

THE SCHOOL ESTATE

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This briefing provides an overview of the issues surrounding the management of the school estate. It gives an overview of the legislative and policy framework and the condition and capacity of the school estate. It goes on to examine funding improvements to the school estate and design issues.

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KEY POINTS OF THIS BRIEFING

- The management of Scotland's 2,729 publicly funded school buildings and their grounds is a key task for local councils. Approaches to management have varied amongst local authorities, reflecting variations in the size, condition, and capacity of the school estate throughout the country.
- Nationally the *School Estate Strategy*, published by the Scottish Executive and COSLA in 2003, has been a key driver for improvements to the school estate over the last few years.
- According to Audit Scotland between 1999 and 2007 219 new schools have been opened. At least another 160 will open between 2008 and 2012. It is less clear how many schools have been substantially refurbished in this period because of difficulties in definitions and data collection.
- Around 14% of schools have been assessed by councils as currently being in good condition. Just over a third of schools, 36%, have been assessed as being in poor or bad condition. Audit Scotland estimate it will take around 15-20 years to improve the condition of these schools.
- The Scottish Government's policy towards the school estate includes developing an alternative funding mechanism, to Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) through the Scottish Futures Trust, working with local authorities to develop more schools as community hubs, and consulting on legislation on a presumption against closure of rural schools.
- Much of the recent capital investment in the school estate has been made through PPP arrangements, although "traditional" capital expenditure, financed largely through borrowing, has also played a part. As noted above, the Scottish Government's policy towards the school estate includes developing an alternative to PPP through the Scottish Futures Trust.
- The Concordat, signed with COSLA in November 2007, sets out the terms of a new relationship between the Scottish Government and local authorities and underpins the funding to be provided to local government over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11.
- Audit Scotland estimate that taking all types of capital funding together from 2000-01 to 2006-07, £3.9bn of school building work was committed. This is likely to increase to around £5.2bn by April 2008. It is also estimated that PPP annual charges will reach over £500m a year by 2012.
- School occupancy levels and future pupil projections will influence how councils plan for the future of their school estate. The average level of primary and secondary school occupancy level is around 75% which is slightly higher than the average of 73% in 2004.
- There have been criticisms of the design of some of the new and refurbished schools. Environmental conditions such as heating and ventilation, and environmental sustainability are two areas that require particular attention in future years. Work is ongoing by councils and the government to improve the design of future new and refurbished schools.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2007 there were 2,729 publicly funded schools throughout Scotland: 2,168 primary schools; 378 secondary schools; and, 183 special schools (Scottish Government 2008a). The size, condition, capacity, and running costs of these schools vary between local councils. Councils determine the best way of managing and planning for the future of their school estate, within the context of national guidance.

In recent years councils have been undertaking substantial work to improve their school estates. Consideration has been given to the numbers of schools that are needed in their area, their location, how the design of schools needs to adapt to meet the needs of new technology, and greater links with local communities. In many cases councils have rationalised their school estate in light of falling school rolls. Sustained activity has also been undertaken to improve the condition of the school estate through programmes of new school building and refurbishment.

Key issues that have arisen over the last few years in relation to the school estate include:

- the state of repair of school buildings
- the adequacy of design of the school estate
- the capacity levels of schools and the effect of the pattern of population changes
- the funding method for building and refurbishing schools
- school closures (particularly of rural schools)
- the use of the school by the community, and the effect of this on the school estate

The remainder of this briefing provides an overview of the legislative and policy framework and the condition and capacity of the school estate. It goes on to examine funding improvements to the school estate and design issues.

LEGISLATION

The main legislative requirements regarding the school estate are contained in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (c 44). These are summarised Table 1 below.

Table 1: Education (Scotland) Act 1980

Section Number	What the Section does
17	<p>Places a duty on education authorities to provide sufficient accommodation in all educational establishments under their management to enable the authorities to perform their functions.</p> <p>This section also gives authorities the power to make provision for denominational schools; a duty to maintain and keep schools efficient and provide additional accommodation when necessary; and, the power to provide, alter, improve, enlarge, equip and maintain schools outwith as well as within their area.</p>
18	Makes provision for education authorities to ensure the safety of pupils getting to and from school. Authorities can improve the safety of any private road which is used by pupils, or is in the vicinity, and arrange for the provision of safety barriers at or near the school entrance.
19	Gives Scottish Ministers the power to make regulations prescribing standards and requirements to apply to the premises and equipment of schools
20	Gives education authorities with regard to their functions under the Act the power to:

	buy land within or outside the authority; build a school; and, convert, alter, enlarge or improve any existing building.
22	Gives education authorities the power to close schools. They can discontinue or change the site of any educational establishment under their management, but they must follow a consultation procedure. The consultation procedure that must be followed is contained in Statutory Instrument 1981 No 1558 (S. 159) The Education (Publication and Consultation etc) (Scotland) Regulations as amended. ¹

