October 2022
Management Circular No. 60

To **Heads of all Primary Schools**

The Capacity of Primary Schools

The authority's procedures for establishing the capacity of its primary schools are as set out below.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 National Guidance

In October 2014 the Scottish Government issued new guidelines entitled *"Determining Primary School Capacity"*. The provision and delivery of education at a local level in Scotland is the statutory responsibility of Local Authorities under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. This includes effective management of their school estate which involves determining the maximum number of children who may be suitably accommodated in every room in a school (under the Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975), and the administration of the placing request system in their area.

In addition, there has been a significant level of innovative design in new primary schools in Scotland. Notwithstanding this, within the context of Curriculum for Excellence, all primary schools require to use space more creatively and flexibly complemented by a significant increase in electronic technologies.

1.2 Why Calculate Primary School Capacity?

Forward Planning
To allow assessment of the capacity and future requirements of the primary school estate and other changes in school provision, taking account of factors such as population trends and new housing.

Curricular and Organisational Needs
To establish the number of children for whom the school can provide the desired curriculum and to allow assessment of the implications of any new staffing standards, class size maxima, changing methodologies and new resources.

Placing Requests
To establish a clear and consistent basis for determining whether placing requests should be granted or refused and identifying schools which are currently over capacity or may exceed capacity in the future.

Informing Consultations on Proposed Changes to the Primary School Estate
To meet legal requirements to provide clear, accurate information in consultations on changes to the primary school estate, e.g. school closures, catchment area changes, that the public has confidence in.

The *Scottish Government Policy*
To take account of the priorities and objectives set by the Scottish Government, such as:

- To ensure that P1-P3 classes in primary schools comply with class size legislation and P4-P7 classes comply with the maxima set out in teachers' terms and conditions of service.
- Changes to curriculum policy and guidance and the provision of the facilities required to deliver the curriculum.

1.3 This Management Circular describes how the planning capacity of primary schools has been calculated. Detailed information on the technical aspects of the calculation of capacity and the formulae which are used can be obtained from Education Support Services.

2. THE SCHOOL CAPACITY

There are two measures of primary school capacity. These are: Planning Capacity and Working Capacity.

2.1 Planning Capacity

Planning Capacity is a theoretical measure of the total number of children which ***could*** be accommodated in a school, based on an optimisation of the total number of teaching spaces, the size of those spaces, the class size maxima, and a realistic distribution of children within each primary stage.

The Planning Capacity is a static figure and will only change if a school building is re-compartmentalised, extended, or physically adjusted in some other way (including the addition of temporary accommodation).

In reality, Planning Capacity is rarely achieved, and therefore planning Capacity should be used for broad strategic issues relating to school provision, e.g. for forward planning for the school estate, to assess the impact of new government policies, etc.

This figure will be returned to The Scottish Government in the annual School Estate Core Facts Statistical return.

2.2 Calculating Planning Capacity

There are four steps to calculating Planning Capacity:

i) Determine which teaching spaces will be included in the calculation;

ii) Determine the physical size/dimensions of the teaching spaces identified;

iii) Determine the maximum number of pupils which could be accommodated in each class base;

iv) Prepare an optimised theoretical classification based on the maximum use of each class base.

i) Determine which teaching spaces will be included

The Planning Capacity calculation should include all teaching spaces in a school which are designated for **full-time** class teaching. This will include all closed/cellular, semi-open and open-plan class bases.

A judgement on the status of any temporary accommodation e.g. modular external teaching spaces, in terms of longer term planning requires to be made to determine whether or not they should be included in the Planning Capacity calculation.

The Planning Capacity calculation should only include class bases. It **should not** include ancillary areas or general purpose (GP) areas.

The following areas are some examples of areas considered as ancillary and should **not** be included in the capacity calculation:

Staff rooms; Meeting rooms; Offices; Store rooms; Smaller learning support or breakout areas not suitable to be a GP area; Reception area; Areas designated solely for community use; Toilets; Changing rooms; Kitchen/dining facilities; Medical rooms.

A GP area is an activity space which is set aside to be used for educational purposes other than class based teaching. GP areas can be class bases or open spaces within a school, such as breakout space next to a class base. Any breakout space being used as a GP area should be of sufficient size to accommodate the required number of children undertaking the necessary activity e.g. half a class or a full class.

GP provision in schools will vary within and across the estate dependent upon the nature of the school and how it is designed. Examples of GP areas:

Teaching spaces not used as a class base; Breakout areas; Dance rooms; Drama rooms; Music rooms; Art rooms; I.T. suites; Reading/Resource rooms; Libraries; Learning Support rooms; Nurture rooms.

It should be noted that teaching spaces which deliver **full-time** class teaching as well as activities such as dance, music or I.T. are not GP areas.

The table below sets out the recommended minimum number of GP areas for a school, where possible, based on the total number of class bases in the school.

Number of Full-Time Class Bases	Recommended No. of GP Areas
1-7	1
8-14	2
15-21	3
22+	4

ii) Determine the size of each selected class base

In line with Section 6 of the School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) Scotland) Regulations 1967, it is recommended that rooms should be measured wall to wall. This eliminates issues around the variations in the amount, size and location of furniture.

iii) Determine the maximum number of children which could be accommodated in each class base

a) Size of Room/Class Base

To determine how many pupils can be accommodated in a class base, it is recommended that the total area of the class base be divided by 1.7m^2, and then rounded down. This will give you the number of children that could be accommodated in that class base, based on size.

b) Class Size Maxima

Once the maximum number of pupils which can be accommodated in a class base, based on size, has been determined, class size maxima is then applied. Current class size maxima are as follows:

Primary 1: 25 pupils

Primary 2-3: 30 pupils

Primary 4-7: 33 pupils

Composite class: 25 pupils

In all of the examples below, only *full-time teaching spaces* are used in the planning capacity. GP rooms/spaces are excluded from the calculation.

