



Department
for Education

Net Capacity Assessment Guidance

Assessing the Net Capacity of Schools

June 2025

Contents

Overview	4
Action Required	4
Introduction	4
The Purpose of Net Capacity	4
Schools to which Net Capacity applies	5
How Net Capacity is Assessed	5
Responsibilities	6
Background	7
How Net Capacity Method Works	9
General	9
Flexibility to allow for SEN Inclusion and Admission Arrangements	10
One Permanent Measure	11
Indicated Admission Number	11
Workplaces	12
Schools Without Halls	14
Split Sites and Small Sites	14
What Needs to be Measured?	16
Non-maintained Accommodation	16
Net Area	16
Measuring 'Non-net' Area	18
Open Plan Areas	18
Accuracy of Area Measurements	19
Non-School and Support Provision	20
Early Years Provision	20
Additionally Resourced Facilities for SEN	21
'Non-school' Facilities	21
Spaces Unusable as Basic Workplaces	22
Large Non-teaching Spaces	23
Using the Net Capacity Assessment Forms	25
Establishment Details	25

Convert Primary Data	26
Room Details	27
Net Capacity	29
Unusual Situations	30
Annexe A Definitions of Types of Spaces	31

Table of figures

Figure 1: Primary School Plan (Showing Net area)	155
Figure 2: Open plan area in a primary school, from Example 1 in Part 5	19

Overview

1. The capacity of a school is the number of pupil places it can accommodate.

This guidance describes the method of assessing the 'net capacity' of schools, which should be used as the measure of the capacity of all maintained schools in England.

Action Required

2. Local Authorities in England are responsible for informing the Department of the net capacity of all maintained schools, and any future changes to them through the annual School Capacity (SCAP) survey.

Introduction

3. The capacity of a school is the number of pupil places it can accommodate. This Guidance describes the 'net capacity assessment method' of assessing the capacity of all mainstream and special schools for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN), in England. This version of net capacity supercedes all previous methods of assessing the capacity of schools [including the version described in the 2001 Guidance on net capacity, ref DfES/0739/2001 REV and the funded number of places in Academies].

The Purpose of Net Capacity

4. The net capacity assessment method is intended to provide a single, robust, and consistent method of assessing the capacity of schools. It results in a measure of capacity called the 'Net Capacity' [because it includes all the spaces within the 'Net Area' of the school buildings]. The Net Capacity figures can be used for a number of purposes. By comparison with the number on roll and future pupil forecasts, it can indicate the number of places that are surplus or additional places that are needed in a school or across the local area when combined with capacity data from other schools. In mainstream schools, if it is divided by the number of year groups, it can indicate the approximate¹ admission number that can generally be accommodated, while in special schools it can indicate an appropriate number

¹ The admission number or planned places indicated by the Net Capacity of a school may need to be refined taking into account class size limits and need.

of planned places. It can also inform decisions about how capital resources are best deployed. In addition, it provides schools and responsible bodies with consistent and objective data for use in admission appeals, supporting estate management and curriculum planning.

Schools to which Net Capacity applies

5. The net capacity assessment method will apply to all Community, Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled, Foundation schools and Academies in England. The method will not apply to nursery schools, alternative provision (including pupil referral units) or further education colleges.

How Net Capacity is Assessed

6. For all types of schools, the net capacity is based on the number, size and type of teaching spaces and the age range of the school. This is checked against the total useable space available, which must be measured, and ensures that there is neither too much nor too little space available to support the core teaching activities. The method also allows some flexibility to suit the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and admission arrangements with mainstream schools.
7. For special schools, the net capacity is calculated in the same way as mainstream schools described in paragraph 4, but with an additional assumption that allows significantly more space per pupil.
8. The net capacity of a school should be assessed by the measurement of the available space and calculation, using the relevant assessment form available at [Net capacity assessment tool - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/net-capacity-assessment-tool).

Although the method of assessing net capacity is broadly similar, different assessment forms are used for mainstream and special schools.

9. Both assessment forms comprise three parts:
 - Establishment Details
 - Room Details (steps 1 to 4)
 - Net Capacity Calculation

Responsibilities

10. The secretary of State requires all Local Authorities under Section 29(3) of the Education Act 1996 to annually inform the Department, via the School Capacity Survey, of the capacity of each mainstream and special school in its area, and any planned changes to a mainstream school's capacity in the coming 3 years. This includes academies. The local authority may not centrally hold capacity data for all its academies and may have to collect this data from responsible bodies. Practices will differ across local authorities; this may involve responsible bodies having to inform the local authority of any new capacity figures or may involve responding to the local authority when it asks for the data. The School Capacity Survey should always reflect the most up to date capacity of an academy regardless of whether the funding agreement is still yet to be updated.
11. Steps 1 to 3 of the Room Details may be measured and assessed by independent assessors, as they are based only on the physical attributes of the spaces available.
12. Local authorities are responsible for assessing the net capacity of all schools maintained by them, based on these measurements. Responsible bodies for other schools including academies should use this assessment method to ensure a consistent approach with maintained schools when supporting their requirement to keep their capacity figure in their Funding Agreement accurate and up to date.

The relevant responsible body should identify the Establishment Details and, at step 4 of the Room Details, identify:

- the rooms that are 'classbases' in primary schools, or teaching rooms in all schools, which are the basis of the net capacity calculation.
- any non-school facilities excluded from the capacity assessment because they are not normally available for the school, including a faith space, a parents/community room, adult learning facilities, some specially resourced facilities and any spaces in residential use.
- any early year's provision used solely for Local Authority designated nursery and childcare places aged 0 to 4.
- any spaces used solely for Local Authority designated specially resourced places for pupils with specific special educational needs and outside of the mainstream school admissions and roll, such as a designated unit.

