



Department  
for Education

# **Area guidelines for SEND and alternative provision**

**Including special schools, alternative  
provision, specially resourced provision and  
units**

**Building bulletin 104**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out non-statutory area guidelines for buildings (Part A) and to provide guidance on grounds (Part B) for ages 3 to 19 at the following educational settings: special schools, alternative provision (AP), specially resourced provision (SRP) and Units. The area guidelines supersede the recommended areas in Building Bulletin (BB) 102. The guidance does not cover hospital schools although some of the areas will be applicable, nor does it cover the residential facilities that are part of some special schools<sup>1</sup>.

The document aims to assist those involved in briefing for and designing new buildings, refurbishment or conversion projects, including sponsors and architects. It will also be of interest to headteachers, governors and others who need advice on the appropriate amount of space for teaching and learning or for support activities.

In line with increasing choice and opportunity in state funded education, these guidelines will not necessarily have to be met in every case and should always be applied flexibly in light of particular circumstances.

The document is applicable to a wide range of needs and different educational settings. The section Understanding SEND outlines these settings, the needs they typically accommodate and how this impacts on the area guidelines. It is important to understand the nature of an individual setting and its particular approach when establishing the range and size of indoor and outdoor areas

### **Making the best use of the guidelines**

Because special schools, AP, SRP and Units vary far more than mainstream schools, providers should make full use of the recommended area ranges in this document.

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<sup>1</sup> Residential special schools: national minimum standards should be referred to for any special boarding accommodation.

The area guidance is in two parts:

- Part A sets out building area recommendations for overall categories of space (for example basic teaching area) and also for individual types of spaces. It includes graphs and formulae to show the recommended area ranges of these spaces.
- Part B sets out the area recommendations for categories of external space at special schools. It also gives broad guidance on the external spaces in AP, SRP and Units.

This guidance can be used to estimate the area needed for new educational settings, as well as the extra building area that may be needed for settings increasing in size. When considering how existing buildings will be used, it is important to recognise that the proportion of net to gross area will vary depending on the design and to identify any 'supplementary area' needed (page 67).

The Glossary defines educational and building acronyms and other terms used in the document. The References section lists documents and organisations referred to in the document.

# Understanding SEND

## Broad areas of need

There is a wide spectrum of special educational need (SEN) and many pupils have inter-related needs. The SEND Code of Practice<sup>2</sup> describes four broad areas of need as below. Text in italics points to the possible environmental implications of these needs.

### Communication and interaction

Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have difficulty in communicating with others. They may have difficulty with one, some or all of the different aspects of speech, language or social communication at different times of their lives. This area includes those children and young people with an autistic spectrum disorder who also are likely to have difficulties with social interaction, and with language, communication and imagination, which can impact on how they relate to others.

*Some pupils with autism need an easily understood environment with a low level of distraction and sensory stimulus to reduce anxiety or distress. They may need a safe place to calm down and may benefit from having access to a safe, sheltered, outdoor space.*

### Cognition and learning

Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, including moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) - where children are likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and have associated difficulties with mobility and communication - through to profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Children with PMLD are likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment. This range of needs also includes specific learning difficulties (SpLD) which encompasses a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.

*Pupils who have these needs may need additional support in the classroom or in a smaller quiet place. They may use specialist equipment.*

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<sup>2</sup> The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabled children and young people.

## Social, emotional and mental health difficulties

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.

*Pupils who have these needs may need extra space to move around and to ensure a comfortable distance between themselves and others. They may need to be able to withdraw from their group, possibly to a sheltered outdoor area. Some may take extreme risks or have outbursts and need a safe place to calm down. Some may need behaviour support or counselling which should take place in a quiet supportive environment.*

## Sensory and/or physical needs

Some children and young people require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided in a mainstream setting. This includes pupils with visual impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI) who are likely to require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning or habilitation support. It also includes those with a severe physical disability (PD).

*Some pupils with sensory impairments may need extra space and additional 'clues' to help them negotiate their environment independently.*

*Pupils with physical disabilities may use mobility aids including wheelchairs, standing frames, or horizontal learning stations, all of which can be bulky and require storage. Whether they are able to move around independently or need support, there should be sufficient space for them to travel alongside their friends. Accessible personal care facilities should be conveniently sited. Many will need specialist support (for example mobility training or physiotherapy).*

## Types of educational setting

Most pupils with SEN and disabilities are able to attend mainstream schools with school-based support (for example those with dyslexia or PD). Some pupils receive additional specialist support on their mainstream school site (see SRP and Units below) and a few attend special schools. Some pupils attend alternative provision because they have



health or behavioural difficulties that cannot be met at a mainstream school. Some of these pupils also have SEN. These settings are described further below.

## Special schools

All pupils in special schools have education, health and care (EHC) plans or statements of SEN<sup>3</sup>. The number of places in a special school usually ranges from around 50 (often catering for a broad range of needs including pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)) to over 250 (often for ambulant pupils with moderate learning difficulties); most schools have around 100 pupils. Special schools (especially for non-ambulant pupils) often cater for all ages. Primary schools for pupils with behavioural difficulties are unusual and usually cater for key stage (KS) 2 only. Special schools vary widely in the curriculum and programmes of study they offer, in some the curriculum is mainstream while in others it can be quite different. Life skills and developing personal independence plays a big part.

Although special schools cater for varying needs that can change over time, they can be divided broadly into those that cater predominantly for ambulant pupils and those that are specifically set up to accommodate pupils with PD and PMLD (as well as other needs) . For simplicity this document refers to the first as '**ambulant**' special schools and the second as '**non-ambulant**' special schools.

**Ambulant** special schools typically provide for one of the following:

- a range of predominantly ambulant needs (moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and autism) with pupils taught together in groups of 8 to 12; there are often a few places for pupils with greater needs such as those associated with severe autism or social emotional and mental health difficulties who are taught in smaller groups with a higher staff to pupil ratio;
- severe social emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties where pupils require greater personal space to avoid conflict and have the capability to follow a curriculum similar to mainstream; pupils are taught in groups of 6 to 8;
- significant difficulties associated with autism (ASD) where pupils require greater personal space and high levels of adult supervision, pupils are taught in groups of 6 to 8.

**Non-ambulant** special schools typically provide for one of the following:

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<sup>3</sup> EHCPs are gradually replacing statements of special educational need.

- a broad range of needs with 10% to 60% of pupils being non-ambulant (requiring specialist equipment and facilities); pupils with MLD, SLD/autism are taught in groups of 8 to 10 and pupils with PMLD or severe autism are taught in groups of 4 to 6;
- a broad range of needs with 60% to 90%+ of pupils being non-ambulant (requiring specialist equipment and facilities); all pupils are taught in groups of 4 to 6.

In special schools there is often more flexibility across the key stages than in mainstream schools; pupils may be placed according to their level of functioning, rather than age. Where a special school caters for a broad range of needs, pupils are likely to be grouped to suit their needs. For example, those with profound learning difficulties, who need intensive stimulation, are likely to be grouped separately from pupils with autism, who need low sensory stimulus. Pupils who present with boisterous or aggressive behaviours may at times be taught separately from those who are vulnerable.

## **Alternative provision (AP)**

AP accommodates pupils who cannot attend mainstream school for a variety of reasons including exclusion, or mental or physical health difficulties. AP provides an alternative education which is often on a temporary basis until a pupil can return to mainstream education or move to a special school, although for some pupils it may be a longer term solution. Pupils sometimes also attend AP part time, spending the rest of their time at a nearby school, further education (FE) college or other provider to use specialist facilities such as for vocational courses.

Although the range of needs catered for in AP varies widely they often fall into one of the following types:

- pupils with mental and physical health difficulties including anorexia, obesity or school-phobia;
- pupils with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties who may have been excluded from their mainstream school (severe difficulties of this type may be accommodated in a special school).

AP may also provide for pregnant pupils.

For simplicity this document refers to AP that is primarily set up for pupils with health difficulties as AP (health) and AP primarily accommodating pupils with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties as AP (behaviour).

## **Specially resourced provision (SRP) and Designated Units (Units)**

SRP and Units provide additional specialist facilities on a mainstream school site for a small number of pupils, typically less than 30, who usually have EHC plans or statements of special need. SRP and Units tend to provide for a specific need such as speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), hearing or visual impairment (HI/ VI) or autism. Less commonly they may provide for pupils with a physical disability (PD) or behavioural difficulty. SRP and Units vary widely, often reflecting the local approach to inclusion.

There is a difference between SRP and Units. In SRP pupils spend most of their time (usually well over 50% of their timetable) in mainstream classes. They only attend the SRP facilities for individual support, to learn a specific skill (for example braille for VI pupils), to receive medical or therapeutic support (for PD pupils) or to access specialist equipment. The facilities can be in a suite or dispersed throughout the school. Pupils in a Unit spend the majority of their time there, only attending mainstream classes for a few lessons, such as PE, for assembly or for lunch. Pupils in both settings are on the roll of the mainstream school.

In practice the difference between SRP and a Unit is often less defined so that careful briefing at the earliest stage is essential to ensure that a suitable range of spaces is provided. In both SRP and Units the facilities are additional to those normally provided in a mainstream school to support special needs, such as a SEN resource room.

## **How SEND impacts on area**

Special schools, AP, SRP and Units all require more area per pupil place than mainstream schools because:

- pupils are taught in smaller groups, averaging around 8 to 12 and as low as 4 to 6 where pupils need extensive support;
- staff to pupil ratios are higher, particularly in a special school where 2 or 3 teaching assistants or support staff work alongside the teacher or give support in a separate space;
- multi-agency meetings are common during the school day requiring confidential meeting rooms (these can involve several people in special schools). These areas can also be used for the delivery of individual intervention and therapy sessions

The following apply in some settings:

- pupils who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids need more movement space and space to store their equipment when not in use (some pupils may use up to three different pieces of mobility equipment during the school day for medical and functional reasons)<sup>4</sup>;
- disabled pupils need facilities for physiotherapy (which can require specialist equipment such as a hoist) as well as specialist changing facilities;
- pupils who are easily agitated often need more personal space around them;
- pupils in special schools and AP need individual teaching, counselling and therapy, requiring a range of small spaces;
- visiting professionals, such as speech and language therapists, need access to a desk space and storage in addition to the teaching areas.

## How to apply the formulae for buildings

The recommended area in square metres (m<sup>2</sup>) for various categories of space (such as basic teaching) and individual types of spaces, or rooms, are shown on graphs and based on simple formulae. All formulae use a 'base' area and an area per pupil place; in most cases this means the number of places planned rather than the number on roll because this can vary year by year. In the case of the area of spaces (figure 15), this is the maximum group size, or number of 'workplaces' in the room.

The graphs and formulae can be used to check the area needed for a given number of pupil places, either for the setting as a whole or for categories of space. Rather than set specific areas for a particular number of pupils the graphs show zones of area in a given category of space, with the top of the zone being the recommended maximum area for the category and the bottom being the recommended minimum area. Further explanation as this applies to net (building) area is given on page 19.

Because special schools, AP, SRP and Units vary greatly it is important to make use of the whole area range in this guidance and not to assume the minimum (or maximum) will automatically apply.

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<sup>4</sup> This area need is over and above the space allowed in Building Bulletin 103 for mainstream schools.

## Applying the formulae to different settings

The formulae for special schools, AP, SRP and Units are divided into broad types, for simplicity, that reflect their area needs. A formula range is given for each type to reflect the variation in schools. This is explained below and summarised in figure 1.

**Special schools.** The ambulant formulae apply to any special school where there is little or no need for specialist physiotherapy, medical or personal care facilities (although there may be a small number of pupils using mobility aids). The non-ambulant formulae apply to a special school with a range of such facilities to meet the needs of pupils with PD and/or PMLD.

**AP.** The AP (health) formulae apply where pupils have mental or physical health difficulties. The AP (behaviour) formulae apply where pupils have behavioural difficulties. If the AP accommodates pupils with a wide range of difficulties including behavioural the AP (behaviour) formulae will apply.

**SRP.** The SRP (ambulant) formulae apply to any SRP except where provision is specifically intended for pupils with PD. SRP (PD) refers to provision where pupils learn alongside their mainstream peers, only attending the SRP to use medical or therapy facilities. It is assumed that pupils with PMLD require more extensive facilities than would be provided in SRP.

**Units.** The Unit (ambulant) formulae apply to any Unit except one designed specifically for ambulant pupils with autism for which the Unit (ambulant - ASD) formulae apply. Units for SEMH are rare but where they occur the formulae for Unit (ambulant - ASD) can be used. Although Units for pupils with PMLD/PD are very rare the table on page 86 (Annex A) gives minimum formulae for a Unit (non-ambulant).

The formulae for both SRP and Units represent the area that is additional to that provided in the main school because pupils spend some time in each place.

Setting	Typical pupil needs	BB104 formulae to use
<b>Special schools</b>	A range including MLD, SLD, autism (MLD/SLD/ASD)	Special school (ambulant)
	Severe social emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH)	
	Severe autism (ASD)	
	A broad range including MLD, SLD, autism, PMLD with 10% to 60% non-ambulant	Special school (non-ambulant)
	A broad range including MLD, SLD, autism, PMLD, with 60% to 90% non-ambulant	
<b>AP</b>	Mental and physical health difficulties	AP (health)
	Behavioural, emotional or social difficulties	AP (behaviour)
	Wide range of difficulties including behavioural	AP (behaviour)
<b>SRP</b>	HI, SLCN	SRP (ambulant)
	VI	
	PD	SRP (PD)
<b>Unit</b>	HI, SLCN	Unit (ambulant)
	VI	
	Autism (ASD)	Unit (ambulant - ASD)
	A broad range including MLD, SLD, autism, PMLD, with 10% to 60% non-ambulant	Unit (non-ambulant)

**Figure 1: Table showing how the formulae apply to typical educational settings.**

These do not cover every type of setting; specific requirements should always be established. Annex A gives recommended net and gross areas for these settings.

## Existing buildings

This guidance is generally written to apply to new buildings for special schools, AP, SRP and Units. However most of the details can be used when considering existing buildings, whether they are to be remodelled or unaltered. Existing AP has often been remodelled from buildings that have had other uses in the past.

When calculating the total area needed for a setting that includes existing buildings the following apply.

1 When adding pupil places to existing special schools or AP, the 'base' areas in the net and gross area formulae are often already provided, for instance in the form of the main hall, head's office, staff room and central stores, so only the area per pupil place for the additional places would be needed. This would cover not only additional classrooms but also the associated support spaces, listed in this guidance, needed to accommodate the extra pupils.

2 The total net area of all buildings available to the setting should be included whether owned or maintained by the local authority, governing body or trustees. Buildings owned and maintained by others but available for pupils or staff in the setting to use for at least 80% of any normal school week (such as indoor sports facilities or a hydrotherapy pool with a 'joint use agreement') should also be included.

3 The different categories of space in the net area, discussed below, may need specific attributes that can only be provided by certain buildings: for example a hall would need a large volume.

4 Existing rooms may be outside the recommended 'zone' for the type of space. If existing rooms are below the recommended minimum, the range of activities will be reduced; in many cases a smaller teaching space will pose a health and safety risk (for example in a practical room). In these instances group sizes should be reduced or spaces combined to create larger rooms.

5 If existing rooms are above the recommended area, allowance needs to be made for a 'fit factor' such that the recommended net and gross areas are increased by 10 - 15%. Where the net and gross areas are more than 15% higher than the recommended figures, remodelling may be more economical, for instance to divide oversized spaces into more suitable sizes. Remodelling to achieve a better fit may be more difficult in listed buildings if alterations are restricted; in these cases the total area could be well in excess of the recommended range for the required spaces, and the 'fit factor' may be as high as 25%, or perhaps more.

6 Non-net area such as circulation in an existing building may be above the minimum that could be achieved in a new building.

The graph in figure 15 can be used to calculate the group size that can be accommodated in an existing space, depending on the size and type of space and activities (see page 34).

## **Other situations**

### **Co-location**

A special school sharing a site with a mainstream school allows pupils to interact and can give special school pupils access to a wider range of facilities. However the special school's teaching area should remain the same to ensure pupils have guaranteed access to their curriculum. Some non-teaching spaces such as the commercial kitchen and premises manager's office can be shared resulting in an area reduction of up to around 75m<sup>2</sup>. However, co-location may not always be appropriate for AP where, for example, it may be more effective for pupils with behavioural difficulties to be educated away from their peers.

### **Split sites**

A special school or AP is occasionally on more than one site; for example where AP has a primary and a secondary department or where two special schools have combined to form one establishment. Where a significant part of a school or AP is provided in buildings on more than one site extra area may be needed, to allow for the replication of key resources. This is unlikely to be more than 75m<sup>2</sup> gross, for administrative and kitchen facilities, depending on the distance between sites and the facilities on each site. Distance between sites is likely to be more of an issue for a special school than for a mainstream school.

### **Extensive facilities**

A special school or AP that offers extensive vocational learning on site that involves large-scale practical activities such as motor vehicle maintenance may need extra area. Such facilities are most economical if made available to other local schools or AP.



## Part A: The buildings

Part A sets out how to establish the floor area requirements for primary and secondary provision in special schools, AP, SRP and Units. It is in three sections:

- **Net area** which is the usable area and comprises basic teaching area; halls, PE, dining and social spaces; learning resource areas; staff and administration; and storage;
- **Non-net area** which supports the functioning of the building, and includes toilets and personal care facilities, commercial kitchens, circulation, plant and internal walls;
- **Supplementary area** (including net and non-net), such as a community health or counselling centre.

Not all categories of space apply to all settings; this is shown in figure 2.

The gross area, or gross internal floor area, of the building(s) is the total of the net and non-net area. It is important that the non-net area increases in line with any increase in net area. Generally, the gross area of new buildings will be as follows, depending on the provision of areas such as circulation, hygiene rooms or (in special schools and AP) the commercial kitchen:

- special schools for ambulant pupils: 145% to 155% of the net area;
- special schools for non-ambulant pupils<sup>5</sup>: 153% to 162% of the net area;
- AP: 140% to 160% of the net area depending on the needs accommodated;
- SRP: 139% to 143% of the net area, or 155% to 170% for non-ambulant pupils, because a hygiene room and wider corridors are needed;
- Units: 130% to 140% of the net area, or 138% to 145% for pupils with autism (ASD) where for example wider corridors are needed.

In existing buildings the proportion of gross to net area may be higher - as much as 175% in a special school or AP.

In a special school for non-ambulant pupils with PMLD the net area required for medical and therapy rooms and the non-net area required for toilet and hygiene facilities will be

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<sup>5</sup> ie a school specially equipped for pupils with PD and/or PMLD

significantly higher than in other settings, but these facilities are essential to supporting teaching and learning at the school. There should be enough flexibility to allow some increase in pupils with these needs.

	Categories of space	Special schools	AP	SRP	Units
<b>NET AREA</b>	Basic teaching	Page 36		N/A	Page 45
	Halls and PE	Page 48	Page 50	N/A	
	Dining and social			Page 50	
	Learning resource areas	Page 51	Page 53	Page 54	
	Staff and administration	Page 57		Page 58	
	Storage	Page 60		Page 62	
<b>NON-NET AREA</b>	Toilets and personal care	Page 63			
	Commercial kitchen facilities	Page 65		N/A	
	Circulation, plant and internal walls	Page 66			

**Figure 2: Table showing categories of space that make up gross and net area in special schools, AP, SRP and Units, page numbers link to relevant section.**

Some categories do not apply to SRP and Units because the facilities are available in the main school. The dining and social and learning resource area categories overlap in these settings because spaces are used flexibly.

## Net area

The net area is the total area of all usable spaces, both teaching and non-teaching. It includes everything except toilets and personal care facilities, circulation, boiler and plant rooms, commercial kitchens, and the area occupied by internal walls.

Net area is made up of spaces (usually enclosed rooms) within five categories of space:

- basic teaching (not applicable to SRP);
- halls, PE, dining and social (halls and PE are not applicable to SRP or Units);
- learning resource areas;
- staff and administration;
- storage.

Where categories are not required in SRP and Units because the facilities are provided as part of the main school, it is important that the area provided in the main school allows for those pupils spending some of their time there and for any shared staff facilities such as a central staff room. There will be less distinction between some categories in SRP and Units because there needs to be flexible use of space. In SRP, for example, group rooms (in the learning resource area category) may be used at lunchtime by those pupils not wishing to go to the main school dining room. Similarly, a staff office (in the staff and administration category) may have additional use for individual learning support (subject to securing confidential material).

The graphs in figures 3 to 14 show the zones for each category of space, for each type of setting. The top of each zone is the recommended maximum net area for the category, and the bottom is the recommended minimum net area. Each is calculated for the number of pupil places by using the formulae shown. The graphs also show the recommended minimum and maximum total net area, and the likely range of gross area needed based on the proportion of net to gross described on page 17.

