

Department of Education

# New School Site Selection Guidelines (September 2023)

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For further information on state school site selection, please contact the Service Planning team, Department of Education via email at [ServicePlanning@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:ServicePlanning@qed.qld.gov.au).

## Executive Summary

Selecting an appropriate site on which to establish a new school is an important decision for the future school and the future school community. The location, size, shape, topography and provision of services to a school site can materially affect the cost and ability to deliver the school, the operational aspects of managing the school, the ability to service the surrounding school network, student safety both within and accessing the school and the ability to expand the school to meet future enrolment demand.

## Background and Application

This guideline is intended to inform planning for, and selection of, new state school sites. The intended audience for this document includes officers from the Department of Education, other state government departments, local governments, as well as parties involved in planning for residential development. The guideline is not intended as a benchmark for the assessment of established state school sites. Acceptance of a school site is at the sole discretion of the Department of Education.

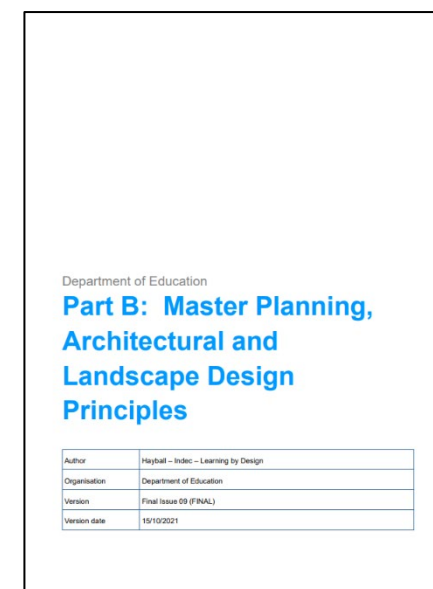
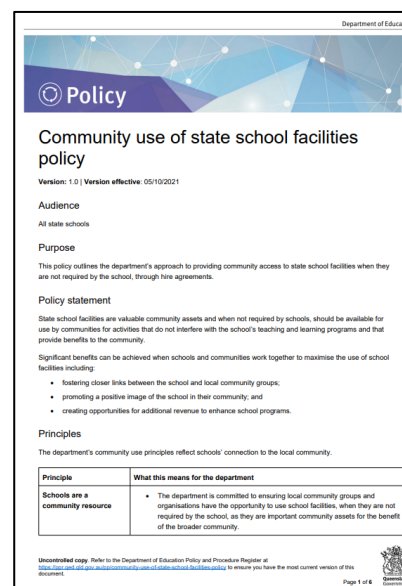
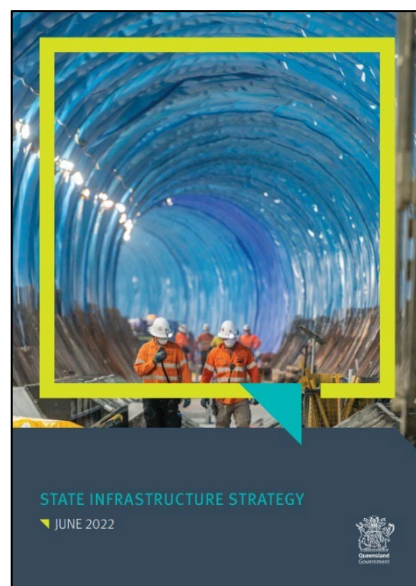
The New School Site Selection Guideline – September 2023 replaces the previous version dated September 2022. Further updates may be made from time to time to reflect current government policy.

