

Kitchen and dining spaces

a design note



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Well designed kitchen and dining spaces are an important part of any school, and key to encouraging children and young people to enjoy good healthy food. A healthy school lunch can have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour, learning and general well-being.

This design note provides a useful summary of key points to consider when establishing a design brief. It's aimed mainly at school heads and governors, to be used as a checklist for discussion with providers and the design team, particularly those involved in the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Primary Capital Programmes.



“ We have proved that if you give children a nice environment and fantastic food, they can only react in one way, and that’s positively.”

Deputy head, secondary school

Regulations and guidance

There are no statutory requirements for the size of kitchen and dining spaces. However the Department has published recommended area guidelines in *Building Bulletins 98: Briefing Framework for Secondary Schools* (BB98) and *Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary Schools* (BB99).

The Department has also published *Inspirational Design for Kitchen and Dining Spaces* which includes detailed guidance on room sizes, room layouts, lighting, acoustics and finishes. It is illustrated with case study examples.

All three documents are referred to in many output specifications and design briefs (such as for BSF and PCP projects).



The facility must meet the particular needs of your school. Talk to pupils about the kind of spaces they feel comfortable in and to catering staff about their requirements.

Regulations and guidance key points:

- The area guidelines in BB98 and BB99 are based on typical dining arrangements and provide a baseline for guidance only. The size of spaces must provide the capacity to meet the particular needs of the long-term vision for your school.
- BB98 and BB99 recommend minimum gross (or total) areas for school buildings as well as area standards for all types of space in a school. The gross area will be determined by the available budget but you must achieve a balance of spaces within the overall area so that one kind of space doesn't suffer at the expense of another.
- In BB98 and BB99, an area called the 'float'¹ is left unallocated to give you the flexibility to add area where it best suits your priorities. You could use some of this, for example, to provide a larger social space to incorporate dining.
- Well designed kitchen and dining spaces of the right size make an important contribution to the health and well being of pupils and staff.
- The design team should hear from staff and pupils about the type of social and dining experience they would like. Ideally, give your pupils the opportunity to interact directly with the design team.
- It is essential the design team understand the flow of the catering service from beginning to end: deliveries; storage; preparation; serving; queuing; clearing and waste collection. This will help them to decide on the best position of spaces, the most efficient room plans and equipment layouts.

¹ If you add up all the recommended minimum areas for every space in the school, the figure will be 4 to 10% less than the recommended total net area (net area = gross area minus toilets, kitchen and plant). This difference is called the 'float'.

Kitchens

Kitchens are highly serviced and heavily equipped spaces that need specialist design input if they are to provide value for money.

The area recommendations in BB98 and BB99 are given as formulae based on the number of pupils at the school (N): $0+0.1N$ to $15+0.15N$. So for example a primary school of 420 children would need a kitchen of between 42m^2 and 78m^2 . A secondary school of 900 students would need a kitchen of between and 90m^2 and 150m^2 .

Installing modern, up-to-date, small pieces of equipment can achieve significant improvements in effectiveness and efficiency. The indirect advantage is increased productivity and reduced costs.



Kitchens key points:

- *Inspirational Design for Kitchen and Dining Spaces* says “It is likely that a school preparing a wide variety of food on site from fresh ingredients will have a kitchen at the top end of the area ranges [in BB98 and BB99]”.
- The recommendations are based on an efficiently planned kitchen with a typical range of equipment. A poorly planned kitchen or one with over-specified equipment will not function properly at these sizes. Make sure you get reliable professional advice and base your area needs on an efficient design and a realistic specification.
- Choosing the most efficient layout and paying attention to flow issues will make the kitchen work more effectively and may reduce your area requirements.
- Ask your catering team about what works well and what doesn't in the current kitchen (if applicable).
- Understanding the detailed requirements from the perspective of all users will avoid costly changes later. You should establish the following at an early stage:
 - The size of space and the equipment required to produce a variety of hot and cold food that meets the nutritional standards for school food.
 - The number and location of power points and lighting positions.
 - Ventilation requirements.
 - An efficient flow from the self-clearing facility to the kitchen pre-clean area and dishwashing and storing facilities.
 - A system of waste disposal that complies with regulations and meets sustainability requirements.

Dining areas

Well-designed, attractive dining areas encourage and support healthy eating and good social interaction. Having enough space is one of the factors that contribute to good design.

The area recommendations in BB99 are based on 0.9m^2 per 'cover' and an assumption that all pupils take meals, in three sittings. The area recommendations in BB98 are based on 0.9m^2 per 'cover' and an assumption that 75% to 80% of pupils will be eating in the equivalent of three sittings (15-20 minutes per sitting).

However, school meals are changing and becoming more popular and it may be more realistic to plan secondary as well as primary schools on the basis of the possibility of all pupils (100%) taking meals. This may mean considering a range of organisational options such as longer lunch breaks, staggered lunch breaks or providing multiple serving areas across the school.

Where dining takes place in an open-plan central space, allow enough room for circulation alongside those sitting at tables.

Tip - do a flow diagram to demonstrate the logical flow of children round the dining room from arrival, queuing to collect food, both hot and cold, eating and self clearing (so those clearing empty plates do not conflict with those carrying full plates).



Dining areas key points:

- Base your area needs on likely future take-up of school meals and not just on current take-up.
- Provide enough space for those pupils eating a packed lunch as well as those taking school lunch. Consider the requirements for breakfast clubs, break-time snacks and any community use.
- In most primary schools dining takes place in a multi-functional space. Make sure all activities can be properly accommodated (for example allow for storing furniture and equipment when not in use).
- Think about the location of dining spaces at an early stage. In a large secondary school there could be one central space or more dispersed spaces (think how the latter are served by kitchen facilities).
- Consider different types of space for different groups, such as students wanting a quick snack before a lunchtime sporting activity.
- Dining rooms are one of the largest spaces in the school. Think what other activities they can house, for example: independent study; small group support; community gatherings; after school clubs and food and cookery lessons.
- There must be enough space for queuing, serving, paying and clearing - as well for eating. A well planned space will work more efficiently and use space more effectively.
- If the dining room has direct access to a sheltered outdoor area, make it available in fine weather for dining and socialisation.
- Dining spaces can be large noisy places, the shape of the space and the choice of finishes can help to ensure a quieter, calmer atmosphere.
- Good quality furniture can make a big impact on the comfort and enjoyment of the dining space. Allow sufficient funding to achieve this.

Further information

- For an introduction and to download the documents *Building Bulletin 98: Briefing Framework for Secondary Schools (BB98)* and *Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary Schools (BB99)* see www.teachernet.gov.uk/sbareaguidelines/
- Download *Inspirational Design for Kitchen and Dining Spaces* at www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=11831
- A number of documents and resources can be found at the School Food Trust website, including *A Fresh Look at the Meal Experience*: www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/index.asp
- The Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA) represents many of the catering managers and suppliers who provide catering services to Local Authorities. www.laca.co.uk/





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You can download this publication at: www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthyliving/schoolfoodanddrink/

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