

Schools Facilities Standards

What are the Schools Facilities Standards?

The Schools Facilities Standards specify the type and size of school learning spaces. They are designed to

- deliver high quality educational experiences for all public schools in NSW and
- ensure school facilities meet the curriculum requirements set by the NSW Board of Studies.

The Standards specify minimum performance requirements for building elements including fixtures and fittings and mechanical and electrical infrastructure.

Schools Facilities Standards – Supporting quality educational outcomes

The Standards specify the type and size of different learning spaces required for different sized schools. This ensures school facilities meet the same high quality benchmarks across the State, regardless of the size or location of the school. The new school halls being built under Building the Education Revolution (BER), for example, are being built to an approved size for each school enrolment band.

Standards have been set for classrooms, science learning spaces and other special teaching spaces so that new educational facilities provide learning environments that challenge young people, promote excellence and are fit for the 21st century. The standards also ensure schools are inclusive by setting minimum accessibility standards.

Schools Facilities Standards – Ensuring safe learning environments

The Schools Facilities Standards sometimes exceed those set by Australian Building Code and Regulations. For instance, the Standards incorporate child safety measures and dictate that all windows must be made of shatterproof laminated glass with no glazing below 100 centimetres. They also dictate that low volatile organic compound paints must be used to retain a high level of indoor air quality.

In some cases the Standards set are higher because of findings of judicial proceedings and coronial inquiries. These responses improve safety in NSW public schools for students, teachers and the broader community.

Schools Facilities Standards – delivering value for money

The minimum quality requirements set by the Schools Facilities Standards mean school projects can initially be more expensive than domestic or commercial projects. However, incorporating the Standards offers good value for money over the life of the building - the Standards mean schools are not only safe but that they are also durable, long lasting and cost effective to maintain and clean throughout their life.

The upfront quality put into schools via the Standards saves money in the long run. The Standards ensure schools are fit for purpose and strike the right balance between the upfront cost of a building and the long-term cost of maintenance and cleaning.

How are the Schools Facilities Standards set?

The Standards are regularly reviewed by the Department of Education and Training's Educational Facilities Research Group to ensure they continue to represent the best balance between safety and educational outcomes and issues such as environmental impact, cost effectiveness, durability and ease of maintenance and cleaning.

The Group reports to the Facilities Standards Committee whose membership includes Principals, representatives from the P&C and NSW Teachers Federation and technical and maintenance experts from the Department of Commerce and the Department of Education and Training. The Facilities Standards Committee makes recommendations to the Minister for Education who makes the final decision regarding any major changes to the Standards.

Educational professionals also guide development of the Schools Facilities Standards. For instance, educational professionals and other stakeholders assist major reviews through workshops, forums and formal consultation. When a building project is completed, staff, students and the community provide input via customer satisfactions surveys.

When do the Schools Facilities Standards apply?

The Standards apply to all new building projects, including BER projects, at public schools. In relation to refurbishment projects the Standards provide guidance and are applied to the extent that it is reasonably possible given the constraints of the existing building.

How can I get more information on the Schools Facilities Standards?

For additional information regarding the Schools Facilities Standards contact your Asset Management Unit (AMU).