## Alignment to policy, strategy and guidelines

The New School Site Selection Guidelines align to a range of State and Department of Education policies, strategies and guidelines

Strategy, policy or guideline	Goals or targeted outcomes relevant for new school planning
Department of Education <a href="#">Strategic Plan 2023-2027</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target responses and investment to meet community need</li> <li>• Work across government and foster meaningful partnerships to respond to changing communities</li> <li>• Respond to the needs of diverse communities and invest for future generations</li> <li>• Deliver integrated responses to provide a range of services to support students, families and communities</li> <li>• Build sustainable, energy-efficient and future focused infrastructure</li> </ul>
Department of Education <a href="#">Equity and Excellence strategy</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated planning, design and delivery of education across schools, early years services and community partners to respond to the changing needs of communities.</li> <li>• Sustainable investment to optimise and renew educational infrastructure across the network.</li> </ul>
Department of Education <a href="#">Inclusive Education policy</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people across Queensland, from all social, cultural, community and family backgrounds, and of all identities and all abilities are able to attend their local state school or education centre and be welcomed.</li> </ul>
Queensland <a href="#">State Infrastructure Strategy</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop regions, places and precincts</li> <li>• Embracing sustainable infrastructure</li> <li>• Planning and designing infrastructure to support integrated service delivery</li> <li>• Leveraging new technologies to advance learning, teaching and working</li> </ul>
Queensland <a href="#">Strategy for Social Infrastructure</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Transport and Main Roads - Planning for Safe Transport Infrastructure at Schools</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Design principles and technical standards for Department of Education facilities</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive suite of documents to inform the design of new schools and infrastructure on existing schools</li> <li>• Includes requirements to consider integration with neighbouring land uses such as early childhood education and care facilities, outside school hours care or community sporting and recreation facilities and to design the school to support access to spaces that are suitable for use by the broader community.</li> </ul>
Department of Transport and Main Roads - <a href="#">Planning for Safe Transport Infrastructure at Schools</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides guidance for safe transport infrastructure in and around schools.</li> <li>• Promotes active transport.</li> </ul>

Strategy, policy or guideline	Goals or targeted outcomes relevant for new school planning
Economic Development Queensland – <a href="#">Priority Development Area Guideline 11: Community Facilities</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides guidance on planning for schools in Priority Development Areas</li> </ul>
Department of Education <a href="#">Community Use of State School Facilities policy</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State school facilities are valuable community assets and when not required by schools, should be available for use by communities for activities that do not interfere with the school’s teaching and learning programs and that provide benefits to the community.</li> </ul>
Department of Education – <a href="#">Mobile telecommunication facilities procedure</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informs the department’s approach to dealing with requests to install mobile telecommunication facilities on or near state school sites and informs selection of new school sites where this infrastructure is already established.</li> </ul>





## School Enrolments and Estimated Staffing Numbers

Target peak enrolments and staff numbers are subject to individual site considerations and context, the below estimates are indicative only. The number of staff on a school site is subject to staff allocative models which may change over time, the characteristics of the student cohort (i.e. the number of students requiring additional supports), and local school decision making regarding staffing. Volunteers are not included in the total staff numbers in the below table, but many schools are supported by volunteers who will access the site during school hours.

Enrolments at a new primary or secondary school are expected to peak within the first 5-10 years of operations and then stabilise at approximately 80-90% of peak enrolments over the medium term. Over the longer term (20+ years), as areas see population renewal, a school may experience subsequent peaks in enrolments. School sizes below these peaks may be targeted in rural centres or based on an assessment of the needs of the local school network. Peak enrolments should be considered when planning for a new school in a new development area to allow appropriate servicing capacity including roads, car parking, sewer and water.

School Type	Low-density greenfield areas	Emerging medium or high-density areas	Infill areas
Primary schools	Peak enrolments: 1,100 Staffing at peak (FTE): 90-110	Peak enrolments: 700 Staffing at peak (FTE): 60-70	Peak enrolments: 700 Staffing at peak (FTE): 60-70
Secondary schools	Peak enrolments: 1,800 Staffing at peak (FTE): 170-190	Peak enrolments: 1,600 Staffing at peak (FTE): 150-170	Peak enrolments: 1,600 Staffing at peak (FTE): 150-170
P12 Schools	Peak enrolments: 2,500 Staffing at peak (FTE): 230-250	Not preferred	Not preferred
Special Schools	Peak enrolments: 200 Staffing at peak (FTE): 90-110	Not preferred	Not preferred

In some cases, opportunities for co-located primary and secondary school sites may be identified. Decision making with respect to whether separate primary and secondary schools or a single P12 school will be made in consultation with the local departmental regional executive team and the State Schools Division.