To achieve the recommended minimum total net area, which is greater than the sum of the minimum net areas for each category, the area of each category of space should average around the middle of the recommended range. Where more space is required for some categories, such that the area falls in the upper half of the range, less must be allocated to other categories to stay within the minimum recommended overall net area. A net area near the top of the recommend range may be needed, but even if the maximum recommended net area can be provided, it is unlikely that all categories of space will be able to be at the top of each zone, so providers will always need to decide their priorities.

It is important to note that:

- the total area for each category should be at least the minimum recommended to allow for the core functions needed to suit the capacity of the setting, an area greater than the minimum but within the zone will usually be preferred for each category;
- anything lower than the minimum recommended area for a category will compromise the space provided in it;
- a total net area higher than the minimum may be needed where there are existing buildings with several rooms larger than the minimum size (see page 15).

When the recommended minima for each category of space are added together the total area (the 'sum of minima' shown in the graphs) will be less than the overall recommended minimum net area. This difference is the 'float' that can be used to enhance some areas, depending on the priorities of the individual setting, for example providing larger classrooms or an additional therapy room.

## **Net area in different settings**

Special schools are far more diverse than mainstream schools. The provision can vary by location, for example an urban local authority may have a few schools each providing for different needs while a rural local authority may have one or two schools providing for a wide range of needs. There are also different approaches to teaching pupils with special needs; this is particularly the case with autism. A total net area higher than the minimum (up to the maximum) may be needed in some cases. It is important to establish a school's approach at an early stage, for example:

- ambulant special schools will need a total net area nearer the maximum if the proportion of pupils with severe autism, requiring maximum support, is very high;
- non-ambulant special schools will need a total net area near the maximum if the proportion of pupil with PMLD, requiring specialist spaces, is high (say over 75%).

Special schools also tend to cater for different pupil needs over time and it is important to provide sufficient flexibility to allow for possible change. For instance, rooms large enough for groups of at least twelve are generally recommended in special schools for MLD/SLD even though the average group size may be around ten.

AP also varies and it is important to establish the local arrangements at an early stage, for example:

- AP with joint arrangements with local schools may require a total net area nearer the minimum;
- AP with extensive on-site vocational provision may require a total net area nearer the maximum.

Where AP provides a full curriculum to pupils who spend all their time there and do not return to school, the areas may need to be closer to the recommendations for a special school to ensure adequate and suitable accommodation.

SRP and Units vary depending on pupil needs and how much time pupils spend in the main school classrooms, for example:

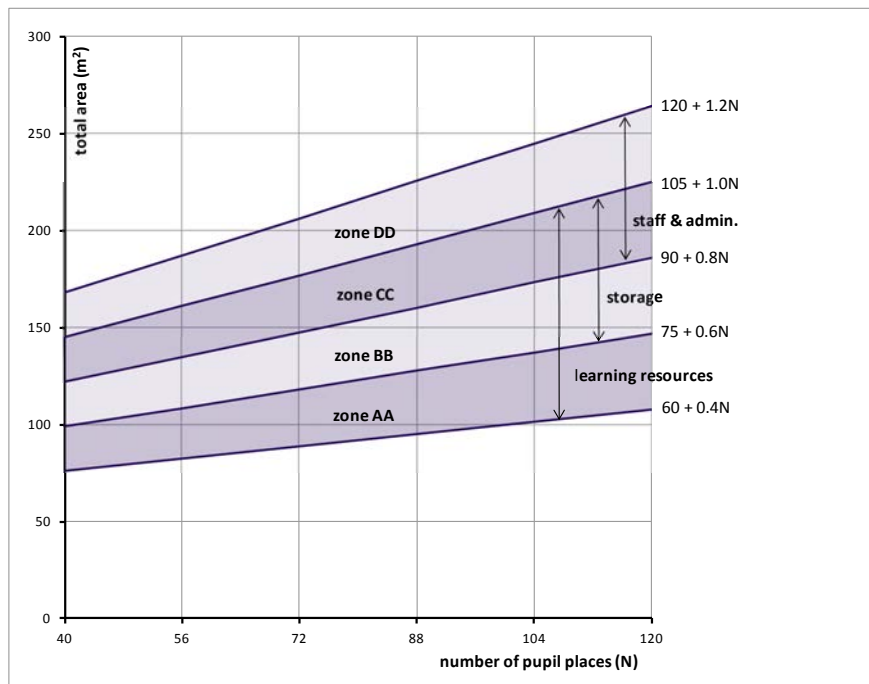
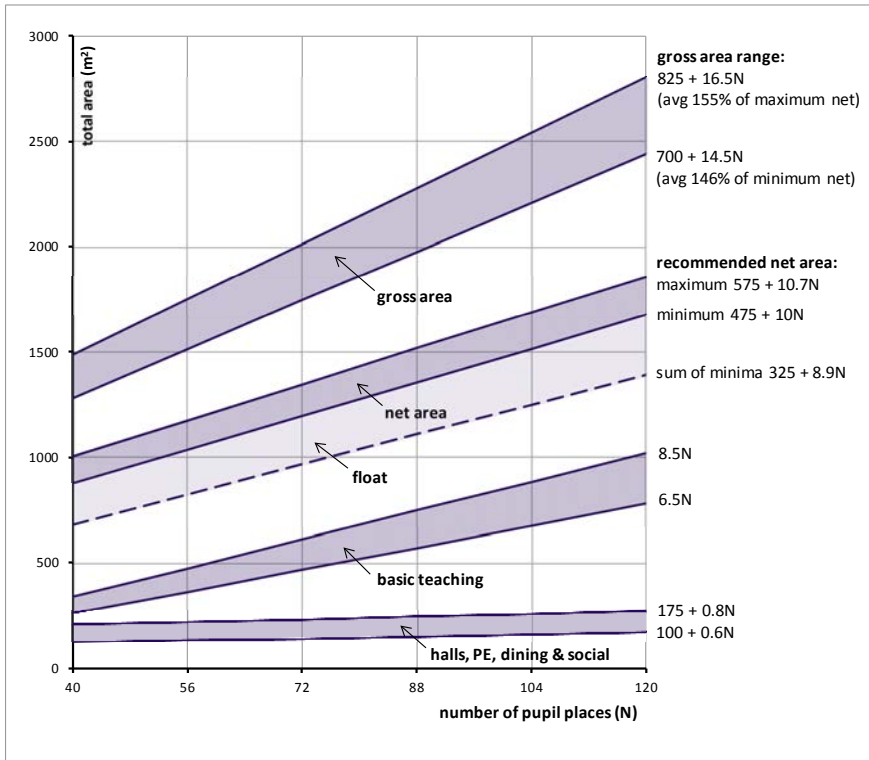
- In SRP where pupils spend most of their time in mainstream classes and need minimal specialist facilities a total net area nearer the minimum may be required;
- SRP and Units providing for a broad range of special needs each requiring specialist facilities may require a total net area nearer the maximum.

Where the number of places in a Unit increases towards the size of a small special school (ie 40 to 50 places), the areas may need to be closer to those recommended for a special school to ensure adequate and suitable accommodation.

This document gives guidance on the spaces required for all types of educational setting within each of the five categories of space within the net area. For each space, the broad activities to be accommodated are noted and the space, with appropriate fittings, furniture and equipment (FF&E), should be designed to suit these.

## **Graphs showing net and gross area**

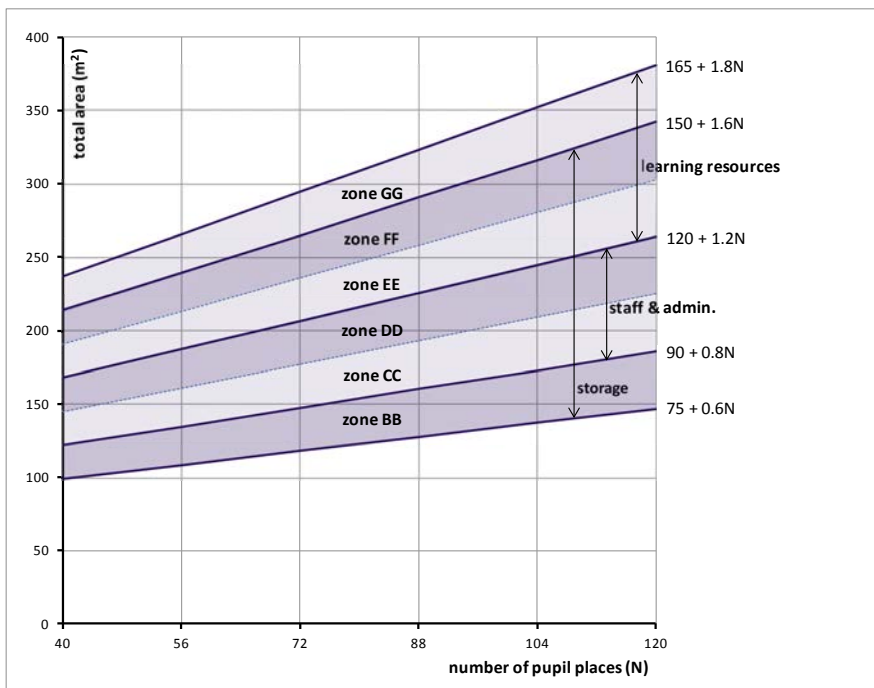
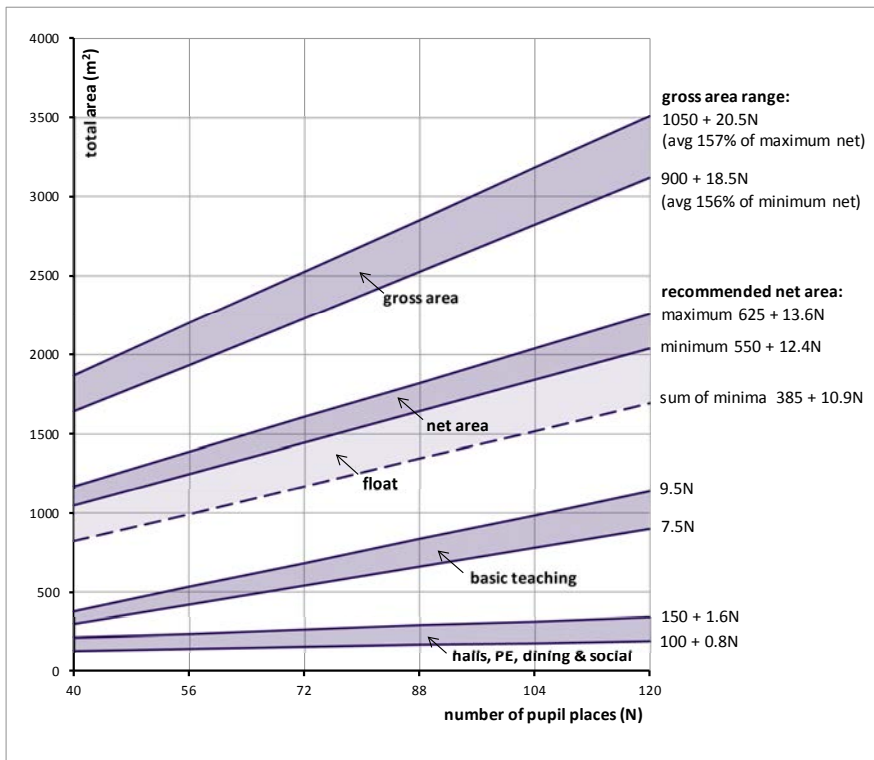
The graphs on the following pages (figures 3 to 14) show the recommended area zones for each category of space within the net area as well as the recommended range of gross area.



**Figure 3: Gross and net areas for primary special schools (ambulant)**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area, basic teaching area and halls, PE, dining and social area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross area. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining three of the five categories of space. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

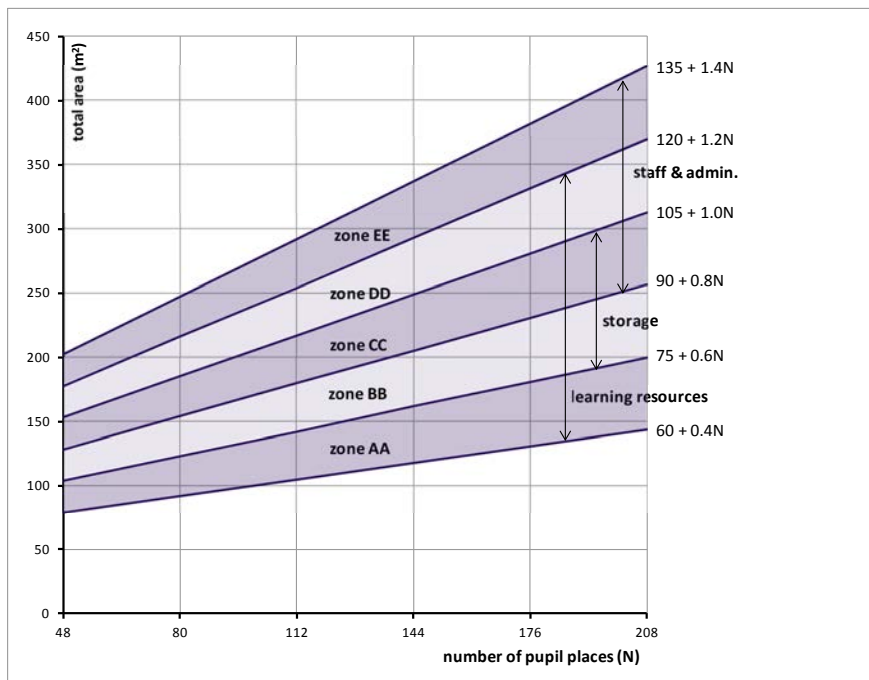
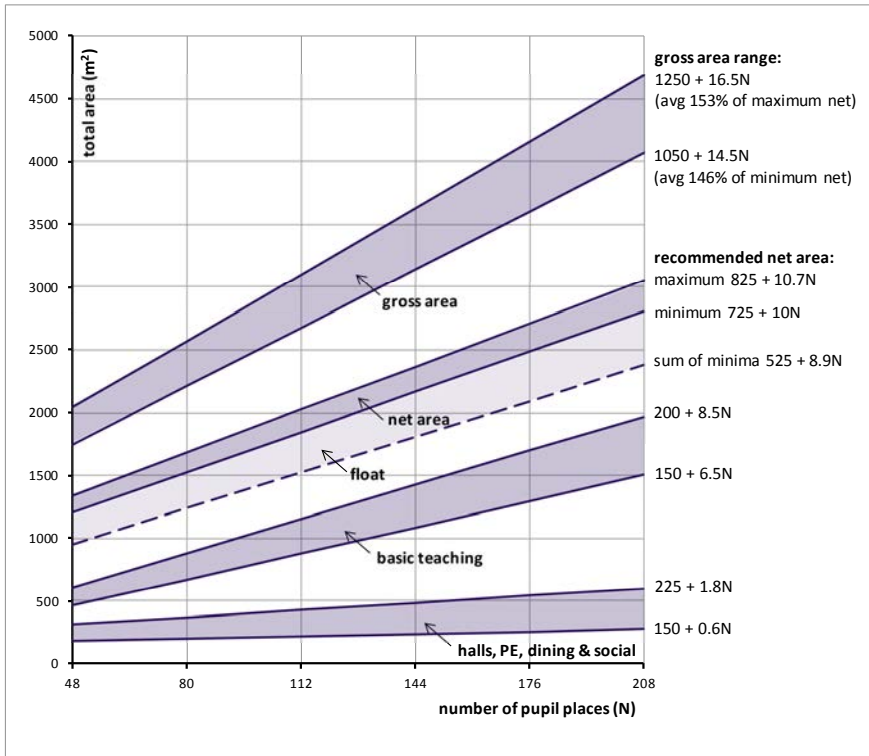
See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.



**Figure 4: Gross and net areas for primary special schools (non-ambulant)**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area, basic teaching area and halls, PE, dining and social area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining three of the five categories of space. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.

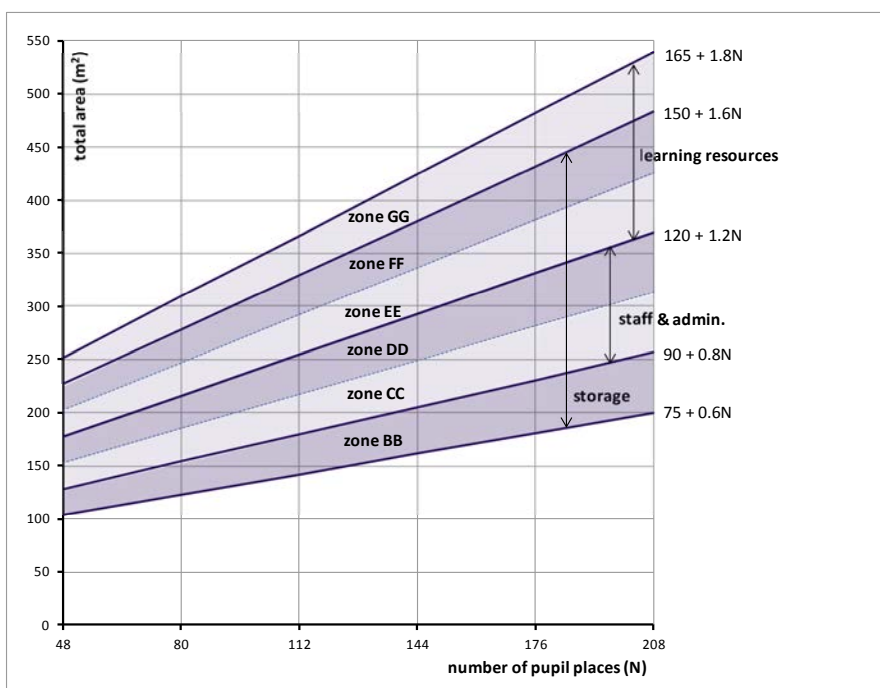
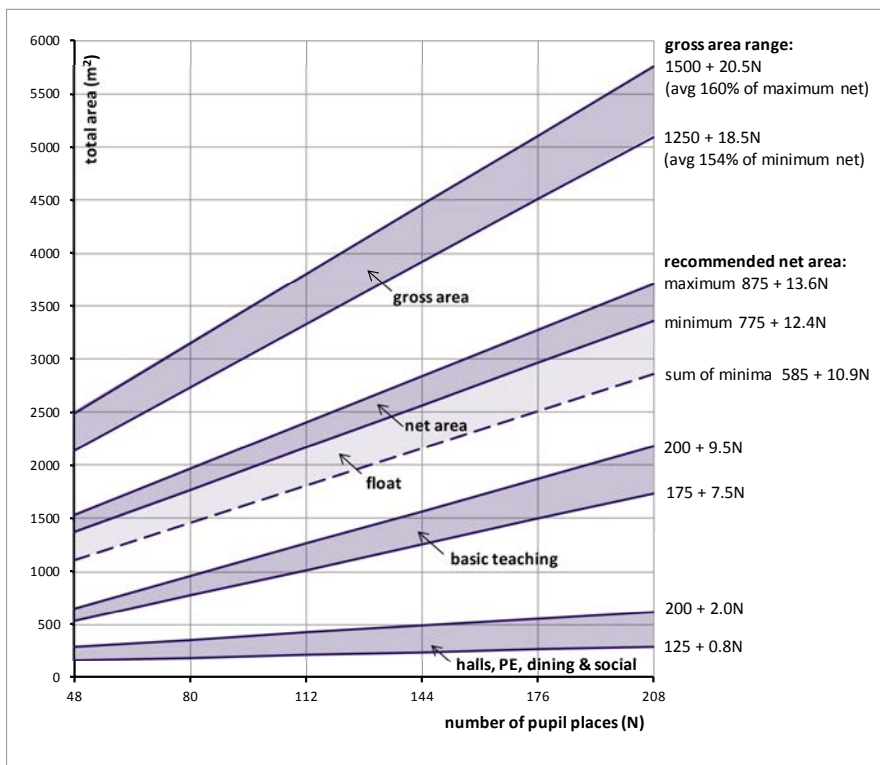


**Figure 5: Gross and net areas for special schools (ambulant) with secondary-age pupils, including schools with both primary and secondary-age pupils.**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area, basic teaching area and halls, PE, dining and social area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining three of the five categories of space. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.