NATIONAL SCHOOL ESTATE POLICY

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE POLICY

From 1999 to 2007, the Scottish Executive supported councils to improve their school estates by continuing support for Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) school building projects, first initiated by the Scottish Office in 1996-7, in addition to continuing capital grant and the capacity for local authorities to borrow for capital investment. In 2001 the Executive and COSLA leaders agreed to establish a joint group to give a strategic overview of the way forward for the school estate. Following the deliberations of this group the *School Estate Strategy* was published in 2003 (Scottish Executive and COSLA 2003). This strategy has been a key driver for improvements to the school estate over the last few years. It set out a vision for a 21st century school with the child at the centre and the school at the heart of the community. The vision was for:

“well designed, well built and well managed schools that:

- support national and local priorities
- inspire children, young people and communities

and a future school estate that:

- meets our aspirations
- responds to evolving needs
- is effectively managed and maintained over the long term”

Under the national strategy each local authority has been expected to prepare a school estate management plan to inform local and national decisions on issues such as funding. The Scottish Executive expected councils to review these plans around every 5 years, although it recognised that implementation of the national strategy was likely to take longer - at least 10-15 years. In order to support councils to develop and implement their plans the Executive issued various pieces of guidance covering, for example, school design, evaluation and sustainability.

Audit Scotland published a report reviewing the impact of the *School Estate Strategy* in March 2008 (Audit Scotland 2008). Audit Scotland was critical of the lack of measurable targets in the strategy. The report concluded that the national strategy documents “..contain limited detailed information on the scale and the nature of the improvements needed. There are few specific targets for achieving the strategy’s aims and therefore no clear way of monitoring progress”. Since 2003 councils and the government have been working to improve the collection of data about school buildings. According to Audit Scotland, “this will make it possible in the near future to review the strategy and to set specific, measurable and meaningful targets against which progress can be monitored”.

¹ As amended by 1987 SI No. 2076; 1988 SI No. 107; 1989 SI No. 1739; and, 2007 SI No. 315.
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SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT POLICY

In their manifesto, the Scottish Government has committed to:

- ‘match the current school building programme brick for brick’,
- develop an alternative funding mechanism - Scottish Futures Trust
- work with local authorities to develop more schools as community hubs, providing out-of-school activities and, where possible, family, childcare and other community services on site
- introduce a legislative presumption against closure of rural schools and tighten the regulations for closing all schools (Scottish National Party 2007)

The main actions taken to date by the Scottish Government have focussed on financial matters and school closures. On financial matters the Scottish Government has committed to honour existing offers of financial support for school PPP projects (Scottish Parliament 2007) and consulted on the Scottish Futures Trust (see below).

The Scottish Government has also re-issued guidance, first issued in 2004, on school estate issues including closures (Scottish Government 2007a) and has said that it will issue a consultation in Spring 2008 on legislating for a presumption against closing rural schools and on tightening the regulations for all school closures (Scottish Parliament 2008a). There is also a member’s bill proposal for the presumption against the closure of rural schools (Fraser 2008). This issue of school closures is considered in more detail in the SPICe briefing *School Closures* (Georghiou 2006)

The Scottish Government has also continued to emphasise the importance of school design issues for those involved in commissioning school building work through, for example, its “Building Excellence” programme; the “Senses of Place” project, and through provision of support to Architecture+Design Scotland (A+D Scotland) for a three year schools programme to inspire and advise on good school design. Further detail on design issues are considered later in the briefing.

SCHOOL CONDITION AND CAPACITY

SCHOOL CONDITION

Councils have had to report to the government on the condition of their school estate since 2003.² The most recent report refers to data collected from councils during April 2007 (Scottish Government 2007b).

After the first set of data was collected it became clear that there were some inconsistent interpretations of the criteria used by councils, which affected the quality of the data. Since then efforts have been made by the government and councils to improve data collection.

The condition of a school is assessed by councils and graded as follows:

- Condition A: Good - Performing well and operating efficiently
- Condition B: Satisfactory - Performing adequately but showing minor deterioration
- Condition C: Poor - Showing major defects and/or not operating adequately
- Condition D: Bad - Economic life expired and/or risk of failure

² 2003 was a pilot year. Data was also collected in 2004.

Work is on-going by councils and the Scottish Government to improve the quality of the data collection. The Scottish Executive issued additional guidance to councils in 2007 (Scottish Executive 2007a) which they are expected to implement by the end of 2008. Given these issues with the quality of the data, comparisons of the 2004 and 2007 data is often not valid.

Table 2 shows how councils rated the condition of their school buildings.

Table 2: Condition of School by Sector 2007

	Primary		Secondary		Special	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
A	290	13%	69	18%	12	8%
B	1,079	50%	148	39%	72	46%
C	678	31%	137	36%	40	25%
D	108	5%	14	4%	15	9%
New Build or Refurbished (condition not reported)	14	1%	8	2%	3	2%
Not reported	7	0%	6	2%	16	10%
Total	2,176		382		158	

Source: Scottish Government 2007b Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3

A total of 396 schools (14%) were reported to be in good condition or newly built or refurbished. Nine hundred and ninety-two schools (36%), were reported to be in poor or bad condition (C and D ratings). Audit Scotland estimated that, bearing in mind the limitations of data, the proportion of schools reported as being in condition C or D has reduced by 6% (from 42%) since 2004. Audit Scotland also estimated that it will take around 15-20 years to improve the condition of the poorly rated schools (Audit Scotland 2008).