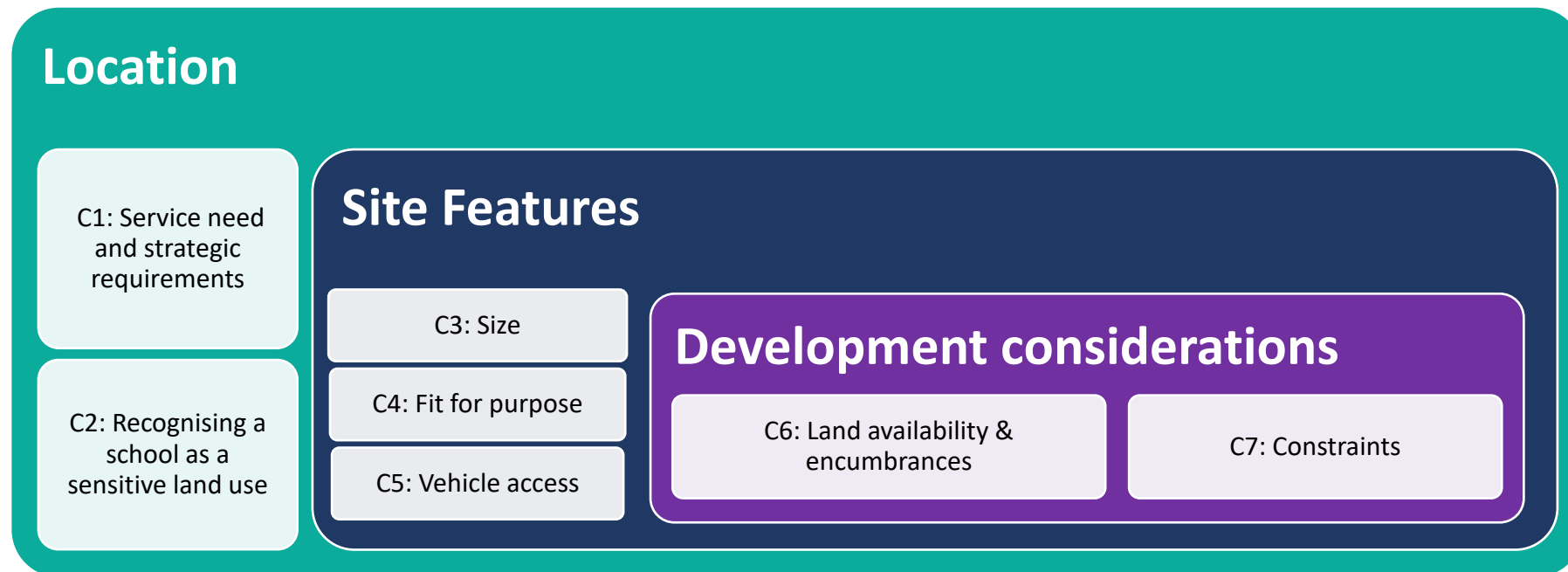
Special schools may operate as P12 schools or as separate P6 and 7-12 schools subject to a case-by-case assessment, however, target peak enrolments are anticipated to be similar regardless of operating model.

## Site Selection Overview

Selection of an appropriate site for a new state school should consider a range of factors including:

- The location,
- Site features, and
- Development considerations.

It is acknowledged that few sites will meet all the criteria set out below, however, each site will be considered on its merits in delivering a safe, well-located, and cost-effective school.