Background

13. The Net Capacity method was introduced in 2002 for mainstream schools to replace a variety of methods previously used to assess the capacity of schools, based on different indicators. This version of Net Capacity is a development of that method, based on the physical capacity of the school buildings.
14. The Net Capacity method has been expanded to include special schools.
15. The net capacity assessment method provides a realistic and fair assessment of physical capacity. Like the previous version, its key features are that:
 - all usable spaces are measured, both teaching and non-teaching, to present a fair assessment of the actual space available and ensure that there is sufficient space available for ancillary accommodation such as staff rooms and storage.
 - the assessment is based only on the physical attributes of the available space, and the net capacity range itself is not affected by the number of sixth form students on roll or pupils with an Education and Health care plan (EHP).
 - the assessment does not need to be updated unless there is any change in the physical attributes of the usable space, significant changes in the use of the spaces and changes to admission numbers or age ranges. The indicated admission number(s) in mainstream schools will be affected by changes in sixth form stay-on rates.
 - for mainstream schools, the capacity divided by the number of years will produce an 'indicated admission number' that is related to a reasonable or consistent year size (based on a number of forms of entry (FE) of 30, for instance).
 - realistic long-term allowances are made for pupils with SEN or disabilities within mainstream schools.
 - for special schools, the wide capacity range allows for a range of diverse types of need to be accommodated.
16. The net capacity of most schools should match a capacity based on their preferred admissions number in mainstream schools², or their planned number of places in special schools.
17. The net capacity method uses a standard area per pupil. The minimum area for a primary classbase for 30 pupils is 50m², but this must be supported by at least a further 12m² of ancillary area, not including the hall. Part of this further area could be

² The 'capacity based on planned admission number' is the published admission number multiplied by the number of year groups, with an allowance for average sixth form size if applicable.

in non-teaching spaces such as stores, but it will predominantly be for teaching: either within the overall area of the classroom or in shared teaching areas.³

18. The minimum area for a secondary classroom assumed for 30 pupils is also 50m². Like other types of space, this is in line with the recommendations for area guidelines⁴. In both sectors, further allowances are made for increasing the overall area per pupil to allow for those with SEN or disabilities.

³ The Statutory Early Years Framework requires 69m² for Reception

⁴ Further guidance on the recommended teaching area of schools is in Building Bulletin 103: Area Guidelines for mainstream schools and Building Bulletin 104: Area Guidelines for SEND and Alternative Provision

How Net Capacity Method Works

General

19. All usable spaces must be included in the net capacity measurement. Every space in the 'net area' of the school buildings must therefore be listed and measured, including separate stores, garages, and temporary buildings. This is to ensure that there is enough support space available in the school for staff, storage, and other ancillary accommodation.
20. **Net Area** is the total area of all usable spaces, both teaching and non-teaching. It includes everything except corridors, toilets and showers, boiler and plant rooms, school kitchens, and the area occupied by internal walls. A full definition of net area is given in paragraph 52. This parallels the standard measurement used in non-educational sectors, except that it excludes 'shared circulation' and school kitchens. **Non-net** spaces can also be captured on the Net Capacity tools, this provides a full record of all spaces within the school.
21. A **classbase** is a classroom or area designated as the registration base for one class. In primary schools, the net capacity is generally based on the size and number of classbases, unless it exceeds the limits mentioned in paragraph 24.
22. **Teaching Spaces** comprise all rooms available for teaching or learning, including all timetabled spaces, halls, libraries (if used for timetabled teaching), and study areas (but not including dining areas or social areas). In secondary schools, the net capacity is based on the size and number of teaching spaces, and on a 'utilisation factor' linked to the age range of the school, unless it exceeds the limits mentioned in paragraph 24.
23. The **utilisation factor** is a decimal fraction equivalent to the average proportion of time that any workplace is in use, to allow for the 'frequency of use' of teaching spaces being timetabled and the 'occupancy' of the space to allow for varying group sizes.
24. The capacity will be calculated from the space in the classbases and/ or teaching spaces if this is within reasonable limits. Because all spaces in the net area are measured, these limits are based on a minimum and maximum proportion of all the usable space available (as set out in paragraphs 42 and 43). The upper limit ensures that there is enough space available for the support areas that the school needs. The lower limit checks that a reasonable proportion of spaces that could be used for teaching (classbases or teaching spaces) are designated as such.
25. All spaces in the net area of a school must be measured, but only to set the limits described above. Unless it exceeds these limits, the net capacity of any school is

based only on the size and number of spaces designated as a 'classbase' and/or a teaching space.

26. In special schools, the net capacity is based on mainstream workspace calculations, and the mainstream utilisation factor linked to the age range of the school, where relevant, unless it exceeds the limits mentioned above. However, the utilisation factor is multiplied by a further 35% to allow for the smaller group sizes in special schools.

Flexibility to allow for SEN Inclusion and Admission Arrangements

27. The net capacity method calculates a maximum and minimum potential capacity in any school, based on the methods described above. The net capacity is then equal to the capacity based on PAN in mainstream schools, or the Planned Number of Places in special schools, if it is within the minimum to maximum range. If it is below the minimum, the net capacity defaults to the minimum potential capacity. If it is above the maximum, the net capacity defaults to the maximum potential capacity.
28. In mainstream schools, the minimum potential capacity is 90% of the maximum. This range offers the flexibility for inclusion, allowing extra space for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The net capacity of a mainstream school can therefore be based on a long-term policy of inclusion of all pupils (with and without Education, Health, and Care Plans).
29. The range allows the net capacity based on classbases or teaching spaces to be reduced by up to 10% in both primary and secondary mainstream schools. A school may set a capacity towards the low end of the range to allow extra space for adult assistants or for wheelchair users, where the Responsible Body recognise that the long-term inclusion policy of the school requires this additional allowance. This would be in addition to the allowances for specially resourced facilities for pupils outside of the main school admissions and roll (paragraph 65).
30. The flexibility also allows for admission arrangements in mainstream schools. The net capacity can be within the range and match the proposed admission number, even if it is a little below the capacity based on spaces. This allows some flexibility to suit a reasonable admission arrangement and organisation of the school (including infant class size limits, as necessary). For instance, a 5 to 11 primary school with 11 classbases suitable for 30 pupils each would have a capacity of 330 based on classbases, but the proposed admission number of 45 (1½ 'forms of entry') would reduce the capacity to 315 to avoid more than three classes of 30 in every two year-groups.

31. In special schools, the minimum potential capacity is 75% of the maximum, to allow for the wide range of group sizes needed: from around 4 for pupils with the most complex needs to about 12 for moderate learning difficulties.

One Permanent Measure

32. Net capacity does not need to be calculated every year. It will only need to be updated if physical changes are made to the usable space, such as:
- space being removed or more space being added;
 - several small spaces being converted into one larger one;
 - changes being made that affect the type of space (as described in paragraph 38) in classbases or teaching spaces;
- or if major changes are made to the admission details such as PAN, age range, sixth form numbers.

