

Social distancing protocols – measure site and spaces to calculate capacity/match to class sizes and subject requirements/use of larger and outside spaces/entry and exit/break and lunch/movement around school/levels of staff supervision/signage¹

SOCIAL DISTANCING

The legal position

Under regulation 6A of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020² (the “Coronavirus Regulations”) a person responsible for a workplace is required to take all reasonable measures to ensure that a distance of 2 metres is maintained between persons on particular premises. This includes schools.

The key principles are that:

- Staff and children should observe a two-metre distance between each other. Contact must not take place unless absolutely necessary.
- Schools should also take into consideration age of children, SEN, classroom size and activities planned. Further guidance is provided on the specifics of class sizes and capacity later in the document

Detailed guidance on Social Distancing in Schools is given in the Welsh Government’s document – “Keep Education Safe: Operational guidance for schools and settings (COVID-19)” which was published on 11th June, 2020.

The stated purpose of the guidance is as follows:

“This guidance provides practical guidance on preparing for and increasing operations during a phased return up to the end of the summer term. It includes key messages on infection prevention and control. It will be of use to all education settings, but its prime purpose is to support schools.

The guidance supports schools and settings to safely increase their on-site operations for staff and learners. It covers measures schools and settings can undertake to:

- plan and organise provision: including determining capacity and checklists for taking the next steps
- support the health and well-being of staff and learners; helping to keep people safe
- manage their facilities and logistical arrangements: including buildings, resources, cleaning and transport.”

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2020/353/regulation/6/made>

CAPACITY

Measure site and spaces to calculate capacity

All Local Authorities should use the Welsh Government guidelines on [Measuring the Capacity of schools in Wales](#) to determine the capacity and admission number for their schools. Some LA's may have more up to date and accurate data than others on their school capacities.

Where LA's have up to date and accurate data, they should base any calculations on the use of space on these calculations. Where LAs may not have up to date and/or accurate data relating to their school buildings, it is not deemed reasonable or practicable within the timescale available to undertake full surveys that would provide this information. LAs should therefore use their best estimate based on the data they already have and seek informal verification from schools on the accuracy of this data. In the medium term, LAs should plan to undertake surveys to gather accurate and up to date information in due course.

Match to class sizes and subject requirements

In order to assess the basic capacity of schools under social distancing requirements, it will be necessary to look at the physical sizes of classes.

The table below outlines **primary school** capacity calculations based on class sizes.

Size of class – m ²	Nursery/meithrin	Yr 1 and 2	Years 3 to 6
70	11	12	14
69	11	12	13
68	11	12	13
67	11	12	13
66	11	12	13
65	10	11	13
64	10	11	12
63	10	11	12
62	10	11	12
61	10	11	12
60	10	10	12
59	9	10	11
58	9	10	11
57	9	10	11
56	9	10	11
55	9	10	11
54	9	9	10
53	8	9	10
52	8	9	10
51	8	9	10
50	8	9	10
49	8	8	9
48	8	8	9
47	7	8	9
46	7	8	9
45	7	8	9
44	7	8	8
43	7	7	8
42	7	7	8

41	6	7	8
40	6	7	8
39	6	7	7
38	6	6	7
37	6	6	7
36	6	6	7
35	5	6	7

The assumptions made for this calculation are that Infants and Reception pupils require a 6m² area to maintain social distancing, Year one and 2 require 5.5m² and years 3 to 6 require 5m². It is also assumed that in the primary sector there are no additional subject related space requirements – this is in accordance with Building Bulletin 99

All these allowances per child are significantly higher than the 4m² allowance that should in theory allow 2m social distancing. The additional allowance per child is given in order to allow for storage, staff, fixed furniture (sinks, fixed shelving etc). The higher allowances for younger children are provided as it is recognised that they are less likely to understand boundaries and distancing rules and therefore further physical or other restrictions may be necessary.

As a general ball park figure, these assumptions result in school capacity being reduced to 1/3 of normal school capacity in the primary sector.