## Location

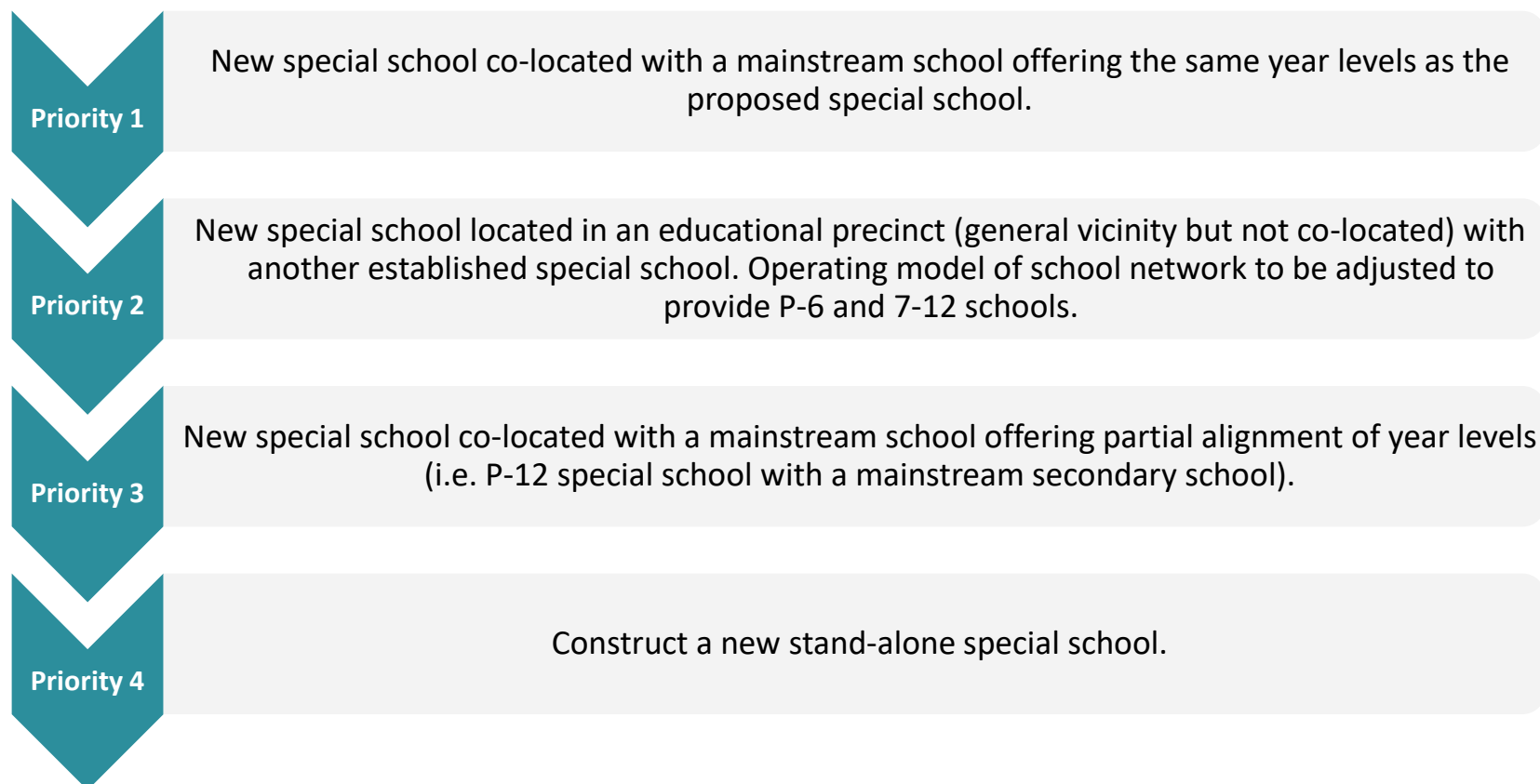
### Criteria 1: Service Need and Strategic Requirements

The site is centrally located to the community it is intended to serve. The location of the site should consider the current and future school network for the local area and ensure that a balanced, functional school network is maintained over the forward planning horizon. Special schools are not preferred in medium or high-density or infill areas due to the need for multistorey buildings. P12 schools are not preferred in emerging medium or high-density areas or infill areas due to the limitations in providing separated play areas for younger and older children.