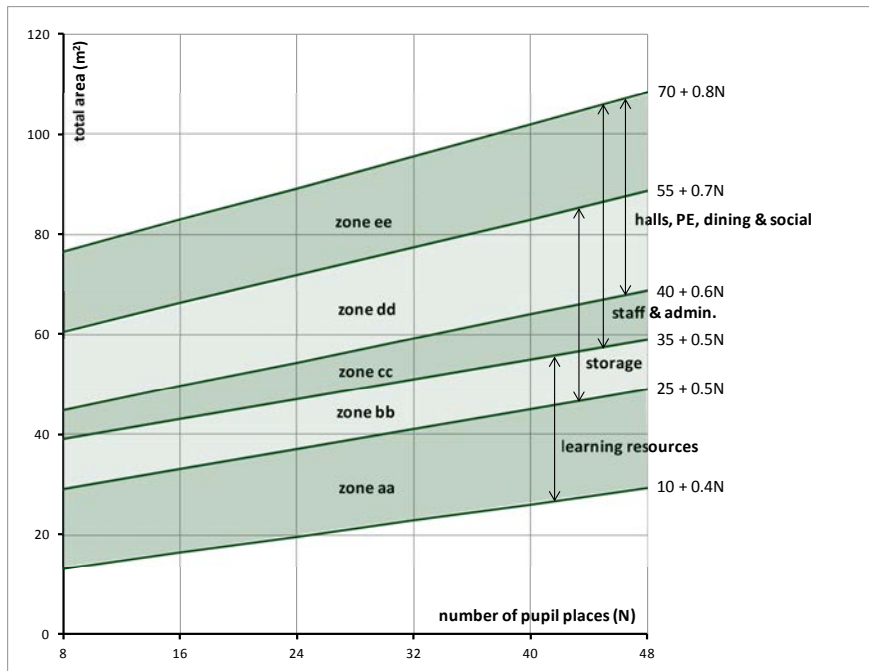
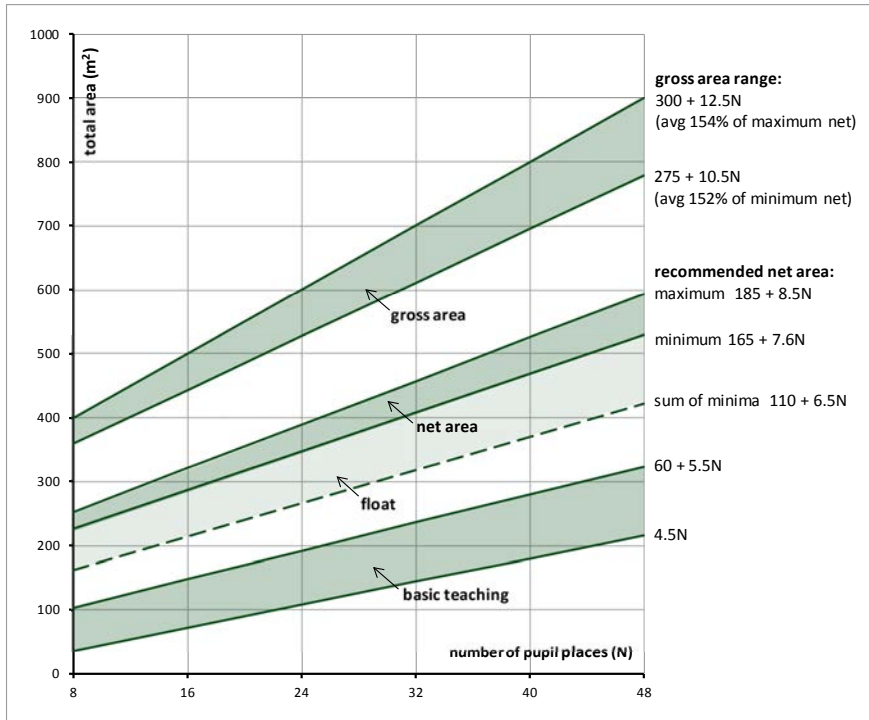




**Figure 6: Gross and net areas for special schools (non-ambulant) with secondary-age pupils, including schools with both primary and secondary-age pupils**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area, basic teaching area and halls, PE, dining and social area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining three of the five categories of space. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

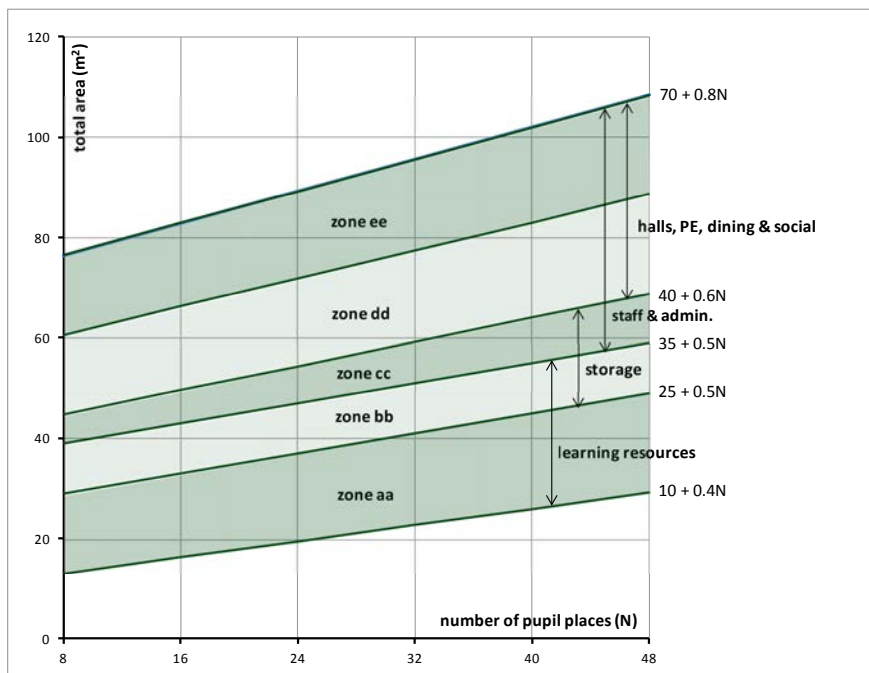
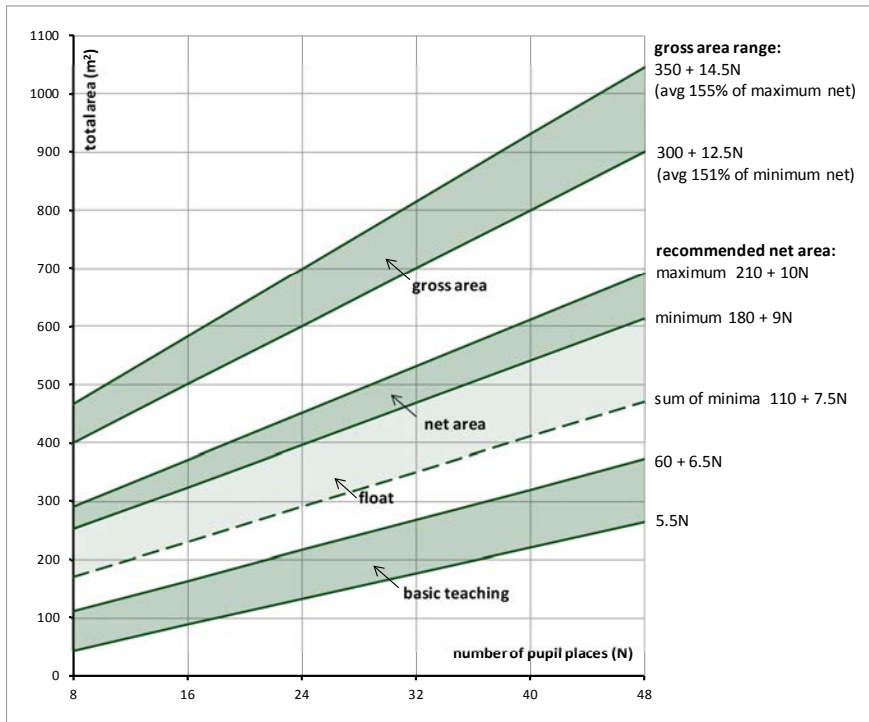
See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.



**Figure 7: Gross and net areas for primary AP (health)**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area and basic teaching area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining four of the five categories of space. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

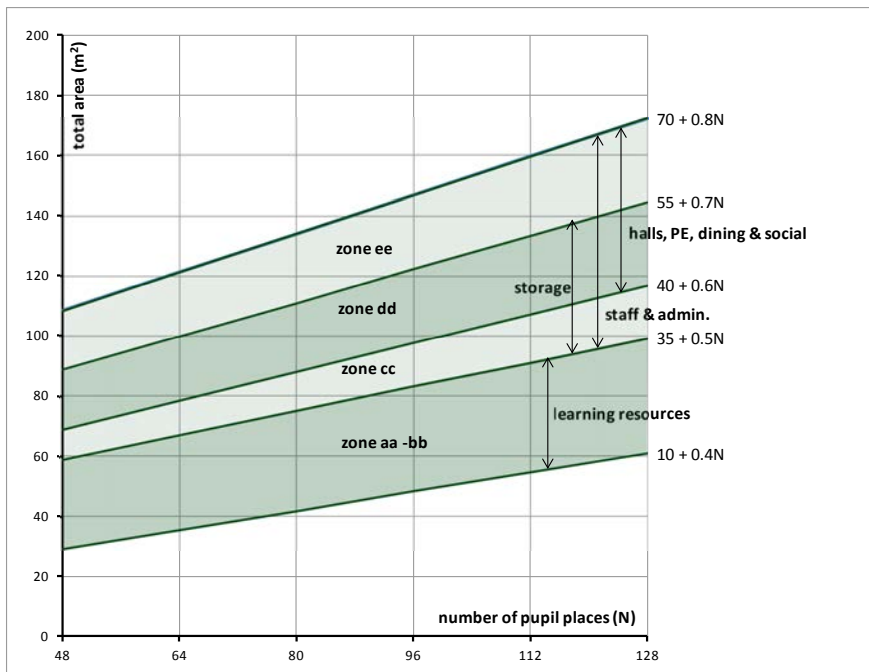
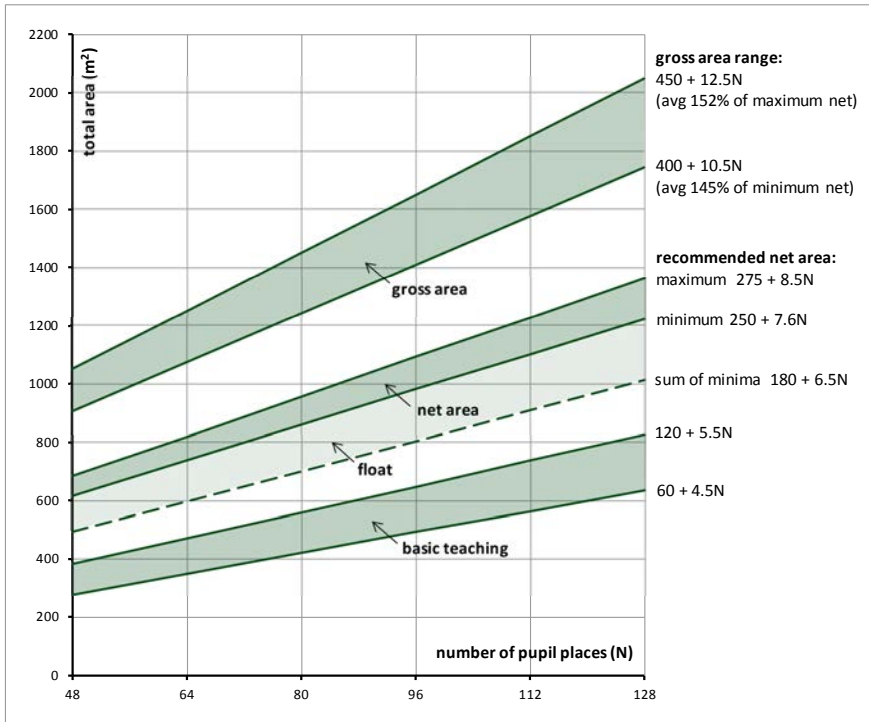
See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.



**Figure 8: Gross and net areas for primary AP (behaviour)**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area and basic teaching area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining four of the five categories of space. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

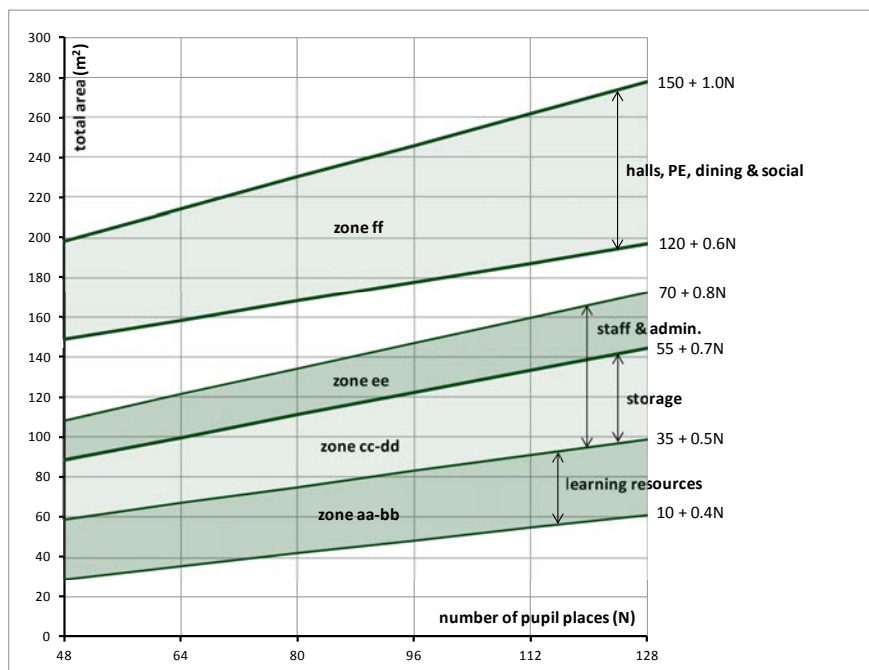
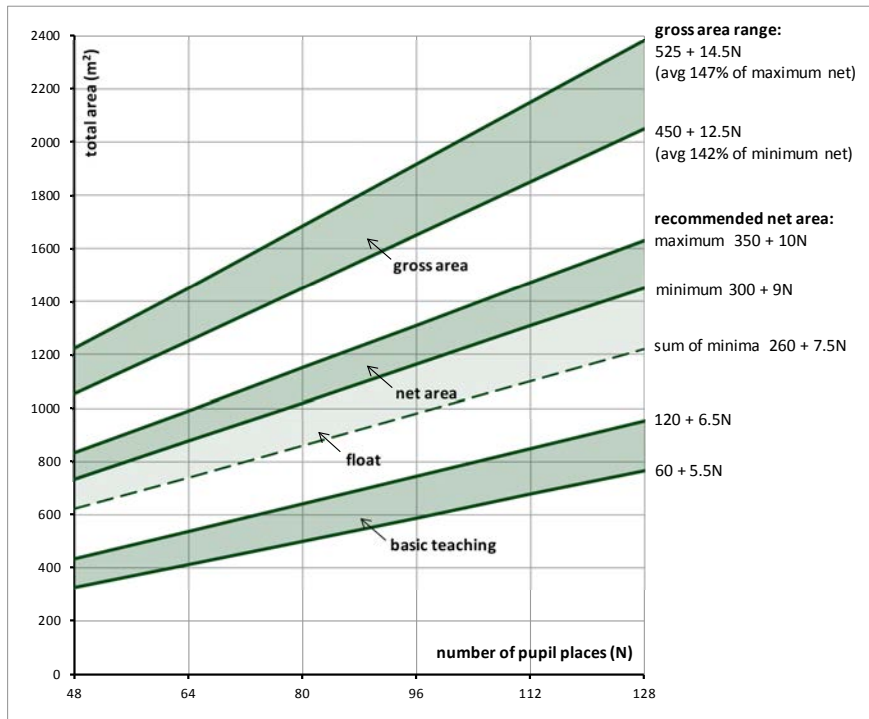
See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.



**Figure 9: Gross and net areas for AP (health) with secondary-age pupils, including AP with both primary and secondary-age pupils**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area and basic teaching area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining four of the five categories of space. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

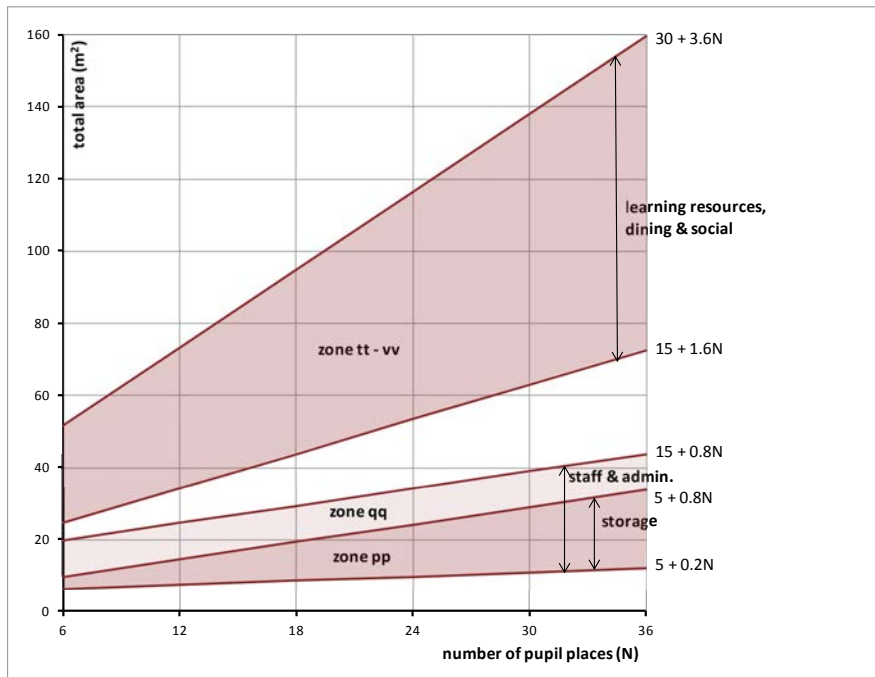
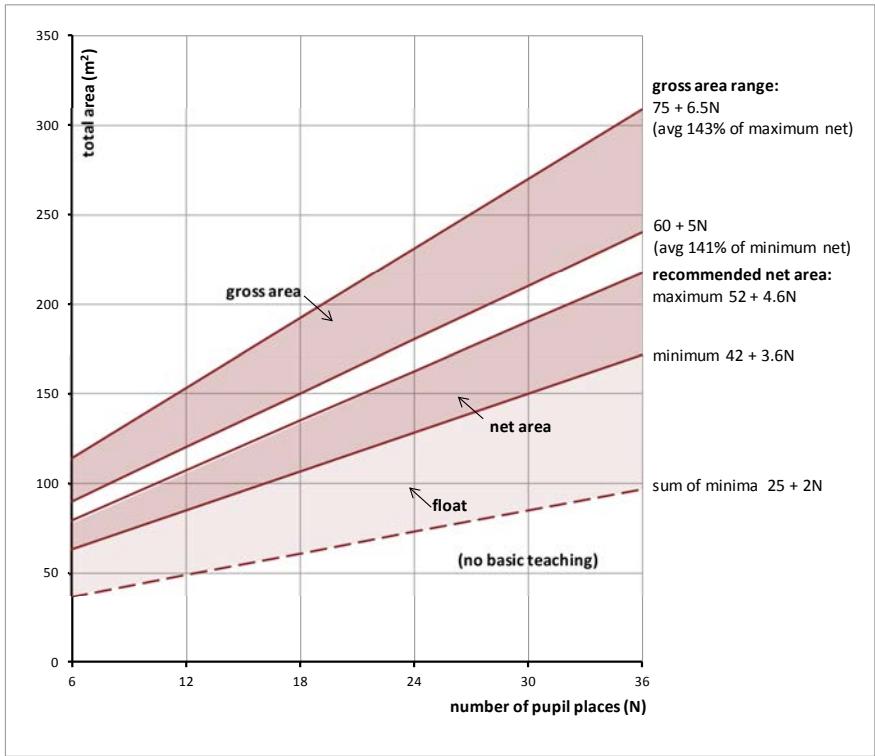
See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.



