



NURSERY/EARLY YEARS DESIGN BRIEF

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Building for their Future

Kent is continuing to develop high quality, new provision which will impact positively on the lives of children and their families.

Designing for our youngest children means that architects must create environments that support and ease the transition from home to nursery. Our nurseries and Foundation provision therefore should be softer environments than those for older students. We know that buildings and outdoor spaces impact on the lives of all human beings. Nurseries should provide comfort and security, space, light and colour which enhance feelings of well being and make learning an enjoyable experience for all children.



Here the lighting has been chosen to soften the airy space

Space both indoors and out must be a priority. Young children are active learners who need room to move around and play.



Moveable screens are invaluable and can make a cosy corner in which to cuddle up and read a story with friends.

Nursery Units – Schedule of Accommodation for 26 places per session

NURSERY UNIT	
Teaching Areas	
Teaching room/Play room (Including wet area 12m ²)	70m² (75m ² if possible)
Ancillary Accommodation Kitchen/Servery	10-12m²
Pupil Toilets	12m² (BS 8300)
Disabled/Staff WC	6m² (BS 8300)
Shower area (could be incorporated with other wet areas e.g. disabled toilet or laundry)	3m²
Office/Staff Room (may need to be larger if a standalone nursery)	12 m²
Entrance/Coats	8m²
Resource Store	4m²
Medical/Sick Room (school facilities could be used if school maintained nursery)	4m²
TOTAL INTERNAL AREA	129-131m²
Outside Areas	
Outside Covered Area 30m² (Canopy to cover external play area)	
Outside Play Area (9m ² per child)	234m²
External Store	10m²
External Waiting Area	15m²
Buggy Store	2m²
TOTAL EXTERNAL AREA	261m²
GROSS TOTAL SITE AREA	390-392m²

(This brief can also be used when providing accommodation for Foundation Stage classes where new primary school provision is being planned.)

NURSERY / EARLY YEARS UNITS – ACCOMMODATION SPECIFICATION

DESCRIPTION OF CURRICULUM NEEDS, ROOM FUNCTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS.

1. General Considerations

Issues related to the delivery and provision of a high quality curriculum, which in turn impact upon standards.

The learning environment is an important consideration in the early years. Experience gained during the building/adaptation of the last group of nurseries in the county, subsequent visits to them, and DfE research, has shown that the following points should be considered at the design stage if the highest value added is to be achieved.

This brief has been developed to identify the ideal provision required for a Nursery/Early Years Unit of 1, 2 or 3 classes in size. It assumes that whole day attendance will not be required and that such Units will operate on separate half day sessions, for 26 places. NB. This equates to 52 actual children.

Should whole day provision be required, further consideration must be given to any additional accommodation. This would chiefly concern the adequacy of refreshment/meal arrangements where it would be necessary to increase the servery and/or provide full-scale kitchen facilities together with a dining area.

If more than one class is intended (i.e. 52 or 78 places = 2 or 3 class) then there may be a need for the following, although this has to be related to the availability of such facilities in a school on the same site:

- a) small hall/large room/central piazza
- b) staff room

Design Teams should be aware that Nursery/Early Years Units should be designed to allow use by disabled pupils (e.g. ramping, modified access, toilet provision, working surface heights etc.) All facilities within the nursery – e.g. ramps, toilets, door widths etc should allow for use by disabled pupils and wheelchairs. All doors must be hung carefully so that maximum and efficient use of space can occur.

2. Internal Spatial Requirements

Space should be a priority. The interior play room should aim for at least 70m² and if possible 75m². The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) states that in registered provision the space requirement that must be met is 2.3m² for every child aged between three to five years. Maintained provision should have regard to this and at least equal it if not exceed it. Calculations of indoor space should be based on the net or useable areas of the room used by the children (that is not including storage areas etc.) See page 35 of 'The Statutory Framework for the EYFS' for additional information to which designs should have regard.

