

## The Highland Council

### Education, Children and Adult Services Committee 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	ECAS 48/14

## Primary School Capacity Modelling and Roll Pressures in Inverness

### Report by Director of Care and Learning

#### Summary

This report advises of the work that has been undertaken in relation to establishing a consistent approach to determining the capacity of primary schools across Scotland and outlines the associated methodology that is recommended for use by Highland Council.

It also summarises the factors that need to be taken into account in relation to establishing future capital investment priorities and identifies some of the issues affecting primary school capacity in Inverness, and options for future consideration.

## 1 Background

- 1.1 The Education Culture and Sport Committee approved a framework for determining primary school capacity figures on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009.
- 1.2 The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education published a report in April 2013 that set out various recommendations to the Scottish Government and Local Authorities. One of the recommendations was that “a consistent approach to school capacity modelling should be agreed between the Scottish Government and Local Authorities”. At that time, the most recent Scottish Government guidance regarding school capacity had been issued in December 2004.
- 1.3 In response, the Scottish Government agreed to review the guidance on determining school capacities and to work closely with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland, Local Authorities and others to develop a consistent approach that could be applied to school capacity modelling in Scotland.
- 1.4 All Scottish Local Authorities were invited to be involved in the preparation and provision of this guidance. Highland Council accepted this invitation and the Estate Strategy Manager was involved in the consultation process.
- 1.5 It was generally agreed during the consultation that providing guidance on calculating Secondary School capacities was not a priority at this time. However, it is recommended that all Scottish Local Authorities consider a consistent approach to calculating the capacity of Secondary Schools and seek to work together to develop this by 2016.
- 1.6 The guidance document “Determining Primary School Capacity” was published by the Scottish Government on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014. It is recommended that Local Authorities, if they choose to do so, implement this guidance from January 2015 for the start of the new school session in August 2015 where possible.

## 2 Existing Policy and Legislation

- 2.1 The current class size maxima as governed by legislation are listed below.
- Primary 1 – 25 pupils
  - Primary 2 and 3 – 30 pupils
  - Primary 4 to 7 – 33 pupils
  - Composite classes (with pupils from more than one year group) – 25 pupils
- 2.2 It is understood the Scottish Government remains committed to continuing with progressive reductions in class sizes and improved pupil-teacher ratios and will consult widely before introducing any new statutory requirements. At this point in time there is no firm date for such a consultation exercise but the Scottish Government is actively considering the next steps.
- 2.3 As well as the class size maxima, Local Authorities must take account of a range of other relevant legislation, standards and good practice in determining the accommodation to be provided in schools of all sizes.
- 2.4 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, sets out certain circumstances in which an authority can refuse a placing request.
- 2.5 The staffing budget entitlement for Primary Schools is determined by the current Teaching Entitlements which are based on roll numbers in a series of bandings.

### **3 The Purpose and Scope of the Guidance**

- 3.1 A clear, consistent basis for calculating capacity will assist in the following.
- Forward planning and future investment decisions
  - Assessing curricular and organisational needs
  - Determining if placing requests should be refused or granted
  - Calculation of performance indicators
  - Informing consultations on proposed changes to the school estate
  - Taking account of current Scottish Government policy and future changes
- 3.2 While it remains a Local Authority responsibility to choose how to calculate capacity, it is recommended that the guidance is adopted by all Authorities. However, a degree of flexibility remains. For example, the Scottish Government does not have a recommended occupancy level for schools. Also, it is up to a Local Authority to decide how many General Purpose areas a school should have.
- 3.3 It has been agreed that there should be two measures of primary school capacity.
- **Planning Capacity** – a theoretical measure of the total number of pupils that could be physically accommodated in a school, based on the number of teaching spaces, the size of those spaces and the class size maxima.
  - **Working Capacity** – a measure of the number of places that are available in a particular school session based on the number and distribution of classes. The Working Capacity may vary from year to year and can at times be significantly different from the Planning Capacity.
- 3.4 Working Capacity is relatively simple to calculate in that it is dictated by the number of classes required and the size of individual year groups. However, in order to calculate Planning Capacity, a methodology is required that takes account of factors such as appropriate occupancy levels, the preferred number of General Purpose rooms and the extent of other ancillary accommodation.