**Figure 10: Gross and net areas for AP (behaviour) with secondary-age pupils, including AP with both primary and secondary-age pupils**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area and basic teaching area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining four of the five categories of space. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

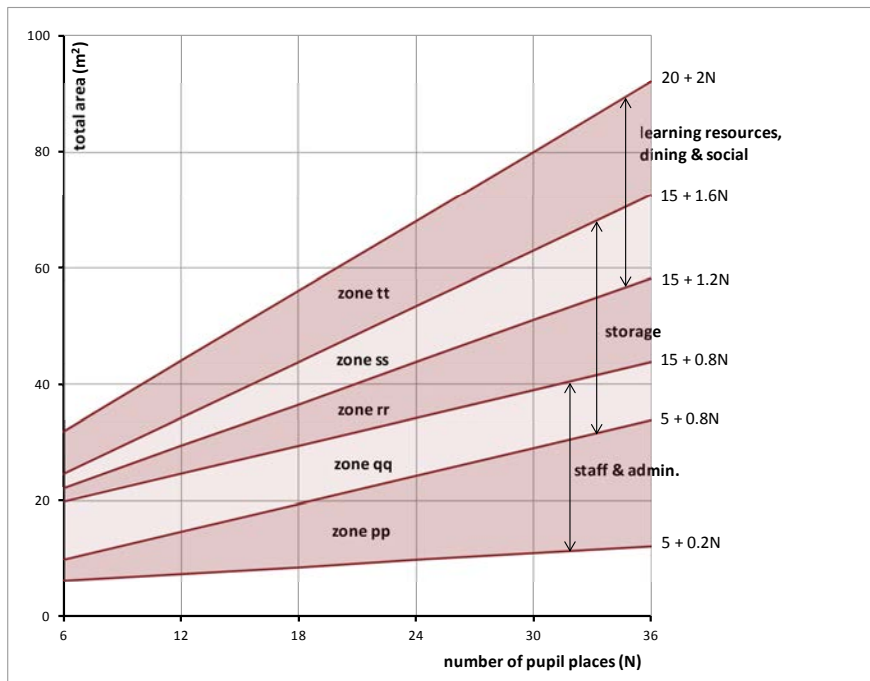
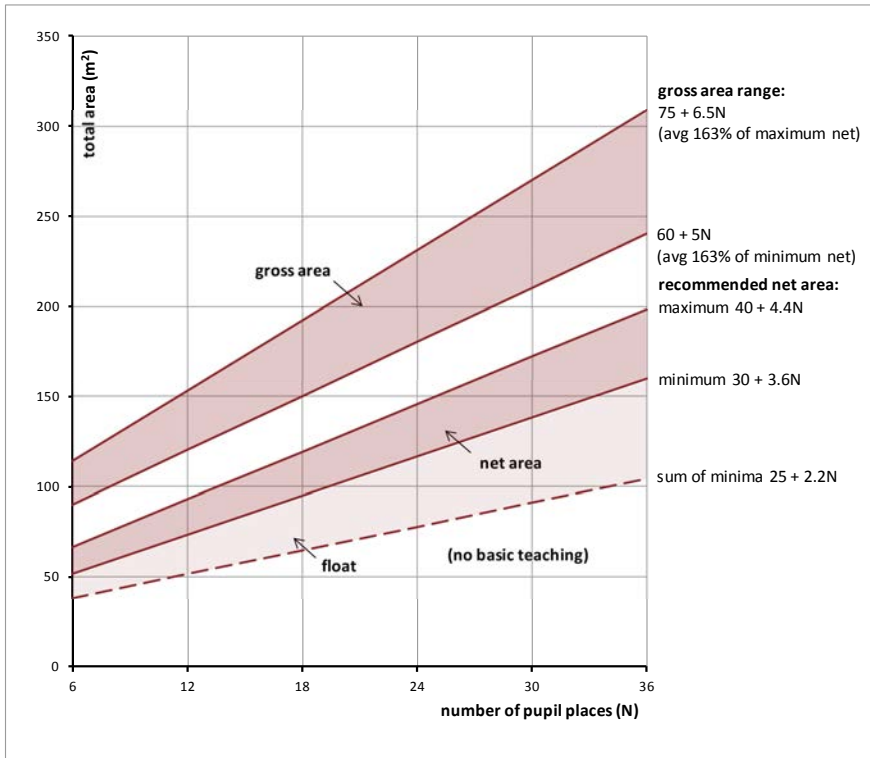
See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.



**Figure 11: Gross and net areas for SRP (ambulant) for pupils of any age**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the three categories of space in the net area (there is no allowance for basic teaching, learning resources and dining and social are merged). Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

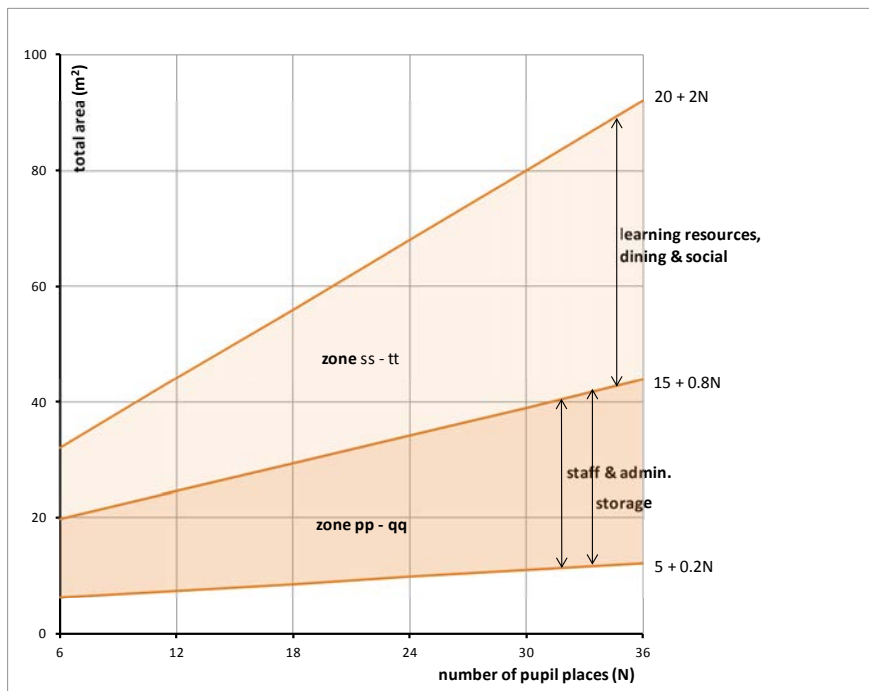
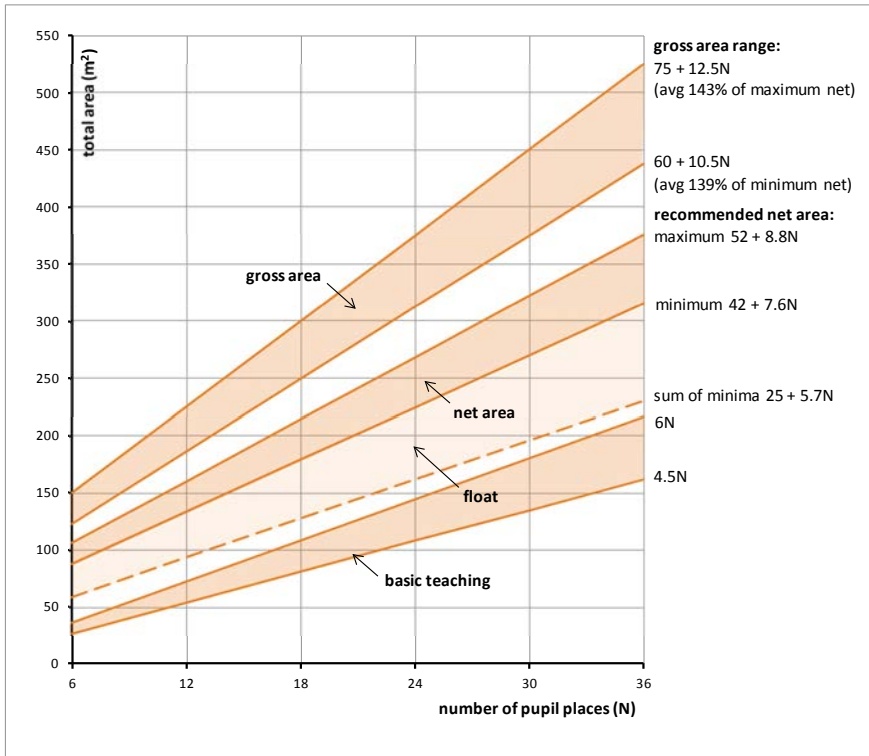
See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.



**Figure 12: Gross and net areas for SRP (PD) for pupils of any age**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the three categories of space in the net area (there is no allowance for basic teaching, learning resource and dining and social are merged). Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.

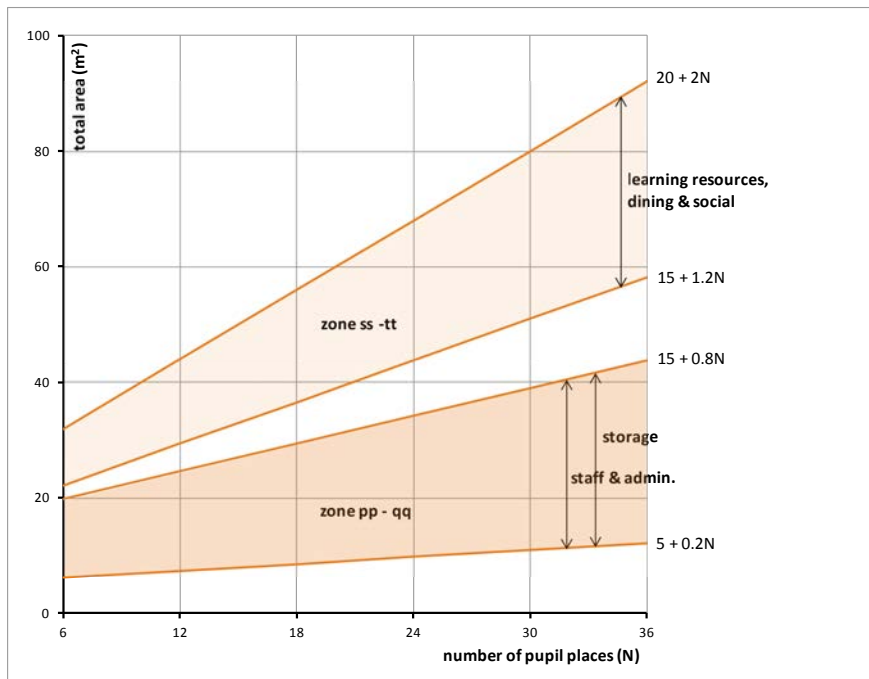
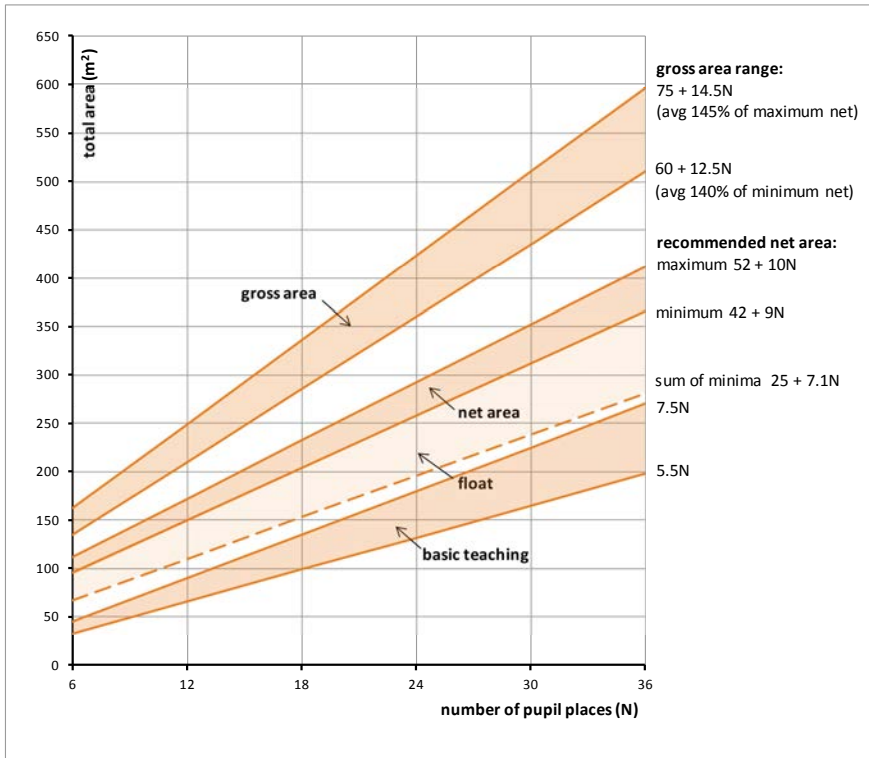


**Figure 13: Gross and net areas for Unit (ambulant) with pupils of any age**

The top graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area and basic teaching area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The bottom graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining categories of space (learning resource and dining and social categories are merged). Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.





**Figure 14: Gross and net areas for Unit (ambulant – ASD) with pupils of any age**

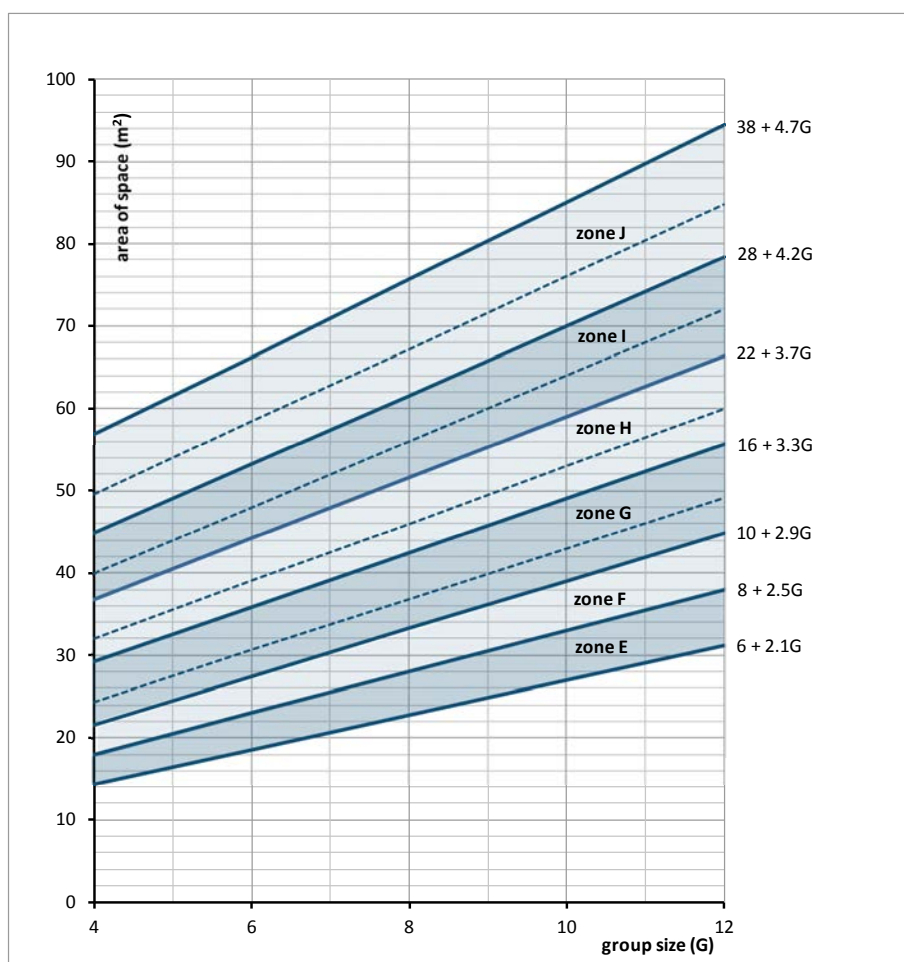
The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the overall net area and basic teaching area, with the related formulae, as well as the recommended range of gross. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended minimum and maximum area. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for the remaining categories of space (learning resource and dining and social categories are merged). Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

See the glossary for a definition of 'float' and 'sum of minima'.

## 1. Basic teaching

Basic teaching comprises all the teaching spaces (except halls and PE spaces) needed for the curriculum offered. It does not include learning spaces such as libraries and small group rooms. The recommended area range for the total basic teaching area is given in figures 3 to 10 for special schools and AP and figures 13 to 14 for Units; this area range can be divided up in many different ways. SRP does not require basic teaching area (see explanation on page 45).

Figure 15 shows the zones of recommended area that apply to basic teaching spaces for primary and secondary provision in any setting. In some cases only the upper half of the zone applies to a space. The formulae shown can be used to calculate the size of a space for any group size.



**Figure 15: Zones for basic teaching spaces for any age in all educational settings**

Graph showing zones of recommended area that can be applied to spaces within basic teaching area. Room sizes can be calculated using the formulae shown. The top of each zone denotes the recommended maximum area, the bottom or the mid-line (dotted) of the zone represents the minimum area. The recommended standard size is generally near the top of the zone (shown in figures 20 and 21)

Figures 16 to 19 show how the recommended area zones relate to pupils' needs. In some cases only the upper half of the zone applies to a space. Generally the minimum recommended area is at the bottom of a zone but where the upper part of a zone is indicated the minimum area will be in the middle of the zone.

Figures 20 (Primary) and 21 (Secondary) on pages 46 and 47 at the end of this section list the most common types of space in the basic teaching category and their recommended standard sizes within the recommended zone, based on typical group sizes seen in settings. The recommended standard size will give the flexibility to accommodate a range of relevant activities and to allow for variation in FF&E layouts. In a classroom for non-ambulant pupils the standard size will provide space for pupils who use wheelchairs or larger mobility aids.

An area below the recommended standard size will restrict the range of activities that can take place and the possible variations in room layout. An area above the recommended minimum but below the recommended standard size will have limitations, for example:

- in a classroom, it will limit the ability to create different settings such as a sensory corner for pupils with PMLD or a soft seating corner for pupils with MLD;
- in a practical space, it will not allow for specialist furniture or equipment such as a screen printing table in an art room; it will limit the number of cookers in a food room;
- in a music space, it will limit the number and type of large instruments that can be kept in the room (such as a drum kit or piano);
- in any basic teaching space where there are non-ambulant pupils, it will restrict movement within the space and reduce the school or Unit's flexibility to increase its intake of non-ambulant pupils in the future.

An area below the recommended minimum area is not recommended and could pose a health and safety risk, particularly in a practical room. Where there are non-ambulant pupils movement space would be inadequate.

In an existing building, a space of the recommended standard size may not be possible. The maximum recommended group size would need to be reduced to avoid a health and safety risk or a restriction in the movement of non-ambulant pupils. Alternatively, rooms may be remodelled or combined to create a larger space. If an existing space has an irregular or inefficiently proportioned shape an area above the recommended minimum will be required.

Each zone allows for variations in size depending on the curriculum, the range of special needs or disability to be accommodated and the staff: pupil ratio. Whatever arrangement is chosen, the basic teaching area should accommodate all the types of activities that need to take place in this area and the associated FF&E.

## **Basic teaching in special schools and AP**

Basic teaching area in special schools or AP includes:

- classrooms;
- practical rooms;
- performance spaces

The size of these spaces will depend on the range of needs accommodated and on the staff: pupil ratio. One child with a wheelchair and/or mobility aids may need as much space as three ambulant pupils. One child with learning aids and a teaching assistant may need the same space as two non-disabled pupils.

### **Classrooms**

At primary level classrooms should be provided with water and drainage for light practical work. The exception is where the room area is at the bottom of the recommended range and practical activities can take place in a separate specialist space. At secondary level the provision will depend on pupils' needs; classrooms will sometimes be only for general teaching with practical activities accommodated in specialist spaces but for some special needs, particularly for pupils with PMLD/SLD, most activities will happen in one space, requiring water and drainage. Drinking water will be required for primary and secondary settings if pupils are provided with refreshments in the classroom.

For primary provision the basic teaching area should include one classroom for every class group. For secondary provision the number of classrooms will depend on the curriculum and group sizes. In AP and large special schools, this should be determined using a simple curriculum analysis. In some secondary special schools there will be one classroom for every class group, in a similar way to primary.

Figure 16 shows the relationship between pupils' needs, classroom type and recommended area zone (from figure 15); it also shows typical settings for these spaces. The table applies to both primary and secondary provision.

Where a special school accommodates a broad range of needs there may be classrooms of different sizes, for example there may be a majority in zone G for MLD, one or two in zone I for severe autism and one or two in zone J for PD/PMLD. However, providing too much variation in room size can limit the school's flexibility to accommodate changing needs. Nursery classes often accommodate a broad range of needs.

In any special school or AP classrooms should be in a suite according to the setting's requirements; this may be by key stage or type of special need (for example a suite for pupils with severe autism in a special school accommodating a broad range of needs). There should be easy access to small group rooms (included in the Learning resource area category) and easy and sometimes direct access to 'walk-in' store(s).