According to Audit Scotland, 219 new schools were opened between 1999 and 2007, and it is estimated that another 160 will open by April 2008. However, Audit Scotland also conclude that “..we cannot be definitive about the number of schools that have been refurbished”. This is because of a lack of clear definitions about what a refurbishment entails and variations in how councils report on “schools that have had some work done to them but have not been rebuilt”.

SCHOOL CAPACITY AND OCCUPANCY LEVELS

The capacity levels of schools, their occupancy levels and future pupil projections will influence councils' decisions about planning for the school estate. The average level of occupancy for primary and secondary schools has decreased from 75% in 2004 to 73% in 2007 (Scottish Executive 2007b). Table 3 shows the occupancy levels of schools in both the primary and secondary sector.

Table 3: Occupancy Level of School by Sector, September 2007

	Schools with roll less than 50% of capacity	Schools with roll 50- <75% of capacity	Schools with roll 75- <90% of capacity	Schools with roll 90- <100% of capacity	Schools with roll greater than capacity (100% or more capacity)
Primary	22%	40%	25%	8%	5%
Secondary	7%	25%	37%	18%	14%

Source: Scottish Government 2007b. Notes (1) Capacity information was not available for 97 primary schools. (2) Capacity information was not available for 24 secondary schools, the majority of which were in South Lanarkshire.

Table 3 indicates that the majority of primary schools, 60%, are operating at a 75% or less occupancy level. Secondary schools have higher occupancy levels. Just under a third of secondary schools, 32%, have an occupancy level of 90% or more.

Average occupancy levels vary amongst councils (information on school occupancy levels by council area is provided in Appendix 1A and 1B). Generally, rural councils tend to have lower occupancy levels, particularly in primary schools.

Projected pupil numbers vary across Scotland too. Between 2006 and 2010 across Scotland the number of primary school pupils is predicted to decline by 3%, but in some areas the decline is higher, for example, in the East Dunbartonshire council area the decline is 13% and in Inverclyde council area it is 6.6%. Over the same time period, the number of secondary school pupils is predicted to decrease by 6%. But, for example, in the North Ayrshire council area the predicted decline is 13% and in the East Lothian council area the predicted decline is 3% (Scottish Government 2008b).

Changes in school occupancy levels and declining school rolls have been a key driving factor in many councils' school estate management plans. For example, Moray Council and the City of Edinburgh council have both given consideration to changes to their school estate in light of falling school rolls (see further information in Appendix 2).

The current school capacity levels and predicted pupil numbers will be important factors in determining the extent to which local authorities will be able to make progress towards the Scottish Government's policy objective of reducing class sizes to 18 in P1 to P3.

Audit Scotland found that, "...demand planning varies considerably across councils, with fewer than half currently estimating the number of pupils they expect in their schools beyond ten years". Although long term demand planning can be difficult the average school is built to last around 50 years. Therefore, Audit Scotland suggest that, "...given the greater uncertainty of longer term demand estimates, there is a need for flexibility across the estate. This might include school buildings that can be readily expanded or easily converted to other uses" (Audit Scotland 2008).

FUNDING IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SCHOOL ESTATE

Funding improvements to the school estate requires capital expenditure for new buildings and major refurbishments and revenue expenditure for on-going repairs and maintenance.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

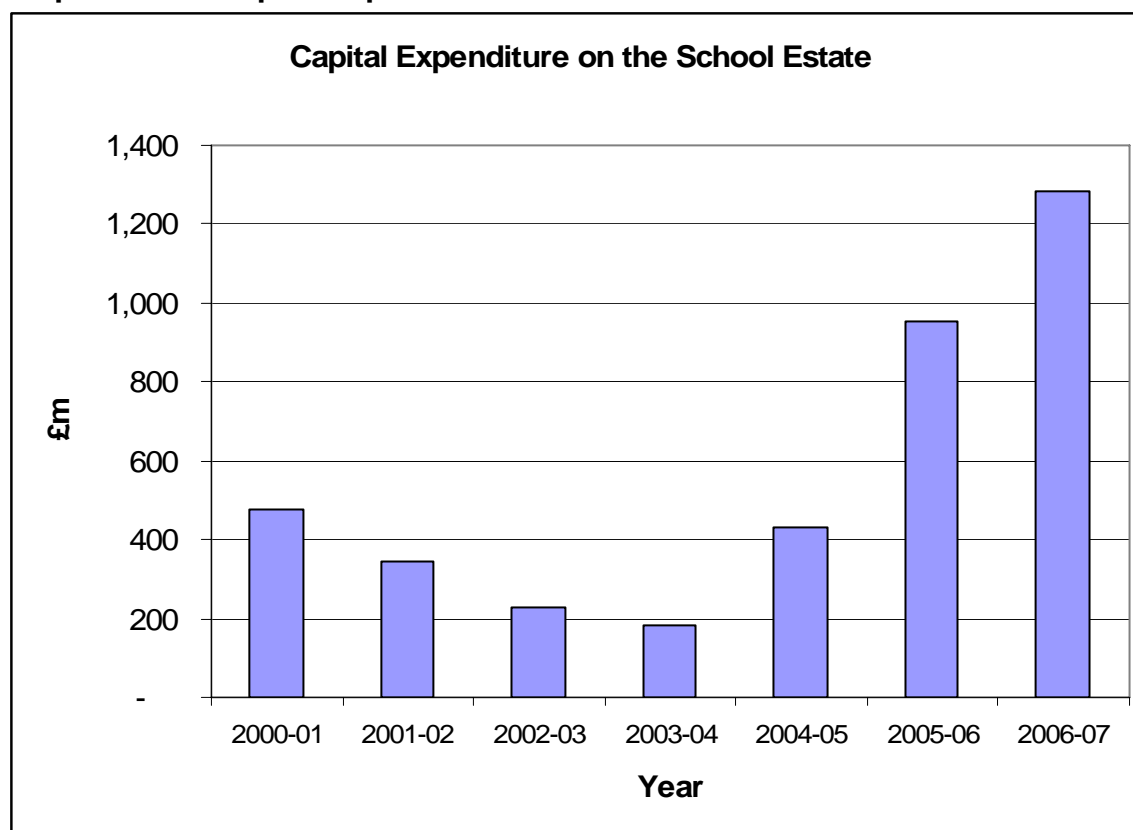
There are two main ways in which local authorities have been funding improvements to the school estate: Public Private Partnerships (PPPs); and, “traditional” capital expenditure. As Graph 1 and Table 4 show total capital expenditure has increased substantially since 2000. From the years 2000/01 to 2006/07 around £3.9bn was committed to capital expenditure on schools (Audit Scotland 2008).

