

ASSESSING THE NET CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS

Introduction

The capacity of a school is the number of pupil places. The 'net capacity assessment method' of assessing the capacity of all maintained mainstream schools replaced all previous methods from June 2002 and will probably take effect from September 2003.

Purpose of Net Capacity

- By comparison with number on roll (NOR) it indicates surplus or additional places that are needed in a school
- Divided by the number of year groups it indicates the admission number that can generally be accommodated
- It informs decisions about how capital resources are best deployed (as a part of a School Organisation Plan)

Schools to which Net Capacity Applies

The Net Capacity assessment applies to all mainstream Community, Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled and Foundation schools. The method does not apply to nursery schools, special schools or pupil referral units.

Definition of Net Capacity

The Net Capacity of a school is based on the net area of all buildings that are available to the school. Net area is the total area of usable spaces, both teaching and non-teaching. It includes everything except corridors, toilets and showers, boiler and plant rooms, school kitchens, and areas occupied by internal walls.

How Net Capacity is Assessed

For primary schools, the Net Capacity is calculated on the basis of the number and size of spaces designated as 'classbases' (designated registration base for one class).

For secondary schools, it is based on the number, size and type of teaching spaces and the age range of the school.

Measurement of Net Capacity

To reduce the burden on Authorities and schools a schedule of the 'net area' of each school has been collated by a team of independent surveyors (Valuation Office) working directly to the DfES. The Authority's Policy, Performance & Information team will be sending schools their new 'net area capacity' assessment for checking during the Autumn term 2002.

Increased Area Standards

The Net Capacity uses a higher standard area per pupil. The draft revision to DfES Building Bulletin 82 is proposing an increase of 9% for teaching area and 15% for gross area for primary schools and 3% teaching area and 9% gross area for secondary schools.