Worked Examples

In preparing this classification, it is important to note that in some instances, it may **appear** that additional children may be able to be accommodated within one or more classes, however, the implications of additional children at a certain stage must be taken cognisance of in future stages. See worked examples.

Example 1:
A school has 14 full-time class bases that can all accommodate a maximum number of 33 children. A realistic optimised classification for this school would be:

Room	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL
1	25							25
2	25							25
3	4	20						24
4		30						30
5		4	20					24
6			30					30
7			4	21				25
8				33				33
9					33			33
10					33			33
11						33		33
12						33		33
13							33	33
14							33	33
TOTAL	**54**	**54**	**54**	**54**	**66**	**66**	**66**	**414**

In the above example, the total planning capacity for this school would be 414. Each class has been calculated to accommodate the relevant class size maxima, however, this school would have a maximum P1 intake cap of 54 in order to sustain the use of no more than 14 teaching spaces. One more child at P1 stage would require an additional P1 classroom (and an additional teacher).

EXAMPLE

Example 2:
A school has 15 full-time class bases that can all accommodate a maximum number of 33 children. A realistic optimised classification for this school would be:

Room	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL
1	25							25
2	25							25
3	13	12						25
4		30						30
5		21	4					25
6			30					30
7			30					29
8				33				33
9				33				33
10					33			33
11					33			33
12						33		33
13						33		33
14							33	33
15							33	33
TOTAL	63	63	64	66	66	66	66	454

In the above example, the total planning capacity for this school would be 454. Each class has been calculated to accommodate the relevant class size maxima, however, this school would have a maximum P1 intake cap of 63 in order to sustain the use of no more than 15 teaching spaces. Only one additional P1 child would require an additional classroom (and therefore and additional teacher).

Example 3:
A school has 21 full-time class bases that can all accommodate a maximum number of 33 children. A realistic optimised classification for this school would be:

Room	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL
1	25							25
2	25							25
3	25							25
4	12	13						25
5		30						30
6		30						30
7		14	11					25
8			30					30
9			30					30
10			16	9				25
11				33				33
12				33				33
13				12	13			25
14					33			33
15					33			33
16					8	17		25
17						33		33
18						33		33
19						4	21	25
20							33	33
21							33	33
TOTAL	87	87	87	87	87	87	87	609

EXAMPLE

In the above example, the total planning capacity for this school would be 609. Each class has been calculated to accommodate the relevant class size maxima, however, this school would have a maximum P1 intake cap of 87 in order to sustain the use of no more than 21 teaching spaces.

Example 4:
A school has 22 full-time class bases that can all accommodate a maximum number of 33 children. A realistic optimised classification for this school would be:

Room	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL
1	22							22
2	22							22
3	23							23
4	23							23
5		30						30
6		30						30
7		30						30
8			30					30
9			30					30
10			30					30
11				33				33
12				33				33
13				33				33
14					33			33
15					33			33
16					33			33
17						33		33
18						33		33
19						33		33
20							33	33
21							33	33
22							33	33
TOTAL	90	90	90	99	99	99	99	666

EXAMPLE

In the above example, the total planning capacity for this school would be 666. Each class has been calculated to accommodate the relevant class size maxima, however, this school would have a maximum P1 intake cap of 90 in order to sustain the use of no more than 21 teaching spaces. In this example it may appears that additional children can be accommodated in P1 however, every other stage is full, where only one additional P1 child (over a total of 90) would require an additional classroom (and therefore and additional teacher).

All of the above examples present a **maximum** realistic capacity. However, in practice, it is unlikely that it would be achieved unless every class is *"full"* at every stage.

When applying the National Guidance, Local Authorities must ensure that they are not in breach of The School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967, for example, in relation to size of site, sanitary accommodation etc., relevant aspects of the 1980 Act which relate to school accommodation, child safety etc. as well as relevant building standards and health and safety legislation. Authorities should also consider how the school's facilities, such as dining areas, gym halls, circulation spaces etc. will provide for or limit the capacity of the school.

2.3 Working Capacity

Working Capacity is a dynamic and more realistic measure of the total number of children which can be accommodated in a school in a particular academic year.

The Working Capacity should be used to determine the number of places available in a particular academic year. When considering placing requests and other issues relating to a specific school session such as late enrolment and reserved places provisions, it is important to assess the implications for future years' classifications as well as the current year's classification.

2.4 Calculating the Working Capacity

Each year, the Headteacher will agree the classification for the following year and submit this to the hub where it is checked. This provides the working capacity and allows Education Services to decide on the capping figure for each school.

The working capacity takes into account the same factors as planning capacity including:

- Identification of **ONLY** full time teaching spaces[1];
- Determining the maximum number of children that can be accommodated in the class base based on the physical size of the room;
- Determining which year group will use the class base and applying the relevant class size maxima[2];
- Prepare a classification based on the maximum use of each class base.

Advice and support on the determination of planning and working capacities is available from Education Services (Estates Section).

John McGhee
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1 See section 2.2 2) above;
2 See section 2.2 3) b) above.