## **4 Proposed Highland Council Approach**

- 4.1 **Appendix 1** shows how the Planning Capacity for an example 13 classroom school would be calculated. It is based on the distribution of classes required to accommodate an average year group size that would result in an occupancy level of around 95%. In this instance the Planning Capacity would be 367. All of the rooms are assumed to be large enough to accommodate up to 33 pupils. Where schools have some rooms that are smaller in area, this may result in a lower Planning Capacity. It also assumes that a school of this size should have two General Purpose rooms.
- 4.2 The current policy would have produced a Planning Capacity of 429 as it would have been based on 13 classrooms each capable of accommodating 33 pupils. This is because the current approach does not take full account of the impact of lower maximum class sizes for Primary 1 to 3 and for composite classes.
- 4.3 **Appendix 2** takes the notional example in appendix 1 a stage further, by then applying future school roll projections to the capacity. This shows that it may be possible to accommodate additional classes by using General Purpose rooms as classrooms for a period of 5 years. It may also be possible in certain sessions to accommodate a higher number of pupils than the upper limit of the Teaching Entitlement banding for 13 classes allows.
- 4.4 While the Planning Capacity figure can be used to give a general indication of school rolls that are likely to approach or exceed that figure, a detailed analysis of the roll projections would be required to assess the actual impact of a rising roll in a particular session. There may also be some sessions in which a different number of classes would be required due to factors such as irregular year group sizes, fewer or more composite classes or relatively higher pupil numbers in Primary 1 to 3.
- 4.5 The Scottish Government provides guidance to local authorities on a number of core facts which are reported on annually. These aim to establish a baseline picture of the current school estate and to provide a way to measure the benefits of long term investment. The three core facts that are particularly relevant in determining capital investment priorities are Condition, Suitability and Sufficiency.
- 4.6 The approach outlined in this report would help to identify schools that may be considered as priorities for capital investment in the future with regard to the Sufficiency (capacity) core fact. However, this cannot be done in isolation and account would have to be taken of Condition and Suitability as well as a wide range of other initiatives and pressures (including Additional Support Needs, Early Learning and Childcare, Gaelic Medium Education and School Meals).

## **5 Inverness City Primary Schools**

- 5.1 This report sets out some emerging issues for consideration, as a result of updated capacity modelling for primary schools in Inverness. The purpose of this report is to highlight some of the further work required to further explore these matters, and the types of solution which may require future consideration by Committee.
- 5.2 Members will be aware of the school roll pressures that have been experienced across a number of primary schools in Inverness over a number of years, and led to some of the extensions and other solutions already in place. As a result of updated

capacity modelling, it is likely that a number of schools in Inverness will exceed their Planning Capacity in the near future and in some cases the roll may also continue to rise thereafter.

- 5.3 It is also apparent that a new primary school will be required to be built at some point and there is a site reserved at Ness Castle. A detailed examination of the roll projections is required to assist in determining when the new school would be required and what additional overall capacity would be required in order to meet future demand. This work would be undertaken as part of the wider Sustainable School Estate Review and this would allow the outcomes to be taken into account in any future review of the Council's capital programme
- 5.4 Extensions to some of the affected schools may not be recommended due to the core accommodation not being suitable to support a significant increase in pupil numbers. In these instances, it may be necessary to accommodate some short to medium term increases in the roll by using General Purpose rooms as classrooms or by bringing temporary accommodation on to the school campus. Where it is likely that the Planning Capacity will continue to be exceeded into the longer term, then it may be necessary to consider capping the roll and refusing placing requests where appropriate.
- 5.5 There is a particular issue at Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, as it is anticipated that future demand is likely to exceed the number of available places. However, the core of the school was designed to support a single stream school and the ancillary accommodation is not sufficient to support a larger amount of pupils (this would be particularly the case in respect of dining facilities). In the short term, consideration may have to be given to moving classes off site. In the longer term, if it proves impractical to construct an annexe adjacent to the school, then it may be that consideration should be given to building a new school on a different site that could in time expand into a two stream school. This would obviously need to be considered in conjunction with the wider review of the pressures across Inverness and the possible timescale for providing a new school at Ness Castle.
- 5.6 As stated earlier, at this time the purpose of this report is simply to highlight some of the issues which will require to be considered going forward. There will be further work undertaken in relation to roll projections and capacity modelling, and discussions will then take place at Ward Level in relation to the options to be considered. A report will be taken to the December City of Inverness Area Committee to brief that Committee on these matters, and indicate a timeline for Ward level discussions.

