

BUILDING BULLETINS 98 AND 99: BRIEFING FRAMEWORKS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECTS

The guidance in Building Bulletins 98 and 99 sets out simple, realistic, non-statutory area guidelines for secondary school and primary school buildings and grounds.

The following Q & A has been put together in response to the queries that are most frequently raised about the two Bulletins and to ensure they are used most effectively. They are aimed at people who are familiar with the publications.

Q1. Are the recommended gross areas adequate?

The gross areas represent average increases of 18% and 25% over the maxima prevailing in 1996 for secondary schools and primary schools respectively.

Further supplementary net area, and a proportional increase in non-net area, may be needed if there are specially resourced non-school or support functions on the school site (see Q3). Decisions about any facilities to be provided within supplementary net area will vary widely due to specific local needs.

Q2. Will the accommodation schedules in Appendices 1 and 2 suit all schools?

No, each school is different and each school has different needs. Pupil number, curriculum, teaching and learning approaches, community access and ethos are among the factors that need to be taken into account in planning accommodation.

The schedules are intended to indicate possible sets of spaces, based on a typical curriculum and organisation. They can provide the basis for feasibility studies and serve as benchmarks, but only through detailed analysis can the differing accommodation requirements of each school be properly assessed. For secondary school teaching spaces, curriculum analysis should be used. The Department has published a [curriculum analysis and model](#).

It is important that project teams fully assess and understand the implications for teaching methods, the management and operation of the school, before committing to decisions on the planning of accommodation. Providing more generous areas or specifications in one area of the school usually means cutting back elsewhere. Schools and project sponsors should be actively involved in these decisions.

Q3. How are the particular additional requirements of some schools taken into account?

The recommended gross area is sufficient to provide for a typical inclusive school environment with extended school and community use of the facilities outside the core school day. Some of the "float" area may be used to enhance facilities, for example to provide a larger hall for community sports, or additional storage to support extended school activities.

Area that is additional to that recommended in BB98/99 may be provided on some school sites, for example to accommodate an early years facility, a designated SEN unit or an adult learning centre for use during school hours. Such supplementary area will need to be supported by appropriate funding.

Q4. How flexible is the guidance on individual spaces?

The guidance shows an area range for every group size. Project teams should consider whether more flexibility can be provided by having a mix of sizes, rather than an average area for all spaces.

Q4. Can the guidance only be applied to a traditional cellular plan (i.e. enclosed rooms)?

No, the ranges of sizes given for individual spaces can be applied to an enclosed room, semi-enclosed room or a zone within an open plan area. The area recommendations are based on different kinds of activities and it is essential for designers to take account of the activities likely to take place in a space or suite of spaces when determining size, shape and furnishing.

Furniture and equipment layouts – that allow for the full range of activities likely to take place in a space and access for wheelchair users and their assistants – are an invaluable way of "testing" the suitability of a space. It is also important to consider the acoustic qualities of a space, particularly in an open plan area to ensure that pupils and staff (including those with a hearing or visual impairment) can hear and see each other clearly.

Q6. What can be done to provide for future adaptability?

School buildings need to be able to adapt to future changes in pupil number, curriculum developments and different ways of learning and teaching. Strategic decisions in the early stages can help to facilitate this, for example:

- Shape: irregularly shaped spaces (or groups of spaces) tend to be more difficult to adapt.
- Modular dimensioning: taking this approach to positioning partitions, lighting, heat emitters, and ventilation inlets / extracts may make it less costly to move partitions between classrooms in the future.
- Minimising variations in the depth and height of spaces: standardisation can simplify future remodelling. However this has to be balanced against the additional cost of providing higher ceilings and

the fact that higher ceilings and/or deeper spaces may be environmentally and aesthetically less suitable for smaller spaces.

- Servicing and structural strategy: minimising load-bearing partitions and considering servicing routes will reduce the complexity and cost of re-locating partitions.

Q7. Why does BB98/99 show minimum areas for categories of space within net area and within non-net area?

Experience shows that if any of the individual categories are insufficient for the site (even if the total net area is enough) this is likely to compromise the best use of the buildings. The implications of any proposal to include less than the minimum area for any of the categories should be fully assessed.

An area greater than the minimum (but generally not exceeding the recommended maximum), will usually be required for each category. The "float" area can be used to provide extra accommodation within the recommended gross area, where it is most needed by each school (see Q3).

Project teams should understand how the categories of area relate to each other and to gross area. For example, when preparing a schedule of teaching spaces, there should be an assessment of the likely gross area and therefore affordability. It is also important to check that proposed layouts allow an efficient balance between net and non-net (particularly circulation) areas.

Q8. Will guidance be published on the premises implications of personalised learning?

The government Report, 2020 Vision¹, recommends key strategies for personalised learning. Pages 25 and 26 of the Report suggest what to consider when designing schools for personalised learning.

The Department has commissioned a study into the implications of personalised learning for internal and external areas. The project team will report on their findings as the work progresses.

Q9. Pending guidance on the implications of personalised learning, should the guidance in the Bulletins be followed?

Yes, but it is important to make use of the flexibility in the Bulletins and not to use the example schedules of accommodations indiscriminately. The needs of individual pupils, and the school's particular approach to teaching and learning should be the key considerations.

Q10. Will guidance be published on the premises implications of the changes in the 14 to19 curriculum?

¹ 2020 Vision: Report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group, available at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=10783>

The Department has published a series of [case studies](#) showing how consortia are working together to provide the appropriate facilities for each of the diplomas. The guidance provides practical as well as inspiration ideas.

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