

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

15 January 2009

Agenda Item	
Report No	

DETERMINING PRIMARY SCHOOL CAPACITIES

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

SUMMARY

This report proposes and includes detailed recommendations on a framework for determining Primary School capacities.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out a framework for determining school capacity figures for the Primary school sector that could be used both internally and externally as outlined in paragraph 1:2 below.

1.2 The calculation of school capacity figures should be both transparent and consistent as there are a number of potential uses, including:-

- Investment planning
- Placing requests
- Discussions relating to future developer contributions
- Statutory performance indicators

1.3 It is possible that there may be different school capacity figures used for different purposes. The critical factor is that there is a justifiable and wholly transparent reason for utilising differing school capacity figures for different purposes.

2.0 Background

2.1 The capacity of a Primary school can be assessed in 2 main ways:

- School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) Regulations 1967 (Statutory Instrument 1967/1199) set out the space requirements for each pupil as 1.7M2
- The Education (Lower Primary Class Sizes) (Scotland) Regulations 1999 (Statutory Instrument 1999/1080) set out the maximum number of pupils permissible within P1 to P3 as 30 at the start of the school session.

2.2 Subsequent Scottish Executive policy changes resulted in the maximum class size for P1 being set at 25 at the start of the school session and most recently the Scottish Government has confirmed that local authorities should plan to move towards maximum class sizes of 18 in P1 to P3.

2.3 In theory the first set of regulations above could result in a situation where a classroom could accommodate more pupils than the current staffing standards permit and 2 teachers could work in that same classroom. Nevertheless such a strategy has only been used on occasions by Highland Council and usually well into a school session where rather than re-composite a class, a second teacher has been used in the class to enable the status quo to continue.

3.0 Factors in Determining a Primary School Capacity

3.1 **Annex 1** outlines the proposals for determining those rooms/spaces within a school which should be included within school capacity calculations and those that should be excluded from those calculations. Members are asked to approve the proposed utilisation of rooms/space outlined in Annex 1.

3.2 There are 3 possible school capacity figures:-

- Recommended maximum capacity
- Planning capacity
- Working capacity

3.3 **Recommended maximum capacity** – this figure takes account of the available floor area for each of the educational spaces included within the school capacity (Section A in Annex 1). Each room/space area is divided by 1.7, per the 1967 School Premises Regulations, in order to derive the maximum pupil capacity.

3.4 **Planning capacity** – the planning capacity is based on the number of educational rooms/spaces, the number of pupils who can be accommodated in these rooms and the current permissible class size, excluding composite classes. The planning capacity of the school is therefore the aggregate for all rooms/spaces included within the calculation. It is recommended that this figure is utilised for all strategic investment decisions, statutory performance indicators and for any discussions relating to future developer contributions.

3.5 **Working capacity** – the working capacity is the planning capacity adjusted annually to take account of the relevant maximum class size for each year group or each composite class size. It is recommended that the working capacity at each stage should be used when considering placing requests. This figure is currently based on 25 in P1, 30 in P2 and P3, 33 in P4 to P7 and 25 for composite classes.

3.6 **Annex 2** exemplifies the above for Hillhead Primary School where the relevant capacity figures are as follows:-

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| • Recommended maximum capacity | 285 |
| • Planning capacity | 230 |
| • Working capacity | 216 |

It is recommended that this template is completed annually by the Head Teacher on the basis of the September school roll census figure submitted to the Scottish Government and the related class configurations. The Area Business Support Officer would provide advice and guidance where required.

- 3.7 It should be noted that a school's working capacity could vary from year to year defined by the pupil/teacher ratio permissible by current staffing standards and also dependent upon the number of year groups relating to these standards.
- 3.8 It is recommended that when the school capacity figures have been determined annually and validated that this information is held on the Council's web-site to ensure that all relevant stake-holders have access to this information.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to approve the following recommendations:-

- i. The determination of educational rooms/spaces that should be taken into account when deciding school capacity figures as detailed in **Annex 1 – Section A.**
- ii. The planning capacity figure is used for the purposes: - investment planning, statutory performance indicators and informing decisions relating to developer contributions.
- iii. The working capacity figure is used to inform decisions relating to placing requests
- iv. Individual Head Teachers, in conjunction with Area Business Support Officers, are responsible for completing the template exemplified in **Annex 2**
- v. The resultant information is thereafter published on the Council's web-site and is therefore available to all relevant stake-holders.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Date: 6th January 2009.

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Background Papers: Scottish Executive Circular 3/2004: Guidance on determining school capacities.

SCHOOL CAPACITY CALCULATIONS

Section A

Educational spaces included within capacity calculations:

- Teaching classrooms
- Art/music/computing and other specialist rooms
- Additional General Purpose room (see Note 1)
- Learning Support rooms (unless room is below 18 pupil capacity)
- School Libraries occupying full classrooms

Section B

Educational spaces not included within capacity calculations:

- Dedicated public library
- Sports hall
- Dining room
- Community rooms
- Learning support rooms for severe and profound
- Physiotherapy, medical, sensory rooms
- General Purpose rooms (See note 1)
- Stage areas
- Nursery/playgroup rooms

NOTE 1 – It is assumed that where possible that each school will be given an allowance for a general purposes room.