Indicated Admission Number

33. The indicated admission number is a guide to setting an appropriate admission number and is calculated by dividing the net capacity by the 'number of year groups' to be accommodated at the school. This is usually a simple whole number, but it can also incorporate fractions to allow for the proportion of pupils in the sixth form, or where there is more than one year of admission.
34. In secondary schools with sixth forms, the number of year groups is adjusted to include the '**stay-on**' rate of all post-16 students remaining at the school. If the school also admits sixth form students from elsewhere, this can be noted in the tool as a second year of admission. If the number of additional sixth form students admitted from elsewhere is less formal and fluctuates considerably, these students can be added into the 'FTE pupils staying on in sixth form instead and the calculations will still work appropriately. Similarly, the Year 12 admission number could all include pupils staying on from the previous Year 11 as well as students from elsewhere and the calculations will still work appropriately.
35. In schools where there is more than one normal year of admission, the number of year groups will also be adjusted. The number of additional pupils it is intended to admit from outside the school for each additional normal year of admission should be noted. For instance, where an all through school has a primary phase admitting 30 pupils in Reception, and increased to 90 pupils in Years 7, the number of **further** pupils to be admitted in the second normal year of admission (60) should be noted. Where a school is admitting a 'bulge' class, it should be added as an additional year of admission but only for 1 year in 'Number of Years'.

Workplaces

36. The net capacity method measures the area available in units known as ‘workplaces.’ Workplaces are used as the unit of measurement to ensure that the spaces in schools are weighted fairly. This is because different activities require different types of space, which in turn require very different floor areas to accommodate the same number of pupils. For instance, a classroom of 50m² and a gymnasium of 260m² will both accommodate a class of 30.
37. Each space in the net area is allocated a notional number of workplaces. This is based on different formulae for each type of space (as described in paragraph 36). These formulae are broadly based on area guidelines for the size of such spaces⁵. However, the number of workplaces is not an indication of the minimum or maximum number of pupils that any room can or should hold, particularly in special schools (where the typical group size would be around a third of that in mainstream spaces of the same size). Nor is it an indication that the room should be used for teaching or working.
38. The **room type** of each space is based on the physical attributes of the space rather than its use. A change to the use of a space (for instance, from classroom to staff room) would therefore not be enough for its type to change. There are six types of space. Most spaces will be ‘general’ (some of which may be open plan). Other specialist spaces are divided into ‘fitted’, ‘light practical’ (including ‘science’ and ‘other’ spaces), ‘heavy practical’ (including ‘clean’, such as food rooms and ‘workshops’), ‘large’ and ‘storage’.
- Annexe A lists the rooms and areas that would normally be included in each type of space, and their general physical attributes.
39. The **room use** (or activity space type) is based on how the school uses the space for the majority of the time. This does not have to match the **room type**, but the room uses most suitable for room type are the first to appear on the drop-down list.
40. A further element of the net capacity assessment method is that, in **mainstream schools**:
- spaces with between 15 and 30 workplaces or, in larger spaces, the highest multiple of 30 (for example 60, 90, etc.), are known as ‘basic workplaces’.
 - spaces with less than 15 workplaces, or the remaining workplaces in spaces with more than 30, are known as ‘resource workplaces’.

⁵ In Building Bulletins 103 and 104: Area Guidelines for Schools

And, in **special schools**, where teaching spaces can be smaller and group sizes are lower (equivalent to approximately a third of the workplaces):

- spaces with between 10 and 30 workplaces or, in larger spaces, the highest multiple of 30 are known as ‘basic workplaces’; spaces with less than 10 workplaces, or the remaining workplaces in spaces with more than 30, are known as ‘resource workplaces’.

This means that small rooms (27m² or less in mainstream ‘general’ spaces) and extra space in larger rooms (over 50m² in ‘general’ spaces) do not count towards the capacity of any school. Such space should still be measured, however, to ensure that there is enough support space. They may also be used as learning resource areas or small group rooms.

41. The allocation of basic workplaces to a space indicates that it is a potential classbase or teaching space. This is based purely on the size and type of the space. It is not a reflection of the current use of the space. Nor is it expected that all basic workplaces should be used for teaching.
42. The upper limit described in paragraph 24 means that if more than 75% of all workplaces available are designated as classbases, for primary classes, or teaching spaces, a lower figure [based on the 75%] will be set as the capacity. This upper limit ensures that there is enough space available for the support areas that the school needs.
43. The lower limit described in paragraph 24 means that the capacity will be set at a higher figure if the number of basic workplaces in spaces designated as classbases and teaching spaces is less than 75% of the basic workplaces available, having discounted an additional ‘basic workplace allowance’ of 75 basic workplaces in mainstream schools or 45 basic workplaces in special schools. The lower limit checks that a reasonable proportion of spaces that could be used for teaching (classbases or teaching spaces) are actually designated as such.
44. The ‘basic workplace allowance’, additional to the 25% of basic workplaces allowed in the paragraph above, allows parity across a range of school sizes for large non-teaching spaces and halls (see paragraph 75). For instance, small schools with few classbases may have a reasonable number of basic workplaces in a hall, staff room and other supporting spaces, such as a dining area, while large schools have a sufficient proportion of space to allow for two halls or staff rooms and various other larger supporting spaces.

