schools the time to think about what they want to do and the way that they want to do it is the best way to ensure that what emerges at the end is an excellent learning environment, rather than a striking building which does not meet the needs of its users as well as it should. (Paragraph 58)

### **PFI and capital funding**

12. While we take the point that it is the viability of the project in the first instance that is the main risk factor, it seems to us that there are risks associated with PFI as a funding method. (Paragraph 67)
13. We ask the DCSF to make a clear public statement on how many PFI schools have closed prematurely, what the overall cost to the public purse has been and how it monitors schools in danger. (Paragraph 68)
14. We ask for confirmation that local authorities are required to set out in their BSF plans the full revenue costs of the project and details of how they plan to meet them over the full term of the contract. (Paragraph 69)
15. The Government needs to set out more clearly than it has done so far its assessment of the sustainability of the levels of revenue commitments across local authorities in general; how DCSF and Partnerships for Schools make judgements about how well authorities have planned to ensure that schools will be sustainable given projected future numbers of pupils; and the lessons that it has learned from those PFI funded schools which have been forced to close. (Paragraph 71)

### **Primary schools**

16. The challenges facing the primary capital programme could be addressed more effectively if the DFES could ensure that:

- all involved in delivering the primary programme have a clear view of how it interacts with BSF;
- explicit national goals are set out to assist those at local level who are making hard choices, including clear guidance on what DCSF means by personalised learning in the primary context;
- as with the BSF programme there must be real clarity about how and to what extent this £7 billion programme is to contribute to transforming education. (Paragraph 78)

### Further Education

17. In order to provide properly integrated secondary education in any given area, the funding systems in place should be designed to encourage working in partnership. The DCSF should examine the way BSF, further education and primary capital projects are funded to ensure that partnership working designed to increase the range of learning opportunities available to students is rewarded and that there is as great a degree of flexibility as possible to help local authorities, schools and colleges to maximise the benefit for children and young people in their areas. (Paragraph 83)
18. These examples show how complicated it can be to achieve integrated provision from different sectors, but they also illustrate that the only way to ensure that there is effective educational provision in an area is through the co-operative efforts of those working locally. With the division of DfES into Children, Schools and Families and Innovation, Universities and Skills this level of co-operative effort will be equally important at the national level. (Paragraph 86)
19. We ask the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills to set out its policy on the appropriateness of PFI as a means of financing the redevelopment of colleges. (Paragraph 95)
20. We applaud the commitment shown by the LSC in stating these principles that need to be met and providing funding to offset any additional cost (although not all sustainable features incur extra costs). This checklist would be useful for anyone seeking to build sustainable educational buildings, not just Further Education colleges. (Paragraph 98)

### Educational transformation

21. The crucial question here, and one that the Department does not answer in this document, is what do we want education to be in the 21st century? (Paragraph 100)
22. This suggests that, as we commented earlier, the early phase of development of what is now called the Strategy for Change is key to the success of the whole process. People need to be given enough time to think through the issues about how secondary education should be provided in their area before they are required to start making firm decisions. A clear statement of the national ambitions for 21st century education could help to provide guidance and challenge to this local decision-making process. (Paragraph 103)

### Local decisions versus Government policy

23. Given the amount of expenditure which is being authorised, it is right that the DCSF should satisfy itself that it is being spent appropriately. On the other hand, it does not look much like “devolving resource and power to local level” if there is a detailed check list of Government objectives which have to be addressed to allow a project to be signed off. (Paragraph 107)
24. While it is important to ensure that expenditure is properly monitored, we have seen no evidence that local authorities have put forward particularly inappropriate plans for their BSF projects. The Government should have the courage of its convictions, and allow local authorities greater flexibility to develop local solutions within a clear framework of priorities, such as the need to promote innovative approaches to learning and the need to embed sustainability. (Paragraph 108)
25. The DCSF should place a requirement on local authorities to ensure that One School Pathfinders are used as test beds for ways to transform education. (Paragraph 111)
26. If the Government is serious about wanting BSF to provide educational transformation, it ought to be encouraging local authorities to be more innovative. (Paragraph 114)

### Developing the use of ICT

27. We believe that ICT is a vital area for the development of education over the coming years, but that does not mean that each school needs to have a bespoke system created for it which differs from systems in all other schools. (Paragraph 118)
28. We recommend that information about systems in use is made widely known amongst authorities in later waves of BSF so that they can take advantage of the experience of those which have already procured their ICT. (Paragraph 118)
29. Guidance on making the most of ICT and examples of good practice should be issued by the DCSF. (Paragraph 120)

### Future proofing

30. There should be a post-occupancy review of every school within the BSF programme so that a proper assessment can be made of what has worked well and what has caused difficulties, on procurement and construction issues and also on the design and conception of the school. These reviews should be given the widest possible circulation so that all those involved in BSF, in the current waves and in the future, can use them to ensure that mistakes are not repeated, that good ideas are adopted more widely and that the desired flexibility for the future is in place. Transformation of education for the 21st century will only occur if we learn the lessons about what works best. (Paragraph 124)
31. When planning the development of schools in an area, local authorities must ensure that the way provision for 14–19 education is to be made and in which responsibility for delivering each of the diploma lines is to be shared is considered at an early stage.

