

Applicant Guidance

School capacity (SCAP) data

Winter/Spring 2021

**New
Schools
Network**

This guidance is based on the Department for Education's most recent mainstream free school wave – wave 14. The deadline for wave 14 applications was on the 11th November 2019.

The criteria for free school applicants are subject to change with each free school wave and local authority led presumption competitions. As a result, applicants using this guidance should be aware of potential changes in criteria for the application route they are applying to. New Schools Network will endeavour to update our guidance to reflect the latest Department for Education's criteria.

Please note: Due to Covid-19, the 2020 SCAP data collection has been cancelled. This guidance is based on the most recent data collection.

Introduction

As part of the free school application process, it is important to have an understanding of how your proposed school will impact on the existing provision in your area. In previous waves, demonstrating basic need for a new school has been a key requirement.

The criteria around basic need varies from wave to wave, but it is always important to have an understanding of the local context to inform your application. Demonstrating that there is a requirement for additional school places will help you present a strong case that a new school is needed in your area.

This guidance outlines a variety of resources that applicants can use to build a basic need case for their chosen area and explains how to interpret the school capacity (SCAP) data tables.

Basic need data sources

The most recent [application guidance](#)¹ outlines a variety of resources that applicants can use to build a basic need case for their chosen area. This includes:

Publicly available information:

- Published basic need data – the most up-to-date [school capacity \(SCAP\) data](#)
- [Pipeline](#) free school projects

Information that can be requested from the local authority (may also be publicly available):

¹ Please note this criteria is for wave 14, which has closed. New guidance is published for each wave.

- Local authority basic need data – obtained by talking to the Director of Children’s Services or the school place planning team
- School expansions, openings and closures
- Housing developments
- Planned presumption competitions
- Birth and migration rates
- Growing yearly cohorts and in-year migration

School capacity (SCAP) data

The annual school capacity survey provides national and local authority level information on the numbers of: primary school places, secondary school places, unfilled schools places and pupils over school capacity. It also provides pupil number forecasts for 5 to 7 years (primary and secondary respectively).

Included within the SCAP data returns are additional tables and underlying data tables which outline the estimated number of places needed at the national, local authority and planning area level. These tables are extremely useful, particularly when developing a need case for a new free school.

When interpreting the SCAP tables, you should be aware that the data could be outdated. This is because local authorities submit their data collections in May, but the compiled SCAP is not published by the DfE until the following March.

You should always engage with the local authority to fully understand the need picture in your proposed area.

Main tables

The [main tables](#) outline school capacity, actual pupil numbers, pupils forecasts and new or removed places within different local authorities. This data is high level and does not distinguish between different planning areas.

This data can be used to create a basic table which demonstrates how school capacity will be affected if the local authority does not add any additional places into the system. It does not account for any school expansions, bulge classes, school openings or closures. Although this is a good place to start interpreting basic need in a local authority, the data presented may not be truly representative.

Worked example: Secondary school in Kingston Upon Hull (SCAP19)

Table 1: Number of places needed if school capacity remains static

Year	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26
Number of school places (Table A3)	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000
Number of actual/forecast places (Table A6)	14,354	15,142	15,689	16,178	16,596	17,065	17,287	17,300
Surplus/deficit places	-1646	-858	-311	178	596	1065	1287	1300

School place planning tables

The [school place planning tables](#) outline the estimated number of places needed to meet modelled demand. The data can be viewed at a national, regional, local and planning area level.

- Table B1 and B2 outline the estimated number of places needed at a national, regional and local authority level.
- Table B3 and B4 outline the number of places **needed** at a planning area level. This data sets aside pockets of spare capacity within year groups and acknowledges that pressure in one part of a local authority cannot necessarily be offset by spare places in another area. In this model, surplus places are removed and it is not assumed that pupils could not be dispersed.
- Table B5 and B6 outline the number of places needed at a planning area level. Unlike Table B3 and B4, surplus places are also included as negative numbers and factored into the totals.

You can find more information on how both models of place planning estimates are calculated in the accompanying [technical guidance](#).

Worked example: Secondary school in Kingston Upon Hull (SCAP19)

Table 2: Places needed in each planning area with surplus places removed (Table B3 and B4)

Year	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26
Secondary North	49	113	179	247	373	456	457
Secondary East	39	34	46	86	140	157	99
Secondary West	69	72	144	251	353	382	367
Total	157	219	369	584	865	994	923

This table shows basic need whilst assuming that surplus places within other year groups **could not** be used to meet demand.

Worked example: Secondary school in Kingston Upon Hull (SCAP19)

Table 3: Places needed in each planning area with surplus places included (Table B5 and B6)

Year	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26
Secondary North	-306	-83	57	163	315	408	422
Secondary East	-413	-347	-240	-148	-61	-43	-61
Secondary West	-101	-367	-186	20	234	367	362
Total	-820	-797	-369	35	488	732	723

This table shows basic need whilst assuming that surplus places within other year groups **could** be used to meet demand.

Although both of these data tables are useful, and both display basic need (from 2023 onwards), it is important to review the underlying data tables to determine which year groups these places are required within.

You will notice that the need figures in both place planning tables differ from the data presented in the main tables. This is because the school place planning tables take into account additional capacity that is being added through new school places and school expansions.

Underlying data tables

The [underlying data tables](#) outline basic need by both place planning area and year group. This information is particularly useful for free school applicants, as it highlights the year groups in which surplus and deficit capacity exists. This data correlates with Tables B5 and B6.

It will be important to consider the following:

- **Primary** - The continued need for reception places from your proposed year of opening and onwards as the free school builds to capacity.
- **Secondary** - The continued need for year 7 places from your proposed year of opening and onwards as the free school builds to capacity.
- **All-through** - The continued need for reception and year 7 places from your proposed year of opening and onwards as the free school builds to capacity.

Worked example: Secondary school in Kingston Upon Hull (SCAP19)

Table 4: Year 7 places needed in each planning area (surplus places included as negatives)

Year	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26
Secondary North	36	51	73	84	165	140	83
Secondary East	39	3	35	58	80	54	-7
Secondary West	53	72	83	114	161	101	71
Total	128	126	191	256	406	295	147

This data takes into account the addition of any school places for which the local authority has firm plans for delivery.

Overall, this data demonstrates basic need for a new secondary school in Secondary North and Secondary West.

Conclusions and next steps

This guidance has used an example to demonstrate how to illustrate basic need at both local authority and planning area level.

It is important to note that school place planning projections are updated regularly and that applicants should contact the local authority directly to request additional information about basic need (as outlined on page 2 of this guidance).

Updated projections and additional input from the local authority can change the overall need picture within a planning area and this information should be factored into your application.

FICTIONAL example: Secondary school in Kingston Upon Hull (SCAP19 plus additional local authority data)

Table 5: Year 7 places needed in Secondary North (surplus places included as negatives)

Year	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26
Secondary North (SCAP 19)	36	51	73	84	165	140	83
Secondary North (LA updated data)	36	51	87	91	165	101	97
Planned housing development pupil yield	0	0	8	8	8	9	9
In-year migration	0	4	7	12	12	12	12
Total	36	55	102	111	185	132	108

In this **fictional** example, you can see that local authority basic need projections have been updated. The local authority has also indicated that housing development and pupil migration are likely to increase the basic need further.

During conversations, the local authority indicated that no further school expansions or builds were planned and that neighbouring planning areas and local authorities could not cater for the rising need.

Once combined, this data presents a strong need case for a secondary school in Secondary North.

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