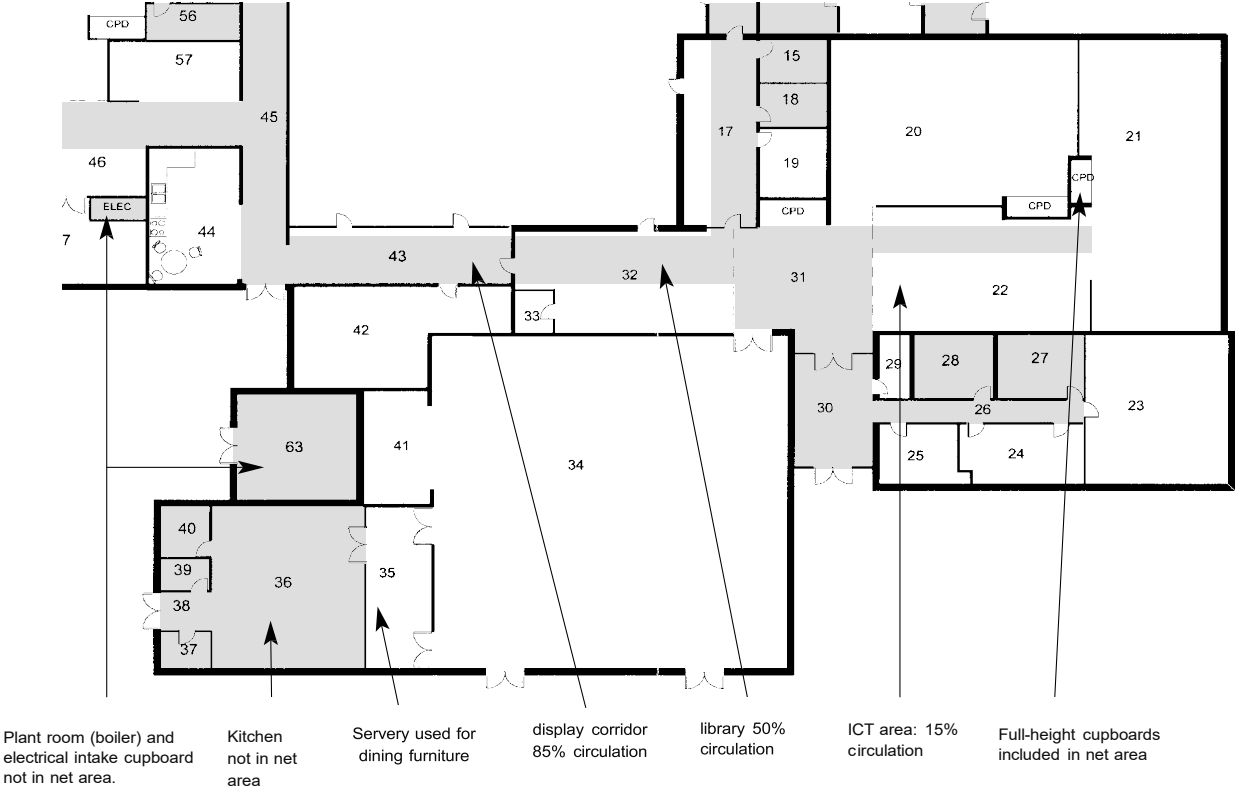
Schools Without Halls

45. Some schools have no hall because physical activities can be done in other, non-maintained accommodation, such as a village hall. If the non-maintained facilities (as described in paragraph 51) are available to the school for less than 80% of the normal school week, they need not be measured or included in the capacity of the school.
46. If a school has no hall but has a large classroom that can be used as such, even if it is not well suited for the purpose, that classroom can be given a use of Assembly Hall in step 4 of the room details, even though it may be marked as a 'general' room type in step 1.

Split Sites and Small Sites

47. The allowance of 75 or 45 basic workplaces (paragraph 43) is for each site that the school occupies, to allow for the extra space requirements of split sites. Schools on split sites are those where there are buildings accommodating registration classes on 2 or more sites where pupils would have to use a public highway to travel between sites.
48. A further allowance of 50 basic workplaces in mainstream, or 25 in special schools, is given to schools where the total site area is smaller than an area approximately suitable to allow for sufficient outdoor PE facilities. This effectively allows schools on small sites (such as in inner city areas) to have more space than a school with a larger site, such as an additional hall. This will help to make up for their inadequate outdoor 'playing field' area.

Figure 1: Primary School Plan (Showing Net area)



What Needs to be Measured?

49. The net capacity of a school is based on the net area of all buildings that are available to that school. These comprise:

- all buildings, on any site used by the school, which are owned or maintained by the Local Authority, Responsible Body or Trustees and are intended to be secure and weather tight.
- 'non-maintained' accommodation used by the school as described in paragraph 51 below.

50. **All** spaces in the net area should be measured. This should be done by listing the spaces and their measurements in the Room Details sheet of both net capacity assessment forms (see Part 5). Certain spaces will be measured but excluded from the net capacity of the school. These are described in 'Measured but Excluded Areas' section

Non-maintained Accommodation

51. Non-maintained accommodation means any buildings that are not maintained by the Local Authority, Responsible Body, or Trustees as part of the school premises. The net area of any 'non-maintained' accommodation should also be measured and included if it is available for the school to use during at least 80% of any normal school week. This would normally be under a 'joint use agreement' or similar. The accommodation would normally be on a site that is adjacent to the school or is easily accessible from the school.

Net Area

52. Net area includes all spaces in all buildings (as described in paragraph 49 above) except the following, which are considered 'non-net' or 'unusable'. These spaces can still be measured and included but will not be included in the calculations.

- Residential (including caretaker's houses) or farm buildings in use as such or intended for next use⁶.
- Buildings condemned by a suitably qualified surveyor or engineer as structurally unsafe.
- Accommodation under the control of service or external bodies and maintained by them (such as telephone or electricity services, the Police

⁶ For instance, if it is a temporarily empty residence awaiting a new tenant.

or Health Service).

- Open-sided covered areas (such as external balconies, covered ways, external fire escapes and canopies) and any other area not intended to be secure and provide reasonable weather resistance⁷ (including outdoor swimming pools).
- Areas with headroom of less than 1.5m, unless beneath an open mezzanine level.
- Additional area provided by open mezzanine levels in spaces of 3m or less in height.
- Toilets, washrooms and showers, and any associated lobbies (including changing areas where these adjoin showers).
- Plant rooms, including lift rooms, boiler rooms, tank rooms, fuels stores, and any space occupied by permanent air conditioning, heating, or cooling apparatus and ducting which renders that space substantially unusable.
- Internal walls, including structural walls, non-structural partition walls, columns, piers, chimney breasts other projections and vertical ducts.
- School kitchens, used for preparing school meals for pupils, including the kitchen, related stores, office and washroom facilities for catering staff, and server areas (where these are not available for furniture storage or other uses at other times)⁸.
- Circulation area, including any corridor, landing or balcony 2.5m or less wide for *essential access*, stairwells, entrance lobbies, lift wells, any protected corridor (deemed to be for the purpose of escape in case of fire) and *shared circulation* in mixed use areas that have a circulation route running through them.

53. **Shared circulation** is that part of an entrance hall, atrium, wide corridor, or open plan area used for the purpose of *essential access*. It can be determined by either:

- Measuring, from a scale plan, the notional circulation routes between openings across the shared space, using appropriate widths (normally 1.5m); or
- estimating the circulation area as one of the following three proportions of

⁷ Reasonable resistance to penetration by rain, snow and wind, and to moisture rising from the ground.

⁸ In some cases, the level of specialist equipment provided, or Environmental Health requirements mean that a servery cannot be used for any other purpose than preparing, finishing or re-heating and serving food. However, where this is not the case, the servery can provide a useful storage area (for instance, for dining furniture) when not being used for serving food. Where such areas can be used as storage, therefore, they should be included in the net area

the floor area of the space of which it is a part:

- 85% (for instance in corridors between 2.5m and 3.5m wide).
- 50% (for instance, in shared resource areas or reception spaces with circulation through them).
- 15% (for instance, in halls or shared teaching areas with a single circulation route through them).