N.B. Where indicated by an asterisk (*) the provision may be omitted provided that suitable facilities are readily accessible in a school on the same site.

a.) Class/Play Room Minimum

Area required: 70m² per room/ 26 children

The room should allow for the teaching of the Foundation Stage curriculum based on play and learning through activity. Differing floor finishes within the area should be provided to allow for multi-functional use. Main nursery work area should have both hard washable surface and carpeted areas. The majority of flooring should be hard washable surface with careful consideration given to where carpeted areas should be placed. It could be that an area is carpeted large enough for the group to gather together and in an area set aside for quiet. Some non – slip flooring may also be worth considering around wet/messy play areas. Low, child height sinks for washing paint pots etc. should be provided with draining board. Some wall storage is helpful. Best practice guidance considers open shelving as an excellent way to store resources that are then easily accessible to the children. Display boards need to be placed at children’s height so that they can easily see and interact with displays.



Other examples of the types of activity to be conducted in the above room are:

Wet/messy activities

Creative activities

Reading / Mark making

Investigation

Construction

Role Play Activity

ICT activities

(T.V. socket/computer point and Tape recorder/CD player sockets will be needed)

Where more than one class/play room is provided, the overall design of the unit should allow for the movement between class/play rooms without the need to pass through other teaching areas. Double doors to the outside should be provided from every teaching room to extend the space available into the external aspects. Glazing should be at a suitable height to permit children and staff to see the external area from inside the class/play room. Clearly careful consideration will be required in respect of the type of glass used if fitted at a lower level.



Here sliding doors can open up the nursery so that outdoors and indoors become one

b.) Resource Store

Area required: 4m²

Each class/play room should be provided with its own integral store for the storage of resource materials and pupils work. It should be lockable. A large and deep walk in storage cupboard with sturdy shelves for adult use is required. Larger play equipment will be stored in the separately designated Large Play Equipment Store.

c.) Medical/Sick Room (*)

Area required: 4m²

A medical/sick room should be provided to enable examinations by Health professionals where necessary and as quiet space for the resting/treatment of pupils who might become ill or require minor treatment. It may also be used as a quiet area for pupils who have been taken ill and are awaiting collection by parents. In this respect it should be located close to the office in case the adult with the child should need extra help - no child should ever be left alone. The room could be used for pupils who require changing following incidences of soiled clothing and in this respect should also be located close to the laundry facility. A washbasin should be provided and the room located near to a toilet. It should be provided with low sink for washing wounds etc and adult sized hand basin. Doors with windows are helpful as long as privacy can still be maintained for children by the careful sighting of changing facilities etc.



A washing machine and tumble dryer for the washing and drying of soiled clothing need to be provided. A hand held low shower and changing area should also be provided. Heating is necessary here and hygienic handling and disposal of soiled materials should be a priority consideration. Hand washing facilities should be provided. Storage facilities should be provided for bulky items e.g. nappies. Direct access from medical room and laundry space to toilet area is needed if at all possible on refurbishments but essential on new builds.

d.) Large Play Equipment Store Area required: 10m² then 5m² per additional class

This is one of the most important features of effective outdoor areas. This store will be required for the storage of large play equipment such as slides, climbing frames, hollow blocks, wheeled vehicles, play house etc. When more than one class/play area is provided in the unit, the store should be associated with the Large Space/Small Hall although access to the external areas to the store will be required for both children and adults. Storage must be ample enough to allow children to select resources independently. Enough space should be provided so that children can easily go into the store and independently access equipment. Consideration should be given to shelving, hooks etc as part of the design process. Ensure best use is made of the space so that as much as possible is accessible to the children.

e.) Cloakrooms/Outdoor clothes Area required: 8m² per class

Space should be provided adjacent to class/play rooms for the storage of children's coats. The area should be at the entrance to the class/play area rather than inside it. Cloakrooms need to be easily accessible and not divided off by closed doors from main work room.



The coats in this Italian nursery are hung carefully from hangers.

Coats should be stored away from messy activities and ideally, therefore, should be separated/ shielded from the work space. They should be near to a source of heat/ air circulation so that drying takes place in wet weather as quickly as possible. They should not be two layered i.e. one peg above the other, but single layered.

Consider where children will put on/remove/store wet weather gear, including muddy boots. Ideally there should be enough space close to the door to the outside area to allow

children to change and store wet weather gear whilst allowing others to flow freely through the doors in and out. This area may be separate from the cloakroom area.

g.) Servery Area required: 10m² for 1 class; 15m² for 2+ classes

Although the nursery will not cater for midday meals on the presumption that attendance at the Unit will be on half-day sessions rather than a whole day basis, it will require an area for the preparation of hot and cold beverages and possibly light snacks for mid session breaks.