Typical setting	Activities and pupils' needs	Classroom type	Zone
AP	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum with minimum additional support and don't need more 'personal' space; eg pupils with health difficulties and no associated learning difficulties	Primary/secondary classroom (health)	upper <b>F</b>
	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum with minimum additional support, some need more 'personal' space; eg pupils with behavioural difficulties	Primary/secondary classroom (behaviour)	upper <b>G</b>
Special school	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum with minimum additional support but need specialist equipment; eg pupils with HI or VI with no associated learning difficulties	Primary/secondary classroom (ambulant)	upper <b>G</b>
	Ambulant pupils work to an adapted curriculum with some support; eg pupils with MLD, SLD or autism	Primary/secondary classroom (ambulant)	upper <b>G</b>
	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum and need more 'personal' space; eg pupils with severe social emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties	Primary/secondary classroom (severe SEMH)	<b>H</b>
	Ambulant pupils are mainly engaged in play and require additional support; eg very young pupils with MLD, SLD or autism	Nursery playroom (ambulant) Reception classroom (ambulant)	<b>H</b>
	Ambulant pupils have a highly adapted curriculum and need more 'personal' space and significant additional support; eg pupils with severe autism and learning difficulties.	Nursery playroom; reception/ primary/secondary classroom (severe autism)	<b>I</b>
	Ambulant and non-ambulant pupils are taught together, some require specialist equipment and significant additional support; eg pupils with SLD and/or PMLD	Nursery playroom; reception/ primary/secondary classroom (non-ambulant)	upper <b>J</b>
	Most pupils are severely disabled and require significant additional support, high use of horizontal learning stations or motorised wheelchairs; eg pupils with PD and PMLD/SLD	Nursery playroom (non-ambulant) Reception/ primary/secondary classroom (non-ambulant)	top of <b>J</b>

**Figure 16: Primary and secondary classrooms - zones related to pupils' needs.**

The zones refer to the area recommendations in figure 15; they are shown in ascending order to show how different needs affect area. The classroom types are those used in EFA schedules of accommodation. In some cases only the upper half of a zone is recommended (dotted lines in figure 15 indicate the mid-range).

The zones for special schools could apply to a Unit accommodating the same SEN.

## **ICT-rich classrooms**

With the increasing use of laptops and tablet computers, the need for ICT-rooms as a bookable resource has diminished. However, there may still be a need for one or more ICT-rich classrooms, equipped with fixed desktop computers for each workstation, in special schools and secondary-level AP (area zones as classrooms, see figure 15). An ICT-rich classroom may be combined with a library (see Learning resource areas). In some settings pupils need a dedicated workspace because their equipment is adapted for a particular need, such as visual impairment or physical disability.

## **Practical teaching spaces**

Practical teaching spaces will generally have water and drainage; they will often have ICT. For secondary spaces there may also be gas services and chemical-resistant finishes. All spaces should have 'walk-in' store(s) accessed from the room, for resources and work in progress.

### ***Primary practical teaching spaces***

A special school or AP with only primary-age pupils should have a space for a cooker either in a food bay or in a specialist food room. A specialist room will be an enclosed space (usually for half class groups) with appropriate finishes, a sink and cooker, often of adjustable height, and fridge. In a special school or AP with primary and secondary-age places, the secondary-level food room can be used by older primary pupils.

A primary-only special school or AP may also include a practical space for science, art and design; an enclosed room (usually for half class groups) with appropriate services and finishes. This would only be required in a primary-only setting where the classrooms are in the bottom half of the recommended area zone and therefore unable to accommodate practical activities.

Typical setting	Activities and pupils' needs	Room type	Zone
AP	Ambulant pupils do hands-on practical activities with minimal support; eg pupils with health difficulties and no associated learning difficulties	Primary practical room (health) Primary food room (health)	<b>F</b>
	Ambulant pupils do hands-on practical activities with minimal support and may need more 'personal' space; eg pupils with behavioural difficulties	Primary practical room (behaviour) Primary food room (behaviour)	<b>G</b>
Special school	Ambulant pupils do hands-on practical activities with some support; eg pupils with MLD, SLD or autism	Primary practical room (ambulant) Primary food room (ambulant)	upper <b>G</b>
	Ambulant pupils do hands-on practical activities with minimal support and require more 'personal' space around them; eg pupils with severe SEMH	Primary practical room (severe SEMH) Primary food room (severe SEMH)	<b>H</b>
	Ambulant and non-ambulant pupils do a range of practical tasks, some use wheelchairs; eg pupils with MLD/SLD and PD	Primary practical room (non-ambulant) Primary food room (non-ambulant)	<b>H</b>

**Figure 17: Primary practical spaces - zones related to pupils' needs.**

The zones refer to the area recommendations in figure 15; they are shown in ascending order to show how different needs affect area. The classroom types are those used in EFA schedules of accommodation. In some cases only the upper half of a zone is recommended (dotted lines in figure 15 indicate the mid-range).

The zones for special schools could apply to a Unit accommodating the same SEN.



### ***Secondary practical teaching spaces***

The number of secondary practical teaching spaces in a special school or AP will depend on the curriculum and pupils' needs. All settings will have as a minimum:

- a food room (for food technology and/or life skills, depending on pupils' needs);
- a room for science activities, in some special schools this may be a multi-purpose practical space.

Most special schools and AP will have in addition:

- at least one further practical space, the number and type to meet pupil numbers and curriculum need; there may be spaces for art, art and design, design and technology (DT), health and beauty, car maintenance or construction.

As the number of practical spaces is less than in a mainstream school, these spaces are generally grouped into a suite and located for easy access from classrooms.

The size of a secondary practical space will depend on a number of factors relating to pupils' needs: staff: pupil ratio, the activities taking place, the range of equipment needed and the amount of space needed around furniture and equipment. It is particularly important that there is sufficient space for pupils (including those using wheelchairs) to circulate with ease and to participate in all appropriate activities, including gathering around for presentations or demonstrations and moving safely around equipment and machines. Allowance should also be made for pupils who need more 'personal' space around them or hearing impaired pupils who may not hear an instruction when using a machine or piece of equipment. A well-designed room layout is an important factor in ensuring safety and functionality.

Figures 18 and 19 give recommended zones for different pupil needs. Heavy practical spaces (those with large fixed machinery or equipment) or spaces accommodating a wide range of practical activities tend to be in a higher zone than light practical spaces, such as those for science or art.

Generally, the following apply to secondary-age pupils in a special school or AP; settings are very unlikely to have all these spaces.

**Light practical teaching spaces** are serviced with water and drainage but do not have large fixed machinery or equipment. They include:

- **for science**, a room similar to a classroom with water and drainage or one equipped with laboratory sinks and gas taps similarly to a mainstream school, depending on pupils' needs;
- **for art**, a room with water and drainage where pupils work in a range of media according to their needs, with space for the local storage and display of finished work (a combined art and design room with a smaller range of machines than in a dedicated DT workshop can be a more effective use of space);
- **for hair and beauty**, typically a room with facilities for hair washing, beauty treatments and to role play reception (zones for science can be used as a guide).

A non-ambulant special school will often have a multi-purpose light practical space for art, science and design activities.

**Heavy Practical spaces** will have fixed equipment (such as a lathe or cookers), very resistant finishes, heavy electrical loads and possibly some specialist extraction. They include:

- **for food technology**, a space for pupils to be as involved as possible in preparing and cooking food and watching cookery demonstrations (the same room may also be used for life skills such as learning to make refreshments and to use a washing machine, alternatively life skills may be taught in a domestic style kitchen included in Learning resource areas);
- **for design and technology (DT)**, a space where pupils work with resistant materials, graphics products and possibly textiles, if there are large floor-mounted machines the minimum in the zone would limit the range of specialist equipment;
- **for vehicle maintenance**, a DT workshop can be used for ambulant pupils to work on vehicle parts (but if whole vehicles are being worked on a very large space will be required which may be outdoors in a covered area);
- **for construction**, a workshop where ambulant pupils take part in a limited range of activities such as painting, decorating and brickwork (zone J, but for more extensive work a very large space will be required some of which may be outdoors in a covered area);
- **for fitness/ exercise**, a room with machines of varying types and sizes to suit pupils' needs, the size of the space will depend on the range of equipment and how much personal space pupils need around them, specialist equipment for non-ambulant pupils is likely to require more space.

Typical setting	Activities and pupils' needs	Room type	Zone
AP	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum with minimal support; eg pupils with health difficulties and no associated learning difficulties	Art room (health) Science studio (health)	upper <b>G</b>
	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum with minimum additional support, some need more 'personal' space; eg pupils with behavioural difficulties	Art room (behaviour) Science studio (behaviour)	<b>H</b>
Special school	Ambulant pupils do simple practical tasks with additional support; eg pupils with MLD, SLD or autism	Art room (ambulant) Science studio (ambulant)	<b>H</b>
	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum with minimal support but require more 'personal' space; eg pupils with severe SEMH	Art room (severe SEMH) Science studio (severe SEMH)	<b>I</b>
	Ambulant and non-ambulant pupils do a range of practical tasks; some use wheelchairs; eg pupils with MLD/SLD and PD	Multi-purpose practical (non-ambulant)	upper <b>J</b>

**Figure 18: Secondary light practical spaces – zones related to pupils' needs.**

The zones refer to the area recommendations in figure 15; they are shown in ascending order to show how different needs affect area. The classroom types are those used in EFA schedules of accommodation. In some cases only the upper half of a zone is recommended (dotted lines in figure 15 indicate the mid-range).

Where pupils with severe autism access practical spaces, the zone for severe behaviour applies.

The zones for special schools could apply to a Unit accommodating the same SEN

Typical setting	Activities and needs	Room type	Zone
AP	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum with minimal support; eg pupils with health difficulties and no associated learning difficulties	DT workshop (health) Art and design room (health) Secondary food room (health)	<b>H</b>
	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum with minimum additional support, some need more 'personal' space; eg pupils with behavioural difficulties	DT workshop (behaviour) Secondary food room (behaviour)	<b>I</b>
Special school	Ambulant pupils do simple practical tasks with additional support; eg pupils with MLD, SLD or autism	DT workshop (ambulant) Art and design room (ambulant) Secondary food room (ambulant)	upper <b>I</b>
	Ambulant pupils work to a mainstream curriculum using large machinery or specialist equipment with minimal support but require more 'personal' space eg pupils with severe SEMH	DT workshop (severe SEMH) Art and design room (severe SEMH) Secondary food room (severe SEMH)	<b>J</b>
	Ambulant and non-ambulant pupils do a range of practical tasks, some use wheelchairs; eg pupils with MLD/SLD and PD.	Art and design room (non-ambulant) Secondary food room (non-ambulant).	upper <b>J</b>

**Figure 19: Secondary heavy practical spaces - zones related to pupils' needs.**

The zones refer to the area recommendations in figure 15; they are shown in ascending order to show how different needs affect area. The classroom types are those used in EFA schedules of accommodation. In some cases only the upper half of a zone is recommended (dotted lines in figure 15 indicate the mid-range).

Where pupils with severe autism access practical spaces, the zone for severe behaviour applies.

The zones for special schools could apply to a Unit accommodating the same SEN

## **Performance teaching spaces**

Music and drama can take place in a classroom, a specialist music or drama space or in a hall. A hall can be used for performances to audiences larger than the class group. All special schools or AP should have a room with a suitable acoustic environment to accommodate traditional music making, electronic music and, where relevant, music therapy. In some special schools this space will also be equipped with interactive ICT, sound beam or resonance boards for use in music therapy.

Generally the zones for classrooms (figure 16) apply to a specialist music room in a special school or AP although the room layout will be different. A combined music/drama room will be larger to allow a clear space of sufficient size to be created. A clear height of 2.7-3.5m will create a reasonable volume for good sound quality and should be sufficient for simple stage lighting and ceiling-mounted fittings.

A recording room with a window onto the music room may be provided in a secondary special school or AP (10-15m<sup>2</sup> or 15-20m<sup>2</sup> for wheelchair users), see Learning resource areas. Secure storage for musical instruments and other equipment should be easy to access (see Storage).

## **Basic teaching in Units**

In a Unit the basic teaching area will vary depending on the needs of the pupils and the amount of time pupils spend in the main school but all Units should include classrooms for (typically) 6 to 8 pupils. Basic teaching in a Unit may also include:

- a multi-purpose practical space for science and/or design and technology;
- a space where pupils can be taught life skills, this may be in a food room but is more likely to be in a multi-purpose space also used for independent learning, meetings and for dining at lunch time (see Learning resource areas).

The zones recommended for basic teaching spaces in special schools will generally apply to the equivalent spaces in a Unit accommodating the same needs. For example a classroom for HI pupils will be in zone G.

There should be easy access to small group rooms (included in the Learning resource areas category) and store rooms (see Storage).

SRP will not have any basic teaching area because pupils have their lessons in the main school, only coming to the SRP to use learning resource areas such as a group room or life-skills kitchen (see Learning resource areas).

Zone	Room type	Typical setting	Recommended area range for typical group size	Recommended standard size within range
H	<b>Nursery playroom</b> (ambulant)	special school, Unit	49-59m <sup>2</sup> for 10	55m <sup>2</sup>
upper J	<b>Nursery playroom</b> (non-ambulant)		58-66m <sup>2</sup> for 6	62m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Reception classroom</b> (ambulant)		49-59m <sup>2</sup> for 10	55m <sup>2</sup>
upper J	<b>Reception classroom</b> (non-ambulant)		58-66m <sup>2</sup> for 6	62m <sup>2</sup>
upper G	<b>Primary classroom</b> (ambulant)		49-56m <sup>2</sup> for 12	55m <sup>2</sup>
upper J	<b>Primary classroom</b> (non-ambulant)		58-66m <sup>2</sup> for 6	62m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Primary classroom</b> (severe SEMH)		42-52m <sup>2</sup> for 8	48m <sup>2</sup>
I	<b>Primary classroom</b> (severe autism)		44-53m <sup>2</sup> for 6	48m <sup>2</sup>
<hr/>				
G	<b>Primary practical room</b> (ambulant)	special school (possibly Unit)	22-29m <sup>2</sup> for 4	27m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Primary practical room</b> (non-ambulant)		23-29m <sup>2</sup> for 2	27m <sup>2</sup>
G	<b>Primary food room</b> (ambulant)		22-29m <sup>2</sup> for 4	27m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Primary food room</b> (non-ambulant)		23-29m <sup>2</sup> for 2	27m <sup>2</sup>
upper G	<b>Primary music room</b> (ambulant)		49-56m <sup>2</sup> for 12	55m <sup>2</sup>
upper J	<b>Primary music room</b> (non-ambulant)		58-66m <sup>2</sup> for 6	62m <sup>2</sup>
<hr/>				
upper F	<b>Primary classroom</b> (health)	AP	28-33m <sup>2</sup> for 8	32m <sup>2</sup>
upper G	<b>Primary classroom</b> (behaviour)		37-42m <sup>2</sup> for 8	41m <sup>2</sup>

**Figure 20: Typical primary teaching spaces (basic teaching area) and respective zones.**

Recommended area ranges and standard sizes for typical group sizes are shown; group sizes are indicative, settings will vary.

Zone	Room type	Typical setting	Recommended area range for typical group size	Recommended standard size within range
upper G	<b>Secondary classroom</b> (ambulant)	special school, Unit	49-56m <sup>2</sup> for 12	55m <sup>2</sup>
upper J	<b>Secondary classroom</b> (non-ambulant)		58-66m <sup>2</sup> for 6	62m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Secondary classroom</b> (severe SEMH)		42-52m <sup>2</sup> for 8	48m <sup>2</sup>
I	<b>Secondary classroom</b> (severe autism)		44-53m <sup>2</sup> for 6	48m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Science studio</b> (ambulant)	special school, (possibly Unit)	56-66m <sup>2</sup> for 12	62m <sup>2</sup>
I	<b>Science studio</b> (severe SEMH)		52-62m <sup>2</sup> for 8	58m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Art room</b> (ambulant)		56-66m <sup>2</sup> for 12	62m <sup>2</sup>
I	<b>Art room</b> (severe SEMH)		52-62m <sup>2</sup> for 8	58m <sup>2</sup>
upper I	<b>Secondary food room</b> (ambulant)		72-78m <sup>2</sup> for 12	76m <sup>2</sup>
upper J	<b>Secondary food room</b> (non-ambulant)		58-66m <sup>2</sup> for 6	62m <sup>2</sup>
J	<b>Secondary food room</b> (severe SEMH)		62-75m <sup>2</sup> for 8	69m <sup>2</sup>
upper J	<b>Multi-purpose practical</b> (non-ambulant)		58-66m <sup>2</sup> for 6	62m <sup>2</sup>
upper I	<b>DT workshop</b> (ambulant)	special school	72-78m <sup>2</sup> for 12	76m <sup>2</sup>
J	<b>DT workshop</b> (severe SEMH)		62-75m <sup>2</sup> for 8	69m <sup>2</sup>
upper F	<b>Secondary classroom</b> (health)	AP	28-33m <sup>2</sup> for 8	32m <sup>2</sup>
upper G	<b>Secondary classroom</b> (behaviour)		37-42m <sup>2</sup> for 8	41m <sup>2</sup>
upper G	<b>Art room</b> (health)		37-42m <sup>2</sup> for 8	41m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Art room</b> (behaviour)		42-52m <sup>2</sup> for 8	48m <sup>2</sup>
upper G	<b>Science studio</b> (health)		37-42m <sup>2</sup> for 8	41m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Science studio</b> (behaviour)		42-52m <sup>2</sup> for 8	48m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>Secondary food room</b> (health)		42-52m <sup>2</sup> for 8	48m <sup>2</sup>
I	<b>Secondary food room</b> (behaviour)		52-62m <sup>2</sup> for 8	58m <sup>2</sup>
H	<b>DT workshop</b> (health)		42-52m <sup>2</sup> for 8	48m <sup>2</sup>
I	<b>DT workshop</b> (behaviour)		52-62m <sup>2</sup> for 8	58m <sup>2</sup>

**Figure 21: Typical secondary teaching spaces (basic teaching area) and respective zones.**

Recommended area ranges and standard sizes for typical group sizes are shown; group sizes are indicative, settings will vary.

## 2. Halls, PE, dining and social

This category covers predominantly large spaces for PE and performance, as well as for dining and social activities (for recommended area zones see figures 3 to 14).

Dining together can be an important occasion for pupils with learning difficulties, as well as pupils with social and emotional difficulties, helping to develop social skills and promote independence. For some it can also be a stressful time and in some settings there may be pupils who require privacy - for example those with severe autism or those who have difficulty eating. Where this is the case some enclosure will be needed to break up the dining space (where provided) and some pupils may prefer to eat in their classroom or in a learning resource area. The option to go outside in the summer is an advantage. A few pupils in special schools or Units (or even in AP) may need to be tube-fed; the feed will need to be prepared in hygienic conditions with sterilisation facilities, for example in a medical or nurse's room (see Staff and administration).

Where a dedicated dining room is provided it should allow for:

- tables and chairs for the number of 'covers' (or dining places) and space to access them;
- reasonable space for pupils to queue up to, and in front of, the servery and past checkout facilities (where pupils serve themselves, 'family service' where pupils are served at shared tables is sometimes preferred);
- clearance areas and waste disposal.

The main servery is part of the commercial kitchen area allocation and should be adjacent to the dining area used for hot food diners.

### Halls, PE, dining and social in special schools

The recommended minimum total area for the halls, PE, dining and social category (see figures 3 to 6) can be divided in different ways to suit pupils' needs. But all special schools should accommodate in one or more spaces:

- assemblies (for the whole school in small special schools but key stages in larger schools), examinations (where relevant), public performances, parents' evenings and community events;
- dining;
- PE/ movement.



Most primary-only special schools will have one multi-purpose space for assembly, PE, and dining similarly to a mainstream primary school. If the pupil cohort is such that team games are seldom played and pupils feel uncomfortable dining in a large group, the same area could be divided into two smaller spaces, one for dining and one for PE/movement and assembly; this may occur in a school catering solely for severely autistic pupils.

Ambulant special schools providing secondary provision will usually have two large spaces: either one space for assembly, PE and performance and one space for dining; or one space for PE and one space for assembly, dining, and performance. The minimum recommended area would allow a school to have a minimum hall of 100m<sup>2</sup> and a second space for dining in two sittings.

Non-ambulant special schools providing secondary provision will have either one multi-purpose space or two smaller spaces (one space for assembly, PE and performance and one space for dining). One larger space allows more space for wheelchair users at lunchtime and allows for more space-hungry activities such as trampolining and basketball at other times. If a multi-purpose space is provided the acoustics will need to be designed to suit a wider range of activities and the hall will need to be cleared of furniture after mealtimes. If there are two spaces, some dining could take place in the hall leaving the dining space for pupils who need the most assistance and time.

A space for PE will need a minimum ceiling height of 4.5m, or 5m where there is trampolining.

Special schools with sixth forms will also have a sixth form social space which may be used for dining (meals taken from the main servery or made locally in a kitchenette) as well as life-skills training. The area recommendations for classrooms can be used as a guide (see figure 16); allowance should be made for 50% of pupils being in the room at any one time.

### **Dining in special schools**

The total area of spaces used for dining should allow 1.3m<sup>2</sup> per 'cover' for ambulant pupils and 3 to 4m<sup>2</sup> per 'cover' for non-ambulant pupils. The recommended total areas for halls, PE, dining and social are based on two sittings for ambulant pupils and one sitting for non-ambulant pupils; multiple sittings may not be practical in some special schools.

The time taken to dine must be taken into account when calculating area needs, particularly where pupils require a high level of support. In order to provide an appropriate environment for younger pupils, special schools with both primary and secondary pupils either stagger lunchtime or use two spaces for dining.