## **6 Implications**

- 6.1 Resource – The work that has been carried out to date and that will be required in the future is within the framework of the ongoing Sustainable School Estate Review process.
- 6.2 Legal – A consistent approach to school capacity modelling will enable the Council to identify measures required to meet its statutory obligations.
- 6.3 Equalities – The methodology will take account of the need for appropriate accommodation to be provided for pupils with additional support needs.

- 6.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever – The methodology will be taken into account when planning major capital investment projects.
- 6.5 Risk – A consistent approach will allow the Council to identify any relevant risks as part of the future capital investment decision making process.
- 6.6 Gaelic – The review process in Inverness has clear implications for enhanced Gaelic-medium provision and for provision at Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis.
- 6.7 Rural – One of the aims of the guidance is to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the School Estate.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to:

- 1) Agree that Highland Council will adopt the Scottish Government guidance on Determining Primary School Capacity;
- 2) Agree to adopt the recommended approach described in Section 4 in relation to determining Planning Capacity and identifying the schools that are likely to exceed this figure at any point over a 15 year period based on the roll projections;
- 3) Note that consideration may be given in future to the application of the Primary School Teaching Entitlements in instances where schools would be able to accommodate a higher number of pupils in a particular session;
- 4) Note that consideration will be given to capping school rolls and refusing placing requests, where deemed appropriate, from January 2015 onwards;
- 5) Note that any short to medium term requirements for additional classes in schools will continue to be managed where necessary by either using general purpose areas as classrooms or providing temporary accommodation;
- 6) Agree that work should continue in analysing the pressures affecting schools in Inverness in the future as part of the wider Sustainable School Estate Review in order to allow the outcomes to be taken into account in any future review of the Council's capital programme;
- 7) Agree that further consideration be given to the measures required in relation to the immediate pressures affecting Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis as well as the longer term requirements for additional accommodation in order to meet the anticipated future demand for places.
- 8) Note that there will be further discussion at City of Inverness Area Committee and at Ward Business Meeting to progress discussions on the Inverness Primary School issues.

**Designation:** Director of Care and Learning

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014

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### **Background Papers**

Determining Primary School Capacity – Link to Document on the Scottish Government Website - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/Buildings/commitments>

## 13 Classroom School - Notional

## Optimum

Accommodation			
Room Ref.	Room Area (m2)	Maximum Capacity	Planning Capacity
1	63.000	33	25
2	63.000	33	25
3	63.000	33	25
4	63.000	33	30
5	63.000	33	30
6	63.000	33	25
7	63.000	33	33
8	63.000	33	25
9	63.000	33	33
10	63.000	33	25
11	63.000	33	33
12	63.000	33	25
13	63.000	33	33
GP	63.000	33	0
GP	63.000	33	0
Total			367

Occupancy (Based on Planning Capacity)	95.4%
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No. of Classes	13
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Average Year Size	50.0
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Optimum Class Distribution			
Class	Working Capacity	Pupils	Spare
P1	25	23	2
P1	25	23	2
P1/P2	25	25	0
P2	30	29	1
P3	30	29	1
P3/P4	25	23	2
P4	33	32	1
P4/P5	25	23	2
P5	33	32	1
P5/P6	25	23	2
P6	33	32	1
P6/P7	25	24	1
P7	33	32	1
GP			
GP			
Totals	367	350	17

Optimum Pupil Distribution							
P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Totals
23							23
23							23
4	21						25
	29						29
		29					29
		21	2				23
			32				32
			16	7			23
				32			32
				11	12		23
					32		32
					6	18	24
						32	32
50	50	50	50	50	50	50	350

**13 Classroom School - Notional**

**Summary**

Classrooms in School	13
GP Rooms in School	2
Potential Teaching Spaces	15

Planning Capacity (Based on 13 Classrooms)	367
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	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Projected Roll	325	330	335	340	345	355	365	380	395	380	365	355	345	345	345
Occupancy (Based on Planning Capacity)	88.6%	89.9%	91.3%	92.6%	94.0%	96.7%	99.5%	103.5%	107.6%	103.5%	99.5%	96.7%	94.0%	94.0%	94.0%
No. of Classes	12	12	12	12	13	13	13	14	14	14	13	13	13	13	13
Teaching Entitlement	12	12	13	13	13	13	14	14	15	14	14	13	13	13	13

Key	
	Not all classrooms in use
	All classrooms in use
	1 GP Room in use
	2 GP Rooms in use
	Additional teaching space required