In cases of dispute, shared circulation should be measured from a scale plan.

54. **Essential access** is the primary or only circulation route for regular access by pupils to a room or discrete area from a corridor or other spaces. It does not therefore apply to:

- secondary routes to spaces accessible from other circulation areas.
- routes through other spaces leading to offices, storerooms or similar that do not require regular access by pupils.
- circulation between desks or workstations within rooms.

Measuring ‘Non-net’ Area

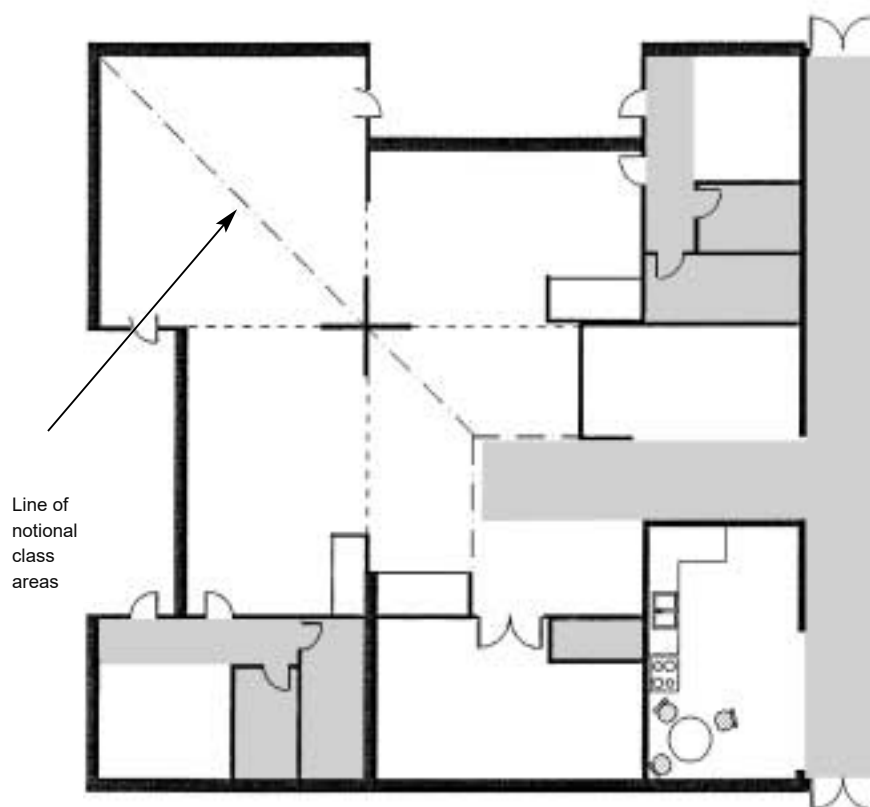
55. All spaces in a school should be listed in the room details. The area of any spaces that are not in the net area (such as toilets, corridors, or plant rooms) should be noted in the ‘non-net’ column in the Room Details. These spaces will not be allocated workplaces. Although it does not affect the net capacity calculation, it is useful to list spaces that are not currently in the net area, such as school kitchen or residential facilities, for future reference or benchmarking.

Open Plan Areas

56. Some open or semi-open plan primary schools have small classbases that were designed to be used with part of an adjacent shared teaching area. Where such spaces exist and can be used together for teaching a class, their floor areas can be combined for the net capacity assessment. In this situation, a marked-up scale plan should be used to show the notional boundaries of the space or spaces (see Example 1 in Part 5). If the classbases and shared area are so designed that they cannot reasonably be used together to teach a class, they should be measured and included as separate spaces.

57. Similarly, open plan areas in secondary schools that are designed for more than two groups should be notionally delineated to identify the area of each teaching space.

Figure 2: Open plan area in a primary school, from Example 1 in Part 5



Accuracy of Area Measurements

58. Internal area should be measured to the face of internal walls or sliding/folding doors. Any fixed storage, such as benching, should be included in the area of the space, unless it is full-height (from floor to ceiling) and effectively forms another space. The measurement of any space larger than 7m^2 should be rounded up or down to the nearest one square metre (1m^2). 0.5m^2 should be rounded up. Small spaces of less than 7m^2 (or storage rooms of less than 10m^2) do not need to be measured as accurately because they will have just one resource workplace, whatever the exact area.

Measured But Excluded Areas

59. Some schools have small rooms that are not available to the school during the school day, because they are used, for example, as community offices or stores, or by school nurses or counselling services. These can normally be noted as such and

included in the room details and will not count towards the net capacity, because they are too small to have basic workplaces (paragraph 40).

60. Some larger areas should be measured but will be excluded from the capacity assessment by being designated as non-school provision and support provision.

Non-School and Support Provision

61. Non-school and support provision should be measured but can be excluded from the capacity if in one of the following categories. The first two categories would only be for rooms that are provided for Local Authority [regulated] places, and the third only applies to rooms that are not normally available to the school during the school day.

- Nursery (marked as Early years status in step 4 of the Room Details)
- Specially resourced facilities for SEND (marked as 'SEND resourced' status)
- Facilities that are not normally available to the school during the school day (marked as 'non-school' status).

Early Years Provision

62. Nursery provision will include those run by a Local Authority, private provider, the school, or Trust, but must be accommodating places officially recorded by the Local Authority. Therefore, if a nursery for any age up to 4-year-olds is on the school site, all the spaces used solely for this should be identified as 'Early Years' in the Room Details and the nursery will be excluded from the capacity of the school. Similarly, whatever the age range of the school, the calculation of the indicated admission number will automatically start at Reception.
63. Where the age range of the school includes nursery places, this should be identified in the Establishment Details worksheet. This includes schools where early years provision on the school site includes mixed nursery and Reception classes.
64. Measurements of workplaces in early years facilities on school sites may be useful for future planning for the provision of such facilities. So, if there is this type of accommodation on the school but is in a building that is not owned or maintained by the Local Authority or school, it could still be measured. It will not count towards the net capacity of the school [as long as it is identified as Early Years in the Room Details].

Additionally Resourced Facilities for SEN

65. Specially resourced facilities are those at mainstream schools where the premises related costs of maintaining the accommodation are covered by specialist funding (over and above EHCP funding) from the Local Authority, for a specific number of pupils places (over and above the mainstream school admissions and roll) for a specific need. For SEN, these will include:
- Integrated specially resourced provision, for separate places over and above the mainstream admissions, with specific needs, typically comprising:
 - small group rooms, SEN resource space or a medical treatment or therapy room.
 - associated staff space(s), [for instance for peripatetic specialist staff].
 - storage for specialist equipment or appliances.
 - additional toilet or hygiene room(s), within the non-net area.
 - a designated Unit for separate places over and above the mainstream admissions, for pupils with specific needs, typically comprising:
 - classbases for the additional pupils, in groups of [6 to 10]
 - small group rooms for other associated spaces as above.
 - Accommodation for Local Authority designated support services, including peripatetic and support staff or assessment centres.