In the **Secondary sector**, there is added complication due to the need for subject specific spaces which have different size recommendations as outlined in Building Bulletin 98. **Section To be added**

Use of larger and outside spaces

The principle of social distancing applies in larger areas such as halls and outside spaces in the same way as they do for classrooms.

School halls and sport halls should NOT be used for physical education or other physical activities. The increased perspiration, effort and heavier breathing that is associated with physical activity in an enclosed space has been associated with outbreaks in other countries and is considered a high risk activity.

The use of halls to increase the space for lessons could be considered and may be an appropriate use of the space should the need arise to have more than one class of pupils together. Strict social distancing should continue to be observed. The calculations for classrooms would continue to be valid for such usage i.e 6, 5.5 and 5m² per pupil for Nursery/reception, years 1 and 2 and years 3-6 respectively.

Schools should take full advantage of outdoor play spaces but should ensure that planning and supervision ensures that social distancing is observed and consideration given to designated separate areas. The sharing of equipment and apparatus should be avoided or if not possible, minimised. For certain types of apparatus or equipment, disinfection between uses may be possible and appropriate – e.g. hula hoops, balls. Disinfection could be undertaken by means of disinfecting wipes or soap and water. For other types of apparatus, e.g. large outdoor play equipment this would not be considered practicable.

ENTRY AND EXIT

Entry and exit to school sites is a potential point of congestion and a risk of compromising social distancing requirements..

Where schools have sufficient on site space available, schools should consider marking out queueing systems and floor markings that promote social distancing. Marking may be by use of tapes, spray paint or physical barriers such as cones or tapes.

Local Authorities may wish to consider bulk purchases of such items for re-distribution to schools as required.

In large schools, consideration may be given to staggering or timetabling arrival and departure times to minimise congestion.

Prior to any school re-opening, schools should send clear messages to parents and carers outlining the steps the school has put in place to ensure social distancing.

Authorities should consider whether central purchasing of marking and barrier materials would be appropriate.

BREAK AND LUNCH

As with entry and exit, break and lunch time could give rise to congestion and a reduced level of social distancing. Each school building is different and there is no one size fits all solution to minimise a reduction in social distancing.

Schools should consider one way systems within schools if the design of the building allows this as well as staggering of break and lunch times to minimise circulation within the school and numbers of pupils in the outside spaces at any one time.

Schools should aim to provide a clear and constant message through the use of social distancing and safety signage. Social Distancing and Safety Signs effectively communicate key instructions to staff, pupils and service providers.

Floor and wall graphics provide an efficient way of giving directional cues e.g. floor distance markers. The use of stickers are ideal for toilets, washrooms, canteens and doorways to remind users of the social distancing measures in place, to reinforce hygiene and safety policies and to provide instruction.

MOVEMENT AROUND SCHOOL

As with preparing for Break and lunch time, schools should assess the best routes around the school buildings to ensure social distancing.

SIGNAGE

All schools should have adequate an appropriate signage to remind learners, staff and any visitors that may be permitted of the measures put in place to ensure social distancing, hygiene and other disease control measures.

Local Authorities may wish to consider the bulk purchase of signage to re-distribute to schools.

TOILETS

Toilets are potentially a location in which social distancing may be compromised. If toilets are small, it may be necessary to restrict access to one pupil at a time. In larger toilet areas, it may be necessary to remove cubicles, sinks or urinals from use to ensure social distancing if more than one pupil uses the facilities at the same time. Floor markings may also need to be considered to ensure social distancing within the toilet area.

Additional levels of staffing may be required to supervise the use of toilets.

LEVELS OF STAFF SUPERVISION

Schools should ensure that provision is safe for staff and children, maintaining social distancing wherever possible while supporting well-being. The number of children and staff present should allow social distancing measures to be observed. Class sizes should reflect the amount of teachers available but should be kept as small as possible. **No single class should exceed 1/3 of its normal capacity.**

When at school, staff should be placed as consistently as possible with the same children to minimise the risk of infection. Schools will need to keep this under review if staff availability decreases.