Table 4: Capital Expenditure on the School Estate

	2000-01 £m	2001-02 £m	2002-03 £m	2003-04 £m	2004-05 £m	2005-06 £m	2006-07 £m	Total £m
Schools Building Improvement Fund	26.7	38.7	26.7	36.7	76.7	96.7	151.4	453.55
Capital Expenditure by Councils	113.1	140.3	133.3	144.6	122.4	208	245.2	1,106.9
PFI contract capital value	337.3	165.2	70	0	230.8	651.7	887.9	2,342.9
Total	477	344	230	181	430	956	1,285	3,903

Source: Audit Scotland (2008)

Graph 1: Total Capital Expenditure on the School Estate 200-01 to 2006-07



Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)

PPP is a term used to cover a wide range of activities in which the public and private sectors work together.

Under school PPP arrangements a private sector provider is responsible for the construction or refurbishment of a building, overall project management and the provision of services for a number of years after completion. The public sector effectively “buys” services, such as provision of a building and its maintenance, from the contractor for a fixed period of time,

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normally over a period of thirty years. The payments made by the local authority to the private sector provider are referred to as “unitary charges”. Details of the project are defined in a contract which will also define who bears the risk. At the end of the contract period the council will own the building.

The Scottish Government provides revenue support to councils undertaking school PPP projects. Government PPP revenue support relates to a proportion of the capital value of projects. It is for local authorities to decide how they will fund the rest, and any other elements of the unitary charge payable to PPP consortia, from within the overall resources available to them (Scottish Parliament 2008b).

The funding support committed at the outset by the government is for a fixed amount for each year of the contract, but the PPP contract charges are increased by an indexation rate each year. This means that councils must fund an increasing share of the charges each year, from existing resources. The shortfall between identified funding and the cost of the charge is referred to as the “affordability gap”. Audit Scotland has reported that “..not enough is being spent at present to sustain required standards” and that “..some councils are not planning adequately for future increases in PFI charges”(Audit Scotland 2008).

The use of PPPs has been controversial. There has been criticism from those who object to private sector involvement on ideological grounds but there has also been criticism of the more practical delivery of schemes such as time and cost overruns and poor building design (Asenvona and Hood 2006). On the other hand a number of potential advantages of PPPs have been cited. These include the fact that the private sector bears more risk, it maximises the use of private sector skills and it allows the injection of private sector capital (PriceWaterhouse Coopers 2005).

Not for profit Distributing Models

In some areas a non-profit distributing PPP model has been used to deliver capital contracts. Although the specifics of the particular models used will vary by area, a common model involves a not for profit delivery body being established by the council. The board of this body includes stakeholders, and surplus funds generated are retained and can be distributed for education/community purposes, rather than being distributed to shareholders. As these are still PPP models they are eligible for Scottish Government revenue support.

This model has been, or is being currently pursued, in Argyll and Bute, Aberdeen, Falkirk and Moray.

PPPs in Scottish Schools

As at February 2008 there were a total of 36 PPP contracts signed at a capital value of £3,314.9m. A remaining 4 PPP contracts are still to be completed, accounting for around a further £232m (Scottish Government 2008 (on-line tables)).

Of the 219 newly built schools opened in the period 2000-2007, 124 (57%) were built under PPP contracts (Audit Scotland 2008). There are around a further 100 schools still to be completed under PPP contracts.

