

CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH PARENTS:
10 MARCH 2009

SCHOOL NOTIONAL CAPACITIES

Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting of 13 January 2009, the CCWP requested further information on the issue of school notional capacities – including national guidance – and spare places within the school estate. There is limited national guidance on the issue of capacity, a guidance note was produced - Circular No 3/2004: Guidance on Determining School Capacities, available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/01/20528/50013 but it is not prescriptive in how capacity should be determined. The information below, an extract from the Children and Families Asset Management Plan, sets out the City of Edinburgh Council's approach to capacity. The attached appendix illustrates the approach to setting capacity standards at primary schools.

School Notional Capacities

- 1.2 School occupancy levels are assessed against each school's notional capacity to determine how much spare capacity exists. There is no nationally prescribed capacity methodology. The Scottish Executive issued guidance on the type of factors an authority may wish to take into account in December 2004 (circular 3/2004). This guidance is not in any way prescriptive, recognising that this is a devolved matter for individual local authorities to assess. There are differing capacity methodologies in place across Scotland, each reflecting local circumstances.
- 1.3 In the case of the City of Edinburgh Council, a school's notional capacity reflects the optimum operating capacity of the school. The notional capacity methodology is consistently applied across the entire estate, and accordingly needs to be flexible enough to address local circumstances in every school. The notional capacity is not a physical capacity, as it needs to take into account additional factors.

Primary School Notional Capacity

- 1.4 The following information considers a number of terms, defined below.
- **Physical Capacity** – based on an assumption that every class base in the school will fill to the teaching class size limit of 33 pupils.
 - **Organisational Capacity** – considers the organisational structure of the school, particularly the number of single year and multi year (composite) classes, which have different teaching size limits.
 - **Notional Capacity** – describes the optimum operating capacity, taking into account the two factors above, previous experience and allowing sufficient flexibility.

- 1.5 With regard to primary schools, the principal factor in determining notional capacity is the number of classrooms and general purpose rooms available for teaching within the school. General purpose spaces – such as the library and the hall - are essential to the delivery of the curriculum and a school must be supported by the proper number of spaces. This would equate to a school's physical capacity.
- 1.6 Physical capacity per se, however, is meaningless. Physical capacity indicates how many class spaces are available in the school, but the actual number of pupils a school can accommodate is determined by its organisational capacity. The organisational structure of a school reflects the class sizes restrictions set out in the SJNC (TSSE) Scheme of Salaries and Conditions of Service for Teaching Staff in School Education (1994) Section 10.12.1-2. These restrictions set single year class sizes at 33 pupils per class and composite classes (ie multiple years) at 25 pupils per class. The Scottish Executive has also subsequently introduced the requirement to restrict P1-P3 classes to 30 pupils. A further reduction in class sizes for P1 classes to 25 pupils was introduced in 2007. The need to accommodate one additional child above the class size limits would require an entirely new class to be formed.
- 1.7 The composite class size restriction introduces particular issues for organisational capacity, as the effect can change depending on the organisation of the school. For example, an eleven class school could have one and a half classes per year stage, where seven of the classes would be limited to 30 or 33 pupils and the four remaining classes, being composite, limited to 25. Another eleven class school could have an intake of two classes one year and one class the next, so all the classes would have limits of 30 or 33 pupils. Accordingly while both schools had the same number of classes, they would have different physical capacities, which could change year on year. This is clearly an unsatisfactory position, and accordingly the organisational capacity is not an appropriate indicator of notional capacity.
- 1.8 The recently introduced class sizes of 25 for P1 also do not necessarily change the capacity of the school. In a number of double stream primary schools for example, which previously would have had an intake of 60 pupils based on two classes of 30 pupils, continue to have an intake of 60 based on a team teaching approach.
- 1.9 The notional capacity methodology takes these preceding factors into account, but also considers practical experience of how many pupils might be expected to be accommodated within a certain sized organisation. This experience is reflected in the Council's staffing schedules (ie the number of teachers a school would expect to have for a certain sized roll). It is the Council's experience that pupils never come in neat bundles of 30 or 33 pupils throughout the entire organisation. Accordingly it is likely that the distribution of pupils will trigger the need for an additional class well before the physical capacity is reached. The notional capacity methodology is therefore related to the Council's staffing structure and requires sufficient flexibility within the methodology to account for this.

Secondary School Notional Capacity

- 1.10 The determination of secondary school notional capacity is a far more complex procedure. The notional capacity is derived from the curriculum offered in the school. Notional capacity is based on the fact that a certain number of rooms have to be available for each part of the curriculum to teach a certain number of pupils. Thus the total number of classrooms is broken down into departmental accommodation, providing a mix of general and practical classrooms in order to provide the full curriculum. By way of example, a school with a notional capacity of 900 pupils would have 56 timetabled spaces, 26 of which would be general classrooms and 30 practical classrooms. Of these 30 practical classrooms, nine would be science laboratories.
- 1.11 The number of classrooms required to deliver the curriculum to a certain number of pupils is derived from class size limits. For secondary schools, general classes operate in groups of up to 33 pupils, while practical classes are limited to 20 pupils.
- 1.12 Intake limits are applied to secondary schools where demand for places exceeds supply. The intake limit for a school represents a ratio of the total notional capacity. This ratio will vary between schools depending on how many of their pupils stay on to the S5 and S6 stages, which affects the total roll for the school. A school with a high staying on rate will have a lower intake limit to ensure the total number of pupils equates to the notional capacity.

L Glasgow
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Updated Excerpt from AMP 2005

Appendix 1
Notional Capacity - Primary
Accommodation

Notional Capacity	Pupil Roll	No. of Class Spaces	No. of GP/ Resource Areas
	1+	1	1
47	20+	2	1
71	48+	3	1
96	72+	4	1
125	97+	5	1
	118+	5	1
145	126+	6	1
199	146+	7	2
219	200+	8	2
249	220+	9	2
279	250+	10	2
	280+	11	3
333	307+	12	3
379	334+	13	3
	361+	13	3
415	380+	14	4
456	416+	15	4
469	457+	16	4
496	470+	17	4
523	497+	18	4
550	524+	19	4
579	551+	20	5
658	580+	21	5
	659+	22	5