There is wide acceptance now that in order to function well children need regular drinks and food intake. (Research brain development/ basic needs). It is often the case that young children do not have breakfast and therefore need the opportunity for a drink and snack mid morning or earlier. The kitchen is not therefore a luxury item. It is linked to academic achievement.

Children will be involved in cooking activities as part of the curriculum and therefore a Baby Belling/or similar is required rather than a combination microwave, need to check with Building Control that a fire shutter will not be required.

Kitchen/servery area to be open plan with half height wall with hatch or counter for serving into the nursery.

h.) Toilet/Washbasin Provision (pupils) Area required: 12m² then 6m² per additional class

The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 and the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage specifies 1 toilet per 10 pupils over the age of two.

Children's toilets and wash area should be provided with thermostatically controlled warm water. The taps should be those which turn themselves off after a short time.

The size of all the sanitary equipment should be that made for 3-4 years olds, not any larger.

Turning circles for wheelchairs should be provided for in terms of space.

It is important to pay attention to the rights to privacy of the child when siting windows as well as the child's need to feel secure.

A hydraulic changing bench to be provided.

One shower with tanked floor (not raised shower tray or bath or deep sink) plus hand held shower head per 40 pupils should be provided; minimum area of 3m², facilities should be separate from staff provision. A door leading from the toilet area directly into the laundry/medical room, if the shower is located there, is helpful for ease of use with children who need to be washed.

Unisex provision - 3 toilets, one to be easy access, refer to revised Part M Building Regulations and BS 8300. Updated 2009



Here children can see back into the nursery from the toilet area while washing their hands but adults cannot see into the toilet cubicles because of careful design thereby maintaining privacy for children. This toilet area is light and fresh.

i.) Toilet/ Washbasin Provision (staff) Area required: 3m²

The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 specifies separate provision from pupil provision. KCC specification is 1 male and 1 female facility.

A disabled/staff toilet of 6m² should be considered if this facility is not available within the school or the nursery is planned to be a standalone unit.

**k.) Office - for meeting/interviewing Area required: 12m² as a minimum
Parents/Head/Nursery Teacher**

The office may be used for the management of the unit and for confidential discussions with parents/carers. Where only one class/play area is provided in the unit, this room may also be used as the staff room.

For public access, a wider door required for easy access, refer to BS 8300.

Privacy needed so acoustics of room requires consideration.

L.) Staff Room (*) Area required: 20m² for 3 classes

Where more than one class/ play room is provided in the Unit, a staff room should also be provided to permit staff to meet, plan activities and work away from the class/ play areas as necessary.

m.) Entrance Hall/Circulation (*) Area required: 20% of Unit area. (Optional multi class schools only)

The Entrance Hall should be designed as a welcoming aspect to the Unit for both pupils and parents. Consideration of the use of this space will include allowance for the display of pupil's work and literature for parents. The area of the Entrance Hall and Circulation space together should not exceed 20% of the overall area of the unit. Consider including a space in which parents can sit, chat in some comfort.

Access to the nursery should be into a reception area. Parents with pushchairs should be able to gain access easily. Provision for buggies to be parked under cover is necessary. Doors should be wide enough with easy to manage thresholds. KCC specification of 20% circulation on top of working space for children is important. The reception area is a vital area of provision for all the nursery units. *Entrance via the outdoor area is not appropriate.*

** These areas are optional depending on the size of the nursery*

3. External Spatial Requirements

a.) Open Recreation Area

Area required: 234m² per class part of which, 40m², should be safety surface play area



The recommendation is an area of 9m² per pupil which should be mainly hard-surfaced. The remainder of the area should be available for use as an area for “learning through landscapes”.

Each class/playroom should have double doors leading directly to the external area to permit its use in conjunction with and as a natural extension to, the internal spaces.

Examples of external spaces are:

- Soft play area
- Hard play area
- Small hillock/a variety of gradients
- Sandpit with cover
- Area for sitting

It is good practice to zone the outdoor area to ensure children can engage with all areas of learning. This needs to be part of the design process to ensure the outdoor area is exploited for all its potential. Careful consideration needs to be given to which zones are best closer together, near to running water and which may need to be further apart. Any paved area should be of differing colours where possible. The grassed areas should include an area for planting by children.



