

Improving school buildings

Asset management planning in LEAs and schools

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During the 1980s and 1990s many school buildings had deteriorated because of lack of investment in preventive maintenance and improvement.

The investment in recent years is making a difference...

- pupils, parents and staff are benefiting from the improved quality of many school buildings
- asset management planning frameworks are improving the ability of local education authorities (LEAs) and schools to plan and use the increased investment wisely
- the projected level of investment will exceed £5 billion by 2005/06

However, there are systemic problems with the capital funding arrangements for schools, resulting in capital resources not being allocated to areas of greatest need...

- too much of the resource is distributed according to the numbers of pupils, rather than more critical factors, such as the age and condition of the school building
- as a result, not enough of the resources are targeted to immediately fund the most urgent improvement needs

LEAs need to support schools in constructive and innovative ways, so that resources can be managed and deployed more effectively...

- but there are weaknesses in the quality of local authority property services departments, with 50 per cent of these departments being judged as unsatisfactory or poor
- the scale of investment over recent years has placed pressure on the capacity of the building industry to deliver on school projects, thereby requiring LEAs to improve their procurement of building works
- LEAs need to work with schools to help them to become better informed and more confident in handling property issues

The monitoring arrangements of school use of building resources are inadequate...

- school control of building resources has contributed to the increase in school revenue balances which have risen from £500 million in 1997 to £1 billion in 2001

In order to address these problems...

- Government should re-examine funding arrangements and allocate more of the capital resources to take account of need
- there should be more systematic and focused monitoring of how schools are spending their building resources
- local authorities should address the inadequacies of the property services available to schools