It is important that schools should be seen as a system, not just individual institutions. (Paragraph 125)

### **Personalisation**

32. The DCSF should provide a clear vision of what it wants from personalisation, with guidance about how it might be realised in BSF projects, not as a prescription but in order to inform the debate on how schools should operate in the future. (Paragraph 130)

### **Accountability framework**

33. We recommend that Ofsted, in consultation with the DCSF, should draw up and publish for consultation a protocol on how its inspection regime is to be modified for schools in BSF. (Paragraph 132)

### **Sustainability**

34. As the Sustainable Development Commission told us, the schools estate contributes 2% to national carbon emissions overall, but that figure represents almost 15% of UK public sector carbon emissions. If the Government is to meet a target of at least 60% reduction against the 1990 baseline, and if it intends to set an example by the way in which it looks after the public sector building stock, it clearly has to address the issue of schools' carbon emissions. (Paragraph 140)

### **The costs of reducing schools' carbon footprint**

35. We welcome the extra funding the Government is to provide to help achieve its target of carbon neutrality. We hope that this will be carried forward into the general funding of the BSF programme. However, the Government should specify what proportion of the total carbon emissions will be achieved through carbon offsetting. The ideal would clearly be for all new school buildings and plant to be carbon neutral. (Paragraph 150)
36. We recommend that the Government provides funding on the basis of an amount per pupil rather than an amount per square metre where authorities request it. (Paragraph 151)
37. Greater flexibility on building standards, emphasising that they are guidance rather than requirements, would allow authorities at local level a greater degree of choice over their school estates, and allow them to find the most suitable ways of making schools in their area more sustainable. (Paragraph 152)

### **Sustainable procurement**

38. We ask the DCSF and Partnerships for Schools to tell us how the recommendations of the Sustainable Procurement Task Force are being implemented in BSF. We also ask for a response on whether they consider that using 30% of recycled material in

construction would be cost neutral and, if so, whether they will consider raising the level required. (Paragraph 158)

### **Is BSF the best way to spend £45 billion on education?**

39. We are not arguing that BSF is a waste of money or that it should not proceed. Indeed it represents an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that all of the physical spaces which pupils occupy effectively support their learning. What we are saying is that, given the scale of the project and the amount of money proposed to be spent, there is a danger that everyone involved will concentrate on getting through to the end and that the question of whether the project's scope and aims remain appropriate will not be asked. (Paragraph 171)
40. We ask the DCSF in its reply to give us a considered response to the issues we raise here so that we can be assured that it does have a process of regularly reviewing the question of whether this is best way in which to spend £45 billion on education. (Paragraph 171)

### **The Management of the BSF project**

41. The BSF project provides a good test as to whether the DCSF has taken on board all of the lessons of the Capability Review, and at present it appears that it has not. More effective strategic planning, a more clearly defined view of the role of local authorities and less micro-management would undoubtedly help the authorities who are developing their plans for BSF. (Paragraph 175)
42. We believe that, within a clear basic framework, local authorities should be given more freedom to shape their local school system as they consider appropriate. (Paragraph 176)
43. One thing which could make life much more straightforward would be to establish one gateway for an authority's discussions with central Government about its BSF project. (Paragraph 177)

### **How will we know if BSF has been a success?**

44. We believe that there should be a set of clear objectives by which to judge how well the project is progressing. We ask the DCSF to define what it considers to be the key indicators that will demonstrate the success or otherwise of BSF in its response to this report. Given that new Public Service Agreement targets will be set this autumn for the new Comprehensive Spending Review, we also recommend that progress on BSF ought to be one of the areas which the Department should have as one of its high level targets. (Paragraph 179)
45. Schools and authorities should be supported and encouraged by the DCSF, and by Ministers in particular, to explore new approaches which may help to improve attainment overall and particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who typically have low levels of engagement with the school system (Paragraph 181)

46. The policy initiative that all new schools designed from now on must be carbon neutral is welcome, but it is now important that the policy is effectively delivered. We would welcome further information on how the carbon emissions of school buildings are going to be measured, and we urge a consistent approach for all schools. (Paragraph 185)

### **Scrutiny of Building Schools for the Future**

47. The Government's increased capital expenditure on schools is welcome; the task now is to ensure that is spent as effectively as possible. (Paragraph 186)

# Formal minutes

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**Monday 16 July 2007**

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr David Chaytor  
Paul Holmes  
Mr Gordon Marsden

Stephen Williams  
Mr Rob Wilson

## ***Sustainable Schools***

The Committee considered this matter.

Draft Report, proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 186 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Seventh Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

*Ordered*, That memoranda be appended to the report.

*Ordered*, That the memoranda be reported to the House.

Several Memoranda were ordered to be reported to the House for placing in the Library and Parliamentary archives.