- Security is a priority for the youngest children and therefore an interior gate/door should be used to separate the nursery from the main school to ensure children do not wander away.
- The outdoor environment must be provided with an appropriate fence and gate. Latches for gate and cross supports, if any for fence should be on outside to prevent children from climbing and/or opening gates and wandering away.
- The area should be landscaped, ideally to include a variety of gradients and a garden area with room for digging and planting as well as hard surface. Plants obviously should be non-poisonous, without thorns etc and if possible of different varieties that would attract small creatures such as caterpillars, butterflies spiders, etc. They should also include those, which are interesting to smell, look at and touch. Any paths should be of tarmac not woodchip.
- If site is difficult the use of astro-turf could be considered to give variety of surfaces. There should be an area of impact absorbent material – not loose fill but rubber or similar. Of the last nurseries built many opted for the soft surface to be put under the Canopy and this has been reported to be very successful. The soft surface must be large enough so that if a child should fall from apparatus no part of his/her body will fall on hard surface. It is not helpful to place small areas of soft surface around the area if this compromises the safety aspect.

- There should be a canopy with UVA/ UVB filter in the material used for the roof of this structure. The canopy should have two side pieces in order to protect children from the worst of the winter weather. One KCC nursery has a very useful up and over garage door, which protects the whole canopy in heavy rain – still allowing the area to be used because lights have been installed. The canopy also doubles up as a very convenient store for large resources, which is vandal proof.
- If the canopy is not used for storage, some other outdoor secure structure, i.e. brick built, must be provided. This should give ease of access for the adults who take out and put away equipment and it also saves space inside the building because an internal store for outdoor equipment would not be necessary.
- Another consideration is the provision of an outdoor sunken sandpit under the canopy. Sand outdoors needs protection if there is any risk of animals or vandals accessing the site.



This sand is protected by a pest chaser. (see below)



The pest chaser uses high frequency sound.



Shade must be considered when designing outdoor areas.

- An outdoor tap is a small but significant feature that helps adults wash down and clean the area but also which enables water trays etc to be filled without having to carry heavy water containers through the building. It could be a push tap with the stopcock inside or outside the nursery. Ideally this tap should be easy to use, in order that children also have access to water outdoors when needed to enhance their play.



- An outdoor electricity supply is needed.
- Fixed climbing apparatus restricts flexibility and should not be provided at the point of build.
- All windows should open so that no child could accidentally hit their head on the metal of wood.
- All windows should be low enough for good sight lines into and out of the nursery.
- All doors to the outside area should be double, with one leaf having a minimum clear opening of 800mm, in order to allow large equipment e.g. sand trays, and wheelchairs to be taken out without problems. (Please consider any ramps with this in mind, e.g. turning angles, angle of slope etc.)

- All doors should be secured when fully open so that they do not slam shut and cause an injury.
- On exposed sites windbreak types of materials should be considered for fencing.

b.) Covered Recreation Area Area required: 30m² per class

Part of the external space, immediately outside the class/play room should be covered, possibly by extending the roofline, to provide a sheltered activity area. This should also be planned as a transitional area for children who need that safe space before exploring the further reaches of the outdoor area. This could also be an area where children change their clothes and footwear if more appropriate than indoors.

c.) Boundary Treatment

The whole of the external area should be enclosed by an appropriate fence, hedge, wall or similar boundary.

4. Other Requirements

The Equality Act 2010

When designing a nursery a fully inclusive design means that the building will work for everyone and does away with the need to make separate provision. Both The Equality Act 2010 and BS8300: 2009 +A1: 2010 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. These codes of practice should be central to informing the design process.

Reference must be made to the relevant Government legislation and guidance. For example the Education (School Premises Regulations) 1999 requires that radiators that can be touched by nursery pupils must not exceed 43°C. Desirable to have underfloor heating.

5. Background References

- The Education (School Premises Regulations) 1999.
- Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects
- BS 8300:2009+A1: 2010 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. Code of practice
- The Early Years Foundation Stage Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for children from birth to five

https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/eyfs_res_stat_frmwrk.pdf

Reference:

Further Advice can be obtained from KCC - BSS Directorate, Property Group

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