In some special schools staff will serve pupils and help them during the meal so it is essential to establish the number of staff likely to be present and to allow for them in the area calculations. There must also be enough space for pupils who use mobility aids to move safely between tables and for those on horizontal learning stations to be accommodated.

## **Halls, PE, dining and social in AP**

AP will usually have a multi-purpose space for assembly, PE and dining. The recommended minimum total area for this category will allow for two lunch sittings; tables would need to be cleared away.

The exception to this is where an AP which accommodates secondary-age pupils with behavioural difficulties has insufficient outdoor space for PE. In these circumstances the recommended minimum total area for this category is higher ( $120+0.6N \text{ m}^2$ ) because pupils with behavioural difficulties tend to require more physical activity. This area allows for an assembly / PE space for physical activities such as table tennis or fitness and a space for dining in two sittings. An alternative approach on a restricted site is to use sports spaces at a nearby school or community sports centre, as long as there is safe access and the travel time has a minimal effect on the rest of the curriculum.

### **Dining in AP**

The total area of spaces used for dining in an AP should allow at least  $0.9\text{m}^2$  per 'cover'. The number of covers should be based on the number of pupils predicted to eat lunch in the hall divided by the number of 'sittings' or equivalent (if continuous flow) in the lunch break.

The time taken to dine must be taken into account when calculating area needs. It is important to note that the recommended area for dining is only sufficient if the lunch time available is at least an hour. This may be achieved by a single lunch break for all pupils or by a 'split lunch' break whereby some pupils work while others have a lunch break.

## **Dining and social in SRP and Units**

Spaces for PE and assembly or a dedicated dining space are not required in SRP or Units, the main school spaces will be used where needed. However, there should be a space available for those pupils who are not able to eat in the main school dining space (this may be up to 50% of pupils). An area of  $0.9\text{m}^2$  to  $1.3\text{m}^2$  per 'cover' should be allowed for ambulant pupils, depending on pupils' needs, or  $3\text{m}^2$  to  $4\text{m}^2$  per 'cover' for non-ambulant pupils. This will not be a dedicated space; it will be used for other activities such as independent learning, meetings or learning life skills. See Learning resource areas.

### 3. Learning resource areas

Learning resource areas are un-timetabled spaces that are particularly important for special schools, AP, SRP and Units because of the amount of individual learning and therapeutic support pupils need. For recommended area zones see figures 3 to 14.

#### Learning resource areas in special schools

The total area for learning resource in any special school should include:

- at least one small group room for every three classrooms (one per classroom for severe autism) to provide quiet, discrete facilities away from the classroom for a pupil to have 'time out' or to work with a teaching assistant, peripatetic teacher or counsellor (zone B for most ambulant pupils, zone C for pupils who need more personal space, zone F for non-ambulant pupils);
- at least one library with a total area of at least 10m<sup>2</sup> plus 0.2m<sup>2</sup> for every pupil place (or the equivalent area added to classrooms if a dispersed provision is more appropriate);
- at least one therapy space for visiting therapists to see pupils and to carry out administrative tasks, 12m<sup>2</sup> for ambulant pupils, 15m<sup>2</sup> for non-ambulant;
- at least one sensory room for light and sound therapy using specialist equipment, to accommodate at least one pupil and one adult (zone F for ambulant and zone G for non-ambulant pupils but dependant on equipment and the school's approach), where there are two sensory rooms one may be a traditional 'dark' room for one-to-one work and one a larger 'immersive' room for small groups.

Additional spaces to suit pupils' particular needs should include:

- for all special schools with ambulant pupils, one quiet/calming room<sup>6</sup> per key stage where one pupil can have 'time out' (zone C, zone D for pupils who may need more space around them), some schools prefer a 'bay' close or adjacent to the classroom rather than an enclosed room;
- for all special schools with primary-age pupils, a soft play room for movement therapy on padded surfaces (size will depend on the type of equipment but typically 20-25m<sup>2</sup>);

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<sup>6</sup> Unlike a small group room these spaces usually have no furniture, any specialist finishes should be agreed with the school.

- for all special schools with non-ambulant pupils, a physiotherapy room (25-30m<sup>2</sup>) and a hydrotherapy pool (85m<sup>2</sup>), see below.

Additional spaces may include:

- a life-skills kitchen, for learning cooking, washing etc in a domestic environment;
- a soft play room in secondary provision;
- additional therapy rooms for use by outside agencies such as occupational or speech therapists, or nursing staff (some therapy suites also serve other schools);
- a group room to support a group with particular needs;
- support spaces for basic teaching rooms, such as a kiln room or a recording room.

### **Physiotherapy**

Although some physiotherapy takes place in the classroom all special schools for pupils with PD or PMLD should have a fully equipped physiotherapy room where school staff and visiting therapists treat pupils. This should be fitted out with a couch, a clinical wash hand basin, ceiling mounted H-framed hoist and a curtained or screened changing area.

### **Hydrotherapy pool**

Hydrotherapy is principally for the treatment and exercise of students with physical and/or sensory disabilities. It is done in a small group or on a one-to-one basis with a physiotherapist or another adult, with supervision provided by an out-of-water adult. A warm water pool is larger than a hydrotherapy pool and has a different water temperature but it is cheaper to build and to run and it can provide for hydrotherapy as well as school group recreational activities.<sup>7</sup> If there is a pool close by to which pupils can be taken, for instance in a co-located special school, this provision can be omitted and the area can be reduced to match, as noted in Annex A.

A typical hydrotherapy suite will have:

- a pool of 24m<sup>2</sup> with a surround of 2-2.5m wide (to ensure safe movement) and a hoist;

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<sup>7</sup> It is not appropriate to use a pool designated for hydrotherapy for general community swimming because of the high risk of pollution, the cost of maintenance and the reduced availability to disabled pupils.

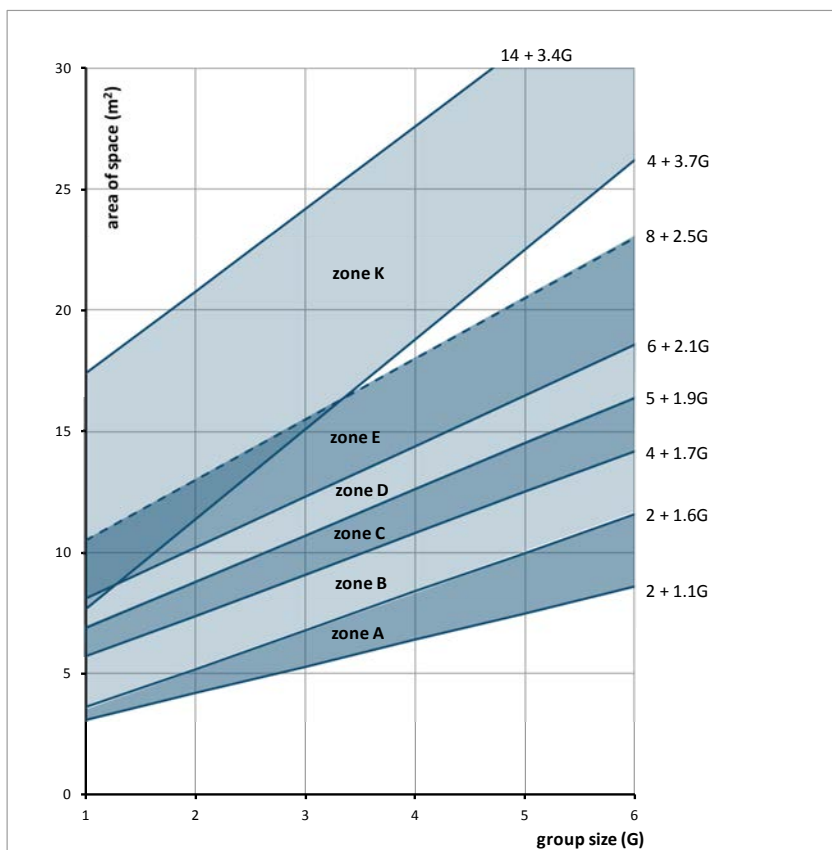
- wet changing areas with direct hoisted access to the pool (see Non-net area);
- a staff changing area;
- a transitional space for pupils to adjust to the difference in temperature between the pool and the rest of the school, this can be part of the changing area.

## Learning resource areas in AP

The total area for learning resource in any AP should include:

- at least one small group room for every pair of classrooms to provide quiet, discrete facilities away from the classroom for a small number of pupils to work with a teaching assistant, peripatetic teacher or counsellor, or to have quiet time/ calm down (zone B, typically 10m<sup>2</sup> for up to four pupils);
- at least one therapy space for visiting therapists to see pupils, this can have other use as an office space (around 12m<sup>2</sup>).

Figure 22 shows the zones of recommended area that suit various types of small space within learning resource area. Figure 23 shows the most common types of space in the learning resource areas category and their respective recommended standard size, where applicable.



**Figure 22: Zones for small spaces in all educational settings**

Graph showing zones of recommended area that can be applied to small spaces within learning resource areas or staff and administration spaces. Room sizes can be calculated using the formulae shown. The top of each zone denotes the recommended maximum area, the bottom (or in some cases the mid-point) represents the minimum area. The standard size is generally near the top of the zone.

## Learning resource areas in SRP and Units

The total area for learning resource in any SRP or Unit should include a therapy space where pupils receive support relevant to their needs, for example hearing aid checks for HI pupils or physiotherapy for PD pupils. Most SRP and Units will also have at least one small group room for one-to-one learning, individual quiet time and small group working. In a Unit there will generally be one small group room for every 2 to 3 classrooms but one per classroom for pupils with autism.

Where there are pupils with autism any SRP or Unit should also have (in addition to the therapy and small group rooms):

- one quiet/calming room or sensory room;
- a space where pupils who feel uncomfortable using the main school dining room can have lunch, this will not be a dedicated space but have other uses for learning and meetings.

Where there are pupils with PD or VI any SRP or Unit should also have (in addition to the therapy and small group rooms):

- a life skills room for occupational therapy, and where PD pupils can eat/be fed if they need privacy (zone H, typically 25m<sup>2</sup> for 2 pupils).

In addition to the above, most SRP will have one group room for each support class group, assuming no more than 75% of pupils will be in the provision at any one time (zone F for ambulant pupils and zone H for physically disabled pupils). The exact nature of the group room will vary depending on pupils' needs. For example, there may be one group room providing a base where 20 VI pupils can work with their specialist IT equipment or there may be a number of group rooms where HI pupils have support teaching in groups of 6 to 12. A Unit will have classrooms (see Basic teaching) but may also have group rooms.

Note: Group rooms and small group rooms aren't always in a suite; they may be dispersed around the school. Some schools may choose to add the equivalent area to some of the main school's classrooms. However, there will usually be a 'base' for pupils in the SRP or Unit.

Zone	Room type	Typical setting	Recommended standard size
B	<b>Small group room</b> (ambulant)	special school, SRP, Unit, AP	10m <sup>2</sup> for 4
C	<b>Small group room</b> (severe SEMH)		7m <sup>2</sup> for one
F	<b>Small group room</b> (non-ambulant)		12m <sup>2</sup> for 2
D	<b>Quiet/ calming room</b> (severe autism)		8m <sup>2</sup> for one
D	<b>Therapy room</b> (ambulant)		12m <sup>2</sup> for 4
F	<b>Therapy room</b> (non-ambulant)		15m <sup>2</sup>
<hr/>			
F	<b>Sensory room</b> (ambulant)	special school, SRP, Unit	13-16m <sup>2</sup>
G	<b>Sensory room:</b> (non-ambulant)		16-23m <sup>2</sup>
F	<b>Life-skills room</b> (ambulant):		18m <sup>2</sup> for 3
H	<b>Life-skills room</b> (non-ambulant)		25m <sup>2</sup> for 2
<hr/>			
N/A	<b>Library</b> (ambulant)	special school	varies
N/A	<b>Library</b> (non-ambulant)		varies
N/A	<b>Soft play room</b> (ambulant/non-ambulant)		20-25m <sup>2</sup>
N/A	<b>Physiotherapy room</b> (non-ambulant)		25-30m <sup>2</sup>
N/A	<b>Hydrotherapy room</b> (ambulant/ non-ambulant)		85m <sup>2</sup> (24m <sup>2</sup> pool)
<hr/>			
F	<b>Group room</b> (ambulant)	SRP	27m <sup>2</sup> for 6
G	<b>Group room</b> (autism)		34m <sup>2</sup> for 6
G	<b>Group room</b> (VI)		48m <sup>2</sup> for 10
H	<b>Group room</b> (PD)		41m <sup>2</sup> for 6

**Figure 23: Typical spaces in learning resource area**

Recommended standard sizes for typical group sizes are shown; group sizes are indicative, settings will vary.



## 4. Staff and administration

The total area for staff and administration comprises most non-teaching areas within the net area except stores (for recommended area zones see figures 3 to 14). Figure 22 shows recommended area zones that apply to staff and administration spaces.

### Staff and administration in special schools and AP

The total staff and administration area for a special school or AP should include:

- a general office (zone K) for administrative staff, with storage for confidential records in FF&E, a reception desk onto the reception area, and the option of a second reception desk onto a part of the school open to pupils;
- a secure reception area for visitors, with access to the rest of the school controlled by the office staff (this net area is for seating and display, over and above the circulation space through the entrance/ reception space);
- an interview room (zone A), ideally accessed from the entrance foyer or reception area, along with an accessible visitors' toilet, so that they can be used by visitors without them entering the main school;
- a headteacher's office of about 15m<sup>2</sup>;
- a meeting/training room (zone C) for case meetings, staff training, etc;
- a parents' room (zone C) which could also be used as a second meeting room;
- preparation and social space for teaching staff, usually in the form of a central staff room for work and social use including a kitchenette (zone C).

And may also include:

- offices for other senior teaching staff (zone C), such as the deputy head or bursar, who may need privacy for interviews and pastoral support (special schools and larger AP);
- an office base for visiting therapists typically provided in special schools (zone C);
- separate reprographic facilities, if they are not in the general office or staff room;
- an office/workshop for a facilities manager or caretaker (zone E), typically provided in all non-ambulant special schools;
- an office/ workshop for an ICT technician (zone E).

The total staff and administration area for a special school or AP should also include facilities for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and for the short term care of sick and injured pupils<sup>8</sup>. This will typically comprise either:

- a sick bay or sick room for pupils waiting to be collected, near to the main office and a toilet, to include a washing facility and;
- a medical treatment room (15 to 20m<sup>2</sup>) for the treatment and care of pupils, to have a lockable fridge and easy access to an accessible WC;

or (for example where pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties):

- a medical treatment room (15 to 20m<sup>2</sup>) for the treatment and care of pupils but also functioning as a sick room, to have a lockable fridge and easy access to an accessible WC and;
- a nurse's base (usually linked to the treatment room) for preparing gastro tube feed with a wash hand basin (and secure storage for drugs, if dispensed from here).

Where there are non-ambulant pupils medical rooms should have a ceiling mounted H-framed hoist

## **Staff and administration in SRP and Units**

SRP or Units should only require a staff work room (zone D) and in larger settings there may also be a staff office (zone C). Where pupils (such as those with VI) require significant technical support, a staff work room will be used for maintaining equipment and creating specialist resources. As SRP and Units are small settings, each space needs to be used effectively. For example, a staff work room is likely to be used also by visiting therapists. Because staff in the SRP or Unit will also use staff facilities in the main school it is important to take them into account when calculating accommodation for the whole school site.

Figure 24 shows the most common types of space within the staff and administration area and their recommended standard size.

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<sup>8</sup> as required by the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012

Zone	Name and description	Typical setting	Recommended standard size
C	<b>Office (only):</b> for one or more members of staff, with administrative storage	special school, AP, SRP, Unit	7m <sup>2</sup> for one, 9m <sup>2</sup> for 2
D	<b>Staff work room:</b> space for staff to work and meet		varies
A	<b>Interview room:</b> off reception area to meet visitor(s) without the need to access the main school	special school, AP	6m <sup>2</sup> for 3
N/A	<b>Sick bay:</b> semi-open bay for pupils who are feeling unwell		4m <sup>2</sup>
N/A	<b>Sick room:</b> enclosed room for pupils who are feeling unwell		6m <sup>2</sup>
K	<b>General office:</b> main office for administrative staff, with reception desk for visitors, off entrance/ reception area		varies
D	<b>Head's office (meeting room):</b> office for headteacher and meetings of staff, visitors or other adults		15m <sup>2</sup> for head and 4 visitors
E	<b>Office/workshop:</b> for facilities or ICT manager		varies
B	<b>Staff room (social):</b> main space for staff to meet and socialise		varies
C	<b>Staff room (prep and social):</b> main space for staff to work, meet and socialise		varies
C	<b>Meeting/training room:</b> for meetings of staff, outside agencies and parents (especially review meetings) and staff training		varies
C	<b>Parents room:</b> for informal meetings		varies
N/A	<b>Medical treatment room:</b> for the treatment and care of pupils		15-20m <sup>2</sup>
N/A	<b>Nurse's base:</b> for the care of pupils and for admin tasks	special school	15-20m <sup>2</sup>

**Figure 24: Typical spaces in staff and administration area**

Recommended standard sizes are shown

## 5. Storage

The total area for storage for all settings includes storage for teaching materials and equipment, and pupils' work. It is important that defined teaching storage is provided to avoid compromising the usable area and flexibility of the teaching spaces. The total storage area also includes non-teaching storage for pupils' belongings, administrative resources, pupils' records and cleaning and maintenance equipment. There will also be storage for mobility equipment which in a non-ambulant school can be extensive. For recommended total storage area see figures 3 to 14.

### Storage in special schools and AP

#### Teaching storage

The total storage area for any special school or AP should include the following teaching storage (additional to that provided in furniture), easily accessible for staff but not pupils, ideally directly from the teaching space:

- classrooms: full height, lockable storage of 1m<sup>2</sup> to 3m<sup>2</sup> for every classroom depending on needs, for teaching resources and (where relevant) therapy equipment;
- practical rooms: walk-in stores for materials, equipment and pupils' work-in-progress in subjects such as science, design and technology and art (5m<sup>2</sup> for each practical teaching room except science and design and technology in some secondary provision, see below);
- music: at least one instrument store for each school/AP of at least 5m<sup>2</sup>;
- indoor PE: equipment store totalling at least 10% of the area of the space used for PE.

Where there are secondary places, the total storage area should also include:

- science: where pupils are working towards a mainstream curriculum, a preparation/ storage space of at least 8m<sup>2</sup>, with dedicated cupboards for chemicals including a fire-proof cupboard for highly flammable liquids, where activities require the use of chemicals<sup>9</sup>;
- design and technology: where pupils are working towards a mainstream curriculum, storage for materials and tools of at least 8m<sup>2</sup> and where materials are

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<sup>9</sup> Refer to CLEAPSS guidance on the storage of chemicals.

prepared on site a preparation room of at least 12m<sup>2</sup> to safely accommodate machinery;

- food: a store room for dry goods, equipment and pupils' completed dishes of at least 5m<sup>2</sup> for each food room;
- drama: a store for costumes and props of at least 8m<sup>2</sup>;
- outdoor PE: a store with external access, ideally near to outdoor PE facilities (in special schools this may include bike storage);
- therapy: storage for resources associated with therapy spaces (some of which may be in furniture).

### **Non-teaching storage**

Non-teaching storage should include:

- coat and bag storage for pupils' personal belongings, 0.1m<sup>2</sup> per place or 0.2m<sup>2</sup> per place if pupils need more personal space;
- storage space for mobility equipment, 1.5m<sup>2</sup> per floor for any school or AP with additional area for non-ambulant special schools, see below;
- storage for medical supplies, some of which may need refrigeration;
- secure storage for valuable items such as school and personal records, archives or examination papers (where relevant, to meet examination board requirements);
- central storage for bulk stock, such as pens or paper;
- storage for maintenance equipment, and cleaners' and caretaker's equipment;
- furniture storage for chairs, tables and staging, and for dining furniture when the hall is used for dining, exam furniture may also be stored on site.

Non-teaching storage will also need to include:

- where there are non-ambulant pupils, space to store mobility equipment (6 + 1.5N);
- where pupils use specialist equipment such as braille readers or radio aids, space to store equipment when not in use (pupils' needs will have to be assessed);
- where there is a pool, storage for chemicals (special schools only);

- where there are pupils with severe medical needs, safe storage of oxygen cylinders<sup>10</sup>.

The type and location of coat and bag storage will need to meet the age and needs of pupils. For example a store room or bay directly off a classroom is sometimes preferred because pupils feel more comfortable being able to see their possessions. The storage area must be additional to the classroom area and to the circulation space needed to access the coats. For secondary pupils, the storage may be in lockers which take up less area if stacked 3 or 4 units high (0.075m<sup>2</sup> per pupil place). Space must be allowed to open the locker doors.