All development areas	Additional Criteria		
	Low-density greenfield areas	Emerging medium or high-density areas	Infill areas
<p>The site is located in close proximity to existing and/or proposed land uses conducive to supporting a school, including but not limited to other educational facilities, libraries, community facilities and precincts, sport facilities, parks, halls, childcare facilities, residential areas and pools.</p> <p>The site is located to ensure that the proposed new school, any existing schools in the network and planned future schools in the network have sustainable in-catchment student populations based on equidistant school catchments.</p> <p>Service need for all schools must include consideration of local population age-profile, existing school network, current and prospective dwelling typology and state and non-state school attendance trends.</p>	<p>Primary school sites are centrally located to service a residential catchment of approximately 3,000 dwellings (subject to local demand assessment).</p> <p>Secondary school sites are centrally located to service two to three primary school catchments and a residential catchment of approximately 8,000 dwellings (subject to local demand assessment).</p> <p>Special Schools will be located to service a local state school student population of approximately 15,000 students or as required to relieve enrolment pressure on the existing special school network.</p> <p>The department’s desired standard of service in PDA areas is reflected in <a href="#">PDA Guideline 11 – Community Facilities (2015)</a>.</p>	<p>The need for new schools in an emerging medium or high-density development will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with consideration of the local dwelling make-up and local attractors which may influence the population age-profile (i.e. proximity to entertainment precincts may attract younger adults while proximity to parks, cultural facilities or schools may attract families).</p> <p>Primary schools must be located with direct access (i.e. no road crossing) to ovals or other suitable outdoor play space where it cannot be delivered as part of the school site.</p> <p>Secondary school sites should consider access to ovals for sport and health and physical education. Direct access is preferred.</p>	<p>Infill development areas are highly variable in terms of local demographics and schooling sector share. The need for a new primary or secondary school in an infill area will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Primary and secondary schools must be located to complement the established school network with a focus on the schools intended to be relieved. Consideration may be given to the suitability of negotiated catchment boundaries to support relief outcomes.</p> <p>Primary schools must be located with direct access (i.e. no road crossing) to ovals or other suitable outdoor play space where it cannot be delivered as part of the school site.</p> <p>Secondary school sites should consider access to ovals for sport and health and physical education. Direct access is preferred.</p>



Special consideration is given to the location of new special schools which service a much larger area than mainstream primary and secondary schools. In planning for new special schools, the department will consider the below preference model when considering options for the school location.



**Criteria 2: Recognising a school as a sensitive land use**

A school site is a sensitive land use and is therefore protected from potential adverse impacts of infrastructure and activities that will affect the health and safety, wellbeing and amenity of the school and its students.

**All development areas**

A school must be protected from potential adverse impacts from off-site activities (e.g. infrastructure, land uses) which could adversely affect the health and safety, wellbeing and amenity of the school and its students. It is preferred that school sites are situated within existing or planned residential areas.

The site is not:

- situated in or adjoining a zone or land use that is incompatible with the use of the site as a school (i.e. uses that generate significant air or noise pollution)
- within 100m of major high voltage overhead electrical transmission or distribution lines
- within a defined buffer area and/or close proximity of existing or future infrastructure which may pose a risk to the safety and wellbeing of future users of the school (i.e. defined sensitive use buffer areas for hazardous infrastructure such as gas pipelines or storage facilities for fuel or hazardous chemicals)
- adversely impacted by industrial or emission generating activities
- impacted by noise or odour from a waste facility, sewerage treatment plant or sewerage treatment pump station, or intensive animal industry
- located in close proximity to a current or future **major transport corridor** (including a heavy rail corridor or highway) and the noise and vibrational impacts cannot be buffered from internal and external learning areas sufficiently to meet requirements set out in the [Design principles and technical standards for Department of Education facilities](#)
- located in close proximity to uses that create a real or perceived threat to school security or student safety. Specific uses such as adult store, detention facility, drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility or brothel or the like, must not be within 100m walking distance of a school site.