Audit Scotland (2008) has estimated that the annual charges for all the PFI contracts are likely to reach over £500m a year by 2012, when all the contracts in the pipeline become operational. Just over £200m of this will be funded through revenue support from the Scottish Government.

“TRADITIONAL” CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

In broad terms “traditional” capital expenditure usually involves councils borrowing finance, but it may also include other sources of funding such as proceeds from selling off council owned assets and the Schools Fund. When councils borrow money to fund capital projects they must pay back the original loan, interest payments and on-going revenue payments to provide facilities and management services.

The Prudential Borrowing Framework

Councils used to be subject to government controls on their levels of capital borrowing. However, the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (asp 1) repealed the legislation containing these controls. In its place the “prudential borrowing framework” was introduced. Under this framework councils can decide for themselves how much they can afford to borrow without having to seek permission from the government, having regard to the Prudential Code developed by CIPFA. The Scottish Government provides general loan charges support to local authorities designed to provide a level of funding for the costs associated with servicing debt charges.

The Schools Fund

The Schools Fund, set up by the Scottish Executive in 2003, as a successor to similar capital grants beginning with the New Deal for Schools in 1997-8, was a capital grant to local authorities to allow them to make improvements to the school estate.

Levels of Expenditure

Between 2000-01 and 2006-07 councils have spent £1.56bn on “traditional” capital spending. Ninety five of the 219 newly built schools opened between 2000 and 2007 have been built using traditional funding (Audit Scotland 2008).

Audit Scotland (2008) argue that from the available data it is difficult to ascertain how much councils are spending on revenue costs associated with traditional capital projects. Often services such as maintenance and janitorial services are provided by councils’ own staff.

FUTURE FUNDING OF IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SCHOOL ESTATE

From 2008-09 future government PPP revenue support and the School Fund will be rolled up within the overall local government settlement (Scottish Government 2007c). The following PQ outlines the Scottish Government’s intentions towards financing the school building improvement programme.

S3W-8597 - Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) (Date Lodged Thursday, January 17, 2008): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answers to question S3F-191 on 4 October 2007 indicating the Executive’s commitment to match the previous administration’s school building programme brick for brick and not to use the private finance initiative for this purpose (Official Report c. 2465), how it intends to finance its school building programme and when the necessary finance will become available.

Answered by Maureen Watt (Friday, February 08, 2008): The Scottish Budget and the concordat signed by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities provide revenue resources which include support for PPP projects, as well as significant growth in the capital resources being made available to local authorities. There is almost £3 billion over the three year period 2008-09 to 2010-11 to secure investment

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in schools and other local government infrastructure, including an extra £115 million in 2008-09 which can be invested in schools if authorities so choose. The local government capital budget represents an average increase of 15% in each year of the settlement compared to 2007-08 figures.

The overall local government settlement enables the government to match the previous Executive's school building programme brick for brick. (Scottish Parliament 2008c)

In the longer term the Scottish Government will also consider the use of a Scottish Futures Trust as an alternative to PPP funded projects. In December 2007 the Scottish Government launched a consultation on the proposed Scottish Futures Trust. The consultation paper makes clear that the Scottish Government:

“..considers the costs of projects which use the standard PFI model to be expensive and views the returns which the private sector equity participants can realise as excessive, especially those obtained during the contract period and which have not been factored into the initial procurement and value for money assessments”. (Scottish Government 2007d)

The government's approach will involve the use of the Not for Profit Distribution PPP model for all new projects (unless in exceptional circumstances) in the short term. In the longer term it is proposed to establish the Scottish Futures Trust as a limited company run on non-profit distributing principles. It will obtain its funding through bonds and other appropriate commercial financial instruments at rates which could be cheaper than those involved in PFI procurements. The government proposes that the SFT will undertake the following range of functions:

- provide serviced assets to public authorities and others who provide public services
- provide private finance to those who provide public services
- provide other related financial services at cheaper cost through aggregation of demand
- provide a centre of expertise for best practice advice and support to public authorities on the planning and delivery of infrastructure investment projects
- provide co-ordination and support for the provision of shared infrastructure
- provide a forum and focus for public and private sector market engagement

The consultation closed on 14 March 2008 and Scottish Ministers are considering how to take the proposals forward.

Audit Scotland concluded that whatever approach to future funding mechanisms was taken it was important to identify how much still needs to be spent to achieve the aims of the School Estate Strategy. It made three key recommendations in relation to future financing of improvements to the school estate:

“The Scottish Government should identify a financial strategy for achieving the aims of the School Estate Strategy. The amount of financial investment required should be estimated now and kept under review as information improves and progress towards targets continues. The financial strategy should allow for the long lead-in time required for major school building projects.

Councils should develop plans for the duration of their PFI contracts that identify how they will pay the increasing charges for their PFI contracts.