‘Non-school’ Facilities

66. Facilities that are not normally available to the school during the school day can be marked as ‘non-school’ status in step 4 in the Room Details. These include adult learning facilities, some specially resourced facilities and any spaces in residential use. Spaces with this status will not be included as part of the net capacity calculation.
67. They may also include non-school facilities funded from other sources and not available to the school during the normal school day, such as community library facilities or youth centres, as well as a central office for use by a relevant multi-academy trust (MAT) and community facilities not available to or usable by the school such as bars.
68. In all cases, a maximum of one space of no more than 30 basic workplaces, for each category with basic workplaces, can be identified as non-school at Step 4 in the Room Details, if it complies with criteria set out below.

69. In some schools, a room for parents, families or the local community may be large enough to have basic workplaces⁹ and may affect the capacity calculation. This space may be felt to play a significant role in encouraging parents and others in the local community to participate in the life of the school. One parents/community room in any primary school may therefore be marked as 'non-school' at step 4 in the Room Details and excluded if:

- It is used regularly during the normal school day by parents or members of the local community.
- It is not available to the school during the school day (for instance because of the size or type of furniture).

70. One Chapel, or other place of worship, on any school site may also be excluded by being marked as 'non-school' at step 4 of the Room Details if:

- the school has a relevant religious ethos or governance.
- it is in use as such.
- it is not available to the school except for that purpose.

71. Related ancillary spaces will usually be too small to have basic workplaces, so will rarely affect the capacity calculation. They should therefore be noted as such and included in the Room Details.

Spaces Unusable as Basic Workplaces

72. Basic workplaces should only be allocated to spaces that could potentially be used as classbases or teaching spaces, although this may not reflect their current use (halls or staff rooms, for instance). As discussed in paragraph 40, the net capacity method ensures that small rooms and extra space in large rooms are only allocated resource workplaces, so do not count towards the capacity of a school. This is done automatically in the calculation tool.

73. Some spaces are large enough to be allocated basic workplaces, but their physical attributes mean that they should not be considered a potential teaching space. Such spaces should still be measured and allocated workplaces as they can provide useful support space (lofts or basements used for storage, for instance). However, they should be marked as 'unusable as basic workplaces' at step 1 of the Room Details and allocated only resource workplaces. They cannot

⁹ A parents/community room over 27m² would be allocated basic workplaces by the formula in the Room Details. However, such a room would not be expected to exceed 30 basic workplaces

then count towards the net capacity. The calculation tool will not allocate basic workplaces to spaces marked with as unusable as basic workplaces.

74. Normally, therefore, the following spaces only are not suitable as potential teaching spaces and should be marked 'as unusable as basic workplaces' on the basis of their physical attributes.

- Spaces with no, or very little, **daylight**¹⁰ or **ventilation** or heating, such as basements or loft space used only for storage, or enclosed server areas also used for storage¹¹.
- Spaces with no, or very little, **heating or insulation**, such as garages or storage containers.
- Space with inadequate access or means of **fire escape**.
- Spaces or areas that are **narrow** - less than 3.5m wide (not including any shared circulation area).
- Spaces with a **low ceiling** height, where the height of the majority of the room is below 2.1m.
- Dedicated cloakrooms and changing rooms (without showers¹²) that have fixed **changing benches** and perhaps fixed 'island' units.
- Usable area in spaces which are around **85% circulation**, such as wide corridors, foyers, or main entrance halls.
- Indoor swimming **pools**¹³.
- **Outbuildings** [not suitable for normal indoor use], such as greenhouses or sheds.
- Spaces with **other** reasons (identified by a professional surveyor or similar) that make it unsuitable for teaching or learning.

Large Non-teaching Spaces

75. Some spaces, such as dining areas and staff rooms, will be over 27m² and therefore be allocated basic workplaces, but do not have any of the physical

¹⁰ This applies to daylight where required by the room type (for example not for drama studios) and can include 'borrowed' light, for instance from atria or light wells

¹¹ In cases of dispute, reference should be made to the [Advice on standards for school premises](#), and the relevant Approved Document of the Building Regulations.

¹² Changing rooms with showers directly adjacent should not be included in the net area of the school.

¹³ Outdoor swimming pools should not be included in the net area of a school

attributes above to be marked as unusable as basic workplaces. Although they may theoretically be potential classbases or teaching spaces, they will not count towards the capacity because they will not be marked with a classbase or teaching status in Step 4. Instead, the basic workplaces they are allocated will be part of the allowance for larger non-teaching spaces and halls discussed in paragraph 46.

Using the Net Capacity Assessment Forms

76. The net capacity of a school should be assessed by using the relevant assessment form. The spreadsheet tools for mainstream and special schools are available at [Net capacity assessment tool - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
77. This part of the Guidance summarises the process involved, with reference to relevant paragraphs elsewhere in the Guidance, and highlights what to do in some unusual situations.
78. Different assessment tools are used for mainstream schools (including primary, middle, and secondary schools) and special schools. They both follow the same arrangement, as set out below.

Establishment Details

79. Populating the “Establishment details” tab is mandatory as it contains all the general information on the school covering the following areas: Establishment information, age range, Buildings information, admission details, sixth form stay-on rate, Nursery admission details and SEN Admissions. Each cell has a pop-up definition of the cell.

Additionally, the “Guidance” tab contains the instructions and definitions of different fields.

There are multiple validation messages that will automatically populate when certain conditions are not met, this will help prompt the user to check the information populated is correct and relevant.

- Step 1 – “Establishment Identification”: Enter all establishment details and select Establishment Type from drop down. All fields are mandatory and needed to identify the school, as is selecting the date in which the tool is populated, to make sure that the sixth form stay on dates are updated correctly.
- Step 2 – “Establishment age range”: From the drop down select the Minimum and Maximum age range based on your school. All these fields are mandatory and needed to calculate Net Capacity.
- Step 3 – “Buildings information”: Enter the number of sites, in most cases it is one, but can be more. Enter the “Total site area,” which is usually available in the school’s data or site plans. This is important for the basic workplace calculation.
- Step 4 – “Main admission details”: Enter all admission information on year groups and number of students as needed.
- Step 5 – “Sixth form stay on rate”: Enter all relevant Sixth form admissions details if applicable, otherwise leave as blank or zero.