The storage space required for mobility equipment is considerable in some special schools, many non-ambulant pupils have up to three pieces of equipment that they change between throughout the day either to suit an activity or for medical reasons. Whilst the majority of the storage space will be adjacent to those classrooms accommodating non-ambulant pupils, there should also be 'parking' space around the school so that, for example, a pupil can change equipment before a practical lesson. There may also need to be storage near the entrance so that pupils can change equipment on arrival at school and central long term storage for spare equipment. There needs to be a facility to charge up electric wheelchairs.

## **Storage in SRP and Units**

The total storage area in SRP or Units should include:

- full height, lockable storage of 1m<sup>2</sup> to 3m<sup>2</sup>, depending on needs, for every classroom or group room, for teaching resources and equipment;
- coat and bag storage (only if the pupils register there) of at least 0.1m<sup>2</sup> per place or 0.2m<sup>2</sup> per place if pupils need more personal space;
- storage for any specialist equipment associated with a pupil's particular needs such as mobility equipment or specialist IT equipment.

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<sup>10</sup>Refer to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for guidance on the storage and use of oxygen.

## Non-net area

The non-net area comprises the three categories of space listed below, plus non-net areas needed to support any supplementary net area:

1. Toilets and personal care - this will depend on the number of pupil places and pupils' particular hygiene needs; in special schools accommodating non-ambulant pupils these facilities can take up considerable area which must be allowed for.
2. Kitchen facilities - this will depend on the type of catering arrangements, any special dietary needs and any additional community activities; SRP or Units will not have a dedicated commercial kitchen.
3. Circulation, plant and internal walls - this will generally be directly proportional to the net area, so it is important to include any supplementary net area in the total net area before calculating the requirement for these areas.

## Toilets and personal care

The total area of toilet and personal care facilities must include the following toilet provision:

- for special schools, SRP and Units where pupils are less independent, and for pupils aged two to four in any setting, approximately one fitting for every 10 (full-time equivalent) pupil places in total (where hygiene rooms are provided all but one of these can be counted towards this number);
- for any setting where pupils are independent and aged five years and above, one fitting for every 20 pupils in total;
- for all settings, at least one accessible toilet for disabled pupils per floor;
- where there is a hydrotherapy pool, one accessible toilet adjacent to the pool;
- for all settings, separate toilets for staff comprising at least one toilet with wash hand basin plus one for every 25 full-time equivalent members of staff (not including catering staff) rounded up, see the Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992, Approved Code of Practice and Guidance, L24;
- for all settings, at least one accessible toilet for staff or visitors (which may also count towards the number of staff toilets above).

Hygiene rooms should be provided as follows:

- for non-ambulant special schools or Units, one hygiene room for every 12 non-ambulant pupil places with fixed hoist, a changing bed, a wash hand basin, an accessible WC and accessible shower (if the changing bed doesn't incorporate one) and space for assistants to change a pupil; for ambulant special schools and AP, one hygiene room per setting with fixed or mobile hoist, a changing bed, a wash hand basin and an accessible WC (alternatively the WC can be adjacent and separately accessed).

There should be enough fittings in any setting to ensure they are easily accessible, particularly where pupils need assistance with their personal care or are learning to be more independent. In a suite for severely autistic pupils there may need to be more toilets to ensure there is one immediately adjacent to a classroom. Accessible toilets for pupils may need to be provided within each key stage area (ideally alongside standard toilets). All accessible toilets must meet the travel distances and access requirements of ADM.

Facilities should also be of the right size, fewer well-placed rooms of the right size work better than an over-provision of undersized rooms. Facilities must also suit the age of the pupils. The following can be used as a guide to the size of a hygiene room:

- a changing bed against the wall with wash hand basin (primary only) - 7m<sup>2</sup>;
- a changing bed against the wall with wash hand basin and accessible WC (primary only) - 9m<sup>2</sup>;
- a changing bed against the wall, an accessible WC and accessible shower (this is only suitable for AP, ambulant special schools or if there are other larger hygiene rooms) - 12m<sup>2</sup>;
- a peninsular changing bed (so that staff can support a pupil on each side) and an accessible WC - 15m<sup>2</sup>;
- a peninsular changing bed, an accessible WC and an accessible shower - 20m<sup>2</sup>;

All hygiene rooms should have either a sluice or some other facility for dealing with waste (to suit the school's arrangements) and storage for pads, spare clothing etc.

Changing rooms should be provided near to indoor, and ideally outdoor, sports provision as follows:

- in special schools and AP with pupils in Year 7 and above, changing rooms for one class group (equal and separate facilities for boys and girls in co-educational



settings) with about one shower for every seven pupils generally in the form of separate cubicles;

- in special schools and AP with pupils in Year 7 and above, at least one accessible changing area with a sanitary fitting, wash hand basin and shower (if this is a separate space it may also be used by staff);
- in special schools, two changing rooms with shower for individual staff, associated with the PE space.

In special schools with a pool there must be assisted changing facilities for up to three disabled pupils as well as facilities for ambulant and independent wheelchair users. There must be a ceiling-mounted hoist leading directly from the assisted changing room to the pool. Arrangements will vary, there may be one 'dry' changing room for before using the pool and one 'wet' room for afterwards (a total area of at least 30m<sup>2</sup> will be needed). There should also be two changing rooms with shower for individual staff next to the pool.

Some of the spaces listed above may be designed to allow facilities appropriate to:

- use outside the school day;
- particular religious requirements, including orientation and ablutions.

## **Kitchen facilities in special schools and AP**

Where a commercial kitchen is provided, the total kitchen area should include:

- facilities for preparing food and drink, and washing up afterwards, where needed;
- food store rooms;
- facilities for catering staff, including changing areas, toilets and a workstation for administration;
- a main servery serving hot food and other items (to be able to accommodate wheelchair users).

The size of the core preparation area will depend on the equipment needed, which in turn will depend on the type of preparation system to be used that ranges from traditional, through cook-chill to pre-prepared 'fast food'. The minimum recommended area for a full service kitchen is 35m<sup>2</sup> + 0.08m<sup>2</sup> for every pupil dining on site, 15m<sup>2</sup> + 0.06m<sup>2</sup> per pupil place for cook-chill. The area may need to be higher where special diets are being prepared. There should be easy access for deliveries and a secure site for bins.

## Circulation, plant and internal walls

### Circulation

The circulation area should be at least the following (this also applies to supplementary area where relevant):

- for all AP, SRP and Units (except settings for pupils with PD) 22.5% of the total net area;
- for SRP and Units for pupils with PD, 25% of the total net area;
- for ambulant special schools, 27% of the total net area;
- for non-ambulant special schools, 32% of the total net area.

Within this area:

- all rooms should be accessed from a circulation route, except store rooms and (where appropriate) toilet and hygiene facilities that are accessed directly from learning spaces;
- where the provision is mainly for ambulant pupils, corridors leading to more than two classrooms should have a minimum clear width of 1.8m or 2m if pupils need more 'personal' space;
- where there are pupils who use mobility aids or need assistance from support workers (such as a pupil with visual impairment), corridors leading to more than two classrooms should have a minimum clear width of 2.2m (minimum clear width of 1.8m wall to wall is the minimum for wheelchair users to pass safely in different directions, 2.2m allows staff to turn a wheelchair 180°);<sup>11</sup>
- where there is an access route through a space, such as a dining area, a 'strip' of circulation at least 1.5m wide should be discounted from the usable net area, 1.8m in a non-ambulant special school.

In a non-ambulant special school corridors should allow for the movement of mobility equipment including horizontal learning stations, especially around corners and in/out of storage areas. There must also be sufficient circulation space for pupils (including those in wheelchairs) to move safely between their classrooms/hall and their transport at the

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<sup>11</sup> See ADM: Access to and Use of Buildings

start and finish of the school day, avoiding congestion - safety is paramount, since this can be a particularly stressful time for some pupils.

Special schools should ideally be single storey to make circulation easier for pupils using mobility aids, or for those who need assistance or close supervision from staff. Where an upper floor is unavoidable staircases should be of sufficient width to allow:

- staff to assist a pupil from both sides;
- an evacuation chair or other equipment to take someone downstairs in case of fire;
- refuge and landing space, to meet ADM.

In addition, lifts will need to be able to accommodate a child plus their mobility equipment and accompanying staff.

### **Plant**

In special schools and AP an area equivalent to at least 2% of the total net area will be needed to accommodate boiler rooms and a server room, as well as hub rooms and vertical ducts. Further area will generally be needed if ventilation plant, chimneys or sprinkler tanks are included in the gross area of the building. In a special school with a pool, area for pool plant and chemical storage will be additional.

In SRP and Units the area required will be less because the main plant will be in the main school.

### **Internal walls**

The area of internal walls will occupy an area equivalent to at least 3% of the net area, and up to 6%, if the walls are thicker due to existing or different forms of construction.

## **Supplementary area**

In special schools and AP, supplementary area may be added for non-school functions such as community activities that require additional area. There are three types of spaces that fall within the category of supplementary area:

- area to accommodate the enhancement of a setting's facilities, this will include spaces which have been enlarged beyond the recommended 'standard', for instance to allow for extensive specialist equipment;

- area to accommodate extra support facilities, this will include separate spaces available to others as well as to the setting for specific uses, such as a second pool in a special school or a counselling centre in an AP;
- community provision, this is separate space not normally available to the setting, for example facilities for adult education during the day.

It is important to note that a dedicated, additional funding stream needs to be identified for any supplementary area unless that area already exists in appropriate accommodation.

SRP and Units are defined as supplementary to mainstream schools.

## Part B: The site

This part of the guide sets out how to establish the site area requirements for a special school. Guidance is also given for AP, SRP and Units but neither area requirements nor a detailed breakdown by category of space is included for these settings which are highly varied with less distinction between different types of space than in a school.

The site area is divided into three sections:

- **Net site area**, which is the usable site area available to pupils;
- **Non-net site area**, which supports the functioning of the site and includes the footprint of buildings and access areas such as paths, roads and parking;
- **Supplementary area**, which is used for community functions such as extended horticulture facilities or to support supplementary buildings such as residential facilities.

The gross or total site area is the total of the net and non-net site area. In a special school, the percentage of non-net area taken up by access areas will be far greater than in a mainstream school because most pupils arrive onto the site by vehicle, see Non-net site area. In SRP and Units pupils will share most of their outdoor facilities with the main school; it is important to allow for the pupil places in the SRP and Units when calculating the requirements for the whole school.

### Net site area

The net site area, also known as the playing field land in [Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#) 'protection of school playing fields'<sup>12</sup>, can be divided into:

- outdoor PE;
- informal and social areas;
- habitat areas.

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<sup>12</sup> See guidance at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/protection-of-school-playing-fields-and-public-land-advice](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protection-of-school-playing-fields-and-public-land-advice).

## Net site area in special schools

For special schools, the categories of net site area can be further divided into:

- soft outdoor PE;
- hard outdoor PE;
- soft informal and social areas;
- hard informal and social areas;
- habitat.

The graphs in figures 25 and 26 show the zones for each category of external space, for special schools. The difference between the two graphs is in the recommended PE area; figure 25 applies where space for formal team games is not required, such as in a special school with a high percentage of non-ambulant pupils or a school accommodating only KS1 pupils. Figure 26 applies where space for formal team games, including a pitch, is required. The top of each zone is the recommended maximum net area for the category, and the bottom is the recommended minimum net area. Each is calculated for the number of pupil places by using the formulae shown in the graphs and Annex B. The graphs also show the recommended minimum and maximum total net area, and the likely range of gross area needed. The minimum gross area formulae allow for a single storey building, which is generally preferable for a special school. An area below the minimum is possible on a constrained site if a two storey building is acceptable, given pupils' needs.

Outdoor spaces in special schools are far more varied than in mainstream schools, reflecting the broad range of pupils' needs. For some schools horticultural activities are an important part of the curriculum, for others outdoor PE is the most important activity. For some schools there may also be little distinction between the formal and informal curriculum and between learning and play. For this reason the recommended area ranges are wider than in mainstream schools and the categories need to be used flexibly, although the minimum recommended for each category should be achieved.

Where a special school is on a restricted site a flexible approach must be taken to the provision and management of the area available, priority should be given to those spaces that are most important to the particular needs of the pupils in the setting. Where it is appropriate pupils can access suitable off-site PE provision.

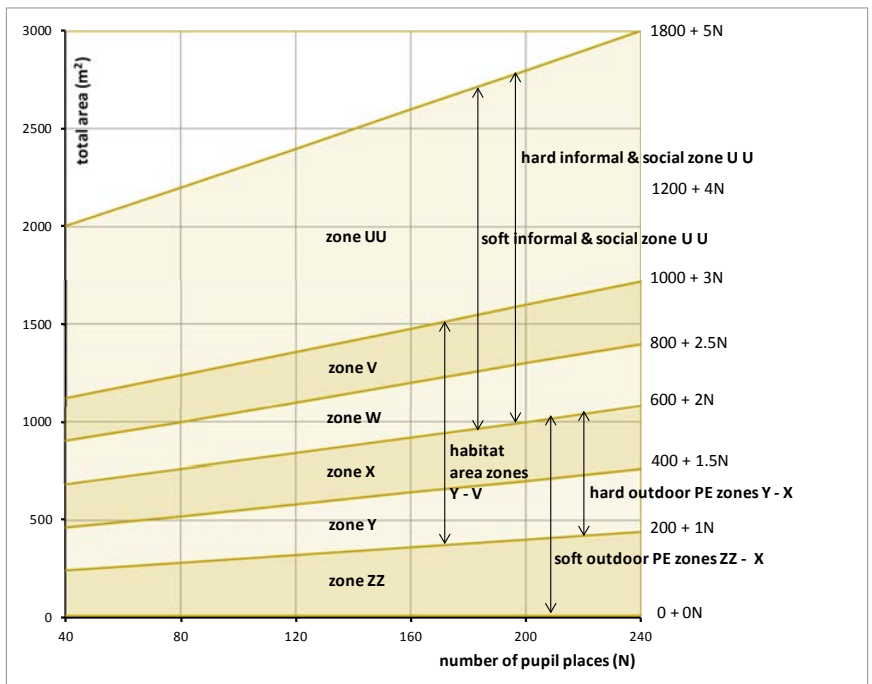
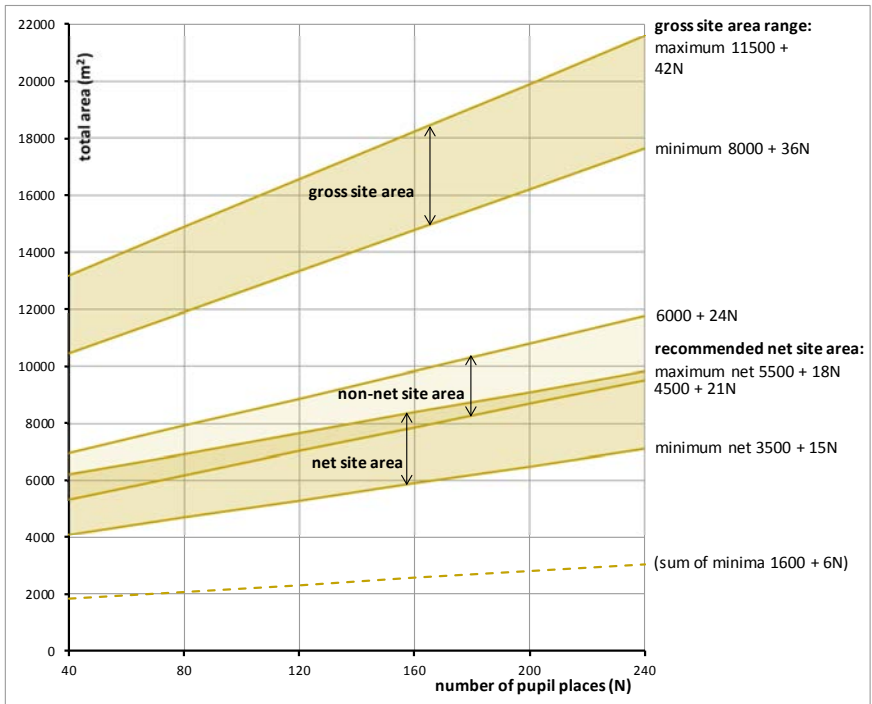
Security and safety are particularly important on special school sites; pupils may be less aware of dangers or more vulnerable to their environment. Outdoor spaces should provide good sightlines, with no hidden spaces. Some areas will need to be fenced off (in

addition to the perimeter fencing); noisy, busy areas should be separate from quieter, sheltered spaces. Where there are less mobile or non-ambulant pupils there must be:

- accessible routes, with shelter for more vulnerable pupils;
- safe and wheelchair-accessible surfaces, with safe changes in level or transitions between surfaces;
- wide paths (ADM and BS8300 require 1500mm and 1800mm for busy routes with passing places as required).

School staff should be consulted to ensure that outdoor areas are suitably placed in relation to the building. For instance, some pupils may be easily distracted if their classroom overlooks external activities.

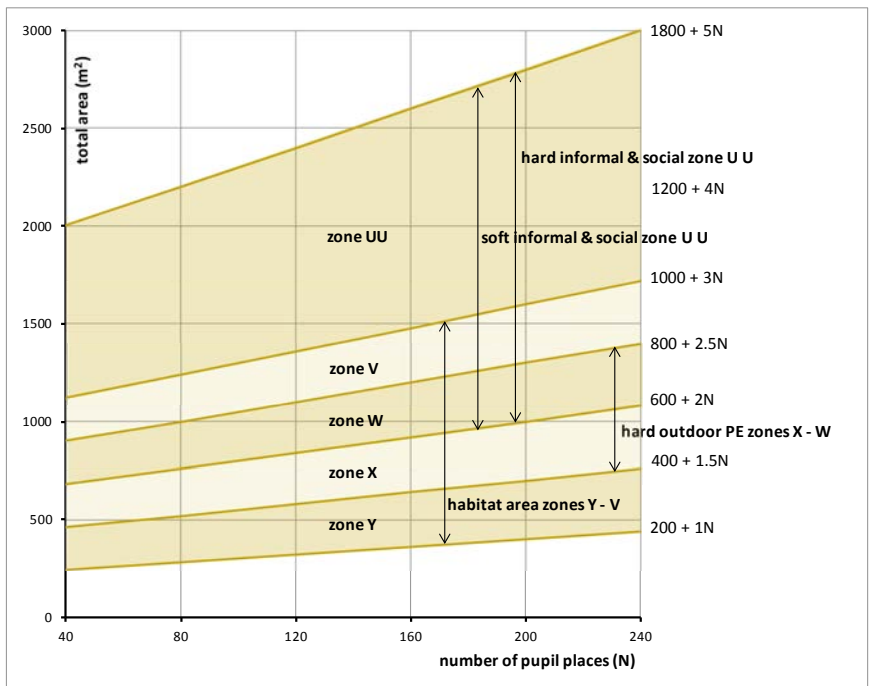
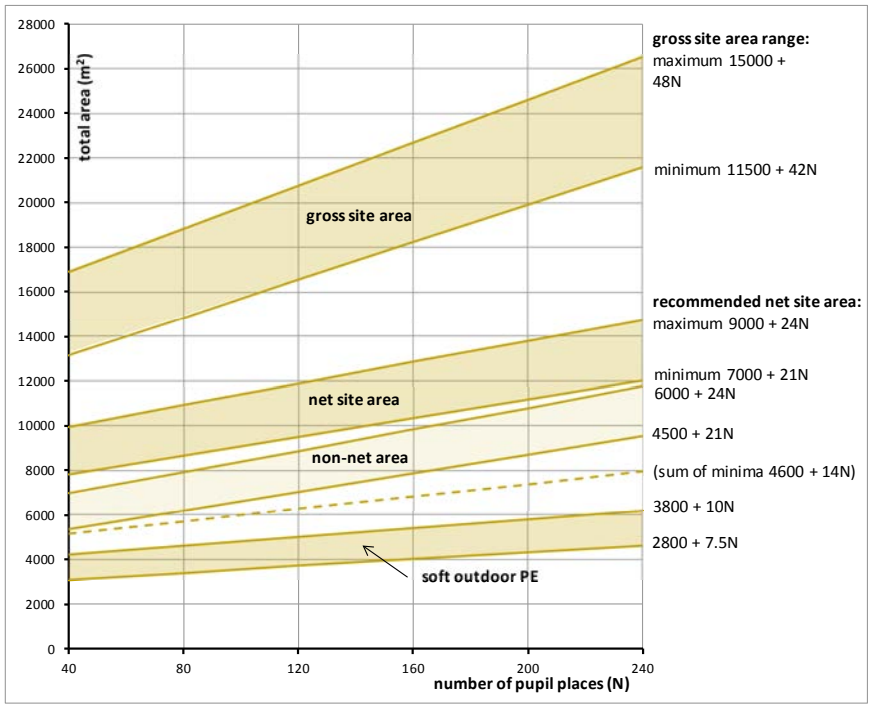
Storage will be needed for PE and play equipment, possibly including bicycles (see Storage).