The site must comply with the department's [Mobile telecommunications facilities procedure](#) which requires a minimum buffer of 200m between mobile telecommunications facilities and school boundaries.



## Site Features

### Criteria 3: Size

The site must allow adequate space for suitable building platform and outdoor play, oval and sport platforms and other core facilities, that will accommodate the planned peak enrolments of the future school in the context of its surroundings.

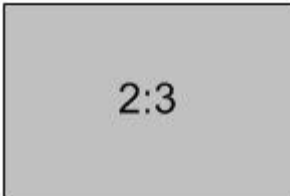
Reduced school site sizes will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and may be facilitated by connectivity to neighbouring infrastructure that can be shared with the school such as car parking, sports fields, or multipurpose halls.

Complementary facilities proposed to be incorporated into or shared with a school, such as kindergartens, community hubs, children and family centres and other dedicated community facilities may require land in addition to these school sizes. Proposals for these facilities will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

All development areas	Low-density greenfield areas	Emerging medium or high-density areas	Infill areas
<p>The site allows for at least 13m<sup>2</sup> per student of useable outdoor open space designated for play and activity and additional passive open space.</p> <p>If the site cannot provide at least 13m<sup>2</sup> per student of useable outdoor open space designated for play and activity, the site should be located within proximity to public open space unless otherwise agreed by the department.</p> <p>Any site proposals seeking a reduced minimum land requirement will be determined appropriate through a master-planning process led by the Department of Education in consultation with the developer. Favourable consideration will be given to opportunities where necessary facilities or infrastructure can be shared with neighbouring facilities and reduce the need to provide these on the school site (i.e. car parking, storm water management).</p>	<p>The site is provided at a minimum size of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primary school: 7 hectares</li> <li>- Secondary school: 12 hectares</li> <li>- P-12 School: 18.5 hectares</li> <li>- Special School: 4-5 hectares.</li> </ul>	<p>The site size will be subject to consideration of the scope and scale of surrounding development and the school will be constructed to broadly align with surrounding building heights.</p> <p>As a guide, school sites will be a minimum size of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary school: 3 hectares</li> <li>• Secondary school: 4 hectares</li> </ul> <p>Primary and secondary school sites may be reduced to approximately 2 hectares where adjacent ovals are available (as outlined in criteria 1).</p> <p>The site must be large enough to accommodate all the required facilities including learning spaces, administration, resource centre, hall and open play spaces, demonstrated through a masterplan endorsed by the department. Estimated gross floor area (GFA) for a primary school is 8,000 to 9,000m<sup>2</sup>. Estimated GFA for a secondary school is 16,000 to 18,000m<sup>2</sup>.</p>	<p>The site is provided at a minimum size of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary school: 2 hectares</li> <li>• Secondary school: 3.8 hectares</li> </ul> <p>Primary schools may be reduced to approximately 1.1 hectares and secondary school sites may be reduced to approximately 1.8 hectares where adjacent ovals are available (as outlined in criteria 1).</p> <p>The site must be large enough to accommodate all the required facilities including learning spaces, administration, resource centre, hall and open play spaces, demonstrated through a masterplan endorsed by the department. Estimated gross floor area (GFA) for a primary school is 8,000 to 9,000m<sup>2</sup>. Estimated GFA for a secondary school is 16,000 to 18,000m<sup>2</sup>.</p>

**Criteria 4: Fit for purpose**

The proposed site must allow for cost-effective delivery and operations of a school site and minimise any constraints that may delay or complicate the delivery of the school site.