- Step 6 – “Nursery admission details”: Enter all relevant Nursery admissions details if applicable, otherwise leave as blank or 0¹⁴.
- Step 7 – “SEN Admissions”: Enter all relevant SEN admissions details if applicable, otherwise leave as blank or zero.
- Step 8 – “Comments”

80. Please provide further details here on the details given in steps 4 to 7. This can be used to understand Schools with special cases and for tracking purposes as well.

81. If the assessment form is being completed before details of pupil numbers are known (for instance in a new school or one that does not currently have a sixth form), then proposed or projected pupil numbers should be entered here.

Convert Primary Data

82. Part two is only applicable under two conditions; firstly, if the school is a Primary school and secondly if you have old data from the original 2001 tool. The “Convert Primary Data” tab allows the conversion of that original room data into something usable in the next step of the Net Capacity assessment.

This step allows the use of old data and therefore saves time, while also allowing any additions or changes to the data if needed.

Step 1 – PREVIOUS FORMAT:

Copy data from step 1 to Step 4 and paste the data as values into all the columns labelled under “PREVIOUS FORMAT” (columns A to U). Pasting as values can be done by highlighting the data and then pressing the following keys: Ctrl + C (to copy) and then Ctrl + Alt + V to paste as values.

Step 2 – CONVERTED FORMAT:

Columns X to AR will be auto populated, such that the old data is translated into the new format ready for using in the next step of the process. Columns AE and AR assumes the room type and Status based on the title/name of the room in the school. Additionally, this can be reviewed and changed in the next step once pasted into the “Room details” tab.

Step 3 – Paste data to room details tab:

¹⁴ If the admission year is Reception in a school with a policy of ‘rising fives’ (i.e. it takes smaller numbers in the first two terms of Reception), the maximum number in that year should be taken as the admission number

Now that the data has been converted into a new format you can paste over the data into the “Room Details” tab by pasting all the columns and data as values. All columns will match, therefore no need for aligning (copy and paste as values from columns X to AS). Now the data can be changed if needed and new rooms/buildings added if needed, based on any changes to the school since the last survey.

Room Details

The “Room Details” tab is the part of the process where information is input on every room within the school. The “Guidance” tab contains definitions which can assist when trying to understand room uses and room types as well as other definitions. The room details tab has a limit of 2000 rooms. The columns highlighted in grey contain calculations and do not need to be manually populated.

Step 1:

1. In the column named “Block Reference / External” (Column B), select a building from the drop-down list. If the area exists outside a building, then please select “OUT.” This block reference field is used to match with CDC block naming conventions; it is not mandatory for the NCA calculations.
2. In the column named “Block Name” (column C), input the actual name of the school building as referred to by the school/establishment, and which may be useful for tracking purposes.
3. In the column named “Floor” (Column D), select a floor number or name for the dropdown list.
4. In the column named “Room” (Column E), input the room number using a logical room reference.
5. Following the input of this data, the Column named “Surveyor Room Reference” (Column F) automatically creates a reference for the room by the amalgamation of the floor and room number, and is highlighted in grey, so no input is required here.
6. In the column named “Establishment Room Reference” (Column G), input the actual room reference as referred to by the school/establishment. This may also help for tracking purposes.
7. In the column named “Establishment Room Name” (Column H), input the actual room name as referred to by the school/Establishment. This may also help for tracking purposes.
8. In the column named “Room Type” (Column I), select the room type via a drop-down menu. This drop-down menu depends on the school/establishment type

selected in the “Establishment details” tab. Please refer to the "Guidance" tab for definitions on different room types. Room Type is used in the calculations to determine the workplaces. The type of each space should be chosen based on its physical attributes, as described in paragraph 38.

9. For all room types apart from ‘non-net,’ in the column named “Net Area” (Column J), enter the area of the room in this field. This field is mandatory for Net Capacity calculations.

10. For all ‘non net’ rooms, in the column named “Non-net Area” (Column K), enter the area of the room in this field.

11. In the column named “Net Area Validations” (Column L), this is an automated field that will provide validation feedback based on the Net area values input received. Please pay attention to the validations provided and double check that the correct areas are placed in the correct area types. This field is highlighted in grey, so no input is required here. A validation does not automatically indicate an error, it shows the values are outside of normal ranges, but may still be correct. It is used to prompt a further check by the user.

12. In the column named " Unusable as Basic Workplaces" (Column M), select from a drop-down menu, which lists reasons as to why the room is potentially unusable. Further information is available on the “Guidance” tab as to why a room is deemed unusable. If the option “Other” is selected, then it is important to provide further detail in the “Notes” column (Column R).

Step 2:

1. In the column named “Height of Room” (Column N), enter the height of the room, in this field. This field is not mandatory.

2. In the column named “No. of sinks” (Column O), input the number of sinks available in that room. This field is not mandatory.

3. In the column named “Accessibility” (Column P), Select from the drop-down menu (options: “Yes”/” No”) whether the room is wheelchair accessible or not. This field is not mandatory.

4. In the column named “Daylight provision” (Column Q), input any daylight provisions. This is particularly important if “Daylight provision” was selected as an Unusable reason earlier. This field is not mandatory.

5. In the column named “Notes” (Column R), input any helpful notes as well as reasons when selecting “other” as highlighted in step 1.

Step 3:

Workplaces are the unit of measurement used in the capacity calculation and are described in paragraphs 36 to 44.

1. In the column named Basic Workplaces (Calculated) (Column S), the number of basic workplaces is calculated based on the area provided. This field is highlighted in grey, so no input is required.

2. In the column named Resource Workplaces (Calculated) (Column T), the number of resource workplaces are calculated based on the area provided. This field is highlighted in grey, so no input is required here.

Step 4:

1. In the column named “Room Use” (Column U), select the room use via a drop-down menu. This drop-down menu depends on the school/establishment type selected in the “Establishment details” tab and the Room Type selected in Column I.

2. In the column named “Status” (Column V), select the room status via a drop-down menu. The definitions of each room status are available in the “Guidance” tab. Select blank option for rooms that are not needed. Paragraphs 12 and 59 to 71 describe the statuses in more detail. Spaces that are none of the above, including staff rooms, storerooms, and other ancillary teaching areas, should not be marked and this column should be left blank.

3. In the column named “Type of space validation” (Column W), this is an automated field that will provide validation feedback based on the Room type values received. This field is highlighted in grey, so no input is required here.

