



Communities working on neighbourhood development plans (NDP) are exploring existing demands for school places and the demand that will be created as a result of proposed housing development and an increasing population. This guide note seeks to answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

**Q – How does an NDP steering group find out the capacity of a school within the area?**

A – School capacity data can be obtained from the Education, Health and Social Care Directorate at Cornwall Council. The data provided will include the capacity of the existing school building and the numbers of pupils at the last school census (undertaken in January, May and October each year); however, further information such as forecasts and catchment area statistics may also be available upon request.

**Q – Can an NDP steering group find out how many school places will be needed over the next five years?**

A – Yes, every November, Cornwall Council prepares four-year enrolment projections for all of Cornwall's schools. The projections show the future enrolment trend at each school by giving the estimated number of students expected to be attending each school, for each year, over the next five years.

**Q – If the NDP steering group believe that the local school is at full capacity, can it be expanded?**

A – Expanding a school may be possible, but is not always the answer. It is important that the NDP steering group liaises with Cornwall Council to review school provision in their area, looking at all schools collectively rather than in isolation. If there is a collective capacity issue, Cornwall Council may consider expansion in order to fulfil its statutory duty of ensuring that every school-aged child has access to a school place.

**Q – If a school within a neighbourhood area is at capacity and agreement has been made that the school can be expanded, will it take priority?**

A – When it is agreed between the Cornwall Council and the NDP steering group that a school requires expansion, it will be considered alongside all other school expansion schemes proposed across the county. Cornwall Council has received very limited capital investment over recent years; as such, it may only be possible to provide temporary provision (e.g. Elliott buildings) in the first instance.



**Q - If one of the schools within our neighbourhood area is at capacity and the other isn't; could we still make a case to expand the most popular school?**

A – It is important that the NDP steering group liaises with Cornwall Council to review school provision in their area, looking at all schools collectively rather than in isolation. We advise engagement with the under-capacity school first; this may reveal why the school is not as popular and if there are improvements that can help solve the problem. Given the limited capital revenue Cornwall has received in recent years, it is unlikely that an individual school would be expanded if there is not a collective school capacity issue in the area.

**Q - Do schools that are at capacity and have future capacity needs have to expand?**

A – No. Some schools and governing bodies may decide not to expand, whilst others may not have the land and space to do so.

**Q – If a school within the area of the neighbourhood area is over capacity, due to the school letting children in from outside the catchment area, can we intervene?**

A – School places must be allocated in accordance with the admissions authority's criteria. For community and voluntary controlled schools, this is the local authority. For academy, trust, voluntary aided, free and foundation schools, it is the school's governing body. If the school is oversubscribed, places will be allocated in accordance with the admission authority's criteria – distance from the school is often towards the top of the list. Once the standard round of admission is complete, applications are allocated on a first come first served basis, with distance from the school not considered unless two applications for the same year group and the same school are submitted on the same day.