All development areas	Low-density greenfield areas
<p>The site is a useable lot that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is regular in shape,</li> <li>- has a maximum slope less than 1:20,</li> <li>- does not rely on excessive earthworks (e.g. large retaining walls, batters) with sufficient area to accommodate flat land for ovals and play space,</li> <li>- does not encroach into areas affected by hazards (natural or otherwise),</li> <li>- the orientation provides appropriate solar access, with preference given to sites that promote road frontages with a north/south orientation, and</li> <li>- ensure any required cutting, filling, retaining walls and earthworks minimises adverse impacts to vegetation, natural features and topography.</li> </ul> <p>Note also requirements set out in Criteria 6 and 7 regarding constraints and encumbrances to development.</p> <p>The site must be serviced by the necessary water, sewer, electrical and telecommunications infrastructure (Telstra network access is required) to operate a school in accordance with the relevant Council or utility provider’s requirements. Where the site is not currently serviced by necessary infrastructure the site should be within the local government priority infrastructure area and able to be connected to reticulated water, sewer, stormwater, and transport networks.</p> <p>The site accords to the requirements in DoE’s design standards for infrastructure and services and includes allowances to facilitate the future provision of services in instances where they are not available at time of site handover.</p>	<p>The site is rectangular in shape with a ratio of width to length of 2:3.</p> <div data-bbox="1236 507 1525 703" style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Where the site as a whole cannot meet slope requirements, the site must have the potential to establish appropriate building platforms and area suitable for the delivery of ovals (approximately 1.5 hectares for primary schools or 3 hectares for secondary schools).</p>

**Criteria 5: Vehicle access**

The proposed school site must be accessible for students, families, staff and the community.

All development areas	Low-density greenfield areas	Emerging medium or high-density areas	Infill areas
<p>Road frontages allow for separation of conflict points between pedestrians, bicycles, cars (staff, parents, visitors), school buses and service vehicles arriving and departing the school.</p> <p>Sites should be located with consideration to the suitability of the surrounding road network including the ability of the network to accommodate any other high traffic generating land uses in the local area. Major infrastructure upgrades to surrounding road and / or active travel networks should not be required to facilitate delivery of the school.</p> <p>The site is serviced by existing roads at a suitable classification level (such as collector roads), or future roads constructed to an approved standard to operate a school in advance of the school opening date.</p> <p>Primary access points should avoid major arterial roads or minor residential streets.</p> <p>Further detail can be found in the Department of Transport and Main Roads publication <a href="#">Planning for safe transport infrastructure at schools</a>.</p>	<p>The site is serviced by a minimum of two road frontages (three road frontages preferred). These must be usable, formed road frontages of sufficient length (including one road frontage with at least 130m suitable for bus bays) that can provide vehicle access to the school site. I.e., an arterial road bounding one side of a school site that does not facilitate safe and unrestricted vehicle access does not constitute a usable road frontage.</p> <p>Access from multiple road frontages to enable several vehicular access points is provided for easy and direct access for staff, students and vehicles and enables conflict points to be avoided. Sufficient space for heavy vehicles, such as bus access and turnaround and waste collection vehicles can be accommodated. Primary and secondary school sites should consider accessibility to active travel and public transport networks.</p> <p>Special schools should be located to provide connectivity to major transit routes to support the larger area that students are drawn from.</p>	<p>Primary and secondary schools should be located with strong connectivity to active travel and public transport networks.</p>	<p>Primary and secondary schools should be located with strong connectivity to active travel and public transport networks.</p>



## Development Considerations

### Criteria 6: Land availability and encumbrances

The site must be serviced and available for construction to commence no later than two years prior to the opening year or as required to facilitate the school opening date. It should be generally free of substantial site improvements or encumbrances that would limit the cost effective and timely development of a school, pose safety risks, or require the department to enter into ongoing arrangements with others to manage the encumbrance or improvement. All encumbrances that would remain after settlement must be disclosed if they will not be discharged.

#### All development areas

The site should be under one ownership and a freehold lot.

The site is free (or will be at the time of site handover) of buildings and structures, easements, encroachments and other encumbrances that would significantly restrict the developability or ongoing operations and safety of the site. This includes:

- easements of all types
- registered covenants
- encroachments
- leases
- any type of informal or formal tenancy agreement
- environmental offsets areas or obligations
- liens or mortgages that would remain after settlement of the property.