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The Scottish Government and councils should ensure that adequate resources are allocated to building maintenance for schools without PFI maintenance contracts". (Audit Scotland 2008)

SCHOOL DESIGN

GUIDANCE ON SCHOOL DESIGN

Since 2003, the Scottish Executive and Scottish Government have highlighted the importance of good design through guidance and case studies. They have also funded a number of projects which have brought together educationalists, designers and pupils to explore design issues for school buildings. As guidance on school design, produced by the Scottish Executive, states:

"Good building design is not simply about aesthetics, but is the careful synthesis of many aspects of how a building functions and fits in with its environment and supports the activities of its users. [...] Research shows that good design can add value to teaching and learning, improve pupil performance and staff morale and enhance the relationship between the school and the wider community."
(Scottish Executive 2003)

The design guidance also identified key design issues for the client to consider. These included: the importance of communication, being clear about expected design quality, ensuring everyone is committed to meeting high design aspirations, thorough and realistic budgets, ensuring proper evaluation and allowing sufficient time for full consultation.

VIEWS OF SCHOOL DESIGN

Despite the value placed on good school design the adequacy of the design of some new and refurbished schools has been criticised. There have been some negative press reports of the design of some buildings, particularly those under the PPP programme (Sunday Herald 2007). For example, Glasgow's early PPP schools have been criticised. "Regardless of whether PPP can be seen as a good use of public money, the quality of the environment, although an improvement on what went before, was poor and the buildings were little more than sheds." (Lewis 2007).

Architecture and Design Scotland (A+DS) surveyed 26 school building projects between 1999 and 2003. They found that, while there were some examples of good design, the majority of the schools in this period fell below the quality endorsed through the then Scottish Executive's Architecture Policy. In their briefing for a parliamentary debate on school buildings, A+DS concluded that the design process and the aspirations for good design were integral to successful projects. Specific recommendations included that A+DS continues to monitor the school building programme. On PPP projects A+DS said:

"...while it is difficult to say that any single procurement method is responsible for producing poor quality it must be recognised that the constraints imposed by PPP/PFI processes have in many cases, stifled debate and creativity. Transferring responsibility for the quality of the finished product to those less motivated in the wider public interest makes delivering a quality school more difficult to achieve." (A+DS 2008)

Audit Scotland commissioned the Building Research Establishment to undertake quality reviews at a sample of 18 new or refurbished schools:

“Our study indicates that new-build schools generally meet good practice standards for site and space planning, internal and external design details, choice of materials and fittings, and safety and security. They fall short of the standards for environmental conditions (temperatures, levels of daylight, acoustics, air quality and noise or visual distractions), environmental sustainability and the mechanical and electrical engineering systems that control heating, lighting, ventilation, plumbing etc.... The refurbished schools fall below the standards being met by new builds in every respect.... The design aspects that rated most poorly in both the new and refurbished schools are those relating to user comfort, in particular temperatures, ventilation and levels of natural daylight.” (Audit Scotland 2008)

Audit Scotland also commissioned pupil focus groups and a staff survey at some of the schools to examine their experience of the improved schools. They found that pupils and staff were “generally satisfied” but “some expressed dissatisfaction with a few aspects”. In particular, while environmental conditions were important, air quality (ventilation) and temperature were “overwhelmingly a cause for concern at almost every school in the sample”. Both teachers and pupils considered new schools to be more attractive than refurbishments. For pupils, the most popular improvements were those to PE and sports facilities (Audit Scotland 2008).

IMPROVING SCHOOL DESIGN

Since the original general design guidance was issued in 2003, further more detailed guidance on particular aspects of school design has been prepared by, or commissioned by, the government. This includes: guidance on the internal environment (Scottish Executive 2007b), research on acoustic design (Charlton Smith Partnership 2005), case studies on environmental sustainability (Lighthouse and Gaia Group 2006) on how to involve pupils in the design process (Lighthouse 2006).

Some of this work has been in reaction to issues identified with existing projects. For example, having discovered that most local authorities held some form of evaluation on completed school building projects, very few were conducting what they would term formal post occupancy evaluations. The Executive published an example of an evaluation in 2006 (Scottish Executive 2006).

More recent activity has included the *Building Excellence* programme which brought together educationalists and architects to consider the implications of the Curriculum for Excellence for school design. The results of this exercise were published in 2007 (Scottish Government 2007e).

In addition to the *Building Excellence* programme, the Scottish Government commissioned The Lighthouse, Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City, to manage the 'Senses of Place: Building Excellence' project. This project sought to develop aspirations for the design of school buildings and their grounds in the context of Curriculum for Excellence. Working with five local authorities, The Lighthouse facilitated workshops with school pupils, teachers, members of the community and local authority representatives. The resultant material has been developed into design briefs. Five design firms then designed interpretations of these briefs which have been exhibited at The Lighthouse.

In February 2008 the Scottish Government announced that they would be supporting the A+DS schools design programme. The A+DS schools programme will give all councils access to specialist, one-to-one advice on their school buildings. The three year scheme will involve:

- an education design champion promoting and inspiring good design in all schools
- tailored assistance for all councils to provide impartial advice on their school projects
- design evaluations of some projects, reviewing the design process at key stages

Audit Scotland reported that there was no conclusive evidence that the design of more recent schools is any better or worse than schools built or refurbished in the earlier stages of the programme. However, councils who had completed more than one major project were able to point to a number of important lessons learned about school design that they have taken into account in subsequent projects. These lessons include issues around specific design features and the process of consultation (Audit Scotland 2008).

