



Buying any type of insurance can be confusing, but for the growing number of academies now responsible for purchasing their own insurances, it can be a minefield. Unlike local authority schools whose insurance is paid for as part of a block policy, for the first time academies must now make provision for and source their own cover.

By law, schools must have certain types of insurance (such as employers' liability and motor cover for example) and appropriate cover to protect against a multitude of risks including:

- Loss or damage to a building or contents
- Financial risk, for example unexpected legal expenses or unforeseen business continuity costs after a fire or flood
- Liability, such as compensation for a pupil injured as a result of negligence
- Personal injury to cover accidents involving pupils or staff
- Miscellaneous risk such as travel insurance for student trips.

But with so many eventualities to consider, what do academy heads need to ask a potential insurer to ensure all needs are met?

1. ARE YOU EXPERIENCED IN PROVIDING COVER FOR ACADEMIES?

There are less than a handful of insurers and brokers on the market who are 100 per cent focused on this sector so it's important to find out what type experience they have. Ask if they're prepared to visit your school and see first-hand its condition and the contents that need to be insured.

2. CAN THE COVER BE FIXED FOR THREE TO FIVE YEAR PERIOD?

See if you can fix a deal to cover all eventualities for a set period as this will remove the hassle of having to renew your premium on an annual basis.

3. ASK ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THE CLAIMS SERVICE ON OFFER

If you ever need to make a claim, the type of service you receive from your provider can help

COVER STORY

ENSURING YOU HAVE THE CORRECT INSURANCE PROVISION CAN BE A DAUNTING PROSPECT, SO **PAUL TOMBS** OFFERS ADVICE ON GETTING THE RIGHT POLICY AT THE RIGHT PRICE...

ease what is potentially an already stressful situation. Find out as much as you can about the type of claim service on offer. For example, how user friendly is it? What service for claims do they offer? What is their experience in dealing with a major loss such as a school fire? Do they offer a personal service by claims handlers that specialise in education?

4. REHABILITATION FOR STAFF

If a staff member is injured on school property they may need some form of rehabilitation to help them recover. Find out if the provider offers this as part of the package.

5. ARE YOU PAYING TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE FOR YOUR PREMIUM?

It's important to ensure that the sums insured (building and contents) are accurate or a school could expose itself to being under or over insured. Many schools' insurance premiums will be based on historical estimates made by the Local Authority, so may need to be updated. If it's possible to do so have the contents revalued and get a quote for rebuilding the school.

6. HAS YOUR SCHOOL MADE IMPROVEMENTS FOLLOWING A CLAIM?

A provider could consider reducing a school's

premiums if it can prove that it is prepared to take control of some of the risk itself. This could be through a programme of improvements, such as replacing lead stolen from a roof with a non-lead product, improving site security and protection such as CCTV or installing sprinklers.

7. CONSIDER AN INSURANCE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

When buying school insurance it's incredibly important to seek advice from a professional organisation that has experience in education and who can help guide you through any potential pitfalls or problems you may encounter. You may also want to consider entering into a framework agreement. There are a couple of public sector purchasing organisations, one being ESPO (www.espoleadingdirect.org), that offer framework agreements specifically aimed at schools.

Buying insurance through a framework has a number of benefits as the provider will have vetted all the insurers within it to ensure that only the best value and most effective cover is on offer as part of that framework. Entering into a framework agreement can not only save schools time, but it is also a way of ensuring a quality product at a cost effective price from a quality provider. It's essential that the cover you have in place meets all of your needs effectively. Ultimately, the best advice that anyone can give, when it comes to insurance for schools, is to seek guidance from a specialist provider who can help steer you towards the right package for your needs.