The site is not encumbered by a surface or underground trunk water supply, sewage main or stormwater network infrastructure (e.g. large mains of 600mm+ or sized such that it is classified trunk infrastructure). This includes surface inlet pits or any substantial open stormwater infrastructure through the site, or that services uses or land external to the school site, i.e., a sub-regional or regional bio-retention basin or constructed wetland on school land that services surrounding development is not supported.

The site is provided free of significant ongoing maintenance obligations associated with features which are not for the direct enjoyment or benefit of the school.





**Criteria 7: Constraints**

It is preferable that school sites are free of constraints to establishing a school. Where constraints cannot reasonably be avoided, site acceptance will require supporting information to demonstrate that the constraint can be managed and/or mitigated to an acceptable or tolerable level. Depending on the constraint, a report prepared by a suitably qualified person with experience in the constraint may be required for the department to accept the new school location. Where constraints require mitigation or management, these measures must ensure a school can still be delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Note – Where a site is subject to a development constraint which cannot be avoided, alternative locations within the development should be considered through the undertaking of a detailed options assessment.

All development areas	
General	<p>At the time of site handover, the site is free from constraints or reporting ensures that the constraints can be managed and mitigated, including land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- classified as high value agricultural land,</li> <li>- containing potential or actual acid sulphate soils,</li> <li>- subject to unexploded ordinances,</li> <li>- subject to mining tenure,</li> <li>- subject to geophysical and geotechnical constraints (e.g., fault lines and undermining), or</li> <li>- subject to native title claims, on the cultural heritage register or on the State or a Local Heritage Register.</li> </ul> <p>For sites with such risks detailed investigative studies or peer reviews of existing reporting may be required by professional consultants to determine suitability of the proposed site location.</p>
Noise	<p>A school site is a sensitive land use and to ensure the safety and amenity of the school, the school site including both the indoor and outdoor teaching, learning, administrative and recreational spaces must be able to achieve noise and vibration levels consistent with the requirements of the <a href="#">Design principles and technical standards for Department of Education facilities</a>.</p> <p>Areas which are likely to be incompatible with a future school include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• areas within 500m of medium or high impact industry (zoned, approved and existing land uses) with greater setbacks required in some cases,</li> <li>• areas affected by incompatible noise emissions from land uses or infrastructure</li> <li>• areas which are in close proximity to planned or existing major transport corridors</li> <li>• areas affected by flight path noise.</li> </ul>

All development areas

<p>Environment</p>	<p>The site has an existing approval under the <i>Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999</i>, or confirmation can be given that a referral to Federal Government will not be required.</p> <p>Additionally, the site should not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- contain waterways or a wetland of high importance,</li> <li>- containing flora or fauna which is listed as a matter of federal or state significance,</li> <li>- containing protected koala habitat and/or other significant vegetation (federal and state), or</li> <li>- be on the contaminated land register or otherwise include contaminated land.</li> </ul>
<p>Natural Hazards</p>	<p>The site is located outside a known area of flooding, bushfire, landslide, storm inundation or erosion hazard areas.</p> <p>A suitable evacuation point, outside of hazard areas, should be located on site. Where this is not possible a suitable location must be identified in close proximity to the school site.</p> <p>Requirements for a school site to mitigate the impacts of flooding and storm surges are set out in section 3.8.2 of Part B: Master planning, architectural and landscape design principles of the <a href="#">Design principles and technical standards for Department of Education facilities</a>.</p> <p>Requirements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• buildings should be in areas of the site not affected by inundation or overland flows</li> <li>• building platform levels must be above the 1 in 100 Average Recurrence Interval (ARI) inundation level</li> <li>• building floor levels must be 500mm above the Q100 level or the relevant authority’s minimum floor height requirements, whichever is the greater</li> <li>• overland stormwater flow paths must be designed to ensure that water does not enter buildings during a 1 in 50 ARI rain event</li> <li>• pedestrian and vehicle access must be designed to allow suitable access and egress and the use of buildings following a significant rain event.</li> </ul> <p>Any operational space for fire-fighting vehicles, fire trails and working areas separating the school site from an area of medium, high or very high potential bushfire intensity is located external to the school site and not within the school grounds.</p>