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[Adjourned till Wednesday 18 July at 9.15 am

## Witnesses (Volume II)

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### Wednesday 24 May 2006

Page

**Mr Michael Buchanan**, Education Director, Place Group, **Mr David Lloyd Jones**, Director, Studio E Architects, **Ms Angela Rawson**, Education Adviser, BSF Project Team, and **Ms Janet Newton**, Project Director, BSF Project Team, Lancashire County Council, and **Mr Allan Jarvis**, Deputy Head teacher, Buttershaw High School, Bradford and BSF Phase 2 Consultant

Ev 3

### Monday 3 July 2006

**Mr David Kester**, Chief Executive, The Design Council, and **Ms Hilary Cottam**, Head of RED team, The Design Council and **Mr John Sorrell**, The Sorrell Foundation

Ev 26

**Mr Ty Goddard**, School Works and **Mr Richard Simmons**, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)

Ev 53

### Wednesday 5 July 2006

**Mr Rob Shed**, Managing Director, Skanska Integrated Projects, and **Mr Barry White**, Director of Education, Skanska Infrastructure Development, **Mr Mike Blackburn**, BT Education and Local Government, **Mr Marcus Orlovsky**, Bryanston Square, and **Mr Nick Kalisperas**, Director, Markets, Intellect

Ev 69

### Wednesday 25 October 2006

**Mr Martin Lamb**, Area Director, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Learning and Skills Council, **Mr Graham Moore**, Principal, Stoke-on-Trent College, and **Mr John Widdowson**, Principal and Chief Executive, New College Durham

Ev 93

### Wednesday 1 November 2006

**Dr Stewart Davies**, Business Commissioner, Sustainable Development Commission UK (SDC), **Mr Alan Yates**, BREEAM Technical Director, Building Research Establishment, **Mr Stan Terry**, Environmental Consultant, Heads Teachers and Industry Ltd (HTI), and **Mr Martin Mayfield**, Associate Director, Arup

Ev 131

**Mr Chris Archer**, Services Director, Children's Services Department, Nottingham City Council, **Mr Jim Burke**, Principal, Academy of St Francis of Assisi, Liverpool, and **Ms Caroline Morland**, Edunova Ltd

Ev 155

### Wednesday 6 December 2006

**Ms Sally Brooks**, Divisional Manager, Schools Capital (Policy and Delivery), Department for Education and Skills, **Mr Martin Lipson**, Programme Director, 4ps, and **Mr Tim Byles**, Chief Executive, Partnerships for Schools

Ev 183

**Wednesday 24 January 2007**

**Jim Knight**, a Member of the House, Minister of State for Schools, and **Parmjit Dhanda**, a Member of the House, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Skills

Ev 206

## List of written evidence (Volume II)

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1	Lancashire County Council	Ev 1
2	The Sorrell Foundation	Ev 24
3	Design Council	Ev 38
4	School Works	Ev 42
5	School Works on behalf of the British Council for School Environments (BCSE)	Ev 44
6	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)	Ev 49
7	BT Education and Local Government	Ev 65
8	Intellect	Ev 67
9	Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	Ev 90
10	Sustainable Development Commission (SDC)	Ev 113: Ev 122: Ev 143
11	BRE	Ev 124
12	HTI (Heads Teachers and Industry Limited)	Ev 124
13	Arup	Ev 153
14	Department for Education and Skills (DfES)	Ev 164: Ev 203: Ev 221
15	4ps	Ev 180
16	Partnerships for Schools (Pfs)	Ev 181: Ev 204: Ev 333
17	Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR)	Ev 223
18	Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC)	Ev 224
19	Zurich Municipal	Ev 227: Ev 229
20	Ofsted	Ev 235
21	Learning and Skills Network (LSN)	Ev 236
22	Magnified Learning	Ev 239
23	Learning Through Landscapes (LTL)	Ev 240
24	Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)	Ev 241
25	FSquared Ltd	Ev 245
26	WWF-UK	Ev 249
27	Business Services Association (BSA)	Ev 253
28	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)	Ev 255
29	Association of Colleges (AoC)	Ev 260
30	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service	Ev 268: Ev 271
31	Confederation of British Industry (CBI)	Ev 272
32	BackCare	Ev 274
33	Teachers' TV	Ev 280
34	Carbon Trust	Ev 326
35	Sir Bruce Liddington, the Schools Commissioner	Ev 329
36	National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)	Ev 330
37	New Line Learning	Ev 331

## List of unprinted evidence

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The following memoranda have been reported to the House, but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives, and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

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## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

### Session 2006–07

First Report	The Work of the Committee in 2005–06	HC 301
Second Report	Citizenship Education	HC 147 (HC 517)
Third Report	Bullying	HC 85 (HC 600)
Fourth Report	The Bologna Process	HC 205 (HC 788)
Fifth Report	14–19 Diplomas	HC 249
Sixth Report	The Work of Ofsted	HC 165

### Session 2005–06

First Report	Schools White Paper: <i>Higher Standards, Better Schools For All</i>	HC 633-I and II (Cm 6747)
Second Report	Public Expenditure on Education and Skills	HC 479 (HC 1132)
Third Report	Special Educational Needs	HC 478-I, II and III (Cm 6940)
Fourth Report	Further Education	HC 649 (HC 1712)
Fifth Report	Public Expenditure	HC 1201 (HC 211)