**Figure 25: Gross and net external areas for special schools without team games.**

The **top** graph shows a 'zone' recommending the net site area, with the related formulae. It also shows the likely total site area as a proportion of the net site area. The bottom and top of each zone denote the recommended total site minimum and maximum areas. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for hard outdoor PE area, soft outdoor PE area, soft informal and social area, hard informal and social area and habitat area. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.





**Figure 26: Gross and net external areas for special schools with team games.**

The **top** graph shows 'zones' recommending the net site area and soft outdoor PE area, with the related formulae. It also shows the likely total site area as a proportion of the net site area. The bottom and top of each zone denotes the recommended minimum and maximum areas. The **bottom** graph shows zones recommending the area and related formulae for hard outdoor PE area, soft informal and social area, hard informal and social area and habitat area. Note that the scale of the 'total area' axis is different in the two graphs.

## Outdoor PE in special schools

Many pupils in special schools can take part in team games and other activities similarly to pupils at mainstream schools. Some will take part in simplified games for developing throwing, catching and jumping skills. For some pupils including those with severe autism team games may not be appropriate. Provision should be geared towards the pupils at the school.

### Soft outdoor PE

The total area of soft-surfaced outdoor PE could include, depending on pupils needs:

- an athletics track;
- other soft-surfaced facilities such as trim trails and bicycle tracks.

Where formal team games are played, the total area of soft-surfaced outdoor PE (figure 26) will include, in addition:

- a sports pitch laid out to suit team games, such as football.

The minimum of the zone for soft outdoor PE allows for a 2000m<sup>2</sup> sports pitch, the upper part of the zone allows for a broader range of facilities.

For those schools for which a sports pitch is not appropriate - such as a special school with a high percentage of non-ambulant pupils or a school accommodating only KS1 pupils - the area for soft outdoor PE will be less, and may be none (figure 25).

Where pitches are provided, all-weather surfaces such as synthetic turf allow more intensive use than grass<sup>13</sup> and can also, particularly with floodlighting, offer a popular community resource ([Sport England, 2012: Artificial Surfaces for Outdoor Sport](#)).

It is important that where pitches are provided they are designed and constructed so that wheelchair users can access them. All-weather surfaces are easier for wheelchair users to move across than grass pitches.

The location, size and shape of grassed and all weather outdoor PE areas should be based on a number of considerations including the statutory requirements, safety considerations, gradient, orientation of pitches and accessibility.

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<sup>13</sup> The area of all-weather pitches can be counted twice for the purposes of both these guidelines and [section 77](#) applications, as they can be used for significantly more hours per week than grass pitches.

## **Hard outdoor PE**

Where formal team games are played, the total area of hard surfaced outdoor PE will include:

- a porous macadam multi-use games area (MUGA)

Laying out a variety of courts within a single MUGA makes supervision easier and extends the range of games. A MUGA of 18m x 33m overall with 1-1.5m margins allows for basketball (15m x 28m) netball (15.25m x 30.5m) and football.

Where a formal team games area is not suited to pupils' needs, for example where most pupils are non-ambulant or severely autistic, a hard surfaced area should still be provided for other PE activities.

Health and safety risk assessments will be necessary to decide on the locations and the surfaces of courts and pitches, and areas must allow for safe run-offs.

## **Informal and social areas in special schools**

A variety of informal and social areas should be created to suit the learning development and cultural needs of pupils as part of the informal curriculum and for play and social activities during breaks as well as before and after the school day. These areas can also be where pupils come to have some quiet time or to calm down if they feel distressed or anxious. Safety is paramount, stepped and sloped areas that may be provided in mainstream schools may not be suitable even for some ambulant pupils.

### **Soft informal and social areas**

The total area could include:

- soft-surfaced areas, such as grass, sand or bark mulch, for play, or to sit and socialise;
- shrubs or planted areas (additional to the landscaped areas not available as social space)
- meadowland or woodland, where there is space available and passive supervision is possible.

The soft-surfaced areas should be conveniently situated, safe, and provide some shade and shelter. There should be hard-surfaced routes through the areas suitable for wheelchair users. Plants must not be poisonous because some pupils will not understand that they should not be eaten.

## **Hard informal and social areas**

To complement the soft informal and social areas, there should be: hard-surfaced playgrounds for healthy, creative outdoor play; fenced areas as extensions to classrooms or practical spaces; and places for learning activities such as music, theatre and (where appropriate) dance. Hard surfaced areas are particularly suitable for wheelchair users.

The recommended area zone for hard informal and social area is wide, reflecting the range of pupils' needs, but for any special school this area should include:

- space to play (including for wheelchair users) as well as space to run and kick a ball;
- social spaces to sit and talk, or quiet places to be alone, with fixed seating and wheelchair space alongside;
- outdoor space directly accessible from nursery and reception classrooms (and where appropriate for older pupils who benefit from 'cooling off' outdoors), a part of which should be covered to provide shade and some protection from light rain.

The total area may also include:

- areas with fixed adventure and play equipment with safety surfaces;
- for secondary-age pupils, places for vocational learning such as vehicle washing;
- for non-ambulant pupils, routes laid out for mobility training with safe simulations of hazards that pupils might meet outside school to help them to develop independence skills.

There may be a need to separate boisterous activities from quieter sheltered spaces for more vulnerable pupils. Paths, fencing and gates can be used to divide areas, to add variety and help with supervision. In some cases outdoor spaces directly outside classrooms will need to be fenced off for safety reasons. Access control, as well as fencing positions and heights, should be agreed with the school.

The type and amount of sensory stimulus and play equipment will vary according to needs and should be discussed with staff. There should be adequate space around play equipment and safety surfaces for soft landings. 'Furniture' can be created through the introduction of natural materials that blend into the landscaping.

## **Habitat areas in special schools**

Habitat areas include any soft-surfaced outdoor spaces that are used under supervision as a valuable resource for teaching and learning. The natural features of

any site can provide a rich resource for learning across the curriculum; the choice of plants in these areas is important.

For any special school the total habitat area should include grounds developed for a range of supervised activities, for instance:

- meadowland, wildlife habitats (such as ponds), gardens, nature trails, sensory planting;
- vegetable gardens and greenhouses, which can be important resources for older pupils as part of vocational courses;
- outdoor science areas to support the curriculum.

Where there are non-ambulant pupils there should also be:

- raised planters for pupils using wheelchairs and other mobility aids;
- accessible greenhouses.

The recommended area zone for habitat is wide because provision will vary depending on the school's curriculum and the natural opportunities of the site. A secondary special school that specialises in vocational courses may have extensive horticultural facilities; another school may make use of existing wooded areas to establish covered outdoor classrooms or nature trails. Habitat areas should be fenced to avoid unsupervised access and designed to support effective supervision. Appropriate sightlines and security are essential to avoid pupils straying and to provide protection from unauthorised visitors.

Parts of this area may be designed to be developed over time by the staff, pupils and parents.

## **Net site area in AP**

The external area for AP will vary greatly depending on location and may be minimal in an urban setting. It is important to make best use of the available space and to meet pupils' particular needs. Outdoor spaces should provide for social and recreational activity and where possible physical education. For older pupils sheltered outdoor space can complement indoor vocational learning space for courses such as construction.

## **Outdoor PE in AP**

PE activities can develop social skills, teamwork and understanding risks. However it may not be suitable for all pupils.

For secondary provision, typical provision could comprise a multi-use games areas (MUGA) of 18x 33m overall with 1 to 1.5m margins which allows for basketball (15 x 28m) netball (15.25 x 30.5m) and football. Storage will also be needed (see Storage). For a Primary-only AP where there may not be space for a MUGA, shared use is often arranged with a nearby primary school.

For pupils with behavioural difficulties soft surfaced outdoor PE could include (where space is available) sports pitches laid out to suit team games such as football, athletics tracks, trim trails or bike tracks. A grass pitch for 5-a-side football is 18.5m to 28m x 30m to 40m. If a site for an AP which accommodates secondary-age pupils with behavioural difficulties is very constrained the internal PE space may need to increase (see page 50).

### **Informal and social areas in AP**

Outdoor spaces should be provided for informal, social and recreational activities as well as curriculum use; there should be an external store.

For secondary-age pupils with behavioural difficulties and for primary-age pupils there should be spaces to run about and kick a ball as well as places to be quiet and socialise; robust outdoor play equipment may be provided. For older pupils with health difficulties the priority will be for quieter social spaces. In any setting quiet social spaces should be separate, protected and include some shelter. Some pupils may need access to a safe outdoor space to be quiet and calm.

At primary level an external space for use as an outdoor classroom is recommended.

### **Habitat areas in AP**

Where there is space, areas for planting and keeping animals can benefit vulnerable pupils.

### **Net site area in SRP and Units**

In SRP and Units pupils will share PE, social and habitat areas with the main school but there should be a separate protected area, with some shelter, directly accessible from the facility where pupils can have quiet time away from the main part of the school.

### **Non-net site area**

The non-net site area in any educational setting will vary depending on the configuration of the site and buildings. It will include:

- the 'footprint' of all buildings;
- access for people and deliveries;

For SRP and Units these areas will overlap with those provided for the main school.

Access will usually include:

- entrance paths, roads and related landscaping other than that related to play and social areas available to pupils;
- space for coaches, buses or taxis to safely drop off pupils (where relevant);
- access routes for emergency and maintenance vehicles;
- vehicle and bicycle parking for visitors, peripatetic staff and (where relevant) community users, to meet the needs of disabled people and to satisfy local transport planning requirements;
- in special schools and AP, refuse and recycling areas (secure or distant from the buildings to meet local planning requirements).

It is important to separate pupils' access from vehicular circulation, delivery areas and parking.

## **Non-net site area in special schools**

The recommended total non-net site area (figures 25 and 26) applies to any special school; a school for non-ambulant pupils in a single storey school building with more than around 150 pupil places is likely to be at the top of the range.

### **Access for pupils at special schools**

It is essential to provide enough space for the arrival and departure of pupils at a special school which can take up to 40% of the net site area. The exact requirements will depend on the school's particular arrangements and who will be coming to the school. Some pupils arrive on foot, by bicycle or buggy and may be using wheelchairs or other mobility aids. Most will be transported to site and there may be numerous vehicles arriving to drop pupils off at the same time. It is important to know the potential number and type of vehicles and process of handover to the school. For example minibuses that have rear doors require a different parking layout (with possible area implications) from minibuses with side doors. The minimum non-net area formula (figures 25 and 26) allows for the access area to be used solely for arrival/drop off but on a constrained site effective use

can be made of the space if all or part of the drop-off area is designed to become a safe and secure hard informal and social area during the school day.

Arrival and departure take time and involve several staff. Some pupils, including those with autism, will be feeling anxious; some pupils have less awareness of the risks of traffic or are not able to see or hear vehicles. The process needs to be calm and efficient and ensure health and safety. Transferring pupils in wheelchairs from the rear or side of a vehicle is a slow process, which takes place in all weathers; there should be shelter from the vehicle to the pupils' entrance.

Site access at a special school should provide:

- vehicular circulation that allows for public and private transport, including set-down and drop-off without congestion (for example, by one way traffic flow or a roundabout);
- easy access for ambulances to pick up at the main or pupil entrance;
- easily accessible, level or ramped pedestrian routes with slip-resistant and well-drained surfaces, without trip hazards and with an accessible stepped route nearby to give a choice;
- good quality external lighting along routes with clear legible signage, visual contrast and sensory way-finding to help independence.

## **Non-net site area in AP**

The non-net site area in AP will include, as for a special school, the 'footprint' of all buildings and access for people and deliveries. Access requirements will vary depending on the setting's location but secondary-age pupils are likely to be making their own way to school, as at a mainstream school. Where this is not the case, refer to the guidance on special schools.

## **Non-net site area in SRP and Units**

For SRP and Units the building and access areas will overlap with those provided for the main school. Pedestrian and vehicle access routes, visitor parking and refuse areas will be shared with the main school but it is important to take account of the additional staff (including peripatetic) associated with the SRP/Unit. Pupils' means of arrival will vary and should be taken into account when calculating the site area. In some SRP/Units pupils will arrive by vehicle as at a special school, and similar safety requirements will apply.



## **Supplementary site area**

As discussed on page 69, special schools or AP may have supplementary site areas for community or support functions, for example play space associated with residential accommodation or extra car parking for community use of a pool. Any site area associated with these functions will be supplementary site area, and will either need to be funded from other funding streams or, on an existing site, left as additional to the site area needed for the special school or AP.

# Glossary and references

## Glossary

### Special Needs and Disability

AP - Alternative provision, defined by the Department's 'Statutory guidance for local authorities' as: education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

ASD - Autistic-spectrum disorder

Broad range - a school or space where a variety of special needs and disabilities are accommodated, including physically disabled.

EHCP - Education and health care plan - identifies the educational, health and social needs of children and young people aged up to 25 who need extra support, and sets out the additional support needed.

EHC plans - Education and health care plans

HI - Hearing impairment

MLD - Moderate learning difficulty

MSI - Multi-sensory impairment

PD - Physical disability

PMLD - Profound and multiple learning difficulties

SEMH – Social, emotional and mental health difficulties (superseding the earlier term BESD)

SEN - Special education needs

SEND - Special education needs and disability

SLCN - Speech, language and communication needs

SLD - Severe learning difficulties

SpLD - Specific learning difficulties

SRP - Specially resourced provision in mainstream school commissioned by local authority

Unit - Designated unit in mainstream school commissioned by local authority

VI - Visual impairment

## Other

All-weather pitches: includes synthetic turf pitches and those with polymeric surfaces such as shredded rubber bonded with bitumen, latex or polyurethane

FF&E: Fittings, furniture and equipment

Float: The difference between the sum of the recommended minimum area of each category of space and the overall recommended total net area

Key stage (KS): Specific part of child's education and relates to their age and year group

Mainstream schools: all those except special schools and alternative provision

MUGA: Multi-use games area

FE college: Further education college

Sum of minima: The recommended minimum area for each category of space added together

## References

[ADM – Building Regulations / \(Approved Document M\): Access to and Use of Buildings](#)

[BS8300 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. Code of practice](#)

[Building Bulletin 103: Area guidelines for mainstream schools](#)

[Cleapss - Secondary science laboratory handbook](#)

[Residential special schools: national minimum standards](#)

[SEND Code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

[Take care with oxygen, guidance from the Health and Safety Executive](#)

## Annex A: Building areas

Recommended minimum areas (m <sup>2</sup> ) for special schools	School (ambulant)			School (non-ambulant)		
	Base area		Area per pupil place	Base area		Area per pupil place
	with only primary places	with secondary places		with only primary places	with secondary places	
1. Basic teaching	-	150	6.5	-	175	7.5
2. Halls, PE, dining and social	100	150	0.6	100	125	0.8
3. Learning resources	60	60	0.4	120	120	1.2
4. Staff and admin.	90	90	0.8	90	90	0.8
5. Storage	75	75	0.6	75	75	0.6
Float	150	200	1.1	165	190	1.5
<b>Minimum net area</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>12.4</b>
Non-net area	225	350	4.5	350	475	6.1
<b>Minimum gross area</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>1050</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>1250</b>	<b>18.5</b>
Maximum net area	575	825	10.7	625	875	13.6
Maximum gross area	825	1250	16.5	1050	1500	20.5

### Recommended building areas for all types of special school

#### Notes

- All age special schools should use the formulae for schools with secondary pupils.
- School (non-ambulant) applies to a school that caters for a broad range of needs but is specially equipped for pupils with PD and/or PMLD.
- Split sites (where a significant part of the school is provided in buildings on more than one site) may need extra gross area of up to 75m<sup>2</sup> in some cases, to allow for the replication of administrative and kitchen facilities, depending on the distance between sites and the facilities on each site.
- The base areas for non-ambulant special schools includes 75m<sup>2</sup> of net area and 200m<sup>2</sup> of non-net area to cover the hydrotherapy pool and associated changing and plant areas, so if this facility is not required or is available elsewhere the ambulant base area can be used.
- The net area includes a 'float'. When the recommended minimum areas of each category of space are added together, the total will be less than the recommended total net area. This difference provides the 'float' that can be used to enhance some areas, depending on the priorities of the school.

Recommended minimum areas (m <sup>2</sup> ) for alternative provision (AP)	AP (health)			AP (behaviour)		
	Base area		Area per pupil place	Base area		Area per pupil place
	with only primary places	with secondary places		with only primary places	with secondary places	
1. Basic teaching	-	60	4.5	-	60	5.5
2. Halls, PE dining and social	40	40	0.6	40	120	0.6
3. Learning resources	10	10	0.4	10	10	0.4
4. Staff and admin.	35	35	0.5	35	35	0.5
5. Storage	25	35	0.5	25	35	0.5
Float	55	70	1.1	70	40	1.5
<b>Minimum net area</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>9</b>
Non-net area	110	150	2.9	120	150	3.5
<b>Minimum gross area</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>12.5</b>
Maximum net area	185	275	8.5	210	350	10
Maximum gross area	300	450	12.5	350	525	14.5

### Recommended building areas for all types of alternative provision

#### Notes

- All age AP should use the secondary base areas.
- AP (health) applies where pupils have mental or physical health difficulties; AP (behaviour) applies where pupils have behavioural difficulties (and may have been excluded from school) (see page 10). Where AP provides for a wide range of needs including behavioural difficulties the AP (behaviour) formulae apply.
- Where AP provides a full curriculum to pupils who spend all their time there and do not return to school, the areas may need to be closer to the recommendations for a special school.
- Split sites (where a significant part of the AP is provided in buildings on more than one site) may need extra gross area of up to 75m<sup>2</sup> in some cases, to allow for the replication of administrative and kitchen facilities, depending on the distance between sites and the facilities on each site.
- The net area includes a 'float'. When the recommended minimum areas of each category of space are added together, the total will be less than the recommended total net area. This difference provides the 'float' that can be used to enhance some areas, depending on the priorities of the AP.

Recommended minimum areas for specially resourced provision (SRP) or Unit	Base area for any provision (PD/ non-ambulant in brackets where different)	Area per pupil place (any age)				
		SRP (PD)	SRP (ambulant)	Unit (ambulant)	Unit (ambulant – ASD)	Unit (non-ambulant)
1. Basic teaching	-	-	-	4.5	5.5	6.5
2. Dining and social	15	1.2	1.6	0.8	1.2	0.8
3. Learning resources						
4. Staff and admin.	5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
5. Storage	5	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Float	17	1.2	1.6	1.9	1.9	2.8
<b>Minimum net area</b>	<b>42 (30)</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10.5</b>
Non-net area	18 (30)	1.4	1.4	2.9	3.5	4
<b>Minimum gross area</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>14.5</b>
Maximum net area	52 (40)	4.4	4.6	8.8	10	12
Maximum gross area	75	6.5	6.5	12.5	14.5	16.5

### Recommended building areas for all types of specially resourced provision and Units

#### Notes

- SRP (ambulant) applies to any SRP where pupils are ambulant. SRP (PD) applies to SRP that is specially equipped for pupils with PD (but not PMLD).
- The base area for SRP (PD) has 12m<sup>2</sup> less net area and 12m<sup>2</sup> more non-net area to accommodate a hygiene room (area indicated in brackets). This also applies to the net and non-net base areas for a Unit (non-ambulant).
- Unit (ambulant) applies to any Unit where pupils are ambulant except ASD (where pupils need more personal space and the staff: pupil ratio is higher). The formulae for ASD can also be applied to a Unit for pupils with behavioural difficulties. Unit (non-ambulant) applies to a Unit supporting a broad range of needs including pupils with PD/PMLD (such settings are unusual).
- The areas in this table are additional to any areas used by SRP/Unit pupils and staff in the main school, such as classrooms, staff rooms or dining.
- The net area includes a 'float'. When the recommended minimum areas of each category of space are added together, the total will be less than the recommended total net area. This difference provides the 'float' that can be used to enhance some areas, depending on the priorities of the SRP/Unit.

## Annex B: Site areas

Recommended minimum external areas for all special schools	For special schools without formal team games		For special schools with formal team games	
	Base area	Area per pupil place (any age)	Base area	Area per pupil place (any age)
Soft outdoor PE	-	-	2800	7.5
Hard outdoor PE	200	1	400	1.5
Soft informal and social areas	600	2	600	2
Hard informal and social areas	600	2	600	2
Habitat areas	200	1	200	1
Float	2500	9	2400	7
<b>Minimum net area</b>	<b>3500</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7000</b>	<b>21</b>
Non-net area	4500	21	4500	21
<b>Minimum gross area</b>	<b>8000</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11500</b>	<b>42</b>
Maximum net area	5500	18	9000	24
Maximum gross area	11500	42	15000	48

### Recommended site areas for all types of special school

#### Notes

- a. The formulae for special schools without team games apply to all schools with only KS1 pupils. Where there are KS1 pupils as well as other age groups, the total number of pupil places should be counted.



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