83. Steps 1 to 3 may be conducted by independent building surveyors, or data collectors. Responsible bodies and schools are responsible for designating room use and room status at step 4. These will usually match current use. Rooms not given a status in the Room Details may be used by the school for any purpose, without the capacity calculation being affected.

Net Capacity

84. All Net Capacity details/ calculations are provided in the “Net Capacity” tab. No input is required here. All information in this tab is based on the data provided in the “Establishment details” and “Room Details” tabs. A definition of each calculation is provided in a box on the right-hand side of the figures.

Unusual Situations

85. If a school is on a split site, where there are buildings accommodating registration classes on two or more sites where pupils would have to use a public highway to travel between sites, the number of sites should be entered in the Establishment Details.
86. The total site area must be entered in the Establishment Details to determine if the school is on a small site, (where the total site area is smaller than an area equivalent to the minimum team game playing field area required by the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999).
87. In schools with more than one normal year of admission, the number of years that those pupils admitted are expected to be in the school should be entered in the Establishment Details. The number of additional pupils it is intended to admit from outside the school for each additional normal year of admission should be entered in the Establishment Details.
88. If the school has a separate agreed admission number for post-16 pupils, it should be entered as an additional normal year of admission in the Establishment Details. For the purposes of calculating admission numbers, it is assumed that such pupils are expected to be at the school for two years (even if a few stays on for three). If it is not intended to admit into the sixth form from outside the school, as in most cases, these boxes will not apply.
89. Some schools share their accommodation with other sixth forms. For the purposes of indicating admission numbers, the full-time equivalent number of sixth form pupils should be used for both those staying on and any further admissions¹⁵
90. If a change in age range is envisaged, the net capacity of the school can often be re-assessed without re-measuring. The Establishment Details and step 4 of the Room Details will need to be altered, but steps 1 to 3 may remain unless the school is moving from primary to secondary status.

¹⁵ Any change to sixth form details will only alter the net capacity within the flexibility allowed by the capacity calculation. An average stay-on rate is calculated so that sixth form details should only be changed if there is a significant, long-term increase or decrease in the size of the sixth form.

Annexe A Definitions of Types of Spaces

91. This annexe defines the types of space that should be designated at step 2 of the Room Details. It lists typical spaces that are covered by the type of space, except 'general' and describes their physical attributes. Any space not described below should be designated as 'general'.

- General – General - Enclosed spaces which are daylit, reasonably ventilated and heated (unless Unusable as Basic Workplaces), have electrical and IT servicing, 1 or no sinks, 1 or no walls with fitted furniture (e.g. benching) and have minimal fixed equipment.
- Open plan/semi-open general – General - Open-plan or semi-open spaces (i.e. open to main circulation route or other spaces) which are reasonably lit, ventilated, and heated, have electrical and IT servicing, 1 or no sinks, 1 or no walls with fitted furniture (e.g. benching) and have minimal fixed equipment.
- Fitted – Fitted - Any spaces which are reasonably ventilated and heated (unless Unusable as Basic Workplaces), have electrical and IT servicing, no sinks and 2 or more walls with fitted furniture (e.g. benching); e.g. ICT-rich rooms, music rooms with fixed benching for keyboards or secondary school libraries/ LRCs with fixed shelving.
- Light Practical (Science) – Light Practical - Any spaces which are daylit, reasonably ventilated and heated (unless Unusable as Basic Workplaces), have electrical, IT and wet servicing, 1 or more sinks and 2 or more walls with fitted furniture suitable for science (e.g. benching with gas taps); e.g. science studio/ demonstration, science laboratories, science prep rooms.
- Light Practical (Other) – Light Practical - Any spaces which are daylit, reasonably ventilated and heated (unless Unusable as Basic Workplaces), have electrical, IT and wet servicing, 1 or more sinks and 2 or more walls with fitted furniture (e.g. benching), e.g. art rooms, graphics or textiles rooms, hair and beauty salons or primary practical spaces.
- Heavy Practical (Workshops) – Heavy Practical - Any spaces which are daylit, reasonably ventilated and heated (unless Unusable as Basic Workplaces), have electrical and wet servicing, 1 or more sinks and fixed equipment, often with extract facilities, in a workshop environment (e.g. design technology, engineering and construction workshops, prep rooms for workshops, CAD/CAM and heat treatment areas).
- Heavy Practical (Clean) – Heavy Practical - Any spaces which are daylit, reasonably ventilated and heated (unless Unusable as Basic Workplaces), have electrical and wet servicing, 1 or more sinks and fixed equipment or 2 or more walls of fitted furniture and equipment (F&E), in a clean, hygienic environment (e.g. food room, catering training rooms, clinical or massage spaces with beds, fitness/exercise rooms).

- Large and Performance – Large and Performance - Enclosed spaces with large volume (e.g. over 3.5m ceilings) which are reasonably ventilated and heated, have electrical servicing and may have fittings to suit PE or performance (e.g. sports halls, gymnasia, swimming pools, halls (including any stage area), dining halls (not smaller social areas), drama, dance or media studios, atria and malls.
- Storage – Fitted - Enclosed spaces with minimal daylight and servicing, usually with fitted shelving or racking, not occupied and suitable for storage of teaching resources, work in progress, furniture, sports, or other equipment. Not including preparation spaces (e.g. in science and design technology).
- Non-net - Enclosed spaces with minimal daylight and servicing, usually with fitted shelving or racking, not occupied and suitable for storage of teaching resources, work in progress, furniture, sports, or other equipment. Not including preparation spaces (e.g. in science and design technology)

92. The **number of workplaces** for each type of space must be at least 1. It can be calculated using the following formulae, rounded up to the nearest whole number:

- general spaces up to 90m²: $(\text{area} \div 1.5) - 4$
- general spaces above 90m²: $(\text{area} \div 2.5) + 20$
- fitted spaces up to 120m²: $(\text{area} \div 2.0) - 4$
- fitted spaces above 120m²: $(\text{area} \div 3.0) + 20$
- light practical spaces: $(\text{area} \div 2.5) - 4$
- heavy practical spaces: $(\text{area} \div 3.5) - 5$
- large and performance spaces less than 75m²: $(\text{area} \div 2.5) - 4$
- large and performance spaces of 75m² or more: 90m²: $(\text{area} \div 12.5) + 20$



Department
for Education

© Crown copyright 2025

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

About this publication:

enquiries <https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>
download www.gov.uk/government/publications

Follow us on X: [@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)

Connect with us on Facebook: facebook.com/educationgovuk