WIDER COMMUNITY USE

The *School Estate Strategy* places an emphasis on schools which provide facilities for the wider community as well as for pupils and teachers. As the strategy said:

“Delivering better services to children and young people through the school environment is the primary focus of the 21st century school. Schools also make an important contribution to the wider community: they are a physical focus for many communities and provide a real or potential resource for the community, for example, offering opportunities for life long learning, culture, recreation and sport. This is the second objective for the 21st century school: to deliver better services to the community through the school environment.” (Scottish Executive and COSLA 2003)

According to the School Estate Statistics (Scottish Government 2007b), 243 schools have dedicated areas for community services. A school is recorded as having community services if there is space within it dedicated to, and managed by, those providing community services, such as dental, medical or police or social work. This does not refer to the use of school amenities such as sports or cultural facilities by community groups.

Audit Scotland found that:

“Many schools are providing community access to their facilities outside of school hours but only a few have community facilities that can be accessed during the day. New-build schools, particularly secondaries are often designed with community use in mind. In some, mostly refurbished schools there is little evidence of a layout that encourages broad community access...” (Audit Scotland 2008)

The previous Scottish Executive commissioned the Lighthouse to prepare case study material to highlight good practice and demonstrate different approaches to school design. The two examples below give an indication of how some school buildings are being made use of by the wider community:

Highland Council - [Ardnamurchan High School](#) (completed August 2002)

A key motivation for this school being built was the need to serve the community as well as pupils. It incorporates an Arts and Community Centre

which includes a library, indoor and outdoor sports facilities and a 250-seat theatre, as well as dedicated community rooms, a youth club, and bases for further and higher education students. Prior to this school, the community had no dedicated building for such activities.

North Lanarkshire – [St Andrew's High School](#) (completed October 2006)

This is a new build denominational secondary school, with an associated Community Education Centre, a Community Sports Centre, and incorporated a play group. The facilities are used by pupils, staff and community groups on a daily basis and are described as an asset to the area and community as a whole.

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APPENDIX 1A: PRIMARY SCHOOL CAPACITY, SEPTEMBER 2006

	Schools with roll less than 50% of capacity	Schools with roll 50-<75% of capacity	Schools with roll 75-<90% of capacity	Schools with roll 90-<100% of capacity	Schools with roll greater than capacity (100% or more capacity)
Aberdeen City	18	24	8	5	-
Aberdeenshire	23	61	36	7	25
Angus	8	21	22	5	1
Argyll & Bute	43	23	12	1	4
Clackmannanshire	1	7	10	1	-
Dumfries & Galloway	8	30	37	24	8
Dundee City	15	16	4	4	-
East Ayrshire	12	20	12	2	1
East Dunbartonshire	3	18	13	2	-
East Lothian	1	8	22	4	-
East Renfrewshire	-	6	11	6	1
Edinburgh, City of	16	33	27	15	3
Eilean Siar	19	17	2	-	-
Falkirk	3	28	16	1	-
Fife	17	59	44	23	1
Glasgow City	69	60	28	6	2
Highland	77	71	22	6	7
Inverclyde	4	12	10	-	-
Midlothian	-	23	9	3	-
Moray	5	26	13	2	-
North Ayrshire	7	26	15	4	1

North Lanarkshire	11	52	35	14	15
Orkney Islands	13	8	-	-	-
Perth & Kinross	17	21	18	9	11
Renfrewshire	8	24	15	5	-
Scottish Borders	5	31	22	4	3
Shetland Islands	14	9	5	1	4
South Ayrshire	5	25	13	2	-
South Lanarkshire	34	69	19	3	-
Stirling	10	11	16	5	-
West Dunbartonshire	14	13	5	1	1
West Lothian	6	18	18	7	16
Total	486	870	539	172	111

(1) Capacity information was not available for 97 primary schools.
 .Source: (Scottish Executive 2007)

APPENDIX 1B: SECONDARY SCHOOL CAPACITY, SEPTEMBER 2006

	Schools with roll less than 50% capacity	Schools with roll 50-<75% of capacity	Schools with roll 75-<90% of capacity	Schools with roll 90-<100% of capacity	Schools with roll greater than capacity (100% or more capacity)
Aberdeen City	-	2	6	1	3
Aberdeenshire	-	-	4	3	10
Angus	-	2	3	2	1
Argyll & Bute	1	4	3	2	-
Clackmannanshire	-	-	2	1	-
Dumfries & Galloway	1	4	7	3	1
Dundee City	1	2	4	1	2
East Ayrshire	-	4	4	1	-
East Dunbartonshire	-	-	2	2	4
East Lothian	-	-	2	3	1
East Renfrewshire	-	1	3	2	1
Edinburgh, City of	1	4	6	5	7
Eilean Siar	7	1	3	-	-
Falkirk	-	2	5	1	-
Fife	-	3	7	7	2
Glasgow City	-	8	12	6	3
Highland	2	11	11	1	5
Inverclyde	1	4	-	1	2
Midlothian	-	1	4	-	1
Moray	-	-	1	5	-
North Ayrshire	-	6	2	2	-

North Lanarkshire	4	14	5	1	1
Orkney Islands	4	1	-	1	-
Perth & Kinross	-	1	4	1	4
Renfrewshire	-	1	5	3	2
Scottish Borders	-	2	6	1	-
Shetland Islands	1	3	5	-	-
South Ayrshire	1	2	5	1	-
South Lanarkshire
Stirling	-	-	6	1	-
West Dunbartonshire	-	5	-	1	1
West Lothian	-	1	5	4	-
Total	24	89	132	63	51

(1) Capacity information was not available for 24 secondary schools, the majority of which were in South Lanarkshire.

Source: Scottish Government (2007)

APPENDIX 2 – EXAMPLES OF RATIONALISATION PROPOSALS

This section illustrates two examples where local authorities have proposed that some schools in their area may have to close in order to ensure that the school estate is fit for purpose. It highlights the challenges faced by two local authorities, Moray and Edinburgh, in terms of providing adequate and efficient education provision balanced with meeting the needs and concerns of pupils, parents and the wider community.

Moray Council

In February 2004 HMIE published a report on the education functions of Moray Council and made a range of recommendations including the need to address the growing over-capacity in primary schools and that the management of resources should target areas of need and improvement more effectively. HMIE recognised that Moray Council was developing its School Estate Management Plan and suggested it take the opportunity to 'address the issue of growing over-capacity in the primary sector.'

Moray Council published its School Estate Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2004 in November 2004. A key area of concern in the Plan was the over-capacity of primary schools. It was recognised, in common with other rural areas, that Moray's school age population was declining and was projected to keep falling (according to GRO figures from 2002), although it was noted that figures should be treated with caution. The Plan used a threshold of 60% as a capacity or sufficiency baseline and indicated that six primary schools were below the threshold, and by 2011 it was projected that 18 primary schools would be below the threshold. All primary schools below 60% in 2004 and those projected to be below the threshold were listed in the Plan.

Public consultations on the future of the school estate were held between February/March, and May/June 2005. At this stage, there was no actual proposal to close any particular school, but the Plan did raise questions about the future of schools which were below the 60% capacity and suggested options for discussion including closures, mergers and mothballing. Therefore the consultation was an informal one as it was not bound by the requirements of the statutory consultation procedure which apply when there is an actual proposal to close or change the site of any school³.

The suggestion that some schools may have to close in order to provide schools fit for the 21st century, provoked opposition and protest amongst the Moray community (Moray Council 2005a). On 10 August 2005, Moray Council abandoned its plans for the school estate. Eddie Coutts, the council convener stated 'It is of great credit to the local communities who have come together to defend their local schools - they have presented a laudable case on which I believe we should act' (BBC news online 2005). Mr Coutts also added that over-capacity was still an issue that would need to be addressed.

As a result of the reaction to the informal consultation, a two stage review process was put in place (Moray Council 2005b). Stage 1 identifies schools which may be of concern, for example if the roll is 60% of capacity, and the aim at this stage is to encourage and sustain the future viability of the school. If the results are not positive the review moves to Stage 2. This part of the review considers a whole range of factors including the educational case for retention, pupil projections, role of school in community, sustainability and development of rural communities.

³ Education (Publication and Consultation Etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981

Following this, recommendations could include, retention of school, mothballing, closure or merger.

At a meeting of the Education Committee (2005) the then Education Minister, Peter Peacock, stated his concern on how guidance on school closures was being interpreted by local authorities. He indicated that the Executive would be working with COSLA to discuss the issue in more depth. COSLA later published (2006) the School Estates Management Good Practice Guide.

City of Edinburgh Council

The City of Edinburgh Council announced in a press release on 17 August 2007 that it would be reviewing Edinburgh's Children and Families Estate. It published the 'Children and Families Estate Review: Rationalisation and Development Programme' on 23 August 2007. The review outlined a desire to 'create a campus of facilities that may deliver school, early years and childcare, community and specialised services from a single building or suite of buildings'. It stated that this would enhance the educational experience as well as reducing overheads, which would therefore deliver best value and achieve efficiency savings.

A key factor cited for the rationalisation is the fall in pupil numbers. The fall in numbers may have had an effect on occupancy levels as it is stated that a 'third of primary schools and a tenth of secondary schools are operating below 60% occupancy, which is the Accounts Commission benchmark for review'. Other factors include: the poor quality of some the accommodation; small schools being expensive to run; and, that some schools below a certain size find it increasingly difficult to deliver the full curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Thirteen primary schools and three secondary schools were proposed for closure, as well as 6 early year establishments and 4 community centres.

Parents and pupils affected by the estate review campaigned against the closures (BBC news online 2007a; and 2007b). It was also reported that occupancy levels for some of schools highlighted for closure had occupancy levels higher than 60% (BBC news online 2007c).

On 3 September, SNP members of the Lib Dem/SNP coalition council withdrew their support from the estate review (City of Edinburgh Council 2007b). Other council members were disappointed by this outcome. Steve Cardownie, the SNP group leader on the council and deputy leader of the authority, stated that it was time to 'go back to the drawing board and look at the situation afresh' (BBC news online 2007d).